

## **RATIONALIZATION IN THE NIGERIAN PUBLIC SERVICE: IMPLICATIONS FOR CROSS RIVER STATE WORKERS' MORALE AND PRODUCTIVITY**

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### **Abstract**

Rationalization in the Nigerian Public Service is a policy of government to purge the system of workers whose productivity is below expectations. Thus, it is a structural reform strategy for the interest of executing government's policy. Such policy rather than improving the productivity drive of the public service has resulted in the lack of commitment as far as workers' morale and productivity are concerned. This study therefore assessed the effect of rationalization in the Nigerian Public Service using Cross River State Civil service as a case study. Data generated for the study were sourced from 308 public servants from selected ministries and parastatals in the Cross River State Civil Service using structured questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the analysis and presentation of data. Results showed that rationalization in public service significantly and negatively correlated with workers' productivity drive ( $r = -0.54$ ;  $r_{\text{critical}} = 0.11$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ). The analysis also posits that job security positively and significantly correlated with workers' morale ( $r = 0.35$ ;  $r_{\text{critical}} = 0.11$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ), and that there is a significant difference between management and workers' perception of the effect of rationalization on workers' morale ( $r = 0.25$ ;  $r_{\text{critical}} = 0.11$ ). In view of the negative effect of rationalization, the paper recommends that there is need for appropriate legislation in the execution of policy of rationalization to avoid reckless and erratic process.

**Key Words:** Rationalization, Policy, Workers' Morale, Productivity, Public Service

### **Introduction**

The public service is pivotal to the development of human capacity and economic fortune in the global economy. Inefficiency in human resources results in lower productivity and often culminates in rationalization. In the public service, rationalization means maximizing profit, human happiness and satisfaction and minimizing drudgery. Rationalization involves cutting down on the number of the work force suspected to be harmful and constituting loss to the service (Mamoria, 1993).

The public service has been severally criticized for lacking the desirable attitudes for honesty, dedication, integrity, hardwork, selflessness, loyalty and thirst for knowledge. This has been compounded by the lack of clear vision of the type of organizational structures and methods to be used to achieve the desired goal in the Nigerian public service. These and other criticisms have had very profound impact on Nigeria public administration. Gboyega and Abubakar (1989) have argued that the technical competence of public servants and their unsatisfactory performance have been attributed to willful negligence or ineffective political direction and control or corruption, or a combination of these. Consequently, the status of the public service as an efficient neutral instrument was brought into question (Ejue, 2001: 173). This has been the case especially with regards to public corporations that have been accused of gulping large capital investments as well as huge current grants without corresponding improvements in output. Despite fair wages and amenities, the Nigerian worker still performs below expectation. For instance, Etuk (1981) has stated that: “there is a myth about the nature and work life of the average Nigerian public servant. It projects the picture of a complacent individual whose sense of responsibility has been dulled frustration and negativism”.

It was in complete realization of these hydra-headed problems that the military leaders that overthrew the Gowon Administration in July, 1975 decided that a purge of the entire public service was necessary to correct what they regarded as its weakness and inadequacies. In all, about 12,000 public servants lost their jobs through retirement, dismissal or termination on grounds that ranged from declining productivity to old age, drunkenness, inefficiency and ineffectiveness (New Nigeria, November 15, 1985). Accordingly, Ademolekun (1989) asserted that: “the purge was a rough and ready form of justice which totally ignored the disciplinary procedures laid down in the civil service rules and regulation”. In addition, the moral fortitude of the Nigerian public servant was badly shaken by the 'great purge' (The Guardian, June 9, 1986).

While many have seen rationalization exercise (which attempts to help the government cut its over-staffed civil service to a manageable size) as a cost-saving grace for the ailing economy vis-à-vis raising productivity, others hold a contrary opinion. For instance, Longe (1985) maintained that retrenchment of civil servants in the country was the cause of low inefficiency and productivity in the civil service. The above trend shows that what government had continuously and progressively sought for was to restructure and model the public services into a more modern organization, which would be receptive and respond to the yearning of the larger society. Ostensibly, this exercise can be said to have been worthwhile, as it is necessary to, once in a while, sanitize and do away with deadwoods, which clog and slow down the system. However, the implications of such exercise, especially as workers' morale and productivity are concerned, cannot be ignored. The key problem is that, with the spate of rationalization following one administrative committee and panel or the other, productivity in the service has not improved. Workers still exhibit nonchalant attitude to work, especially in the face of deteriorating economic problems. Therefore, the overall objective of this study is to assess the effect of rationalization policy on the remaining crop of workers as far as their individual morale and productivity are concerned, using Cross River State civil service as a case study.

## **Methodology**

This study was restricted to the Cross River State public service, made up of eight ministries, commissions and ministerial/extra-ministerial departments. The population of the study comprised the total work force in the eight ministries, three permanent commissions and thirty-five extra ministerial departments including Boards and Corporations. The study was limited to civil servants serving in the state Headquarters whose total population stood at 2,304. The eight ministries and three permanent commissions were purposively selected for the study. To select the sample, thirty workers (respondents) were randomly selected from each of the eight ministries and three commissions making up a total sample

of 330. Also, 30 management staff were purposively selected from the eight ministries and three commissions covered. The data collected from three hundred and eight (308) respondents were eventually used for the analysis.

Data for this study were gathered from the primary source using structured questionnaire. The instrument was personally administered on the respondents. Several statistical tools were used in the analysis and presentation of results. These include the descriptive (percentages and tables) and inferential statistics. The inferential statistics, specifically, the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between workers' morale and productivity in the civil service system of Cross River State.

Three hypotheses were generated for the study. These include:

1. There is no significant relationship between rationalization in the public service and workers' morale and productivity;
2. Workers' high morale among other things is not dependent on their response to the following contingent variables;
  - (a) Effective communications
  - (b) Job security
3. There is no significant difference between management and workers' perception of effects of rationalization on workers morale and productivity.

### **Theoretical Issues**

This study is hinge on the human relations theory. The human relations approach emphasizes policies and techniques designed to improve employee morale and satisfaction; which are accompanied by increased employee efficiency and reduction in employee unrest. McGregor (1960) maintained that human factor is the most essential of all factors of production. Corroborating McGregor's assertion, Brown (1974) observed that, to ignore human factor in industry is not only to be lacking in humanity, but it is also a sign of gross incompetence in the technical field. The Nigerian public service and the Cross Rive State Civil Service in particular should be concerned with satisfying its workforce to elicit efficiency in the service. This should be the policy option rather than threatening the system with the usual complain of over bloated civil service with a view to “down-sizing” or “right-sizing” it (Okpo, 2005). Equally, to achieve satisfactory civil service reform and to make it people oriented, the near pandemic issue of corruption must be eradicated (Obikezie & Obi, 2004: 159). In fact, the Nigerian civil service today has both the managerial and technical capacity to excel to very high standards, but that will be, and surely if corruption that has been applying the brakes on this reservoir of human knowledge and intellect is given a killer punch (Okpo, 2005:121). This indeed should be the most preferred option than rationalization.

### **Results and Discussion**

The socio-economic characteristics of the Cross River State civil servants are presented in Table 1. Majority of the civil servants in the prescribed study area are within the age bracket of 26-30 years of age, followed by those within the age bracket 31-35 years representing 37 per cent and 26 per cent respectively. Those within 41 years and above constituted 12 per cent of the sampled respondents. This suggests that about three-quarter (3/4) of the sampled respondents still have many years to serve in the public service of the State. The survey also posits that male population were more in number (62.30 per cent) compared to their female (37.70 per cent) counterparts in the public service. In terms of working experience, civil servants whose working experience ranged between 1-10 years, 11-20 years and 21-30 years in service represented 62.34 per cent, 31.50 per cent and 6.16 per cent respectively. The educational qualifications of those interviewed were not quite encouraging as most of them (67.86 per cent) had below First Degree while the rest (32.14 per cent) had University Degree and above. More than 60 per cent of the civil servants in the Cross River State Public Service are married while only 33.10 per cent are not married (singles).

Table 1: Socio - economic Characteristics of Civil Servants in Cross River State

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
1) Age (Years):		
a) 21 - 25	34	11.00
b) 26 - 30	114	37.00
c) 31 - 35	80	26.00
d) 36 - 40	43	14.00
e) 41 and above	37	12.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>100</b>
2) Gender:		
a) Male	192	62.30
b) Female	116	37.70
<b>Total</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>100</b>
3) Working Experience (years):		
a) 1 - 10	192	62.34
b) 11 - 20	97	31.50
c) 21 - 30	19	6.16
d) 31 - 35	-	-
e) 36 and above	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>100</b>
4) Marital Status		
a) Married	199	64.60
b) Single	102	33.10
c) Divorced	6	1.90
d) Widowed	1	0.32
<b>Total</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>100</b>
5) Educational Qualification:		
a) First Degree	209	67.86
b) First Degree and above	99	32.14

Source: Field Survey

The result of the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis revealed that rationalization significantly and negatively correlated with workers' morale  $r = -0.24$ ;  $r - \text{critical} = 0.11$ ) at 5 percent level of probability (Table 2).

Table 2: Person's Correlation Analysis Showing Rationalization in the Public Service Versus Workers' Morale; Workers' Productivity; and between effective Communication and Workers' Morale in the Cross River State Civil Service.

	Variables	$\Sigma X$ $\Sigma y$	$\Sigma X^2$ $\Sigma Y^2$	$\Sigma XY$	rx <sub>y</sub>
a)	Rationalization (X)	3615	45461		
	Workers' Morale (Y)	3087	32635	36773	-0.24
b)	Rationalization (X)	3615	45461		
	Workers' Productivity (Y)	4358	63128	49992	-0.54*
	Effective Communication (X)	3055	1985		
c)	Workers' Morale (Y)	3087	32635	26002	0.37*

\* P < 0.05; df = 306; critical r = 0.11

This suggests that rationalization of workers exerts influence on civil servants' morale. The survey also posits that rationalization in public service significantly and negatively correlation with workers' productivity drive ( $r = -0.54$ ;  $r_{\text{critical}} = 0.11$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ) (Table 2). These results show that the higher the perceived threat of rationalization from the public service, the lower the workers' morale and productivity. These findings lend credence to Ivancevich (1985) assertion that job stress resulting from rationalization or a mere thought of it negatively affects individual workers' morale and productivity. Work stress is detrimental to workers effective performance and often times, it makes them to be apathetic. It affects their work habit. This lack of commitment on the job, however, leads to low productivity as reported by Cohen (1986).

The result further shows that there is a significant positive relationship between communication and workers' morale as reflected by  $r$  value of 0.37 against  $r_{\text{critical}}$  value 0.11 using 5 percent level of significance (Table 2). The result of this survey is consistent with earlier findings that effective communication increases workers' morale (Etuk, 1981; Baird, 1977; Mamoria, 1993). This implies that if there is an open two-way communication channel existing in the various establishments/ministries, rationalization policy would be adequately communicated to reduce grey areas and avoid unnecessary misapplication of the policy.

Table 3 shows that job security has significant positive correlation with workers' morale ( $r = 0.35$ ;  $r_{\text{critical}} = 0.11$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ). This implies that the higher the level of job security of tenure of personnel, the higher the workers' morale. This finding, however, lend credence to the work of Henderson (1979), Ali (1990) who have concluded that instability of tenure causes lowering of morale of employee. In view of the importance of job security in organization, it would become imperative for government to give serious attention to workers' job security among other things.

**Table 3: Person's Product Moment Correlational Analysis Showing Relationship between Job Security and Workers Morale among Civil Servants in Cross River State**

Variables	$\Sigma X$	$\Sigma X^2$	$\Sigma XY$	$r_{xy}$
	$\Sigma y$	$\Sigma y^2$		
a) Job Security (X)	2447	20847		
Workers' Morale (Y)	3087	32635	24879	-0.35*

\*  $P < 0.05$ ;  $df = 306$ ; critical  $r = 0.11$

Moreso, Table 4 indicates that there is a significant difference between management and workers' morale perception of effect of rationalization on workers' morale ( $r = 0.25$ ,  $r$  critical = 0.11). This implies that management perception of effect of rationalization on workers' morale was significantly high compared to that of ordinary workers. This result strongly affirms management's view that retrenchment of workers invariably leads to reduction of government expenditure on salary and allowance and that it is a cost-saving measure (Abdulharam, 1985). Contrary to management's view, workers' view rationalization as not only obscure, but that it is difficult to identify with such policy option. Besides, management sees rationalization as offering the best in terms of eliciting discipline and commitment to duty from the workers; while workers see it as subjecting them to variety of insecurity with constant reminder of many unemployed, ready to take their place if they fail to work harder or more (Abdulrahman, 1985). Table 4 further indicates that perception of rationalization by management negatively and insignificantly correlated with workers' productivity ( $r = -0.14$ ;  $r$  critical = 0.34,  $P > 0.05$ ) (Table 4).

**Table 3: Person's Product Moment Correlational Analysis Showing Relationship between Job Security and Workers Morale among Civil Servants in Cross River State**

Variables	$\Sigma X$	$\Sigma X^2$	$\Sigma XY$	$r_{xy}$
	$\Sigma y$	$\Sigma y^2$		
a) Perception of Rationalization by Management (X)	537	9843		
Workers' Morale (X)	587	11563	10541	-0.25*
Workers' Productivity (Y)	615	12817	10977	-0.14*

\*  $P < 0.05$ ;  $df = 28$ ; critical  $r = 0.34$

However, Ivancevich (1985) sees the policy of rationalization as a device on the part of management to run away from providing welfare to civil servants. This overt threat in turn puts additional pressure on workers to devote more energy to work as they are to combine the performance of their jobs and those of other retrenched staff. Thus, rationalization in public service in the face of the prevailing economic problems is inimical to the system and nation building as reported by Abdulrahman (1985), Voos (1987), Miller and Monge (1986) and Fernie and David (1995).

The results of the survey also revealed succinctly that there is a significant difference between management and workers' perception on the effects of rationalization ( $t$  cal = 11.20;  $t$  critical = 1.96) on morale ( $t$  cal = 28.94;  $t$  critical = 1.96) and productivity ( $t$  cal = 12.45;  $t$  critical = 1.96) using 5 percent level of significance (Table 5). The results of the independent  $t$  test analysis show that there is a

significant difference between management and worker's perception of the effect of rationalization on workers' morale and productivity. This implies that management have a higher mean perception of the hazards of rationalization on workers' morale and productivity than the ordinary workers.

### **Conclusion**

This study examined rationalization in Nigerian public service and its effect on workers' morale and productivity, using the Cross River State Civil Service as a case study. The survey was conducted in the state's Headquarters, Calabar, with data derived from Ministries, Boards and Corporations using structured questionnaire. Rationalization is a structural reform for the interest of executing government's policy. The study observed that rationalization in the public service is not a panacea for raising standards in the face of the unemployment situation that is being experienced in the country and in Cross River State in particular. In addition to causing job stress, rationalization policy makes workers to be apathetic. This kills job interest and hence productivity.

### **Recommendations**

The findings of this study have obvious implications for the civil service organization in general, public service administration and public policy planners in particular. Based on this, the following recommendations are made:

- Rationalization policy and other such policies that seek to elicit workers' cooperation and compliance through threat should be seriously discouraged. Rather, other more positive forms of motivation based on human relations should be promoted.
- It is also recommended that instead of the policy of rationalization, emphasis should be placed in staff training, rewards for hard work and creating conducive working conditions for the public service not only in the area under study but in the nation in general. Hence, there is the need for legislation for the execution of policy of rationalization to avoid reckless and erratic process. In effect, due process should be followed in executing this policy.

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