

Merit Principles of Bureaucracy and Productivity in the Rivers State Pension Board, 2012 - 2023

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Abstract

The merit principles of bureaucracy, which is a cardinal component of bureaucracy as advanced by Max Weber is in itself a key determining factor of productivity in an organization especially public organizations. This paper examined the merit principles of bureaucracy and productivity in the Rivers State Pensions Board between 2012-2023. The paper adopted Human Relations Theory as its analytical framework and was structured via the survey research design. The paper was guided by a single preposition derived from a single question that was raised by the paper. Population for the paper consist of 240 respondents derived from a study population of 600 persons who are members of staff of the Rivers State Pensions Board and pensioners of Rivers State. Data for the paper was gleaned via the use of likert structured questionnaire, complimented by information gathered from secondary sources such as text books, journal, articles, internet sources, magazines and seminars. Generated data was analyzed using simple percentages and statistics as well as content analysis while the single hypothesis was tested by the use of Chi-square at 0.05 confidence value. The paper found out that merit principles of bureaucracy is not fully practiced at the Rivers State Pension Board between 2012-2023. Accordingly, the paper recommends amongst others that; there should be merit in staff recruitment, promotion and processing of pensioners gratuity and pensions. This should also be reflective in the nature of the prevailing human relations in the Rivers State pensions Board.

Keywords: *Merit, Relation, Principles, Bureaucracy, Pension*

Introduction

Bureaucracy is an administrative or public system that relies on a set of rules and procedures, separation of roles and a hierarchical structure in employing controls over an institution, government or social system. A hierarchical structure in which the bulk of significant decisions are made by the managers of an organization. An institution's bureaucracy will quickly obstruct new strategies and bog down the job that workers are expected to do at a given time. Among unnecessary regulations, unrestricted reporting, and a lack of decision-making power, one might begin to wonder if administrative managers are vigorously trying to make it more difficult for workers to operate. 'Bureaucracy has been an aspect in the public service, which is indispensable in any organization and has clearly defined objectives to be carried out (Udeh, 2019).

Though, some form of bureaucracy is necessary for large, efficiently run organizations, there is much argument over whether the theory is actually demonstrated in practice. The fact here is that bureaucracy brings about delay in decision making, does not allow for innovation and quick response to emergency situations. Thereby, showing that, the manner in which an organizational structure is setup and administered can have a direct effect on workers' productivity. Applying strict bureaucratic principles brings about delay in the delivery of duties by workers, under exploration of workers' talents, expertise and intellectual abilities. Therefore, Obadara (2019) has claimed that productivity enhancement is the ultimate aim of any organization, whether public or private. Productivity is basically, a ratio to calculate how effectively an organization turns its input capital into services (man, products, intelligence, management, etc.). Improving productivity requires as many workers as possible, irrespective of their roles and future areas of development, and no organization should neglect the unceasing need to improve productivity.

Studies have shown that most workers in many bureaucratic organizations perform below expectation. It has become a general phenomenon that the levels of productivity in these organizations have become very low and poor. The reasons for this attitude and level of performance are not farfetched (Huckman & Pisano, 2006). This is particularly so, with government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) in Rivers State. The MDAs are saddled with a lot of rules and responsibilities, some are too complex that they have become a spoke in the wheel of progress (Nukunya, 2001). Some of the problems could be man-man due to attitudinal flaws, and inherently poor attitudinal disposition.

Rules and regulations are laid down to assist in achieving the goals and objectives of the government. These set of goals cannot be achieved without the involvement of human and material resources of the MDAs (Hall, 2002). The workers attitude to work may bring about positive or negative results, or rather the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the workers attitude may affect the level of production in an organization. Every organization requires effective productive and

reliable workers in its workforce. An organization where poor attitude and complicated work group exist as a result of complex rules and regulations goes a long way to hindering instead of encouraging the workgroup.

Sometimes, the right person is not taken in a job because he or she does not possess the right certificate or does not have the right connections. This is what is described as over devotion to precedence, lack of initiative, procrastination, proliferation of forms, duplication of efforts and departmentalization, thus making bureaucracy an inefficient organization. It is an institutional manifestation which tends towards inflexibility (Griffin2003).

The work of the bureaucratic organization is influenced by a lot of complex administrative hierarchy, specialization and rigidity. These factors have in many ways affected the level of productivity in an organization. There is slow and low pace of work, lack of thoroughness in application of procedure of work, lack of total commitment to the objective of the organization's goals and achievement as well as embezzlement of funds. The work that is supposed to be done in one day is transferred to another department because of the rules. A work that is urgent; that is supposed to be done by the staff available is being delayed to wait for the right person to do it; some say that it is not their assignment to perform such function; hence, the work is left undone (Adebayo, 1981).

Over reliance on political connection, favouritism, and other primordial sentiments, rather than merit, for employment of staff have affected the level of productivity in public organizations. The situation has led to poor work moral in the Rivers State Pensions Board, such as “the job is not my father's job even, why must I die for it”. “Government work is no man's work”. “Government job is carried on the shoulder, not on the head so that when it is heavy, you bend your shoulder for it to fall off”, “it is a system where monkey works baboo neats”. This has made the workers in the government ministries and in the Rivers State Pensions Board in particular to develop a kind of poor attitude to work which manifest in the various forms and impacts on their productivity. A key question then arises, does the merit principles of bureaucracy as practiced in the Rivers State Pension Board enhance productivity? To attempt to answer this boggling question this paper is guided by the proposition that; the merit principle is not practiced at the Rivers State Pension Board.

This paper was aimed at assessing merit principles of bureaucracy and productivity in the Rivers State Pension Board, between 2012-2023. The paper is structured into five interrelated parts. Part one is the introduction, which we just concluded. Part two deals with the analytical framework which the paper adopted as its theoretical perspective and also highlight brief explanations of relevant concepts to the paper. Part three looks at the method via which data is generated and analyzed; part four encapsulates presentations, analysis and discussions of the paper, while part five and of course the final part is the conclusion and considered recommendations of the paper.

Analytical Framework

The paper employs the human relations theory of management. The human relations theory is a school of management theory stressing the importance of understanding human motivation in the workplace. According to Thompson (2004), the human relations school believes that employee motivation is a result of recognition, encouragement and rewarding of individual contributions. Its advocates were F. J. Roehlisberge, W. E. Moore and E. Mayo in the USA and G. Friedmann in France. Human relations theory developed as a response to Taylorism. Rejecting the biological and mechanistic approaches to F. W. Taylor's "scientific management". The human relations theory proposed the implementation of method of dealing with workers as socio-psychological beings. Robbins (2005) succinctly explain the human relations theory in his following words.

The theory believes in the human aspect of a business and how to utilize humans as a valuable resource. Without people, your business would not exist, so consider restructuring your organization with a focus on employee relations. Spend time and money to invest in developing employees and see higher productivity and more success within your organization.

Also, Zhao (1997) identified the believes of the human relations theorists to include:

- i. Workers are human beings, so they must be treated like human beings and not like machines. Managers should try to understand the feelings and emotions of the workers.
- ii. An organization works not only through formal relations but also through informal relations. Therefore, managers should encourage informal relations in the organization along with formal relations.
- iii. Workers want good communication from managers. Therefore, managers should communicate effectively with employees without feeling of ego and superiority complex.

This theory is most suitable to this paper because, a stringent application and practice of bureaucratic principles in an organization might be scaring for employees. It might prevent them from bringing out their hidden talents, potentials and expertise which will improve their productivity. Hence, if the management and Director of the Rivers State Civil Service, and in particular the Rivers State Pensions Board will adopt the human relations theory of management, employees of the corporation will be motivated to work thereby increasing their productivity and organizational growth. As such this theory helps the paper to understand the forms and nature of relationships that exist between and within the staff of the Rivers State Pensions Board on one hand and the Pensioners on the other hand, while also focusing on the government.

Conceptual Explanation

Organizational Bureaucracy

The term bureaucracy is frequently heard and used, linking it with the conduct of public affairs and activities. Mulder (2017) is of the opinion that bureaucracy is an organizational system that features rules, standardized process, procedures and professional interactions between employees, which means that organizations must have some workable features and system of authority in order to carry out their duties and be able to achieve their set goals. Adebayo (2004) opined that 'the term bureaucracy seems to have developed a deceptive sense, an odious connotation synonymous within efficiency, lack of ambition, unintelligent rigidity in the approach to human

problems. However, as indicated by Max Weber, bureaucracy as a system of government and organizations should be in an optimal organizational framework. In gaining logic, removing chaos and preventing uncertainty in the company, bureaucracy is an efficient method of management (Köybaşı *et al.*, 2017). In Weber's view, one of the key evaluations of communities was to have the highest possible productivity with a clear justification for social and economic goals. Bureaucracy was developed as a philosophy of organizations ideally tailored to the needs of large and diverse entities that offer services to large numbers of consumers. Weber's concept of bureaucracy was an attempt to curtail the frustration and irrational of large organizations in which the relationships between management and employees were based on ethnicities of class privilege.

Types of Bureaucracy

Coercive bureaucracy: this type of bureaucracy has a tendency to touch the features of dictatorship in its procedure. In this kind of atmosphere, transparency is often not seen and anyone, who deviates from standardized process are met with harsh punishment. Brian (2011) explained that 'coercive procedures are intended to restrict conduct to a limited subset of authorized practices, coercive rules are established to require enforcement, punish violations, and impose enforcement with certain requirements'.

Enabling or encouraging bureaucracy: This form of bureaucracy encourages a working environment in which workers are motivated to develop their skills and to assist in developing the normal procedure. Enabling bureaucracy is intended to allow those inside the organization to facilitate independent action, contemplation, and change (Brian, 2011). Enabling bureaucracy requires regulations that are designed in an adaptable and dynamic way to further improve employees' productivity. It facilitates a working atmosphere in which workers are motivated to develop their skills and to assist in developing standard procedures (Mike, 2017).

Mock bureaucracy: is a type of bureaucracy in which the higher-level staff and the lower-level staff do not feel any guilt for dealing with the rules collection. Kevin (2016) claimed that there are mock bureaucracies, where the absence of assumed authority of explicit laws results in a trend of overt corporate non-compliance with certain regulations, but where laws, schedules and practices are present but ignored. Mike (2017) said that smoking laws in an organisation, where both higher authorities and basic personnel often ignore the legislation will be an example of this bureaucracy.

Representative bureaucracy: This type of bureaucracy enforces rules in an institution that are in the benefit of both upper and lower management. A representative bureaucracy was described, in an ideal sense, as a microcosm or miniature of society as a whole by Pan (1994). In the manufacturing sector, representational bureaucracy is predominant. Protection rules that are applied in a factory atmosphere will be an example. In such an atmosphere, the rules are followed without any animosity by each stakeholder in unison (Mike, 2017). Voice bureaucracy is a situation in which, in the interest of the member of the organisation, all sectors of an organisation have a voice in decision-making. Representative bureaucracy theory indicates that a demographically representative (passive representation) public sector workforce would contribute to policy effects that reflect the interests of all represented populations, particularly, traditionally marginalized (active representation) populations (Bradbury & Kellough, 2008).

Punishment based bureaucracy: This form of bureaucracy causes a sense of control or

superiority when one side seeks to impose a series of laws on the other, and by carrying out penalties, failure to comply with the laws is always dealt with. In a company, for instance, there may be regulations on working hours and inability to adhere to them will lead to payment cuts (Mike, 2017).

Public Administration and Bureaucracy

The term 'bureaucracy' according to Weber (1964) is often heard and used in connection with the conduct of public affairs and the activities of public officials in particular. What exactly is the meaning of the term? Or rather, what does the average person think the term means? To give an insight in to the popular concept of the term 'bureaucracy' a sample is given below, being an excerpt from press publications of Sunday observer, editorial comments, 14 January 1979.

We clamour for fast development of our economy and we seem to believe that the importation of technology is the answer. It would appear that a mighty spanner has been thrown into our wheel of progress by an unreasoning bureaucratic protocol and red-tapism in a bid to maintain the status quo. The thinking seems to be that if our scientists are given enough room to breathe and can invent some of the things we now import, the chances of some officials getting rich quick would have been reduced. (Adebayo, 1981)

The word 'bureaucratic' therefore appears to have acquired an opprobrious meaning, an odious connotation. It is associated with inefficiency, lack of initiative, un-intelligent rigidity in the approach to human problems, undue fussiness and bossiness on the part of officials and downright stubbornness. This appears to be the sum of impressions that spring to mind at the mention of the word bureaucratic, when applied to the way that public officials go about their business.

It is interesting to note that this impression is not confined to the Nigerian public service or those of other underdeveloped countries. Nor is it an impression that has gained prominence only in recent times. As far back as the eighteenth century, there was recorded evidence of outbursts against what were considered to be the odious aspects of public administration. These were seen to be manifested in the way public officials went about their business and the impression created in the minds of the public was summarized by the term 'bureaucratic'.

Productivity

The concept of productivity has been described variously by different scholars, analysts and organisations. Some think of productivity as a measure of the economy as a whole. Others think of productivity in terms of individual industries or plants. Some businessmen in their public relations speak as though the whole matter of productivity had to do with the degree of application of the workers to their jobs. At other times, the concept of productivity is used as though it were a measure of the degree of efficiency achieved in production (Freeman, 2008). An ILO publication has defined productivity as the ratio between output of wealth and the input of resources used in the process of production (ILO, 1978). The Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) has defined the concept of productivity as follows. In its widest sense it may be said that productivity is the measurement of the economic soundness of the nations.

The European Productivity Agency (EPA) has defined productivity as follows. "Productivity is an attitude of mind. It is a mentality of a progress, of the constant improvement of that which exists. It is the certainty of being able to do better today than yesterday and continuously. It is the constant adaptation of economic and social life to changing conditions. It is the continual effort to apply new techniques and methods. It is the faith in human progress. One thing common to all these concepts of productivity is the desire to portray some one's ability to produce or the rate at which production is carried. Mehta (1987 p.17) defines productivity as the "ratio of output to the corresponding labour", he places the validity of this definition on its popularity. Salter accepts the measure of labour productivity as output per man hour because it has a perfectly respectable ancestry. Kendrick also opined that "productivity" used to denote the ratio of output to any or all associated inputs in real terms. But today there appears to be a consensus of opinion that productivity is the ratio of output to input. Here it may be desirable to mention the difference between the productivity of enterprise as a whole or industrial productivity and the labour productivity. Whereas the increase in the 'productivity of the enterprise as a whole' is a simple function of the factors like technological advancement, improved managerial or organisational skills better entrepreneurial ability, positive attitude of all concerned, good industrial relations and the like. The productivity of labour depends on the stimuli or incentives available to human effort (Prokopenko, 1978) The international labour organisation productivity mission in India also pointed out that productivity does not mean mechanisation. It means development of scientific attitude on the part of management and that of labour through the adoption of scientific principles and scientific techniques. In the words of Riggs, "productivity is the quality, or state of being productive. It is a concept that guides the management of production systems and measures its success. It is the quality that indicates how well labour, capital, materials, and energy are utilised. Increasing productivity is a goal advocated by business organised labour and Government. A change in productivity of a system results from the combined effect of all the factors contributing to the system's performance (Katzell *et al*; 1978).

Historically productivity measures related to the physical and technical aspects of the productive process. A formal organisation was created to handle problems of specialisation departmentation and technical co-ordination of jobs in an organisation. The Industrial Revolution brought significant changes in technical conditions of production. Before the advent of Industrial Revolution an individual made the complete product and there existed a simple and flexible relationship between the crafts man and his few assistants. The introduction of machinery and large scale production changed the structure of jobs and the nature of work process. Jobs were divided and individuals work was conditioned by work processes which were increasingly characterised by repetitive jobs, immediate dependence on the work of others and problems of man-machine relationships. Subsequently, the writings of Taylor, Gulick and others laid the foundations of a theory of organisation based on division of labour, technical consideration of task, time and motion study and allocation of jobs or positions. Thus consideration of work process and division of work were of primary importance. Man has always been interested in easier ways of doing things, since he first thought of the wheel and cart to help him carry loads (Lawhor, 1985).

The modern approach to study of organisation and productivity attempts to provide an integrated framework which combines both the classical and the neo classical elements. It treats organisation

as a system of mutually dependent variables. The studies undertaken by the Tavistock Institute of human relations illustrated the usefulness of viewing organisations as socio-technical systems. The analysis of socio technical system is important for the determination of optimum solutions for process, design. The task of process specifications that will produce the output most economically process design is concerned with selecting the work stations, managers have to give consideration to the behavioural consequences of arranging work situations. In an assembly line, the work is divided into individual tasks and assigned to consecutive operations on the line. The manager should give considerations to the need for designing work situations so as-to create favourable interpersonal relationship in addition to meeting the technological specifications. In industries where work groups operate under conditions of pooled interdependence, the manager should give consideration to the creation of sequential work groups that generate social motivation and promote productivity.

Method

The paper applied a cross sectional survey to gather data from the Rivers State Pensions Board and pensioners of Rivers State. The basic instrument for data collection was the questionnaire.

The population for this paper was drawn from the employees of the Rivers State Pensions Board and the Rivers State Union of Pensioners which officially is put at six hundred (600). Two Hundred and Fifty (250) staffers of the board and Three Hundred and Fifty (350) pensioners (**Source:** Rivers State Pensions Board Office, 2023).

The sample size for the paper was determined using the Taro Yamane's formula:

Where N = the finite (known) size of population.

n = sample size

e = sample error

The choice of this formular was based on the fact that the size of the population of interest is finite or known.

$$\text{Therefore, } \frac{600}{1+600} (0.05) \\ = 240$$

The sources of data collection for the paper was mainly primary. However, information from secondary sources like the internet, published works, journals, books, newspapers, etc. was also used, where necessary, to further buttress our arguments and enrich the work.

Primary Sources of Data: Spiege (1972) defined it as those collected first hand information from original sources from the user's express purpose, such data are usually obtained from the field through key personnel interviews, questionnaires, observations or recording of official transactions for this paper a likert scale structured questionnaire was the instrument used for primary data.

Secondary Sources of Data: These are data obtained second hand from published or documentary materials. Such data could be gotten quickly and cheap compared with data collected specially for the problem at hand. The secondary sources of information for this paper include text books, magazines, newspapers, journals, government publications and information retrieved from the internet.

Chi-square was utilised to test the single hypothesis that guided the paper, while simple percentages and statistics as well content analysis was adopted to analyze generated data.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Showing the Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
25 – 30	40	16.67
31 – 55	35	14.58
56 and above	165	68.75
Total	240	100

Sources: Field Work, 2023.

From the data shown above 40, (24%) of respondents are between the ages of 25-30 years. 35 (14.58%) are between the ages of 31 – 55 years. While 165 (68.75%) are 56 years and above. The significance of the age distribution as shown above is that a combined 200 respondents representing 75.7% are between the ages 31 and above.

Table 2: Showing the Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Single	25	10.42
Married	215	89.58
Total	240	100

Source: Field Work, 2023.

Majority of the people polled (89%) are married.

Question: Does the merit principle being practised at the Rivers State Pensions Board enhance productivity?

Table 3

Variables	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Very low extent	90	48	-42
Low extent	85	48	-37
Uncided	10	48	-38
Large extent	15	48	-28
Very large extent	20	48	-13
Total	240		

Source: Field Work, 2023

Majority of respondents believe that the merit principle is practiced in a very low(90) and low extent (85), while only 15 and 20 believe it I practice in a large and very large extent, respectively. What this means is that the merit principle which is a key principle of bureaucracy is not fully practiced at the Rivers state pension board.

Decision Rule

- A. Where the calculated value is less than the tabulated (critical) value, the Ha will be eliminated and the Ho will be acknowledged.
- B. Where the calculated value is higher than the tabulated (critical) value, the Ha will be acknowledged and the Ho will be eliminated.

$$\text{Chi-square Test: } X^2 = \sum_j \left(\frac{oL - E_j}{E_j} \right)$$

Hypothesis

Ha –The merit principle is practised at the River state Pensions Board.

Table 4

Variables	Response(0)	Expected N
Very low extent	37	15.42
Low extent	49	20.42

Undecided	46	19.17
Large extent	50	20.88
Very large extent	58	24.11
Total	240	100

$E = \sum O/N = 240/5 = 48$

O	E	O-E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
37	48	-11	121	2.5208
49	48	1	1	0.0208
46	48	-2	4	0.0833
50	48	2	4	0.0833
58	48	10	100	2.0833

$X^2_{cal} = \frac{(O-E)^2}{E} = 4.7915$

N=Number of observations

O=Observed Value

E=Expected Value

(O-E)=Residual Value

$(O - E)^2 =$ Square of Residual Value

$\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$ = Square of Residual Value divided by Expected Value

$\sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$ -Chi-square Value Calculated= $X^2_{calculated}$

$X^2_{calculated} = 4.7915$

Df=(11-1)=(5-1)=4

$X^2_{read} = X^2(0.05,4)=9.488$

Since $X^2_{read} = X^2(0.05,4) > X^2_{calculated}$

$9.488 > 4.7915$

The Null is accepted since the Chi-Square Value calculated falls within the acceptable region.

This implies that the merit principle is not fully practised at the River state Pensions Board.

Discussion

Owing to the analysis of responses to the structured question which the paper raises, it was determined that the merit principle of bureaucracy is not fully practiced at the Rivers state pensions board. This manifested on the outcome of the hypothesis examined, evaluated and was discovered that statistical chi-square (X^2) value of 4.7915 is less than X^2 tabulated value of 9.488. A study by the National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies, NIPSS (2017) found out that the hiring and promotion process in the Nigerian civil service is often based on favouritism and nepotism rather than merit.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Owing to the analysis of responses to the structured question raised by the paper, it was determined that the merit principle of bureaucracy is not practiced at the Rivers state pensions board. This manifested on the outcome of the hypothesis examined, evaluated and was discovered that statistical chi-square (X^2) value of 4.7915 is less than X^2 tabulated value of 9.488.

Flowing from the conclusions the following recommendation is thus made:

Meritocracy, which is one of the cardinal principles of bureaucracy as propounded by Weber and emphasized by other proponents of the concept should be adhered in the operations of the pensions board, and indeed the entire civil service. Without merit, the board will not be productive.

There should be merit in staff recruitment, promotion, and processing of pensioners gratuity and pensions. This should also be reflective in the nature of the prevailing human relations in the Rivers State Pensions Board.

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