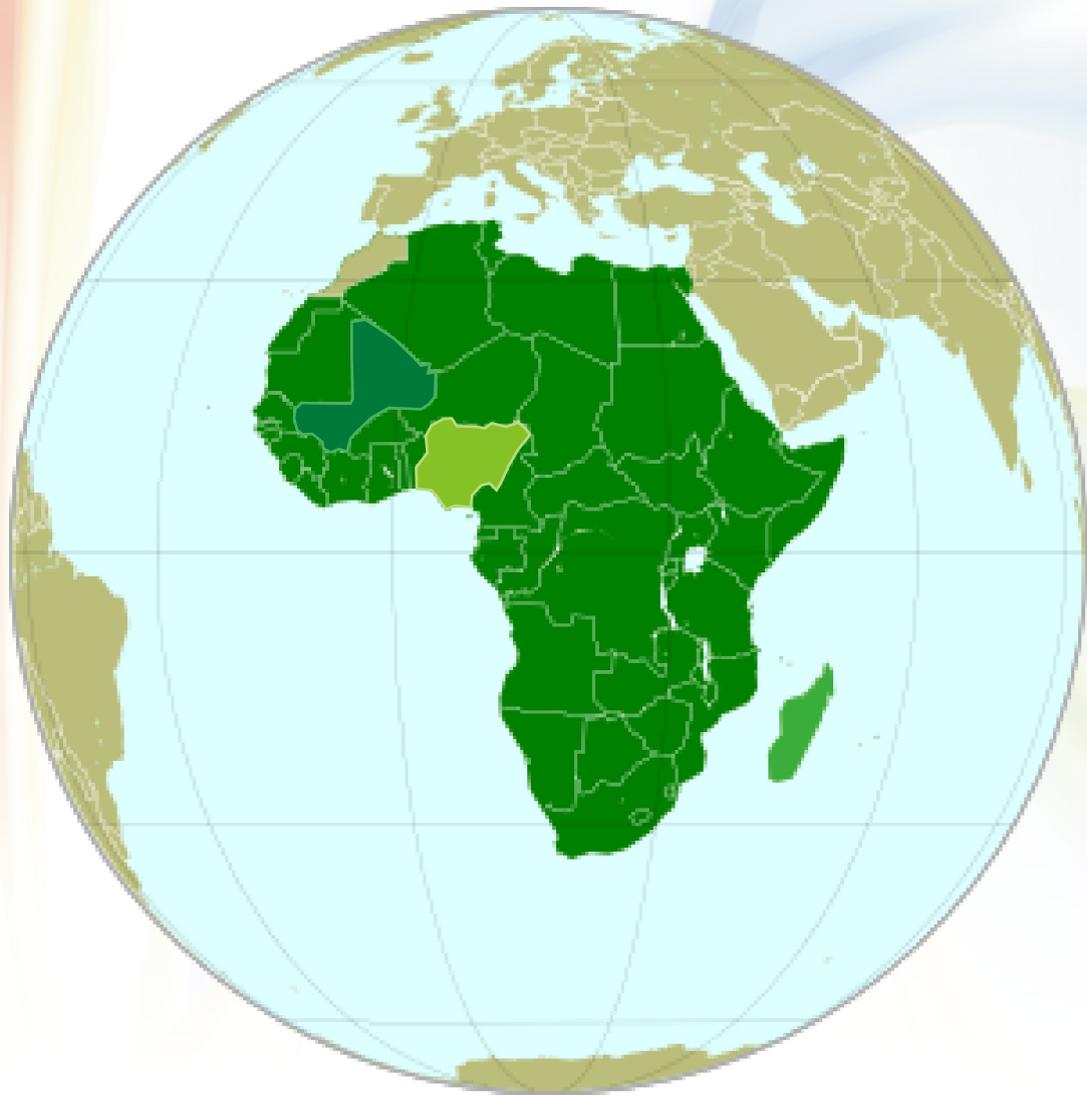


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CONTENTS

LEARNED HELPLESSNESS: A THEORETICAL REVIEW Alex Igundunasse & Johnson Sanmi Ibidapo	1-12
EVALUATION OF ADHERENCE OF JOURNALISTS TO THE CODES OF JOURNALISM PRACTICE IN ENUGU STATE Chima Alexander Onyebuchi, Paul Martins Obayi, Chidera M Udorah & Benjamine Onwukwaluonye	13-37
REFORMING THE NIGERIAN CIVIL SERVICE PERCEPTION SURVEY ON: ISSUES IN SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION Umar Elems Mahmud & Yusuf Abdullahi Ogwuzebe	38-53
OCCUPATIONAL STRESS, TRANSFER AND AGE AS PREDICTORS OF JOB SATISFACTION AMONG IMO ANGLICAN CLERGYMEN Ann Ukachi Madukwe, Ethelbert C Njoku & Charles Chidubem Dinneya	54-69
PEACE BUILDING: A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT Samuel Laraba Baba, Shafa A Yunus & Sani A Oshishepo	70-76
THE IMPACT OF WORKFORCE DIVERSITY ON ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE OF ABIA STATE POLYTECHNIC (2012 - 2017) Michael Chinazam Ihemadu & Chinyere Odiche Atasie	77-95
EXAMINING PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES OF KIDNAPPING IN NIGERIA Ruwan Felix Ignatius Ibrahim & Andrew E Zamani	96-111
HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT FOR EFFICIENCY AND PRODUCTIVITY: AN EXPOSITORY APPROACH Paschal I O Igboeche	113-121
INFLUENCE OF LOCUS OF CONTROL AND FAMILY BACKGROUND ON CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR Hadiza Ibrahim Dahiru & Sani A Oshishepo	122-132
ASSESSING THE PREVALENCE OF CRIMINAL CONSPIRACY AND CULPABLE HOMICIDE IN KADUNA STATE OF NIGERIA FROM 2014-2017 Ruwan Felix Ignatius Ibrahim, Faith Monday Ajodo & Andrew E Zamani	133-149
BORDER SECURITY AND THE OPERATIONS OF BOKO HARAM TERRORISM IN NIGERIA - Emmanuel N Iheanacho & Eudora U Ohazurike	150-160
POVERTY: THE BANE OF WOMEN DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA George I Okoroafor & Chiaka Umoh	161-175
CHALLENGES OF REGIONAL PEACEKEEPING: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF AFRICAN UNION'S ROLES IN BURUNDI AND DARFUR Chidi P Anene, Chinonyerem U Njoku & Dennis U Ashara	176-188
TREASURY SINGLE ACCOUNT POLICY: AN INSTRUMENT OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY OF THE BUHARI'S ADMINISTRATION (2015-PRESENT) George I Okoroafor & Ihuoma C Bernard	189-206

**REFORMING THE NIGERIAN CIVIL SERVICE PERCEPTION
SURVEY ON: ISSUES IN SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION**

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ABSTRACT: The Nigerian Civil Service has been variously described as the central processing unit, engine room, bulwark, fulcrum and depository of government policies. Success in the implementation of public policies therefore is largely hinged on the efficient and effective performance of the onerous role entrusted by government's objective of service delivery by the Civil Service, its architecture, in order to strategically reposition it, for efficient service delivery in-tandem with contemporary best practices. Unfortunately, experience in Nigeria, and commentaries, allude to the widening gap between policy objective achievement and intention. Critics of the undesirable situation ascribe it to the myriad of inadequacies, chief of which include policy disarticulation, poor implementation, weak monitoring and general inefficiency. To the rescue therefore, government embarked on reforms aimed at improving the capacity of the Civil Service, for effective performance, in the changing times. In answering the question as to why reforms in the Civil Service had been largely unsuccessful in Nigeria, this study titled "Reforming the Nigerian Civil Service: Challenges in Successful Implementation", examines the imperative of redesigning the architecture and re-engineering the machinery of the civil service. The objective of course, is to reposition it for better performance in the 21st century and beyond. Underpinned by Structural-Functionalism and Systems theories, the study adopted primary survey method, with a sample of 1200 employees drawn from ten of the existing federal ministries. Chi-square analysis was employed in testing the hypothesis of no statistically significant discrepancies between observed and expected outcomes. This study examines the major impediments, adopting content analysis, primary survey and simple percentage analytical methods, to provide insights into the challenges of reform implementation. In conclusion, the study advances policy options for improvement.

Keywords: Civil Service, Public Policies, Reforms, Inefficiency, Implementation.

INTRODUCTION

Any country that wishes to grow economically, socially and technologically must from time to time consciously undergo structural adjustments, for general efficiency and effectiveness of the bureaucracy, in order to satisfy the needs of its citizens as well as belonging to the world's comity of developed societies. The civil service is regarded as the appropriate instrument with which a country can develop or progress. In this regard, it is imperative for the civil service to from time to time change its form, procedure, structure, etc for higher efficiency, thereby fueling the engine of the country's development. To do otherwise is

tantamount to stagnating or regressing the country in its quest for development (Aboyi, 2005).

The history of the civil service dates back to 462BC, during the times of the ancient civilizations in ancient Greece, and in 120BC in ancient Chinese empire when the Prime Minister observed the difficulties in comprehending the edicts and laws which were written in classical style by officers assigned to interpret the laws to the people. The need to have a permanent body of officials trained to implement government decisions therefore arose (Adebayo, 2011).

With the emergence of the modern state and the growth of the parliamentary system of government the civil service evolved as the cornerstone of the executive branch of government. The growth of the service or “bureaucracy” as it is often otherwise called due to its “rigid” and impersonal rules and procedures are amenable to its numerous characteristics: octopus size, complexity, accountability, organisation etc and the need for specialization (Sharma, et al., 2012). The functions or role of the civil service traverse assisting in the formulation and execution of policy as decided by the political lead, providing the “think tank” or policy, and providing the administrative direction and coordination of public policy for effective and efficient realization of objectives among others. The civil service therefore provides continuity in governance in the discharge of its onerous responsibility; the service must maintain essential attributes: political neutrality, secrecy, honesty and accountability tact, versatile, technical, responsive, loyalty, nationalistic and up to date among others.

Given the importance of administrative reform and the centrality of the civil service in the machinery of government of the people and other issues that concern the administration of a nation, the need for the reform that will help improve the lot of the civil service in Nigeria is justifiable. Simply put, to reform means to improve a system or an organisation by way of making changes. Therefore, reforming the Nigerian Civil Service means improving or changing the Civil Service system, practices and procedures, with a view to improving the levels of efficiency and effectiveness in productivity and service delivery. As much as the philosophy behind reforms in the Civil Service may be efficiency, the concern of the people is with their faithful implementation. Therefore, the resistance of most Nigerians to reforms of the Civil Service is not with the system, but their operators that have consistently failed in the past.

Research Hypotheses

Three null hypotheses of no significant discrepancy: between and observed expected reform and policy conceptualization; between observed and expected policy disarticulation; and between the observed and expected stakeholder attitude to reform implementation, are stated and tested.

Objective of the Study

Given the inevitability of change and the desire to improve the Nigerian Civil Service for efficiency and effective service delivery that will bring about development, the core objective of this study is to examine the major impediments to successful implementation of civil service reforms in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The permanent institution of public policy-making and implementation is the civil service. Therefore the proper functioning of government considerably depends on the efficiency of the Civil Service. In other words, the success or otherwise of most government programmes or reforms is highly correlated with the efficiency of the civil service. For this reason, reforming the civil service should be a continuous process. Unfortunately, experience in Nigeria suggests the existence of parity between reform implementation and reform failure. It may be that there exists a gap between the theoretical foundation and experience. The obvious problem which this study seeks to address therefore is the observed inadequacy of empirical enquires into the causes of the pervasive failure in reform implementation.

Research Questions

Arising from the objective and statement of research problem, the following research questions are posed:

1. Is defective policy conceptualization an impediment to successful implementation of reforms in Nigerian Civil Service?
2. Is policy disarticulation an impediment to successful reform implementation in Nigeria Civil Service?
3. Is poor stakeholder attitude an impediment to successful reform implementation In Nigeria Civil Service?

Background of Civil Service Reforms in Nigeria

Reforms in the Civil Service dated back to the colonial period with Hunt Commission of 1934 through numerous efforts to the Orosanye Committee in 2005. All reforms were aimed at addressing issues capable of improving efficiency in the public service. The Udoji Service Review Commission set up in 1974 was necessitated by the need to secure adequate development and utilisation of manpower and to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service in meeting the challenges of development. Key recommendations of the Commission included the classification of the unified structure for the public service into Grade Levels 01-17, emphasising that pay should depend upon job content and performance. Result oriented management techniques such as project management, management by objectives and programme performance budgeting were introduced. Accordingly, promotion and compensation in the public sector were to be at par with the private sector. The financial management in the public sector was also to be strengthened and modernised.

In 1981, the Federal Government set up the Onosode Presidential Commission on parastatals aimed at strengthening the structure, organisation, management and job content of all public corporations and the public service generally. The Commission was to consider the implication of the reforms for the economy and public interest imperatives. The Commission put aside the Udoji Unified Grading System and adopted the Unified Salary System. Public enterprises were classified into seven types, characterised by function, economic orientation, measure of state control, funding capacity and independence and social nature, among others. In addition to these groupings, the Commission recommended salaries for Chief Executive of public enterprises, partial commercialization and privatization of selected public enterprises.

The Civil Service (Reorganisation) Decree 43, 1988 recognized the peculiar problem of the Civil Service in the 1970s and 1980s that were fashioned along British Civil Service operating under military administration. The bureaucratic model which was to serve the parliamentary government under a military regime was bound to inherit some conflicts. The 1988 reforms under President Babangida recognized this situation and moved to professionalize the Civil Service. The Decree was intended to correct the abnormalities observed in the civil service structure.

To Abiodun (2007), the points of departure between the previous Civil Service Decrees and the 1988 are as follows:

- i. The Ministers became the Chief Executives and Accounting Officers of their various Ministries. The Directors-General (DG) that replaced Permanent Secretaries became the second in command. The tenure of the DG was to end with the government that appointed them;
- ii. The Civil Service became professionalised; Ministries, were empowered to appoint, promote and discipline their employees;
- iii. The Civil Service Commission had most of its powers delegated. It became a mere supervisory body, monitoring implementation of rules and regulations of the Civil Service. It became an appellate body for resolving employee grievances;
- iv. The principle of federal character became a special feature of the reform.

During the democratic dispensation of Obasanjo in 1999, Government embarked on reform agenda in public service to strengthen accountability and responsiveness of government through the Service Delivery Initiative (SDI) having recognised the poor quality of public service delivery. The objectives of the reform included repositioning the public service with a view to meeting the welfare needs of the public, assuring the public of its service entitlement and right and making Nigerians to expect more from public service. Other objectives included transforming the public service and redirecting customer's experience of the service in a transparent, timely and cost effective manner (Okechukwe in Abiodun, 2007). Consequently, a service charter called "Service Compact" was introduced where clear information on the service provided by each agency of government, the entitlements of citizen, correct official course, and realistic time frame for service delivery were to be managed by a specialised office known as Servicom Office.

From the works of the Commissions reviewed, it is manifest that all had clear objectives to better the Civil Service in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and service delivery. However, their implementations were inhibited due to a number of factors. Undoubtedly, the issues in successful implementation of the civil service reforms are the core of this paper.

Conceptual Clarification

Public Administration

Public administration is a wide concept which relates to the action part of government: the means by which the purposes and goals of government are realized (Adebayo, 2011). For example, government must protect the lives and property of its citizens against internal and external aggression. Furthermore, government must be able to create an environment that is conducive for a growing social and economic system; besides providing essential services: social infrastructure and services such as roads, power, water, health, education, communication, etc.

Civil Service

Implicit in the expected goals of government is the performance of certain functions: regulating, conciliating, balancing, negotiating and providing services which are essential tasks of public administration; by a permanent establishment, a corps of public servants in implementing the ideas and wishes of their political masters. In this wise, the corps renders and advisory services to the ministers, the political master (Gulick, 1937) who take ultimate responsibility for outcome. The corps of professional advisers and policy executors forms the civil service. In discharging the onerous task, the civil service combines technical and other considerations (Adebayo, 2011).

Public Policy

In the absence of concusses on the exact definition, reliance is placed on diverse positions of scholars. Thus to Davis and Filley (1977), public policy is a statement of principle or group of principles with supporting rules of action that condition and govern the achievement of certain objectives to which a business is directed. Other scholars: Pal (1997), Adamolekun (1987) and Dye (1976) provide varying definitions. However, the sum total of all definitions points to the notion that public policy is a statement of intention anchored on principles, complemented by a plan of action for realizing the established objectives.

Policy Implementation

The objective of any policy is to guide and drive the orderly and efficient achievement of a set goal. In implementing civil service reforms, policy implementation refers to the various actions taken in furtherance of implementation within the ambit of the policy framework so as to realize reform objectives.

Theoretical Consideration

The duo of Structural-Functionalist and Systems theories are adopted because of their holistic emphasis on stability and order in organizations. The Structural Functionalist theory is of the view that there exists functions to be performed and there also exists corresponding structures to perform the functions. In this wise, the task of reforming the civil service and implementation of the reforms are clearly defined, just as the structures (Civil Service, etc) to perform the functions are clearly assigned. Talcott Parsons is credited with applause as a leading contributor in shaping Structural Functionalism into a systematic theory for sociological analysis. To him, a society will remain functional and maintain its order and stability if it can meet four basic needs which he referred to as functional requisites. These include the achievement of goals, adjustment to the environment, integration of the various parts of society into a whole and control of deviance from accepted norms.

Theories

Although structural-functionalism as a theory has elicited a wide discourse in its evolution by scholars, Gabriel Tarde (1890), Friedrich Ratzel and Frobenius, Kingsley Davis and Robert Merton (Sapru, 2013), Talcott Parsons (1961)'s strand is adopted in this study. Parsons holds the view that each system comprises of various structures which perform respective functions. By working together all social phenomena aim to achieve the common objective of its utility in providing insights into the junctions of efficient service delivery which bureaucratic structures (the civil service) reform.

Similarly, on Systems theory, Robert Merton sees a social structure as having both positive and negative sides. By social structure, he meant the way the units or groups and society relate to one another. Social structures make efficient human activities possible; while at the same time, they can also restrict personal freedom. A unit of a structure is dysfunctional when it prevents society or one of its parts from meeting its needs. Drawing from this theory, it is clear that issues in successful implementation of reforms in the Nigerian Civil Service can best be addressed from structural functionalist and systems approaches which enjoin all structures charged with the responsibility of performing specific functions to achieve optimality so as to meet the set objectives of the organisation. The Systems theory, on the other hand, canvasses co-operation, co-ordination and synergy so that the integrated system of the organisation can perform optimally in unison.

Research Methodology

Given the objective, the study adopted a primary survey research design. Specifically, the study conducted a perception survey of selected cross-sectional echelon of the Nigerian Civil Service and notable public analysts, to elicit their opinions about the status of implementation of reforms.

Ten federal ministries were selected for inclusion in the survey out of the existing 24. The average senior staff and directorate staff strength of the ministries was 2,100, giving an

average total strength of 21,000. This figure was extrapolated from the information obtained from the survey. Although reforms are anchored by the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (OHSCF) and monitored by the Bureau of Public Service Reforms (BPSR), the organisations were excluded in the survey, to minimise error of bias.

Adopting Taro Yamane (1964) method, a sample of 1,200 employees of the selected ministries was drawn on the proportion of 60:40 per cent Directorate: Officers Cadres. The choice of the proportions was informed by the level of involvement in reform design and implementation by the respective cadres. To strengthen and revalidate the responses, 100 public analysts of notable repute were randomly selected from across major locations in Nigeria, reflecting the geographical zones. Respondents were requested to provide information on the selected parameters. In all, a structured questionnaire was employed in data collection.

Data were organised in frequency distribution tables and analysed using simple percentages. The advantage of percentage analysis is its suitability in “common-sizing” information by reducing the diverse and incompatible units of measurement to a generally comprehensible single unit. The method has been widely used in social science research due to its simplicity.

In order to test the significance of the null hypothesis of no discrepancies between the observed and expected frequencies, the Chi-Square (χ^2) statistical tool is employed. The statistic is defined quantitatively as:

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{e=i}^n \frac{(O_i - e_i)^2}{e_i} \dots\dots\dots(1)$$

where:

O= observed frequencies

e= expected frequencies

(Spiegel and Stephens, 2008:294)

A Priori Expectation

Theoretical consideration leads to the expectation that the frequencies of all responses (100 per cent) would either be in affirmative or otherwise. However, in practice, observed frequencies seldom coincide exactly with such expectations, leading to a discrepancy. If all responses are in the affirmative, there is no discrepancy between observed and expected frequencies. In other words, the value of $\chi^2 = 0$. If however all responses are not same, a discrepancy exists and the value of $\chi^2 \neq 0$. Thus, the higher the number of affirmative

responses, the greater the discrepancies. In effect, the value of χ^2 may assume the range $0 = \chi^2 \geq 0$

Expected frequencies are computed based on the null hypothesis, H_0 . If the computed value of χ^2 statistic (χ_c^2) from equation (1) is greater than the critical value such as 0.95 or 0.99, which is same as 0.05 or 0.01 level of significance, we would conclude that the observed frequencies differ significantly from the expected frequencies and reject H_0 at the corresponding level of significance. The converse is true (Spiegel and Stephens, 2008:295).

In general, a value of χ^2 statistic too close to zero is suspicious, because of the rarity of the occurrence in which observed and expected frequencies agree too well. In such a situation of closeness, it would be decided that the agreement is too good at the level of significance.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Tables 1(a) and 1(b) below present summaries of the analysis of the questionnaire administered on civil servants and public analysts.

Table 1 (a): Analysis of the Questionnaire Administered on Civil Servants.

S/No	Cadre (Grade Level) of Employees	Copies of Questionnaire Distributed	Copies of Questionnaire Completed and Retrieved	Percentage (%)
1.	Permanent Secretary and Directorate (GL-15- Above)	720	600	84
2.	Officer (GL 10-14)	480	400	84
Total		1,200	1,000	84 (average)

Source: Survey, 2018

From Table 1 (a) above, it could be observed that across board, 84 per cent of the copies of questionnaire distributed was retrieved, giving a high success rate.

In Table 1(b) below, the profile of the questionnaire administered on the respondent-public analysts is highlighted.

Table 1 (b): Analysis of Questionnaire Administered on Public Analysts

S/No	Location	Copies of Questionnaire Administered	Total Copies of Questionnaire Retrieved	Percentage (%)
1.	Lagos	60	40	67
2.	Abuja	20	20	100
3.	Kano	20	20	100
4.	Port-Harcourt	20	20	100
Total		1,200	100	84 (average)

Source: Survey, 2018

As observable in Table 1(b) above, the questionnaire administration was also successful at an average retrieval rate of 84 per cent.

Analysis of Respondents' Profile

The profile of respondents is presented in Table 2 below. The aim is to highlight the educational qualifications of respondents and thus establish their employment suitability in the survey.

Table 2: Educational Qualifications of Respondents

S/No	Cadre (GL)	Qualification	Frequency or No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Permanent Secretary and Directorate (GL-15- Above)	First Degree/Equivalent – Above	600	100
2.	Officer (GL 10-14)	1. WASC-ND 2. First or Equivalent Degree- Above	10 390	3 97
Total			1,000	97 (av.)

Source: Survey, 2018

From Table 2 above, the suitability of respondents based on educational qualification could be reasonably inferred. On the average, about 990 civil servants or 99 per cent of the respondents hold atleast a first degree. With regard to length of service and experience, a presumption of adequacy is maintained, given that to attain directorate grade, an average of 20 years cognate experience is required by Civil Service Rules.

On responses to questions pertaining to the selected critical reform issues, respondents were asked to give opinions on the key challenges contributory to the failure of reform

implementation in the Civil Service by indicating from three positions provided and marked “Right”, “Haphazard” and “Wrong”.

Analysis of Responses

Table 3: Responses to Selected Reforms and Policy Implementation Issues or Challenges.

S/No	Parameter	Responses							
		Total	“Right”	%	“Haphazard”	%	“Wrong”	%	
1.	Reform/Policy Conceptualisation	1,000	250	25	300	30	450	45	
2.	Policy Articulation	1,000	150	15	250	25	600	60	
3.	Implementability:								
	• Functionality		200	20	150	15	650	65	
	• Practicability		150	15	150	15	700	70	
	• Continuity/Sustainability		150	15	150	15	700	70	
4.	Stakeholder Attitude	1,000	200	20	150	15	650	65	

Source: Survey, 2018

From Table 3 above, it is discernable that responses to the various questions on the critical success factors in the successful implementation of reforms in the Civil Service were across board, indicative of disapproval. Thus, while 250 respondents (25%) indicated that reforms were rightly conceptualised, 300 respondents (30%) were of the opinion that the reforms were haphazardly implemented. Four hundred and fifty respondents (45%) indicated that reforms were wrongly implemented.

Reforms and the driving-policies were adjudged “Right” if they were executed in-tandem with the set objectives. If however reforms were implemented in such a disorderly manner as to diminish their prospects of meeting the set objectives, they were adjudged “Haphazard”. Reforms were considered as “Wrong” if they were conducted in such manner that negated their objectives and successful implementation.

As to the responses pertaining to other parameters, namely policy articulation, implementability and attitude (or commitment) of stakeholders, the results exhibited higher skewness in favour of “Wrong” and “Haphazard” options, with an average per-centage response of 60 for the latter option.

The results of the opinions of public analysts corroborated the above analysis. Analysts ascribed the factors in the failure of reform implementations largely to all the aforesaid reasons, in addition to pervasive systemic corruption.

Results of Test of Significance

In line with the research questions and objectives of the study, four hypotheses were stated, namely:

HO₁: There is no significant discrepancy between the observed and expected frequencies of reform (and policy) conceptualisation.

HO₂: There is no significant discrepancy between observed and expected frequencies of policy disarticulation.

HO₃: There is no significant discrepancy between the observed and expected frequencies of stakeholders 'wrong' attitude to reform implementation.

Table 4.4 below present the results of the Chi-square test of significance.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Percentiles		
		25 th	50th (Median)	75 th
REFORM	1000	1.2500	2.0000	3.0000

Source: Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS)

REFORM/POLICY CONCEPTUALIZATION

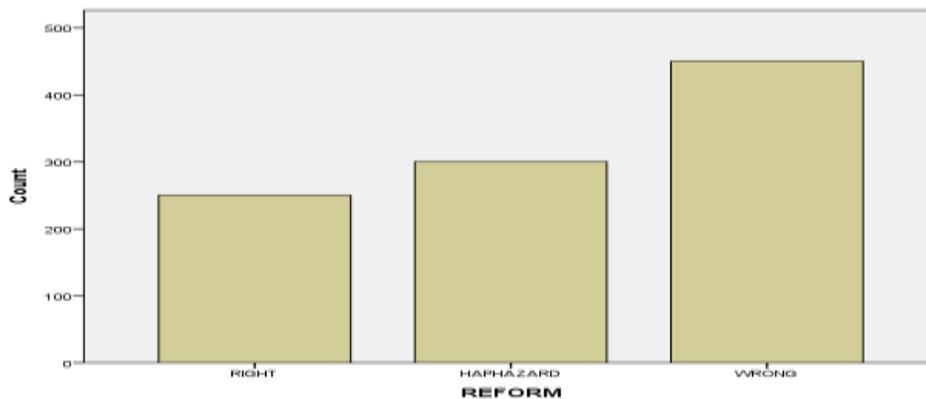
	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
RIGHT	250	333.3	-83.3
HAPHAZARD	300	333.3	-33.3
WRONG	450	333.3	116.7
Total	1000		

Test Statistics

	REFORM
Chi-Square	65.000 ^a
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 333.3.

Significance Level 0.01



Chi-Square Test

POLICY ARTICULATION

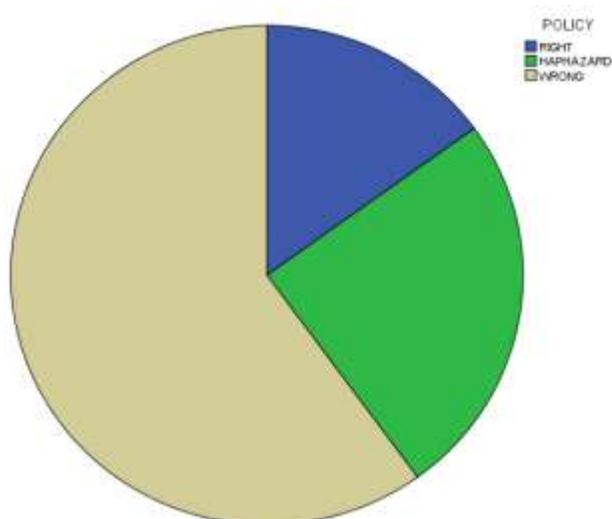
	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
RIGHT	150	333.3	-183.3
HAPHAZARD	250	333.3	-83.3
WRONG	600	333.3	266.7
Total	1000		

Test Statistics

	POLICY
Chi-Square	335.000 ^a
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 333.3.

Graph



Chi-Square Test

IMPLIMENTABILITY

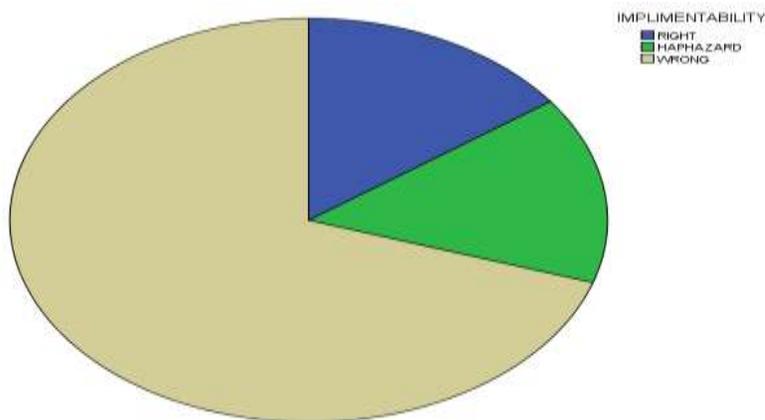
	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
RIGHT	150	333.3	-183.3
HAPHAZARD	150	333.3	-183.3
WRONG	700	333.3	366.7
Total	1000		

Test Statistics

	IMPLIMENTABILITY
Chi-Square	605.000 ^a
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 333.3.

Graph



Chi-Square Test

ATTITUDE

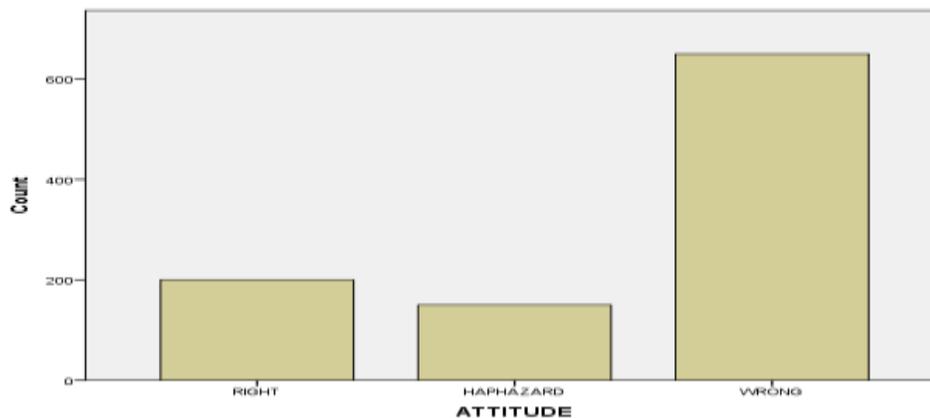
	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
RIGHT	200	333.3	-133.3
HAPHAZARD	150	333.3	-183.3
WRONG	650	333.3	316.7
Total	1000		

Test Statistics

	ATTITUDE
Chi-Square	455.000 ^a
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 333.3.

Graph



From the tables, it is observable that all the hypotheses tested were significant at 0.01 level. We would therefore reject the respective null hypotheses that there was no significant discrepancy between the expected and observed frequencies in the responses with respect to each of the selected variables or parameters in the failure of implementation of reforms in Nigeria during the period of study. Instead, we would accept the alternative hypothesis and conclude that there was significant discrepancy.

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the study confirm the prevalence of failure in reform implementation in Nigeria. The results align significantly with the a priori expectations and commentaries by reputable authors and public reform analysts: Adamolekun and Kiragu (2001), Abah (2015), El-Rufai (2005), Baba-Ahmed (2005) and Bureau of Public Service Reforms (2004, 2005, 2006). The pervasive failure is ascribable to reasons which range from poor reform conceptualisation, policy disarticulation and implemetability. In this wise, reform implementations were dysfunctional, impracticable and therefore largely unsustainable. Importantly too, the attitudes of stakeholders: government officials, civil servants and even the collaborator-private business communities were negative and sabotaged the realisation of reform potential. The above positions supported by the results of the analysis of responses presented in Table 3 and the results of the test of significance of the hypothesis. The findings also corroborate the various positions of public analysts, literature and previous studies as reviewed.

Concluding, the findings of the study provide valuable insights into the fundamental inhibitions of successful implementation of reforms in Nigerian Civil Service. In effect, the frequency of reforms which pre-dated Nigeria's independent remained as high as the frequency of their failure.

Recommendations

Arising from the findings and conclusion, the following policy measures are proffered:

1. Government should widely consult all stakeholders during reform conceptualisation and articulation. Reforms are about people, for people and by people. Neglecting or refusing to consult stakeholders for inputs and buy-in may be counter-productive during implementation. Similar omissions were largely accountable for the failure of the various National Development Plans in Nigeria.
2. Government should always secure and ensure congruency of reform objectives and policy direction. For example, where the reform objective is to prune the workforce of the public service, policies which bloat the workforce through the creation of duplicated agencies and departments are negative to such reforms of the Civil Service. In this wise, a reform which replaced the nature and tenure of the office of Permanent Secretary with Director-General may have been irrational. Such ill-conceived reform destroys the basic tenets of the Civil Service and threatens continuity.
3. Government should educate Civil Servants through frequent training on their proper roles in reform objectives and implementation for attitudinal change and buy-in.

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