

## **Prebendal Politics and Recruitment in Southern Ijaw Local Government Council, Bayelsa State, Nigeria (2011-2024)**

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### **Abstract**

*The research work examined prebendal politics and recruitment in Southern Ijaw Local Government Council, Bayelsa State from 2011 to 2024. The specific objectives of the study were to determine if there is a significant relationship between merit-based recruitment and efficient service delivery in Southern Ijaw Local Government Council; and to examine the effect of godfatherism find out if there is an association between patronage system and inefficient service delivery in Southern Ijaw Local Government Council. The study adopted the Resource Based View theory; applied a descriptive survey research design with structured questionnaire as the main instrument for data collection. The population of the study is 1112; and the sample population size is 294 derived via the application of Taro Yamani Sample Size Determination Formula. The data collected via questionnaire were analyzed using table and percentages, while the hypotheses tested using chi-square statistical tool. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between Merit based recruitment and efficient service delivery in Southern Ijaw Local Government Council, Bayelsa State; and that there is an association between patronage system recruitment and inefficient service delivery in Southern Ijaw Local Government Council, Bayelsa State. Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made that merit-based recruitment principles should be strictly adhered to at all times in order to ensure efficient service delivery; and that patronage system recruitment should be discouraged to reduce inefficient service delivery in Southern Ijaw Local Government Council.*

**Keywords:** *Prebendal, Politics, recruitment, Southern Ijaw, Council, analysis*

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### **Introduction**

Bayelsa State, located in Nigeria's Niger Delta region, is renowned for its vast crude oil deposits, but equally marked by political volatility, elite dominance, and widespread youth unemployment. One of the defining features of its political landscape is the entrenchment of prebendal politics-a system wherein political offices are treated as personal fiefdoms through which public resources are distributed to loyalists, ethnic affiliates, or political godchildren (Joseph, 1987). This patron

client dynamic, deeply embedded in Nigeria's post-colonial statecraft, shapes both the recruitment processes and the structure of local governance in Bayelsa.

Coined by Richard Joseph in his seminal work *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria*, the term "prebendalism" captures how public officeholders view government positions as opportunities for personal enrichment and reward systems (Joseph, 1987). In Bayelsa, this political culture has become normative, particularly in the recruitment and appointment into local government councils, ministries, and state parastatals. Political appointments often prioritize kinship, ethnic loyalty, and political allegiance over competence or merit, thereby institutionalizing a cycle of nepotism and clientelism (Suberu, 2001; Omotola, 2009).

Recruitment in this context is not merely administrative—it is political currency. Public jobs are distributed as patronage tools to consolidate power, appease militant groups, and maintain elite dominance. For instance, the post-amnesty era (after 2009) saw ex-militants in Bayelsa being integrated into government payrolls or granted contracts as part of broader peace settlements, blurring the lines between formal recruitment and political settlement (Aghedo & Osumah, 2012). This study therefore investigates the nature, evolution, and implications of prebendal politics and recruitment in Bayelsa State, with a focus on how it affects governance, public service delivery, and youth engagement. The aim is to offer a nuanced understanding of how a resource-rich state can remain institutionally fragile due to the entrenchment of patronage-based politics.

Many reforms had been set up just for the purpose of setting a model or procedure that will be highly beneficial in recruiting employees and restoring lost confidence that people once had in public organizations (Idris, 2015). For instance, the Public Sector Reform (PRS) was set up as a response to poor recruitment procedures, retaining and training of employees and would be employees in public organizations in the country. Irrespective of these reforms that have been established to handle the employment procedures in public organizations, most of these organizations have jettisoned these procedures and have allowed prebendal politics to take the centre stage.

In like manner, local government councils, as public organizations in Nigeria, are not spared from the menace of the imprints of prebendal politics. In fact, it is quite glaring that the term prebendal politics like water has found its way especially in procedures for employment. Local government councils are established squarely to provide social services, infrastructural development at the local areas, and as an avenue for generating employment for the general populace, unlike private organizations that are set up with the sole purpose of maximizing profits for its investors (Onuba, 2012). The procedures for employment varies from organization to organization, job to job and country to country, According to Otoo and Agyei (2018) some of these processes including the screening of applications and resumes, testing and reviewing work sample, interviewing, checking references and background. However, due to the imprints of prebendal politics in the recruitment procedures in public organizations (especially in local government councils) recruitment procedures are often not dully followed. This has grossly affected the service delivery of local government councils in the country. It is against this backdrop that this research is undertaken in order to identify the merit based recruitment procedures, the effect of prebendal politics on recruitment procedures and the strategies that can be adopted to maintain the merit based recruitment procedures for employment in local government councils in Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Nigeria as a country is the most blessed country in Africa and one of the greatest countries in the world. The nation is so blessed that with the right strategy and the right implementation it will be

one of the biggest economies in the world. However, it is so unfortunate that why it seems as if we are still behind or yet to develop is not having the right people in the right positions because of prebendal politics. Concerns about the procedures for employment has caused everyone to raise an eyebrow yet nothing has been done about it. In Nigeria today, hardly do we find advertorials inviting qualified candidates to apply for vacant positions in public organizations again, yet those positions are always filled up. Hardly do we hear jingles inviting qualified candidates to apply for vacant positions in Ministries, Departments and Agencies in Nigeria.

It has often been said that an organization is as good as the people working in it. This has been a major challenge that public organizations have because most people that get employed lack the requisite skills for the job and this is usually as a result of how they were employed. When the procedures for employment are jettisoned and those selected by politician are given employment not minding if they have the requisite skills or qualifications for the job, it affects maximal productivity of such establishment.

With the rate of youths getting involved in crimes and the high number of youths that are jobless and roaming the streets, it makes one question the people that are working in these public organizations and how they got employed in the first place. The result can be attributed to the high number of employees that are on government quotas or godsons of prominent men that gain employment through their godfathers.

In Southern Ijaw Local Government Council of Bayelsa State, the imprints of Godfatherism in recruitment procedure in the council cannot be neglected. Rural development drives in Southern Ijaw Local Government area has been grossly affected as the people elected, appointed, selected or employed to occupy important public positions at the council by godfathers within the local government level, the state and/or at the federal level were/are elected, appointed, selected or employed to firstly satisfy the interests of their godfathers after which, the interests of the local people. This has further widened the gap between the rich and the poor as it has entrenched the notion that only those that know people in high places and have the right connections can secure employment in public organizations irrespective of how intelligent or dumb they are. It has also increased the rate of unemployment in the local, state and federal government levels in Nigeria.

The high rate of unemployment in Nigeria can equally be associated with the continuity of certain key persons in public organizations due to the influence of their godfathers even when they are due for retirement. These problems are what necessitated this research and the need to proffer solutions to the effect of prebendal politics on recruitment procedures for employment in public organizations. Therefore, in order to throw more light on the effect of prebendal politics on recruitment procedure in public organizations in Nigeria with reference to Southern Ijaw Local Government Council, Bayelsa State, the following research questions were developed to guide the successful conduct of this study:

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is on the effect of prebendal politics on recruitment in Southern Ijaw Local Government Council, Bayelsa State. The study specifically sought to:

- 1) To determine if there is a significant relationship between merits based recruitment and efficient service delivery in Southern Ijaw Local Government Council, Bayels State.
- 2) To find out if there is an association between patronage system of recruitment and ineffective service delivery in Southern Ijaw Local Government Council, Bayelsa State.

## Literature Review

### Merit Based Principle in Recruitment in Nigeria Public Organizations

The recruitment of civil servants in Nigeria is said to be based on the principle of merit. The concept of merit, according to Nigro and Nigro, (1973) involves the application of scientific techniques to analyse job duties, construct examinations, and rationalize personnel procedures. As noted from Okotoni (2017) it is a government policy that all appointments of staff should be done strictly on the approved scheme of service. The Nigeria civil service inherited the merit system from the British Administration. It was first introduced into the British civil service in 1853 by sir Stafford Northcote and sir Charles Trevelyan Commission. This commission saw that little progress could be made until there was a total abolition of a system of appointment which was wholly dependent on patronage and conducted separately by each department. The commission therefore introduced the system of competitive examination by a central board as a substitute for the old system of patronage. This laid the foundation of modern civil service management and set forth the merit principle. The merit objective was to promote outstanding service by recruiting the best talented employees through competitive examination. It also sought to remove patronage, nepotism, favouritism and corruption in the recruitment of public officials.

The merit principle governed in the recruitment policies of the various governments in the federation. The two principal instruments of the merit system in management are: an independent recruitment agency of the civil service commission and competitive examination. Ideally, the first step in the recruitment process should be advertisement of vacancies. But in practice, the advertisements of vacancies are not always done. The commission depends mostly on unsolicited applications, which are made by job seekers not in response to any advertisement but made in anticipation of vacancies in the organization. Positions are only advertised by the commission when there are little or no unsolicited applications. Although, these advertisements are always dull and incapable of attracting the most competent men and women to apply. For instance, these advertisements are scanty in information about career prospects which very competent candidates require very much. The prevalence of unsolicited application in the Nigeria public service in general is an indication of the existence of large proportions of job seekers who have no patience to wait until there are advertisements.

### Effects of prebendal politics on Recruitment in Public Organizations

The effects of prebendal politics cannot be overemphasized. Prebendal politics and recruitment in Nigerian public administration is a contest between meritocracy and favoritism, a contest between good administration and bad administration. The effects include:

**(a) Economic Effect:** The end point and consequences of these (prebendal politics) in our polity is that economic activities are brought to a halt, especially education sectors, health, insecurity as a result of political wrangling, agriculture, housing and infrastructural developments etc.

**(b) Contempt for the Principle of Merit:** In the area of appointments and promotions in public organizations 'Man Know Man' factor reign supreme leaving meritocracy at the lowest ebb and mediocrity celebrated at the top which directly results to dampening morale of the hardworking public servants.

**(c) Cultural Perversion:** The implication of prebendal politics in the scenario pertaining to the cultural re-orientation of the people is borne out of the fact that mediocrity is celebrated in place of meritocracy. The normal cultural diction in Nigeria is that for a child to be great in life, that child must have the love of being educated in life which will create a platform for greatness.

**(d) Dearth of Qualified Employees:** One fact which prebendal politics has caused today is the enthronement of incompetent employees with just a certificate to show. Mere paper qualification is not a true test of the merit which the qualification proclaimed in the certificate is supposed to carry. It is not unusual today to find young employees in public organizations that cannot write down their thoughts and ideas in without committing elementary errors of spelling, grammar and totally unintelligible prose. This is why it is important that the process of recruitment or appointment should be an instrument for the promotion of efficiency in the public service.

**e) Corruption:** Prebendal politics has led to massive corruption in Nigeria. In the recruitment of very junior employees like massagers and clerks. In this category of recruitment, the recruiting agents or officials who are usually management officials see the exercise as an opportunity to make money and hereby resorting to collecting bribes from the applicants hence “no bribe no employment”.

**f) Enhanced Disrespect of the Rule of Laws:** Most times, when people perceive the way some government officials behave it passes the idea that there are no laws in the country or that some persons are untouchable and this is usually picked by colleagues in the office.

**g) Manipulation of Public Policies:** Most of Nigerian policies are usually bent by political godfathers to enable them fix in their candidates to the corridor of power. They have always been instrumental in the final determination of most of our public policies, thereby challenging any idea that might try to enthrone meritocracy.

**h) Turning Vibrant Citizens into Criminal Elements:** Most disturbing is that the youths have turned to murderers, kidnappers, ritualists, thieves, and engagement in corrupt practices as a result of the orientation that they have.

**i) Political Perversion:** The damaging and disturbing influence of prebendal politics in Nigeria’s political landscape especially as it concerns this current All Progressive Congress led government was in purview of making the electoral processes not credible with the absence of the spirit of fairness, freedom of choice and peaceful atmosphere to enable the electorates to vote freely for candidates of their choice into elective positions without fear of victimization.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study is the meritocratic theory. The study adopted the Meritocratic theory as put forward by the following proponents Weber, 1948; 1968; Evans and Rauch, 1999; Henderson et al, 2007, Miller, 2000; Ritzer, 1975; Dahlstrom, Lapuente and Teorell, 2011; Andreski, 1983, Johnson and Libecap, 1994. Proponents of this theory suggest that democratic states all over the world should shun away from political patronage via state jobs and embrace a culture of meritocratic recruitment and promotion. They argue that access to institutions of government as an employee should be conditioned on the bases of possession of relevant knowledge, skills and qualification credentials, what Max Weber (1968) refers to as “expert officialdom”.

For this theory, office holding is not considered a source to be exploited for rents or emoluments nor is considered a usual exchange of services for equivalents (Weber, 1948). In the study of bureaucracy, Max Weber, for example, advocated for “career personnel” with specialized training and expertise, among others, as the prerequisite for employment in any bureaucratic institutions. The emergence of prebendal politics has also robbed the citizens of the privilege of enjoying the dividends of democratic governance in the sense that government has become reluctant to initiate and implement policies that would advance the well-being of the generality of the citizens. This was a result of the fact that prebendal politics in Nigeria was basically predatory in nature.

### **Hypothesis One**

HOI

There is a significant relationship between merit-based recruitment and efficient service delivery in Southern Ijaw Local Government Council, Bayelsa State.

### **Hypothesis Two**

HOI

There is an association between patronage system recruitment and inefficient service delivery in Southern Ijaw Local Government Council, Bayelsa State.

### **Research Design**

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The survey was used to collect detailed descriptions of existing phenomena with the intent of using the data to justify current conditions and practices or to make better plans for improving the phenomena. In this, generalization is made over the entire population using the result of data analysis that will be done on a sample of the population. The study made use of primary and secondary sources of data. The population of the study is made up of the staff of Southern Ijaw Local Government Council, Bayelsa State numbering 1112 (Personnel Department, 2024); while the sample population of 294 was derived via the application of the Taro Yamane's sample size determination formula is given as:

$$n = 12$$

The study adopted the stratified sampling technique whereby the population was partitioned into smaller sub-populations.

### **Method of Data Collection**

The researcher used a face-to-face method of data collection through the direct administration of the questionnaires by the researcher to the respondents within the area of study.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The researcher presented the data in tables, using frequencies and percentages. The data were analysed using inferential statistics specifically using Chi-square distribution

### **Empirical Verification**

**Hypothesis One:** Is there a significant relationship between merit-based recruitment and efficient service delivery in Southern Ijaw Local Government Council, Bayelsa State.

**Statement Objective:** Hypothesis one seeks to examine whether there is a significant relationship between merit-based recruitment and efficient service delivery in Southern Ijaw Local Government Council, Bayelsa State or not.

### **Decision Rule**

When the computed value of Chi-square ( ) is greater than ( $>$ ) the table value of Chi-square ( ), the hypothesis one will be accepted.

**Table 1: Observed Frequency for Hypothesis One**

**Departments**  
**Strongly**  
**Agree**  
**Agree No Idea Disagree Strongly**  
**Disagree**  
**Total**

**Table4.9: Observed Frequency for Hypothesis One**

Departments	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Administration and Finance and Supply	70	28	15	18	11	110
Agriculture/Veterinary and Education and social Development	11	5	8	3	2	43
Planning Research/Statistics	7	9	3	1	2	33
Health and Works	28	18	13	9	3	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>234</b>

**Source:** Author's Research Report, 2024

Calculation of Degree of Freedom (DF)

$$DF=(R-1)(C-1)$$

Where R=Number of Rowin the contingency table

C=Number of columns in the contingency table

$$DF=(4-1)(5-1)=3 \times 4 = 12$$

At0.05significantleveland12degreeoffreedomthetablevalueofchi-square=**21.03**

Computation of chi-square( $X^2$ )

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O - e)^2}{e}$$

Where O=Observed frequency

e=Expected frequency

Expected frequency(e) is giving by  $\frac{RT \times CT}{GT}$

Where RT = Row total

CT = Colum total

GT = Grand total

**Table4.10: Computation of chi-square for Hypothesis One**

Observed Frequency (o)	Expected Frequency (e)	(o-e)	(o-e) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(o-e)^2}{E}$
68	18.66	-0.66	0.4356	0.02
28	40.34	-12.34	152.2756	3.77
15	25.62	-10.62	112.7844	4.40
18	55.38	-43.38	1881.8244	33.98
11	11.38	-10.38	107.7444	9.47
11	24.62	16.38	268.3044	10.90
5	12.97	40.03	1602.4009	13.55
8	28.03	-7.03	49.4209	1.76
3	5.38	23.62	557.9044	13.70
2	11.62	4.38	19.1844	1.65
7	15.81	5.19	26.9361	1.70
9	34.19	-11.19	125.2161	3.66
8	28.46	-26.46	700.1316	24.60
3	61.54	-42.54	1809.6516	29.41
2	4.43	4.57	20.8849	4.71
28	9.57	19.43	377.5249	39.45
18	18.97	48.03	2306.8809	11.61
13	41.03	-29.03	842.7409	20.54
9	6.32	34.68	1202.7024	1.30
3	13.68	-2.68	7.1824	0.53
				$(X^2) = \sum \frac{(o-e)^2}{E} = 230.48$

**Source:** Research Report, 2024

### Decision

Since the computed value of chi-square ( $X^2$ ) of 230.48 is greater than the table value of chi-square of 21.03, hypothesis one is accepted. The study therefore established that there is a significant relationship between merit-based recruitment and efficient service delivery in Southern Ijaw Local Government Council, Bayelsa State.

**Test of Hypothesis Two:** There is an association between patronage system recruitment and inefficient service delivery in Southern Ijaw Local Government Council, Bayelsa State.

**Objective:** The second hypothesis is seeks to ascertain whether there is an association between patronage system recruitment and inefficient service delivery in Southern Ijaw Local Government Council, Bayelsa State or not.

### Decision criteria

When the computed value of Chi-square( $\chi^2$ ) is greater than(>)the table value of Chi-square( $\chi^2$ ),the hypothesis two will be accepted.

**Table4.11: Observed frequency for hypothesis Three**

Names of Faculties	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Administration and Finance and Supply	57	35	17	19	12	110
Agriculture/Veterinary and Education and social Development	9	7	8	4	1	43
Planning Research/Statistics	9	5	5	1	2	33
Health and Works	31	17	10	11	2	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>234</b>

**Source:** Research Report,2024

Calculation of Degree of freedom (DF)

$$DF=(R-1)(C-1)$$

Where R=Number of Row in the contingency table

C=Number of columns in the contingency table

$$DF=(4-1)(5-1)=3 \times 4 = 12$$

At 0.05 significant level and 12 degree of freedom the table value of chi-square = **21.03**

Computation of chi-square ( $X^2$ )

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O - e)^2}{e}$$

Where O=Observed frequency

e=Expected frequency

Expected frequency (e) is giving by  $\frac{RT \times CT}{GT}$

Where RT = Row total

CT = Column total

GT = Grand total

**Table4.12: Computation of chi-square for Hypothesis Two**

Observed Frequency (o)	Expected Frequency (e)	(o-e)	(o-e) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(o-e)^2}{E}$
57	36.58	15.42	237.7764	6.50
35	9.54	5.46	29.8116	3.12
17	55.27	-46.27	2140.9129	38.74
19	34.60	-20.6	424.36	12.26
12	21.25	-19.25	370.5625	17.44
9	5.54	-1.54	2.3716	0.43
7	32.11	-25.11	630.5121	19.64
8	20.10	-12.1	146.41	7.28
4	15.06	-11.06	122.3236	8.12
1	3.93	-2.93	8.5849	2.18
9	22.76	26.24	688.5376	30.25

5	14.25	25.75	663.0625	46.53
5	16.95	-3.95	15.6025	0.92
4	4.42	29.58	74.9764	7.96
1	25.61	-22.61	511.2121	19.96
31	16.03	14.97	224.1009	13.98
17	2.15	14.85	220.5225	102.57
10	0.56	25.44	247.1936	55.70
11	3.25	7.75	60.0625	18.48
2	2.04	-0.04	0.0016	0.01
				$(X^2) = \frac{\sum(o-e)^2}{E} = 398.09$

**Source:** ResearchReport,2024

### Decision

Since the computed value of chi-square ( $X^2$ ) of 230.48 is greater than the table value of chi-square of 21.03, hypothesis one is accepted. The study therefore established that there is a significant relationship between merit-based recruitment and efficient service delivery in Southern Ijaw Local Government Council, Bayelsa State.

### Conclusion

The focus of recruitment procedure is to match the capabilities of prospective candidates against the demands and rewards inherent in a given job. For this reason, top performing organizations (public and private) devote considerable resources and energy to creating high quality recruitment procedure based on merit system. Recruitment and selection process are important practices for human resource management, and are crucial in affecting organizational success. However, the influence and effects of prebendal politics in recruitment procedures in public organizations in Nigeria has adversely affected the practice of merit-based recruitment procedure in public organizations in the country.

As the main aim of the research was to examine the effect of prebendal politics on recruitment in Southern Ijaw Local Government Council, Bayelsa State, this study argues for the fact that the Nigerian government has to grow beyond that level of primordial sentiments (non-merit base) especially in the area of prebendal politics in the making and implementation of rational recruitment policies and practices, if she really wants to achieve success in governance and administration. Therefore, for the government to operate the most efficient and effective administrative organization that would be beneficial to all, her recruitment policies and practices into the public organizations should be unfettered. It should also be capable of absorbing the best qualified, technically competent, disciplined and committed personnel that would in turn help government to achieve the goals of governance and administration.

### Recommendations

Having conducted this research and analyzed the field data, the researcher recommends the following points, which if adhered to will drastically reduce the effect of prebendal politics in recruitment procedures in public organizations in Nigeria:

- 1) The practice of the principle of merit system in recruitment procedure in public organizations in Nigeria should be strictly adhered to by the Southern Ijaw Local Government Council, Bayelsa State at all times in order to boost efficiency in service delivery.
- 2) The practice of patronage system recruitment (prebendal politics) in public organizations in Nigeria should be discouraged to reduce inefficient service delivery.

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