

## Application of Work Ethics and Performance of Public Service in Southeast, Nigeria

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**Abstract.** Governments across the world adopt work ethics to promote efficiency and effectiveness in the performance of public service. This is expected to meet the needs and aspiration of the populace. Some states in Southeast Nigeria, particularly Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo public services though have ethical conduct stipulated in public service rules, ironically, application of the work ethics have not resulted to the expected performance of service delivery. The study adopted Descriptive research design. The population was the public service in Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo state, Nigeria. The three states were purposively selected with numerical population of 51,102. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select three MDAs (Ministry of Works and Infrastructure/Transport, Civil Service Commission and Water Corporation). The sample size was 786. Questionnaire was the major instrument of data collection complemented by interview guide. Reliability test of the instrument yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the construct ranging from 0.77 to 0.82. The response rate was 87%. Data collected were tabulated, while mean as well as standard deviation were calculated and content analysed. Findings revealed that Public service in the three states were bedevilled with corrupt practices, inadequate funding, lack of regular on the job training, and uncondusive political environment. Therefore, performance of public service were short of expectation. The study recommended adequate punitive mechanism to sanction any misconduct, adequate funding, regular training and development, political will to implement governmental policy.

**Keywords:** Work Ethics, Public Service, Performance, Code of Conduct, Southeast

### 1. Introduction

Work ethics across the globe are meant to ensure integrity, commitment and financial management in the public service and by extension promote service delivery in governance. It is therefore established that in civic culture, public service is guided by rules and norms which is referred to as code of ethics becomes the standard at which professionalism is evaluated. Examples of these codes of ethics are neutrality, transparency, integrity, loyalty, efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery (Abdullahi, 2013).

Ironically, in practical terms, this is far from expectation as Nigerian public service is characterized with unethical conducts such as negligence, financial mismanagement, partiality in recruitment and promotion, extortion among others. As such, the public service in Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States are bedevilled by unprofessional and unethical practices. Accordingly, a good number of public servants in these states can be said not to be disciplined, professional, efficient and effective in the exercise to their duties, therefore, corruption, wanton waste of public resources, nepotism, favouritism, deplorable state of public utilities is prevalent in the public service (Ikenyibe and Ibietan, 2018; The Destination, 2016). However different control measures have been put in place over the years to solve the problem and guide the conduct of public service in these states, these are obtainable in the Fifth Schedule of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria as amended, Civil Service Rules, Guidelines for Appointment, Promotion and Disciplinary Issues by the Civil Service Commission of the States under investigation, the Code of Conduct Bureau among others. With the available measures in place, unfortunately these unethical conducts persist. It then seems non-enforcement on the part of the public servants is the major problem.

More worrisome is that it has taken different dimensions such as institutionalization of corrupt practices, absenteeism, collusion, deliberate deception, gratification for services render, unlawful conduct and sale of information or espionage (Adebayo, 2014). These has affected service delivery immensely in Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states, Nigeria. As a result, there are practically no good road networks in the selected south-eastern states and the dilapidated roads have become death traps and recorded many casualties. According to Nigeria Data Portal (2017), Ebonyi State recorded 93, Enugu state 186 and Imo State 279 accidents in the second quarter of 2017. Amaechi (2018) observed that majority of these accidents were as a result of bad road. More so, inadequate pipe borne waters, deficiency in housing among others have become the order of the day.

It is the expectation of this study to proffer solutions to the identified challenges to reduce the number of casualties on roads, provide adequate water, housing etc. the study adopted a mixed method to data gathering, unlike previous studies that used only quantitative research method. The method adopted offered a robust response rate that gave more significant solutions on the study investigated. It is on this premise that the study submitted and the recommendations proffered will solve unethical behaviours in Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states and promote service delivery in public service. The objectives of the paper are to:

- Examine the performance of public service in Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States from 2011-2019.
- Identify the obstacles to the application of ethical conducts in Southeast public service between 2011-2019
- Discover policy actions that can boost public service delivery through proper application of work ethics by public servants in Southeast Nigeria from 2011 to 2019

## 2. Ethics in Public Service

Ethics is a philosophical concept, derived from both Greek “cultural ethos” and Latin “social mores” respectively. It signifies customary values and rules of conduct, (Beauchamp & Childress, 2008; Ebutu & Beredugo 2015). Ethics as a custom deal with rightness and wrongness of an action relating to human conduct that is, the reasons why certain actions are morally right and acceptable or morally wrong and unacceptable. Thus the fundamental basis of ethics according to Agi (2017) is morality; ethics are moral rules or principles of noble behavior

governing the conduct of individual or society for deciding what is right and wrong.

In public administration, particularly within the scope of the public service, ethics pertains mainly to the normative values underneath courtesy, loyalty, integrity, respect, confidentiality, neutrality, discipline and accountability while the administration and management of ethical values for public service uphold the tenets of efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity (Beetseh & Kohol 2014). Apparently, Organization for Economic-Cooperation and Development stressed that in public administration work ethics should be perceived as an activity, not just a way of instituting rules to be kept in offices; rather should be an unremitting administration process that enhances the functioning and development of government activity. (OECD, 2015).

In the work of Annas (2011); Victor (2014); Ebutu and Beredugo, (2015) ethics in public service emphasized public officer’s duty as a public steward. It serves as ethical reasoning and considerations for decisions and actions taken during the completion of duties when working to provide general organization services. In view of this, Teklay (2016) explained that public service ethics originates from ethics infrastructure (ethical standard, legal regulation and institutional reform) with each part serves as a source of public sector ethics and each source range from the private character of an individual public servant, agency-internal regulation and culture, and national legislation; hence ethic formation of public servant is when the three sources work together in the same way. Ethics imbedded in an ideal of public servants responsibilities implies the ability to accept the consequence of an action. Adebayo, (2014) observed some unethical behaviours among the civil servants which include; gratification for service rendered, deception, espionage, unlawful Conduct.

## 3. Evolution of Public Service in Southeast Nigeria

### 3.1 Ebonyi State

Ebonyi state public service is a replica of public service of the country which is not entirely different from the national public service. Ebonyi state public service was created on 23rd July 1996. The State is one of the newest and youngest states created in Nigeria. Before now the state had existed in two different states, the southern part in Abia State, the northern region and the central in Enugu State. The operation of public servant has been going on before a unified public service operation in Ebonyi State

was inaugurated with the appointment of a Seven-Man Public Service Commission, with Chief Cletus Nwezza as the pioneer chairman. Ebonyi State public service was characterized as at then as follows: claims of ranks and offices by some returnees, unorganized system, staff transfer unilaterally transferred from specific ministry to other agencies where they were before their disengagement to departments, so also to government house and others to the state university college.

To coordinate the public service to be more efficient and effective necessitated the then military administrator, CP Simon Oduoye, in 1997 to set up a six-man committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Agom Eze to harmonize and restructure the public service. The committee terms of reference were sketched out; to examine the nature of Ebonyi public service and come out with a proposal on how to make it virile, effective and productive. The committee was also mandated to study the various promotions and appointment of civil servants and to establish its conformity with the laid down procedure of the public service rules and regulations available across the federation.

Ebonyi state consists of sixteen ministries (MDA) with staff strength of 2, 602 public servants (Statistics and Planning Department, Ebonyi Civil Service Commission, 2016). (a) Ministry of Works and Transport, (b) Ministry of Land, Survey and Housing, (c) Ministry of Environment, (d) Ministry of Culture and Tourism, (e) Ministry of Agric and Natural Resources (f) Ministry of Health, (g) Ministry of Education, (h) Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, (i) Ministry of Local Govt. and Chieftaincy Affairs, (j) Ministry of Justice, (k) Ministry of Public Utility, (l) Ministry of Border Security and Conflict Resolution, (m) Ministry of Women Affairs, (n) Ministry of Commerce and Industries, (o) Ministry of Youths and Sports, (p) Ministry of Information and State Orientation, (q) Ministry of Economic Dev. and Poverty Reduction.

### 3.2 Enugu State

The public service of Enugu State started at the beginning of the creation of the state on August 27, 1991. The public service set up was in alignment with the federal public service. By 1917 Enugu acquired township status and presumed strategic significance to British interests with foreign businesses moved into Enugu, the most famous of which were John Holt, Kingsway Store, United Bank of West Africa and United African Company. By

1929, Enugu became the capital of the former Eastern Region and had since then reserved its old status as the regional industrial and business center as well as the political capital and rallying point of the Igbo people. The evolution of Enugu State Civil Service passed through five distinct stages. Enugu has been part of:

- (a) Civil Service oriented towards provincial administration between 1914 and 1946.
- (b) regional Civil Service between 1946 to 1967 when the military took over the reins of government and States were created.
- (c) the East Central State Civil Service from May 1967 to February 1976 when the country, still under military government, was fragmented into 19 State structure.
- (d) the former Anambra State Civil Service, after the formation of State in February 1976.
- (e) the present Enugu State Civil Service after the creation of States in August 1991.

The Enugu State Civil Service consists of Nineteen Ministries, with Staffs Strength of 10, 600 civil servants (Enugu State Civil Service Commission, 2017). These ministries are:

- (a) Ministry of Education, (b) Ministry of Chieftaincy Matters (c) Ministry of Commerce and Industry, (d) Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, (e) Ministry of Environment and Mineral Resources, (f) Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, (g) Ministry of Gender Affairs and Social Development, (h) Ministry of Health, (i) Ministry of Rural Development, (j) Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, (k) Ministry of Justice, (l) Ministry of Lands and Housing, (m) Ministry of Transport, (n) Ministry of Human Development and Poverty Reduction, (o) Ministry of Science and Technology, (p) Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, (q) Ministry of Water Resources, (r) Ministry of Youth and Sports, (s) Ministry of Local Government Matters,

### 3.3 Imo State

The emergence of Imo State public service commenced from the creation of Imo State as one of the seven additional States by the Federal Military Government on February 1976 during General Murtala Muhammed regime. Formerly, the area Imo State was part of the defunct East Central State that was created in 1967. During this period, there was a movement of civil servants from other parts of the defunct East central state (most especially Enugu) to Owerri. The new Imo State Civil Service started with a total of 17,814 civil servants. 13,842 officials were on grade levels 01 to 05, 2,921 were on levels 06-07,

and 1,057 were on levels 08 and above (Government of Imo State, 1991). The civil service in Imo State is structured vertically into ministries and departments, while the horizontal structure is into classes which include administrative, executive, professional, clerical and auxiliary class. In Imo State Civil Service structure, the Head of Service is at the top controls and coordinates the activity of the whole officials (civil servants) in the various ministries and departments. There are eighteen (18) ministries in Imo State with Staffs strength of 17, 900. (Government of Imo State, 1999). Imo state Public service is the highest and largest unit. The approved ministries of Imo state public services are the following:

(a) Ministry of Commerce and Industry, (b) Ministry of Petroleum and Environment, (c) Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, (d) Ministry of Women Affairs, (e) Ministry of Transport and Aviation, (f) Ministry of Education, (g) Ministry of Special Duties, (h) Ministry of Culture and Tourism, (i) Ministry of Public Utilities and Rural Development, (j) Ministry of Economic Planning, (k) Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affair, (l) Ministry of Youth and Sports, (m) Ministry of Agriculture, (n) Ministry of Land and Survey, (o) Ministry of Health, (p) Ministry of Finance, (q) Ministry of Information and Strategy, (s) Ministry of Community Development and Chieftaincy Affairs.

#### 4. Theoretical Framework-Deontology Kant theory

Deontology theory propounded by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), born in Konigsberg in Prussia, Russian. Ethics should provide us with framework principles (rules) that guide and restrict action liberated from personal intentions and desires.

The theory highlights that morality of action should be based on whether that action is right or wrong under rules rather than on the result of an action. It is a morality of principle rather than consequences Kant believes anything that good is based on qualification. He claims that good will comes as a result of respect for moral law because action demands duty to do so. Goodwill is only useful when the person determined to do something because it is that person's duty.

According to Kasher (1978), Kant's anchored the theory on three assumptions:

- Act only according to universal law.
- Act in a way that humans are treated as an end, not as a mean.

#### 6. Data Presentation and Analysis

- Every rational being must act as a member in the universal kingdom of ends.

For public servants, duty is important, they are to serve the public interest and manage public resources based on ethical consideration of their office. Therefore we can say the public service ethics starts with duty. Ethics indicates what should be done; duty means required action by one profession. Hence, duty entails obligations, responsibilities, of meeting expectations based on moral law.

By this, we can say efficiency may not necessarily be the result of good organization or management of activity rather maximum efficiency depends on the level of public servants commitment to duties. If surely public service is well equipped with ethical standards and conducive environment and a good living, there is the tendency of total commitment to the institution he belongs, therefore there will no problem of fulfilling the duties that his office demands.

The first criticism is that Kant deontological theory involves misconception in the sense that it does not hurt incentives, as people voluntarily adhere to universal moral rule. Thus adhere to rules may not necessarily results to disincentives to produce since they are led by agreed moral rule which are not based on their desire.

Despite the fact that moral rules play a major role, not all moral problems can be solve by moral rules due to complexity of humans life which cannot only be limited to set of rights and duties (Anscombe, 1997 cited in Staveren 2014).

#### 5. Methodology

Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was the public service in Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo state, Nigeria. These three states were purposively selected with numerical population of 51,102. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select three MDAs (Ministry of Works and Infrastructure/Transport, Civil Service Commission and Water Corporation). The sample size was 786. Questionnaire was the major instrument of data collection complemented by interview guide. Reliability test of the instrument yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the construct ranging from 0.77 to 0.82. The response rate was 87%. Data collected were tabulated, while mean as well as standard deviation were calculated and content analysed.

**Objective One:** The performance of public service in the selected states from 2011-2019.

**Table 1:** Responses on public service performance

	E Bonyi						Enugu						Imo						ALL	
	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %	Mn/SD	SA %	A %	U ( % )	D %	SD %	Mn./SD	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD (%)	Mn/SD	Mean & SD for the 3 states	
Healthcare services were adequately provided	9 (8)	26(2 3.2)	28 (2 5)	34 (30 .4)	15(1 3.4)	2.7 6/1.28	45 (13.9 )	82 (2 5.3)	27 (8 3)	98 (3 0.2)	72(22 .2)	3.14/ 1.16	74(2 1.1)	99 (2 8.3)	21 (6 )	99 (2 8.3)	57(1 6.3)	3.42 /1.16	3.21/1.20	
Good pipe borne water were adequately supplied	-	34(3 0.4)	7( 6.3)	45 (4 0.2)	26(2 3.2)	2.95 /88	35(1 0.8)	60 (1 8.5)	19 (5 9)	12 (3 38 )	87(26 .7)	3.02/ 1.06	60(1 7.1)	82 (2 3.4)	42 (1 2)	10 (1 28 .9)	65(1 8.6)	3.15 /1.25	3.07/1.13	
Construction and maintenance of roads were done	12 (10.7)	39(3 4.8)	8( 7.1)	38 (3 9)	15(1 3.4)	3.29 /1.06	66(2 0.4)	97 (2 9.9)	28 (8 6)	77 (2 3.8)	56(17 .3)	3.36/ 1.22	78(2 2.3)	60 (1 7.1)	52 (1 4.9)	93 (2 6.6)	67(1 9.1)	3.13 /1.35	3.25/1.126	
Adequate electrification and power supply in the state	-	29 (25.9 )	12 (10.7)	51 (4 5)	20 (17. 9)	2.87 /92	76(2 3.5)	49 (1 1)	58 (1 7.9)	79 (2 4.4)	62(19 .1)	3.07/ 1.41	53(1 5.1)	91 (2 6)	49 (1 4)	11 (0 31 .4)	47(1 3.4)	3.15 /1.24	3.08/1.28	
Public servant retirement packages are provided for	9 (8)	27(2 4.1)	26 (2 3.2)	32 (28 .6)	18(1 6.1)	2.78 /1.27	26(8 )	79 (2 4.4)	27 (8 3)	82 (2 5.3)	110(3 4)	3.02/ 1.11	48(1 3.7)	83 (2 3.7)	48 (1 3.3)	99 (2 8.3)	72(2 0.6)	3.03 /1.24	2.99/1.119	
The public service in this state performed expectedly from 2011 to 2019	11(9 .8)	29(2 5.9)	13 (1 1.6)	47 (4 2)	12(1 0.7)	3.12 /1.10	68(2 1)	79 (2 4.4)	23 (7 1)	11 (2 34 .6)	42(13 )	3.39/ 1.16	57(1 6.3)	11 (7 33 .4)	23 (6 6)	88 (2 5.1)	65(1 8.6)	3.34 /1.14	3.33/1.15	
Overall mean/SD	2.96		SD = 1.08				3.16		SD= 1.18				3.20		SD=1.23					
Grand mean = 3.10										Standard Deviation=1.170										

Source = Field Study, 2019. NB. With 5 point Likert scale  
Decision of mean is ≤ 1.49 = poor, 1.5-2.49= average, 2.5-3.99= good, 4.0-5.0= excellent

Table 1 presents responses on the performance of public service in the states. 53(47.3%) of the respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 3.29 and 160(45.7%) of the respondents in Imo state disagreed that Construction and maintenance of roads were done while 163(50.3%) of the respondents in Enugu State with mean score of 3.36 agreed that Construction and maintenance of roads were done. On the other hand, 59(52.7%) of the respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 3.12 and 154(47.6%) of the respondents in Enugu State with mean score of 3.39 disagreed that the public service in the state performed expectedly from 2011 to 2019 while 174(49.7%) of the respondents in Imo State with a mean score of 3.34 agreed that the public service in this state performed expectedly from 2011 to 2019. Also, 71(63.4%) of the respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 2.29; 210(64.7%) of the respondents in Enugu State with mean score of 3.02 and 166(47.5%) of the respondents Imo State with a mean score of 3.15 disagreed that Good pipe borne water were adequately supplied. Similarly, 71(63.4%) of the respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 2.87; 141(43.5%) of the respondents in Enugu State with mean score of 3.07 and 157(44.8%) of the respondents in Imo State with a mean score of 3.15 disagreed that there is adequate electrification and power supply in the state. In the same vein 50(39.3%) of the respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 2.78; 192(59.3%) of the respondents in Enugu State with mean score of 3.02 and 171(48.9%) of the respondents in Imo state with a mean score of 3.03 disagreed respectively that Public servant retirement packages were provided for between 2011-2019. More so, 49(43.8%) of the respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 2.76; 170(52.4%) of the respondents in Enugu State with mean score of 3.14 disagreed that Healthcare services were adequately provided while 173(49.4%) of the respondents in Imo State with a mean score of 3.42 agreed that Healthcare services were adequately provided.

Table 1 showed responses on the level of performance of public service in the selected states of the south-east. Adjudging from the grand mean of Ebonyi state (mean=2.96), public service has a good performance as the respondents indicated that roads were constructed and maintained (mean=3.29) and that public service in this state performed expectedly from 2011 to 2019 (mean=3.12). Similarly, Enugu state public service performance was good (grand mean=3.16) as the respondents indicated that the public service in this state performed expectedly from 2011 to 2019 (mean=3.39), construction and maintenance of roads were done (mean=3.36) and that health care was adequately provided (mean=3.14). Likewise, Imo state public service performance was also good as the respondents

agreed that healthcare services were adequately provided (mean=3.42) and that generally, the public service in the state performed expectedly from 2011 to 2019 (mean=3.34). Though, all three states performance were good, it can be concluded that Imo state had a better performance (mean=3.20).

**Objective 2:** The Obstacles to the Application of Ethical Conducts in Selected States in Southeast Public Service (2011-2019)

**Table 2:** Obstacles to the Application of Ethical Conducts

	EBONYI						ENUGU						IMO						ALL
	SA (%)	A %	U ( % )	D ( % )	SD (%)	Mn /SD	S A ( % )	A ( % )	U ( % )	D ( % )	SD (%)	Mn./ SD	S A (%)	A ( % )	U ( % )	D ( % )	SD (%)	Mn/ SD	Mean & SD for the 3 states
The working conditions of some of us limited our performances in the public service during 2011-2018	18(6.1)	32(8.6)	20(7.9)	30(11.8)	12(4.7)	3.14	12(4.7)	98(36.8)	24(9.1)	48(18.3)	29(11.1)	3.84	99(37.8)	11(4.3)	22(8.5)	65(25.1)	48(18.3)	3.63	3.65/1.25
Inadequate funding was a challenge to the performance of the public service during 2011-2019	27(10.4)	52(19.6)	13(5.1)	18(7.1)	2(0.8)	3.70	11(4.3)	79(30.5)	7(2.7)	59(22.9)	62(24.1)	3.73	97(37.7)	10(3.9)	31(12.1)	72(28.1)	44(17.1)	3.55	3.65/1.22
The areas of interest of the succeeding state government affected public service delivery during 2011-2018	32(12.3)	30(11.7)	23(9.1)	12(4.7)	15(5.8)	3.29	97(38.1)	88(34.1)	15(5.8)	76(29.4)	48(18.7)	3.63	97(37.7)	12(4.7)	14(5.4)	68(26.5)	51(19.8)	3.67	3.60/1.22
There would have been a better public service delivery in the state if regular on-the-job trainings are organised to better equip us	24(9.2)	36(13.9)	17(6.6)	17(6.6)	18(7.1)	3.29	10(3.9)	77(30.1)	40(15.4)	51(19.8)	48(18.7)	3.51	94(36.9)	11(4.3)	12(4.7)	82(31.7)	49(19.1)	3.65	3.54/1.28
Corruption sometimes makes it difficult for unethical practices to be rooted out through sanctions for defaulting civil servants	30(11.5)	22(8.5)	22(8.5)	18(7.1)	20(7.9)	3.16	81(31.7)	119(46.3)	15(5.8)	78(30.1)	31(12.1)	3.68	86(33.2)	13(5.1)	28(10.8)	67(25.9)	31(12.1)	3.63	3.58/1.20

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

Table 2 reveals that 79(70.5%) of the respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 3.70; 196(60.5%) of the respondents in Enugu State with mean score of 3.73 and 203(58%) of the respondents in Imo State with a mean score of 3.55 agreed respectively that Inadequate funding was a challenge to the performance of the public service during 2011-2019. Similarly, 62(55.4%) of the respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 3.29; 185(57.1%) of the respondents in Enugu State with mean score of 3.63 and 217(62%) of the respondents in Imo State with a mean score of 3.67 agreed that the areas of interest of the succeeding state government affected public service delivery during 2011-2018. In the same vein, 60(53.5%) of the respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 3.29; 159(57.1%) of the respondents in Enugu State with mean score of 3.51 and 207(59.2%) of the respondents in Imo State with a mean score of 3.65 agreed that there would have been a better public service delivery in the state if regular on-the-job trainings are organised to better equip them. Similarly, 52(46.4%) of the respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 3.16; 200(61.7%) of the respondents in Enugu State with mean score of 3.68 and 224(64%) of the respondents in Imo State with a mean score of 3.63 agreed that Corruption sometimes makes it difficult for unethical practices to be rooted out through sanctions for defaulting civil servants. In addition, 50(44.7%) of the respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 3.14; 223(68.8%) of the respondents in Enugu State with mean score of 3.84 and 215(61.4%) of the respondents in Imo state with a mean score of 3.63 agreed that the working conditions of some of the public servants limited the performances in the public service between 2011-2019.

Result in table 2 reveals the impediments to the application of ethical conducts in the selected performance of the public service from 2011-2019 in Ebonyi state (mean=3.70), next is the area of interest of the succeeding state governments affected public service delivery from 2011-2019 (mean=3.29), however, there would have been a better public service delivery in the state if regular on-the-job trainings were organized to better equip them

(mean=3.29). In Enugu state, the working conditions limited the performances in the public service from 2011-2019 (mean=3.84). Also, inadequate funding was a challenge to the performance of the public service during 2011-2019 in Enugu state; corruption sometimes makes it difficult for unethical practices to be rooted out through sanctions for defaulting civil servants (mean=3.68). Similarly, in Imo state, areas of interest of the succeeding state government affected public service delivery during 2011-2018 (mean=3.67); the working conditions of some of them limited their performances in the public service during 2011-2018 (mean=3.63), however, there would have been a better public service delivery in the state if regular on-the-job trainings are organized to better equip the public servants (mean=3.65).

**Objective 3:** Discover Policy Actions that can Boost Public Service Delivery through Proper Application of Work Ethics by Public Servants in Southeast Nigeria from 2011 to 2019

**Table 3:** Policy Actions that Boost Public Service

	EBONYI						ENUGU						IMO						ALL
	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mn./SD	S (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mn./SD	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mn./SD	Mean & SD for the 3 states
The public relations offices of our organisation need to be better equipped for greater functioning	37(33)	29(25.9)	3(2.7)	20(17.9)	23(20.5)	3.66/1.21	15(13.4)	110(94.9)	24(20.8)	28(23.6)	18(15.5)	4.16/1.12	127(108.3)	14(12.1)	64(55.3)	11(9.5)	-	3.78/1.41	3.92/1.28
Reported cases of unethical behaviour of public servants should be handled with utmost seriousness in our organization	39(48.8)	42(37.5)	4(3.6)	10(8.9)	17(15.2)	3.85/1.16	76(66.4)	162(140.5)	23(20.1)	45(39.1)	26(22.8)	3.77/1.08	96(82.4)	14(12.3)	40(34.7)	43(37.3)	23(20.1)	3.68/1.26	3.74/1.17
Anti-corruption mechanisms need to be put in place to reduce or eliminate corruption within our organization	46(41.1)	49(43.8)	6(5.4)	10(8.9)	1(0.9)	4.14/1.00	13(11.4)	121(104.7)	10(8.7)	31(27.3)	12(10.5)	4.07/1.05	108(92.8)	15(13.1)	22(19.3)	46(40.1)	15(13.1)	3.90/1.08	4.01/1.06
There should be constant evaluation of our activities by the state government and the public for necessary actions	38(33.9)	46(41.1)	10(8.9)	12(10.7)	6(5.4)	3.86/1.20	98(85.2)	157(136.6)	8(7.0)	49(42.8)	-	4.00/1.90	92(79.3)	16(14.1)	32(28.1)	48(41.9)	10(8.7)	3.79/1.14	3.89/1.06
The changing political administrations need to ensure continuity of initiatives to ensure the sustenance of existing public service projects	35(31.3)	58(51.8)	-	10(8.9)	9(8.0)	4.06/1.85	12(10.6)	162(141.7)	9(7.9)	23(20.1)	-	4.12/1.97	114(98.3)	17(15.1)	15(13.3)	34(29.7)	8(7.0)	4.05/1.94	4.08/1.94
Provision for training and workshops on integrity of the public servants	17(15.2)	28(25.0)	9(8.0)	32(28.6)	26(23.2)	3.16/1.18	13(11.4)	145(126.7)	58(50.9)	9(7.8)	-	4.10/1.15	120(103.7)	13(11.4)	30(26.7)	47(41.4)	15(13.3)	3.87/1.18	3.86/1.21

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

Table 3 reveals that 95(84.9%) of the respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 4.14; 257(79.3%) of the respondents in Enugu State with a mean score of 4.07 and 267(76.3%) of the respondents in Imo State with a mean score of 3.90 agreed that Anti-corruption mechanisms need to be put in place to reduce or eliminate corruption within the public service. Similarly, 93(83.1%) of the respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 4.06; 282(87%) of the respondents in Enugu State with mean score of 4.12 and 293(83.7%) of the respondents in Imo state with a mean score of 4.05 unanimously agreed that the changing political administrations need to ensure

continuity of initiatives to be able to sustain the existing public service projects. More so, 84(75%) of the respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 3.66; 255(72%) of the respondents in Enugu State with mean score of 4.00 and 260(74.3%) of the respondents in Imo State with a mean score of 3.78 agreed that there should be constant evaluation of activities by the State government and the public for necessary actions. Again, 81(72.3%) of the respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 3.85; 238(73.5%) of the respondents in Enugu State with mean score of 3.77 and 244(69.7%) of the respondents in Imo State with a mean score of

3.68 agreed that reported cases of unethical behaviour of public servants should be handled with utmost seriousness in the public service. Similarly, 66(58.9%) of the respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 3.85; 267(83.1%) of the respondents in Enugu State with mean score of 4.16 and 275(78.6%) of the respondents in Imo State with a mean score of 3.68 agreed that the public relations offices in the MDAs need to be better equipped for greater functioning. In the same vein, 283(87.4%) of the respondents in Enugu State with mean score of 4.10 and 258(73.7%) of the respondents in Imo State with a mean score of 3.87 agreed with that there were provision for training and workshops on integrity of the public servants while 58(36.6%) of the respondents in Ebonyi State, with a mean score of 3.16; disagreed that provision for training and workshops on integrity of the public servants were constantly held in the years under investigation.

Table 3 displays policy actions that can boost public service in the selected states of the south east, Nigeria. In Ebonyi state, respondents suggest anti-corruption mechanisms need to be strengthened to reduce or eliminate corruption (mean=4.14) and that changing political administrations need to ensure continuity of initiatives to ensure the sustenance of existing public service projects (mean=4.06), then there should be constant evaluation of activities in the public service by the state government and the public for necessary actions for productivity (mean=3.86). Respondents from Enugu state suggest that the public relations offices need to be better equipped for greater functioning (mean=4.16); the changing political administrations need to ensure continuity of initiatives to ensure the sustenance of existing public service projects (mean=4.12) and that provision for training and workshops on integrity of the public servants should be made (mean=4.10). In the same vein, respondents from Imo state advocated that succeeding political administrations need to ensure continuity of good initiatives by previous administration to ensure the sustenance of existing public service projects (mean=4.05), and that anti-corruption mechanisms need to be strengthened to reduce or eliminate corruption (mean=3.90). Also, there should be consistent and regular provision for training and workshops on integrity of the public servants (mean=3.87). If these are adhered to, public serve in the selected states would improve through the application of work ethics.

## 7. Discussion of findings

**Objective 1: Examine the performance of public service in selected states from 2011-2019.**

Regarding the performance of the public service, Table 1 revealed that respondents from Ebonyi with average mean score of 2.76 and Enugu with average mean score of 3.14 disagreed while respondents from Imo State with average mean score of 3.42 agreed that Healthcare services were adequately provided. On provision of pipe borne water, majority of the respondent from Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states disagreed that good pipe borne water were adequately supplied. On construction and maintenance of road, majority of the respondents from Ebonyi and Enugu disagreed while respondents from Imo State agreed that construction and maintenance of roads were done. Similarly, majority of the respondent from Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states with total mean score 3.08 disagreed that there is adequate electrification and power supply in the state. On the issue of retirement packages respondents from Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states disagreed respectively that Public servant retirement packages were provided in the years under investigation. On the other hand, respondents from Ebonyi State and from Enugu State disagreed that the public service in this state performed expectedly while respondents in Imo State agreed that the public service in this state performed expectedly from 2011 to 2019.

On the level of performance of public service in the selected states of the south-east, grand mean is (3.11, SD=1.170), the overall performance of public service in the selected states is good. Though, all three states performance were good, it can be concluded that Imo state had a better performance (mean=3.20). This finding contradict Anazodo, Chukwuemeka, and Okoye (2012) who observed that in spite of various organizational and structural changes before and after independence the quality of service provided to the citizenry has not improved either has there emerged a result-oriented public service in Nigeria.

In an interview with the directors of units, most especially at the ministry of works and infrastructure, the performance of public service in the states has improved within the period of study. Although some service delivery are better actualized in some areas than others within the states. Construction of new school building, renovation of old schools and hospital buildings were more visible in the cities. Many roads has been constructed and rehabilitation is ongoing, many has been flagged off by the governors between the period of study, (2011-2019) such as 8.8km road constructed at Isi-Uzo L.G.A, area of Ogbaku community Local government. 380.7km of rural roads were awarded in onuimo, isu and mbaitoli area of Enugu state. 81 kilometer roads in Abakaliki local government, 178km ring road in Ebonyi state

and many in rural areas has been rehabilitated. But there are still more to be done both in the city and in the rural areas. Due to bad road, many of the rural areas cannot transport their farm products to the city and this has resulted to high cost of transportation, the cost of food especially during raining seasons is high as a result of high cost of transportation in these states.

Interview with the public shows that performance of public service has improved during the period of study but it was discovered that some of the roads constructed lack quality while many rural areas are totally neglected. Also, the involvement and assistance received from the government differs from each other in the years under review. It was observed that number of hours patients spent in the government hospital has reduced, while others said that they still do not have adequate number of doctors that attend to patients. It was discovered that in the cities, government hospitals were renovated and old beds were replaced. They poorly equipped and lack international standard of medical facilities which led citizen to travel abroad for medical care. In some rural areas, lack of medical facilities, medical personnel, insufficient drugs for patients, dilapidation of hospitals buildings were major challenges. Evidences of declining performances of public service were identified to include inconsistency in electricity supplied, leakage of pipe borne water, insecurity; kidnapping increasing rate of defective roads, dilapidated school and hospital building most especially in the rural areas. Some admitted that government input are not enough compared to the expected standard.

In an interview with the director of units in Water corporation in the states revealed that the level of integration were not satisfactory, and there are so many challenges that faced the corporation, such as shortage of equipments, lack of funds to replace the damaged pipes, chemical for water treatment, lack of welfare packages for workers, uncooperative attitude from the consumer, low return in revenue collection, lack of motivation, loss of revenue, pipe rusting and damaging, salaries irregularity which resulted to low labour productivity and inadequate security to protect vandalism. It was discovered that the states lack good pipe borne water, many of the houses depend on pole holes and water from the well, and rivers. The water produced was unable to serves up to 60% of the population.

There were complaints of damaged pipes, pipes leakages leading to wastages. It was discovered that the water supplied is just once or twice in a week,

most times during the raining season the water are not suitable for drinking because of infiltration of erosion. Power supply are not frequent in the states, damaged transformer were not replaced or repaired which often led blackout for days if not for weeks, evidence of transformer been placed in some areas but not yet restored. For instance, a 10 unit 200KVA generator for street light that has was not restored in Enugu State as at the time of this research. Electrification has become problematic in the states, many depend on mobile generator for businesses and very disgusting are the sound of these generator that has led to environmental pollution.

The findings corroborated the view of Ezeibe and Iwuoha, (2011) that ineffectiveness of service delivery in Nigeria is as a result of ethical failure and lack of professionalism of the civil servants which has greatly affected every aspect of Nigeria economics and life. Lack of moral standard has occasioned poor educational system, the decline in the health sector, prevailing culture of voraciousness, lack of discipline and corruption in public service.

**Objective 2: Identify the obstacles to the application of ethical conducts in selected states in Southeast public service between 2011-2019**

Table 2 reveals that respondents from the three states with average mean score 3.65 agreed respectively that inadequate funding was a challenge to the performance of the public service during 2011-2019. This findings corroborates with World Bank (2010) view, that low efficiency of budget expenditure and inadequate funding is the problem facing Nigeria's public sector, which can be identified by the poor state of the services – health, education, roads, electricity, among others.

Similarly, respondents from the three states with average mean score 3.60 agreed that the areas of interest of the succeeding state government affected public service delivery during 2011-2019. This is in line with Kwaghga (2010) affirm this finding when he said that the efficiency of the public service mainly determines government effectiveness and productivity, therefore he discovered that in Nigeria, there is much emphasis placed on inputs and less on outputs and the quality of spending; these yield poor outcomes in public expenditure with limited impact on economic and social conditions.

In the same vein, 60(53.5%) of the respondents in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 3.29; 159(57.1%) of the respondents in Enugu State with mean score of 3.51 and 207(59.2%) of the respondents in Imo State

with a mean score of 3.65 agreed that there would have been a better public service delivery in the state if regular on-the-job trainings are organised to better equip public servants. This may be as a result of lack of fund for training or the administrator do not realized the important of training to the growth and achievement of the organization. This finding align to existing literature such as OECD (2014) where it was emphasized that one of the instruments for building integrity and ensure good public governance is through training of public officials.

Again, respondents from Ebonyi State with a mean score of 3.16; respondents from Enugu State with mean score of 3.68 and respondents from Imo State with a mean score of 3.63 agreed that Corruption sometimes makes it difficult for unethical practices to be rooted out through sanctions for defaulting civil servants. This finding corroborates Omitola (2012) when she stated that High level and endemic corruption therefore became a common practice within Nigeria's Public Service, thereby hindering almost all types of development that could accrue to Nigeria. The foregoing condition made it impossible for Nigeria's Public Service to be able to properly direct its aspiration and goals towards improving citizen welfare packages from 1960 to the Fourth Republic. The finding also supported the view of Dahida and Akangbe (2013:10), when it was discovered that the existence of structurally weak unethical control mechanism has led to variety of loopholes that sustain corrupt practices in Nigeria public service.

In addition, on the basis of working condition, respondents from Ebonyi State with a mean score of 3.14, Enugu State with mean score of 3.84 and from Imo state with a mean score of 3.63 agreed that the working conditions of some of them limited their performances in the public service during 2011-2019. This finding confirms Arowolo (2012) who emphasizes ways to enhance public service performance which include: provision of essential facilities to carry out their activities, favourable work environment for enhance performance, capacity building to increase employee attitude to work in form of training, job opportunity and motivation; Informal Team building through interaction and performance appraisal in form of evaluation and rewards of performance.

**Objective 3: Discover policy actions that can boost public service delivery through proper application of work ethics by public servants in Southeast Nigeria from 2011 to 2019**

Analysis in Table 3 reveals that majority of the respondents from Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States agreed that Anti-corruption mechanisms need to be put in place to reduce or eliminate corruption within their organisation. In a similar way, the changing political administrations need to ensure continuity of initiatives to ensure the sustenance of existing public service project. Again there should be constant evaluation of their activities by the state government and the public for necessary actions. The public relations offices of their organisation need to be better equipped for greater functioning, also there must be provision for training and workshops on integrity of the public servants and lastly reported cases of unethical behaviour of public servants should be handled with utmost seriousness in their organisation. The findings are in consistent with Agba, Ochimana and Abubakar (2013) where he stated that investigated public service ethics and the fight against corruption in Nigeria: it was revealed that ethics and anti-corruption campaign have become an essential part of the Nigerian public service and governance but with little success, and large indications of disappointment based on rising of unethical attitude to work, insecurity of lives, embezzlement of public funds which undermined the sustainable development in the country. Oyende, and Omisore (2015) stressed that ethical behaviours must be rewarded, unethical practices must be reported to the management, most importantly, ethical practices must be part of administrators to follow and above all workers must ensure compliance with the ethical standard by action and disrespect widely societal standards that impose injury on others. Proper procedures and sanctions to deal with misconduct, mechanisms for detecting and investigating any act of malpractices are necessary. There is the need for monitoring, reporting, investigating any breach of public service rules, appropriate sanctions to serve as deterrent serves as measures to enhance ethical conducts among public servants.

Ethical matters are crucial in the development of a country; there are different measures put in place by the Nigeria government to overcome ethical problems. The establishment of institutions/agencies to curb unethical behaviours and re-orientation programs to enforce moral standards are some of the measures. These Institutions includes; Special Fraud Unit of Nigeria; War Against Indiscipline/Corruption; Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC); Police Force; Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) Code of Public Complaints Commission (Nigeria's Ombudsman Institution); Conduct Tribunal (CCT); Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligent Unit (BMPIU) known as "Due

Process Mechanism” and Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC).

In an interview with the MDAs, respondents mentioned issues such as training of the public servants about ethical implications of their work, motivating the public servant through payment of salaries and allowance at due time, there is need for adequate resources and infrastructure to carry out duties as expected. Many of the respondents mention sanction and discipline of public servant that do not adhere to the ethical standard of the public servants to serves as a deterrent to others. Responses from the public revealed that public servants need thorough supervisions, monitoring, and discipline. The public service need to be restructured for easy of supervision. Some said that there must be financial disclosure by the member of the senior staff in order to caution them from wealth accumulation. It was also suggested that there is also need for consistent payment of salaries and allowance of the public servants to reduce fraud and greed among them.

Responses from the MDAs highlighted actions such as strict adherence to policy and procedure of the organization through training of public servant roles for public. Policies such as Anti-corruption agencies to arrest and discipline any of the public servants engage in accumulation of wealth at the detriment of public funds and evaluation of performance through performance appraisals.

Responses from the public suggested that there is need for more action of anti-corruption agencies to discipline any public officers that go against the ethical standard of the institution. The government must make it compulsory for any public servant to pass through public administration courses at higher learning to ensure that qualify public servants are produced in all public institution. The code of conduct bureau must make sure that public servants abide with rules and regulations and whosoever is found guilty must be dismissed or sacked. The tradition of godfathers influence to the position of public organization should be eradicated which are ways that lead to self-interest at the detriment of organizational goals and objective.

## 8. Findings and Conclusion

Finding showed that the performance of public service in these states has improved in the area of constructions and maintenance of roads and Healthcare services, but not too encouraging in the area of good pipe borne water, electrification and power supply, Public servant retirement packages.

This implied that performances of public servants are better in one area than the other. According to those interviewed, the public were not satisfied with the public service delivery in the states, there has been an improvement in the public service performance but not yet up to the expected standard.

The study discovered that challenges such as corruption, inadequate funding, lack of regular on job trainings, unconducive political and policy environment that does not give room to proper adhere to ethical issues, delay in salary payment the effectiveness of code of ethics depends on the extent to which administrators support them with sanction and rewards, it was discovered that majority of the respondents in southeast were not encourage to live up to ethical conduct of their profession just because an unethical attitude of the administrators, in essence, there were no proper procedures to deal with misconduct through equivalent sanction since the administrators were corrupt.

The study showed that respondents in the states acknowledged the followings policies to boost public service delivery through proper ethical practices: anti-corruption mechanisms must be strengthened to reduce or eliminate corruption, changing political administrations need to ensure continuity of initiatives to ensure the sustenance of existing public service projects, then there should be constant evaluation of activities by the state government and the public for necessary actions, provision for training and workshops on integrity of the public servants and reported cases of unethical behaviour of public servants should be handled with utmost seriousness in our organisation, finally the public relations offices of their organisation need to be better equipped for greater functioning.

## 9. Recommendations

To be able to manage public servants conduct, there is a need to have overall national integrity strategy which comprises of sound human resource management practices, and comprehensive disclosure procedures. There is need to have integrity policy or corruption policies and also coordinating strategies in place to manage and control public servants' behaviours with effective enforcement procedures. Minimum standard must be employed by the government to penalize violations of ethical standard and to serve as a warning for other intending related actions. The conducts of public servants must be guided, and prompt response needed to be taken when misconduct or failure of compliance is noted.

There is a need to improve productivity; adequate accountability mechanism must be in place within the public service. Efficiency in service delivery demands that public servants should be accountable to the public for all their actions. It means total compliance to rules and ethical standards as to achieve stated objectives with adequate controls and provision for flexible management.

The government of the three states must put in place mechanisms to sanction and deal with misconduct. Such mechanisms must investigate and detect any act of malpractices. The need to monitor, report, investigate any breach of public service rules, appropriate sanctions to serve as deterrent will serve as measures to enhance ethical conducts among public servants.

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