



Anger Management and Public Service Delivery in Nigeria: An Exploratory Approach

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Abstract. This study explores anger management and public service delivery in Nigeria. The paper viewed public service delivery as a critical determinant of a nation's social contract which has direct influence on citizens' quality of life and the level of public trust in government institutions. The objective is to determine the relationship between anger management and provision of public sector services in Nigeria, investigate the causes of anger among public servants in Nigeria and to identify and propose evidence-based strategies for the effective management and constructive channelling of anger within the Nigerian public sector. The study employs qualitative research approach utilizing a descriptive and analytical historical methodology. The study is anchored on Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT), augmented by insights from Attribution Theory and the Social Exchange Theory (SET). The study identified; cruel administration, incompetence and inefficiency, corruption and extortion, reaction to self-failure, lack of accountability and impunity among others as causes of anger in public service. While the effect of anger on public service delivery include; erosion of trust, decreased citizen participation, possibility of societal discontent and reform obstacle. The study recommended enhance communication, improve service quality promoting trust and emotional support as effective ways to management anger in the service.

Keywords: Accountability, Cruel Administration, Public Service, Public Trust, and Service Delivery.

1. Introduction

The efficacy of public sector service delivery is a critical determinant of a nation's social contract, directly influencing citizens' quality of life and the level of public trust in government institutions. In Nigeria, however, public service provision is frequently characterized by systemic inefficiency, corruption, and a pervasive lack of accountability. This persistent service delivery deficit not only impedes national development but also fosters a palpable, collective sense of public disgruntlement.

Anger, as an emotion, is a normal, universal, and unavoidable human experience (Zohuri & Dalili, 2023). When appropriately channelled or "sublimated" it can function as a healthy motivator for moral action and social change (Kabir, 2017). However, when dysfunctional, persistent, and a response to perceived injustice or threat, anger can become a destabilizing force (Videbeck, 2006). In the context of public governance, anger is a a transient, individual feeling. Despite extensive documentation of Nigeria's public service challenges (Ibietan & Joshua, 2013), the emotional landscape of citizen dissatisfaction specifically, the manifestations, root causes, and systemic consequences of public sector-induced anger management remain significantly under-explored. This paper addresses this crucial gap by adopting an exploratory approach. This study aims to comprehensively analyze the bi directional relationship between citizen anger management and the functioning of Nigerian public sector institutions,

1.1 Objectives of Study

The aim of this study is to explore and analyses the dynamics of anger management among public servants in the Nigerian public sector concerning service delivery. Specifically, the objectives of this study are to:

- to determine the relationship between anger management and provision of public sector services in Nigeria;
- to investigate the causes of anger among public servants in Nigeria ; and
- to identify and propose evidence-based strategies for the effective management and constructive channelling of anger within the Nigerian public sector.

1.2 Research Questions

- What is the relationship between anger management and service delivery in the public sector in Nigeria?
- What are the causes of anger among citizens and public servant in Nigeria?
- How can anger be manage in the public sector in Nigeria?

1.3 Research Methodology

The study employs a qualitative research approach utilizing a descriptive and analytical historical methodology. The qualitative method was selected to enable a contextual and explanatory understanding of existing literature. The analysis is presented thematically and chronologically. Data were predominantly sourced from secondary materials, including academic textbooks, peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and online resources. Further supporting evidence was drawn from relevant official publications and authoritative news sources.

2. Conceptual Review

2.1 Anger and Public service Delivery A conceptual analysis

Anger is an emotional state that can vary in intensity from mild annoyance to intense wrath and rage, claim (Zohuri & Dalili 2023). Anger is a complex and enigmatic emotion that can be experienced in response to specific stressors. Although this feeling and emotion are quite distinct, aggression is an action intended to harm other people. Psychological tests can be used to gauge the level of rage. Indeed, some people are more irritable than others. Some people don't visibly show their feelings, but they are frequently irritable and

irritated. People who lose their temper easily usually don't handle frustration well. They cannot tolerate the situation and get even more infuriated if it seems unjust in any manner (Zohuri and Dalii 2023).

Anger can be triggered by both internal and external events (Yadav, Yadav, and Sapkota, 2017). In addition to being focused on a specific person or object, anger can also result from worries about internal problems. Systemic issues have plagued Nigeria's public sector for many years. Consistent underperformance in a variety of fields, including infrastructure, security, healthcare, and education, is a widespread complaint. Political meddling, widespread corruption, bureaucratic delays, and inadequate funding frequently result in:

- Delays and lengthy lines: People must wait endless hours to obtain essential services.
- Requests for bribes or other unofficial payments: The normalizing of corruption in order to speed up services.
- Dilapidated infrastructure: Poor roads, crumbling public buildings, and an unstable power source are examples of dilapidated infrastructure.
- Lack of professionalism and empathy: public employees are frequently seen as uncaring or even antagonistic (Ibietan &Joshua 2013).

These problems are more than just practical difficulties, they constitute a basic violation of the social compact, undermining confidence and creating a sense of powerlessness. Anger is a powerful social reaction to recurrent irritation, unfulfilled expectations, and perceived unfairness (Alagbogu & Onuoha 2023).

2.2 Forms of Anger in Nigeria

Social media campaigns and vocal protests: On social media sites like Facebook, Twitter now X, and local forums, citizens are increasingly airing their complaints. They frequently share personal stories of their terrifying encounters with public services. These personal annoyances are amplified into group demands for change through hashtags and online petitions.

Demonstrations and Protests: From small-scale community demonstrations about the dearth of facilities to larger campaigns like #EndSARS, which, despite their focus on police violence, tapped into a larger pool of resentment against government incompetence and impunity.

Disengagement and Cynicism: A more subtle expression is the rise in cynicism and indifference among citizens who, having lost faith, turn to self-help techniques or disengage from public processes, so undermining governmental institutions.

Confrontational Interactions: The instant frustration experienced during service encounters is often reflected in direct, frequently heated confrontations with public authorities.

3. A Theoretical Review of Anger and Public Services Delivery

The Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT): According to this theory, the discrepancy between the way public services are really performed and what residents expect is what makes them angry. Leon Festinger presented Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) in 1957. It was developed based on Cognitive Dissonance Theory (CDT). EDT is a popular framework for comprehending contentment and discontent in a variety of settings, including the provision of public services. According to the theory, the gap between people's expectations and the actual performance of public services determines whether they are satisfied or not; if the perceived performance meets or surpasses expectations, confirmation takes place (Chen 2008). However, disconfirmation happens if the perceived performance is below expectations, which can cause discontent and even anger. When Nigerians' expectations are not fulfilled in the context of public service delivery, they become irate. People may become angry, frustrated, and disillusioned if their expectations of prompt, responsive public service performance and efficient, effective service delivery are not met.

Attribution Theory: According to this theory, how people assign blame for poor service has an impact on how angry they get. One of the most significant social scientists of the 20th century, Fritz Heider, was the original developer of attribution theory. In his book *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations*, published in 1958, he introduced the idea of "attribution theory." Numerous other scientists, some from unrelated fields, were influenced by his research on social psychology. Harold Kelley expanded Heider's concept of attribution theory to incorporate cause and effect relations about 10 years later. Accordingly, attribution theory is applicable to all branches of psychology that deal with perception, judgment, and thought (Rasdi, 2018). Joseph Kasof introduced attribution theory to creativity in a 1995 special issue of the *Creativity Research Journal*.

The application of attribution theory to creativity is explained in length in this article. Attribution theory states that there are objective and subjective components to creativity. Among the fundamental ideas of attributive theories are:

Locus of Control: People may blame external (like unanticipated events) or internal (like government incompetence) causes for service failures.
Stability: People may view service interruptions as either steady (long-lasting) or unstable (occasional).
Controllability: People may think that service providers or the government may influence the reasons behind service outages.

However, attributive theories implies that citizens attribute service failures to:

- Internal factors (e.g., government incompetence), they are more likely to experience anger.
- Stable factors (e.g., persistent corruption), they may feel frustrated and angry.
- Controllable factors (e.g., deliberate neglect), they are more likely to experience anger and resentment (Rasdi, 2018).

The Emotions as Social Information (EASI) Theory: According to this theory, citizens' opinions and actions are influenced by the information that emotions, particularly anger, provide. Van Kleef created the Emotions as Social Information (EASI) theory in (2009).

The theory, which has been used in a variety of situations, such as organizational behaviour, social psychology, and conflict resolution, contends that emotions are a source of information that shapes social relationships. Mogadeghrad, (2014). EASI theory can be used to better understand how citizens' emotions, such as anger, influence how they perceive and react to service experiences in the context of public service delivery (Mogadeghrad, 2014)

The EASI Theory and Anger in Public Service suggest that:

- Service providers should acknowledge the emotional effect of service encounters and react to citizen complaints with empathy.
- Policymakers create rules and guidelines that promote responsiveness, justice, and respect by considering the emotional components of service delivery.
- Citizen engagement encourages positive interaction and feedback systems to control citizens' feelings and improve service delivery.

The Social Exchange Theory: Sociology, psychology, and anthropology are some of the fields that have contributed to the development of Social Exchange Theory (SET). A number of influential people and their writings, including George Homans (1958), Peter Blau (1964), and Emerson (1976), are responsible for the theory's development. Over time, SET has changed to include different viewpoints and methods. Among the noteworthy advancements are:

1. **Resource Exchange Theory:** This method places a strong emphasis on how social relationships include the exchange of resources, such as material and immaterial commodities.
2. **Reciprocity:** The idea of reciprocity, which emphasizes the value of duty and reciprocal exchange in social interactions, is still fundamental to SET.

According to the SET theory, perceived disparities in the interactions between the public and public service providers are the root cause of citizens' angers (Singh, 2017).

This implies that when public servants do not treat the people fairly or providing them with value, they may become angry and:

1. Decrease cooperation: People may stop interacting with public service providers or cooperating as much.
2. Seek redress: Through complaints or other channels, citizens can try to get their problems addressed.
3. Distrust: People may come to distrust institutions and public service providers.

The SET theory has the following implications for Nigerian public service delivery:

1. Public service providers can foster trust by being fair, transparent, and responsive.
2. Anger can be decreased and public expectations managed with the use of effective communication.
3. Public services can concentrate on providing top-notch services that satisfy the demands and expectations of the public (Singh, 2017).

The Stress Theory: This Theory was designed by Richard Lazarus (1966), Stress Theory, also known as Stress and Coping Theory, has its roots in several disciplines, including psychology, physiology, and sociology. Many scientists and academics have researched and developed the idea of stress over time. The following are the main ideas of stress theory:

1. **Stressors:** Environmental, psychological, or physiological demands are examples of stimuli that lead to stress.
2. **Cognitive appraisal:** The process by which stressors are assessed and interpreted, affecting behavioural and emotional reactions.

3. **Coping:** Techniques and systems for controlling and reducing stress. Webster (2014).

According to this theory, the pressures that public service delivery systems place on citizens can lead to stress, even rage. According to stress theory, Nigerians become irate and frustrated with the way public services are delivered when:

1. **Expectations are not fulfilled:** When public services fall short of citizens' expectations, they may become stressed and feel angry and frustrated.
2. **Inadequate services:** When public services are insufficient, unreliable, or unavailable, citizens may become anxious, which can heighten their resentment and discontent.

3. **Perceived injustice:** When citizens believe that public services are biased or unjust, they may become stressed, which can result in resentment and anger.

According to Stress Theory, Nigerians may become angry and frustrated because of:

1. **Poor service delivery:** Stress and anger among citizens can be exacerbated by inadequate infrastructure, corruption, and bureaucratic inefficiency.
2. **Economic difficulties:** Unemployment, poverty, and unstable economies can make people feel more stressed and irate.
3. **Lack of trust:** When citizens don't trust public institutions and service providers, they may become anxious and irate (Nwinye, 2020).

Public Service Motivation Theory: Irawanto and Primasari, (2015) stated that the Public Service Motivation (PSM) Theory, contends that public servants are driven by a desire to further the common good and improve society. This theory looks at public officials' attitudes and motivations and how these affect the way services are provided. According to PSM, motivated public employees are more likely to develop trust, provide high-quality services, and empathize with citizens. This suggests that:

1. PSM can result in better service quality, which will lessen public anger and boost satisfaction.
2. PSM can increase cooperation and decrease resentment by fostering confidence between the public and public service providers.
3. By lowering stress and burnout, PSM can improve the wellbeing of both residents and public employees (Nwinye, 2020).

3.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is primarily grounded in the Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT), augmented by insights from Attribution Theory and the Social Exchange Theory (SET).

The Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT), was developed based on Cognitive Dissonance Theory (CDT) and first presented by Leon Festinger in 1957. EDT is a popular framework for comprehending contentment and discontent in a variety of settings, including the provision of public services. According to the theory, the gap between citizens' expectations and the actual performance of public services determines whether or not they are satisfied; if the perceived performance equals or surpasses expectations, confirmation takes place (Adekunle, 2017). Nevertheless, disconfirmation happens if the perceived performance is below expectations, which can cause discontent and even angry. When Nigerians' expectations are not fulfilled in the context of public service delivery, they become irate. EDT helps identify some of the causes of resentment and contentment with Nigerian public service delivery. It is assumed that people who have high expectations and believe that public services are not performing up to par may become angry, and that people who have low expectations and believe that public services are performing well will also likely become angry.

4. Causes of Anger in Public Service

Anger is an inward reaction to events depending on how one interprets and perceives them. The following are some things that can make someone angry:

Physiological or genetic: It has been demonstrated that children inherit characteristics from their parents, including their mother, father, grandfather, grandmother, great-grandfather, and great-grandmother. Individuals that are prone to anger typically come from homes that are turbulent, disorganized, and lack emotional communication skills (Adedeji, 2023). Some children are born with signs of irritability, touchiness, and easy anger, and these characteristics are evident from an early age.

Sociocultural Factor: Anger is often viewed as a negative emotion; expressing sadness, anxiety, or other emotions is okay, but expressing anger in a violent manner is not. Some cultural backgrounds support violence and anger; research indicates that people from these backgrounds view expressing anger when necessary as normal (Matsumoto, Yoo, and Chung, 2010).

Reaction to Self-failure: It is clear that many adults and adolescents feel furious at themselves for not being able to achieve their potential in their careers and other spheres of life (Adedeji, 2021). If anger is not controlled or expressed constructively, there is a risk that it will lead to self-harm. Around the world, there are suicide cases brought on by debt, academic or professional failure, embarrassment about prior involvement, a desire to cover things up, etc.

Lowest Possible Level of Stress Tolerance: At some point, everyone's capacity for frustration is limited. Stress-induced anxiety frequently reduces a person's tolerance for discomfort, which causes them to view commonplace items as threats to their safety (Singh and Kaur, 2015). People who are emotionally motivated tend to see commonplace events and other people's remarks as direct challenges to their goals and desires.

Tension/Anxiety: In our everyday lives, we deal with tension and anxiety. Anger results from a decrease in tolerance for frustration brought on by elevated stress levels (Seltzer and Kalmuss, 1988). Stress at work and school frequently spills over into our homes, where it impacts our families and vice versa. We refer to this as transferred aggression. Uncomfortable surroundings, including a noisy neighbourhood, a poor road, a filthy environment, and so forth, frequently cause stress and rage in people.

Drug Abuse: The drive for survival comes first. Examining survival strategies often leads people, particularly young people, to take drugs. Drugs can cause people to misinterpret information and experiences, which might agitate and distress them (Adedeji, 2024). Furthermore, it may evoke suppressed memories and emotions, which can be uncomfortable and often extremely irate. When someone is under the influence of drugs, they act without thinking through the consequences.

Cruel Administration/Government: Kasali (2009) asserts that a government that practices cruelty is more likely to promote cultural values based on rage, which in turn encourage violence and aggression among its populace. Adedeji (2023) claims that a number of elements have been shown to be the main causes of popular anger:

Corruption and Extortion: The expectation or demand for bribes (such as "facilitation fees") for services that ought to be provided for free or that have already been covered by taxes is arguably the most upsetting feature. This creates intense animosity by turning a public right into a commodity that can be purchased.

Incompetence and Inefficiency: The operational dysfunction, which includes faulty equipment, lost data, interminable bureaucratic loops, and a general disregard for procedures, creates a sense of time and

effort waste and irritates people greatly.

Lack of Accountability and Impunity: The belief that public employees who perform poorly or commit misbehaviour seldom suffer repercussions is a major cause of anger.

Disrespect and Poor Attitude: People frequently report meeting rude, contemptuous, or dismissive public officials: this dehumanizing experience adds an emotional layer to the transactional failures, making interactions intolerable.

Perceived Inequity and Bias: People become angry about unfairness and discrimination when they think that access to services is determined by connections, wealth, or ethnic affiliation rather than merit.

5. Effects of Anger on Public Service Delivery

The pervasive anger among citizens has significant effects on the Nigerian public sector in the following ways:

Erosion of Trust: It makes it more difficult for public policies and initiatives to receive support from the general public by widening the gap of mistrust between the people and the government.

Decreased Citizen Participation: Disillusioned and angry citizens are less inclined to report problems, take part in civic activities, or have productive conversations, all of which erode democratic institutions.

Possibility of societal discontent: Unresolved anger has the potential to fester and, in certain cases, explode into broad societal discontent, endangering stability and peace.

Reform Obstacle: When people perceive every government move with suspicion, it can be very challenging for well-intentioned changes to be adopted or successfully implemented.

Negative Effect on Public Servant Morale: In a very hostile setting, public workers themselves may suffer from burnout and low morale, which can lead to a vicious cycle (Yadav, *et. al.* 2017). Adjunct to the above, Kabir (2017), opined that the effects of anger on public service delivery include: **Decreased Trust:** People lose faith in public institutions and grow disenchanted with the system when they see that their needs are not being met. People may become less cooperative with public officials as a result, creating a vicious cycle of mistrust.

Protests and Social Unrest: Stability and security can be threatened by unresolved anger that explodes into protests, demonstrations, and social unrest. People may take more extreme actions to vent their annoyance when they believe their opinions are not being heard.

Less Cooperation: People who are angry may be less willing to work with government representatives, which makes it harder to provide services efficiently. The relationship between the people and the government may break down as a result, which would make the issue worse.

6. Anger Management in the Public Sector in Nigeria

Anger is a natural emotion that comes from frustration, wrongdoing, retaliation, self-defense, religion, and society. People are exposed to rage in the workplace, but it is crucial to be able to express this anger without endangering or destroying the system. Anger is a normal part of life, particularly when someone thinks negatively all the time and becomes hostile, irritable, or impatient. It is expected of salary earners or non-career employees to direct their anger toward issues impacting the company rather than individuals (Ilhan 2014). Lerner (2014) demonstrated how to control anger in the public sector by doing the following:

Relaxation: Reducing the negative effects and enhancing the good response are the cornerstones of anger management. Regardless of the chores that still need to be done, relaxation is characterized by less thinking or a sense of freedom. It is impossible for a relaxed man to be angry at the same moment. Anger makes the heart race, which puts the bearer at risk for issues at work and in their health. Regularly angry officers can deal with the fallout by relaxing, which helps to ease everyday stress. Relaxation can take the shape of rest, holidays, breaks, and leave, and it helps employees live longer.

Humour: Humour is a representation of things that bring people joy. It entails coming up with things like laughing, listening to music and news, talking with friends, and interacting with village chiefs who are knowledgeable about proverbs. Being furious while laughing is equally challenging. Anger management is possible for those with humour skills, such as comedy, storytelling, and a humorous demeanour. The ability to bring humour into the workplace may lessen the weight of irritation or anger. Actions pertaining to humour are required to raise people's standard of living. In other nations, such as America, Britain, Germany, and Canada, humour is a part of everyday

life and is not considered hate speech or prohibited by law.

Mind Control: Managing angry thoughts in certain situations is another way to fight anger. It necessitates understanding how the body reacts, being aware of the signs of anger, and analyzing the data supporting one's own beliefs. Look for other approaches to resolving a certain issue or dispute. Indeed, more constructive options could take the place of unacceptable behaviors brought on by anger. Effective communication and attentive listening to prevent information distortion are two of these options. Training initiatives could do this.

Identify the Problem: Anger management is designed to address issues that impact employees. The ability of a management to pinpoint the true issue with a certain endeavor requires a thorough process that is fraught with perplexity over a plethora of possible solutions. Unless there is a thorough study and an effective choice that arises from understanding of the sources of the problem or anger, the manager's perception of the problem may not always be the one that is harming the firm. Since undiscovered problems result in rage, workplace conflict, resource waste, low productivity, and job discontent, an identified problem seems to be half solved. Due to their inability to recognize the actual issues impeding their operations, the majority of managers and leaders made poor choices. For example, if one of the causes of anger among police public servants are identified as poor conditions of service, government should provide solution to address the problem.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The intricate connection between anger and public sector service delivery has been investigated in this exploratory study. This research emphasizes the need for a more nuanced knowledge of the elements that contribute to citizen dissatisfaction and anger by examining the dynamics of citizen anger and its effects on service delivery. According to the findings, anger is a major problem in the public sector that impacts not just the general public but also public employees and the standard of service delivery as a whole. The study therefore recommends:

Enhance Communication: To control public expectations and lessen anger, public service providers should place a high priority on empathic, transparent, and clear communication.

Improve Service Quality: Public services should concentrate on providing excellent services that satisfy the demands and expectations of citizens while lowering annoyance and anger.

Promote Trust: Public service providers should place a high priority on fostering citizen trust by providing prompt and accountable services, which will lessen resentment and promote cooperation.

Offer Emotional Support: In order to lessen stress and anger, public service providers should acknowledge the emotional component of service delivery and offer residents emotional support.

Educate Public Employees: To enhance service delivery, public employees should be trained in effective communication, empathy, and handling angry citizens.

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