

# Conflict of Interest and Workers Productivity in the Nigerian Civil Service

**Basil C. Onuoha (PhD)**

Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Uyo

Uyo, Akwaibom State, Nigeria

## Abstract

This paper studies the impact of conflict of interest on the level of productivity of workers in the Nigeria civil service. Inspired by the role model theory, this study draws information from the responses in the questionnaires shared among members of the senior and junior cadre. These respondents were picked using multi-stage sampling technique which implies stratified and random processes. To this end 120 questionnaires were distributed out of which 105 were returned. The data obtained was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). Data analysis made three important conclusion and these are: (i) The absence of the feeling of relative deprivation by a worker in the civil service in terms of job related rewards like promotion, salary etc. have a positive impact on the worker's productivity (ii) Workers in the civil service tends to increase their productivity on responsibilities that have direct/immediate impact on their locality (iii) Workers in civil service tend to increase their productivity on responsibilities that have direct impact on their local constituency than in other responsibilities.

**Keywords:** conflict, interest, productivity, relative deprivation, civil service.

## Introduction

Conflict is an inevitable part of the life of any organization. This is so because an organization is like an organism with several parts which are designed to perform specific functions to achieve the overall goal of the organization. The most important part of any public organization is its workforce. But be as it may, conflict in terms of the interest of the worker and the goals of the organization sometimes occur due to the insatiable nature of man. But despite the perceived implication of this, few studies have ventured to investigate the impact of this on productivity in order to established the linkages between the interest of workers and their performance in an organization (Mas & Morretti, 2009; Ebert & Moyes 2000; Bossert & D'Ambrosio 2006; Nickerson & Zenger 2008; Akerlof 1984; Stark & Hyll 2011; Yitzhaki 1979; Worsworthy & Zabala 1985; Sakamoto & Liu 2005). Our a-priori expectation which is anchored on the role model theory is that every individual worker performs two roles in an organization.

The first is the organizational/functional role which are the function ascribed to the individual by the organization and the second is the societal/communal role which are the functions ascribed to the individual by the society based on the individual's position in an organization. In Africa for example, once an individual occupies a position of authority in the civil/public service it is expected that the individual will use that position to secure privileges,

employment and wealth to the members of his family, village and other beneficiaries of his patronage, failure to do so will usually earn the individual poor reputation among his/her family and kindred. As a result the individual is then said to be expected to also perform societal/communal role which may in some occasion be in conflict with the organizational/functional role. As a result of this and more there may arise a conflict between the interest of the individual and that of the organization. Armed with this observation we therefore theorize that:

**Hypothesis I:** The absence of the feeling of relative deprivation by a worker in the civil service in terms of job related reward has a positive impact on the productive output of the worker.

**Hypothesis II:** Workers in civil service tend to increase their productivity on responsibilities that have direct impact on their local constituency than in other responsibilities.

**Hypothesis III:** Workers perception of government's policy tends to significantly affect their work output when given a responsibility aimed at implementing that policy.

### Research Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design. The instrument used to obtain data is a structured questionnaire which was administered and retrieved directly by the researchers. To this end, 120 civil servants from the senior and junior cadre of both the Federal Civil Service were selected as population sample. Out of the 120 questionnaires distributed 105 was completed. The sampling technique adopted is the multi-stage sampling techniques which imply stratified and random processes. The adoption of the stratified method is justified due to the fact that the sample population comprises of different stratum of the civil service across various ministries of the Federal Civil Service. This sample was drawn from the various Federal ministries and agencies in the Federal Secretariat complex Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria to represent the needed sample that represents the federal civil service.

The questionnaire administered to the respondents is structured with 10 items designed to rate their response on a 4-point likert scale. The 4 options used are: Strongly Agreed (SA), Agree (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD). This instrument was authenticated and declared valid by an expert in social science research at the University of Uyo in line with the validity expectations expressed by Denga & Ali (1983). The instrument is reliable. The degree of reliability was measured using a pilot test with 10 respondents and weighed a reliability coefficient of 0.89 using the Cronbach alpha reliability analysis.

To present the data obtained we shall use tables and percentages while the testing of the three hypotheses was done using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The formula is expressed below as:

$$r = \frac{n \sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{[\sqrt{n(\sum x^2) - (\sum x)^2}][\sqrt{n(\sum y^2) - (\sum y)^2}]}$$

Where:

$$\begin{aligned} r &= \text{correlation} \\ x &= \text{independent variable} \\ y &= \text{independent variable} \end{aligned}$$

the decision rule is that when  $r = 1$  a signifies a significant relationship between variables  $x$  and  $y$ . This implies that an increase in  $x$  will lead to an increase in  $y$ . therefore if  $r = -1$  the relationship between  $x$  and  $y$  is significant. This is done at 0.01 level of significance.

### Data Analysis and Presentation

In this section data obtained in the field survey will be analyzed and extensively discussed. But it is pertinent to present first the demographic characteristics of the respondents and their responses to the items in the questionnaire.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Characteristics	Sex	Age	Educational Qualification	Cadre
	Male 5 (62%)	18-27 20 (19%)	FSLC-SSCE 22 (21%)	Senior 50 (47.6%)
	Female 40 (38%)	28-37 52 (51%)	OND – 38 (37%)	Junior 55 (52.4%)
		38-47 19 (17%)	BSC.HND 29 (28%)	
		>48 14 (13%)	>BSC 11 (10%)	
			Others 5 (5%)	
<b>Total</b>	<b>105 (100%)</b>	<b>105 (100%)</b>	<b>105 (100%)</b>	<b>105 (100%)</b>

Source: Field survey, 2016

Table 1 shows the distribution of the demographic characteristics of the respondents. the table showed that out of 105 respondents 65 are male which represents 62% of the sampled population while 40 respondents were female and constitute 38% of the sample. 20 (19%) respondents are within the age bracket of 18-27, 52 (51%) within the bracket of 28-37 years, 19 (17%) are aged between 38-47 while 14 (13%) are above 48 years of age. In terms of academic qualifications 22 respondents which is 21%. In terms of academic qualifications 22 respondents which is 21% of the sample holds SSCE or less, OND holders are 38 (37%) BSC/HND holders are 29 (28%) those above BSC are 11 (10%) while those that have other question or declined to reveal their qualification total 5. (5%). Furthermore there are 50 (47.6%) senior staffs in the sample while junior staffs are 55 (52.4%).

**Table 2: Analysis of Respondents Responses**

Question	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1.	35	38	18	14	105
2.	(32.69%)	(36.53%)	(17.30%)	(13.46%)	(100%)
3.	21 (19.23%)	16 (15.38%)	40 (33.64%)	28 (26.92%)	105 (100%)
4.	14 (13.46%)	13 (11.53%)	44 (42.30%)	34 (32.69%)	105 (100%)
5.	24 (23.07%)	20 (19.23%)	26 (25%)	35 (32.69%)	105 (100%)
6.	20 (19.23%)	16 (15.38%)	34 (32.69%)	35 (32.69%)	105 (100%)
7.	17 (5.76%)	8 (7.69%)	40 (38.46%)	50 (38.46%)	105 (100%)
8.	44 (42.30%)	34 (32.69%)	18 (17.30%)	8 (7.69%)	105 (100%)
9.	14 (13.46%)	20 (19.23%)	30 (28.84%)	40 (38.46%)	105 (100%)
10.	20 (19.23%)	20 (19.23%)	32 (30.76%)	32 (30.76%)	105 (100%)

Key: SA (Strongly Agreed), A (Agreed) D (Disagreed) SD (Strongly Disagreed)

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

### Testing of Hypothesis

In this section we shall analyze the data obtained from the study. The three null hypotheses that will be tested are as follows:

- (i) The absence of the feeling of relative deprivation by a worker in the civil service in terms of job related reward has a negative impact on the productive output of the worker.
- (ii) Workers in civil service tend to decrease their productivity when given responsibilities that directly affect their constituency than when given other responsibilities.

- (iii) Workers perception of government policy tends to significantly affect their work output when given a responsibility aimed at implementing that policy.

### Hypothesis I

The absence of the feeling of relative deprivation by a worker in the civil service in terms of job related reward has a negative impact on the productive output of the worker.

**Table 3: PPMC analysis on worker's feeling of relative deprivation and productive output**

Variables	$\Sigma X_1$	$\Sigma X_1^2$	$\Sigma X_1 Y$	r	Z calculated	Z tabulated	n
	$\Sigma Y$	$\Sigma Y^2$					
Worker's feeling of relative deprivation ( $x_1$ )	993	9967					
			21,883	-0.457	-5.457	1.96	105
Worker's productive output (Y)	2398	65,406					

n = Number of respondents; significance level: 0.01

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

Decision Rule: When  $r = 1$  it signifies a significant relationship between variables X and Y which implies that an increase in X will lead to an increase in Y. If  $r = -1$  then the relationship between x and y is insignificant. Based on the above rule the PPMC analysis showed a negative relationship because an insignificant correlation coefficient of -0.457 and  $Z_{\text{calculated}}$  of -5.8331 was obtained at 0.01 level of significance. Based on this analysis we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that when a worker in the civil service has a feeling of relative deprivation when compared to the colleagues there is high tendency that the level of productivity of such a worker will drop. We therefore accept the following alternative hypothesis.

$H_1$ : The absence of the feeling of relative deprivation by a worker in the civil service in terms of job related reward has a positive impact on the productive output of the worker.

We accept the above alternative hypothesis given that the  $Z_{\text{calculated}}$  (-5.8331) is less than the  $Z_{\text{tabulated}}$  (1.96).

### Hypothesis II

Workers in civil service tend to increase their productivity on responsibilities that have direct impact on their local constituency than in other responsibilities.

**Table 4: PPMC analysis on worker's decrease in their productivity on responsibilities that have direct impact on their local constituency than in other responsibilities**

Variables	$\Sigma X_1$	$\Sigma X_1^2$	$\Sigma X_1 Y$	r	Z calculated	Z tabulated	n
	$\Sigma Y$	$\Sigma Y^2$					
Worker's productivity (x)	1261	15,549					
			28,484	-0.3653	-3.9620	1.96	105
Worker's productive output (Y)	2398	65,406					

n = 400; significance level: 0.01

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

**Decision Rule:** When  $r = 1$  it signifies a significant relationship between variables X and Y which implies that an increase in X will lead to an increase in Y. if  $r = -1$  then the relationship between X and Y is significant. Based on the above rule the PPMC analysis showed a negative relationship between an insignificant correlation coefficient of -0.3653 and  $Z_{\text{calculated}}$  of -3.9620

was obtained at 0.01 level of significance. Based on this analysis we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that when a worker is given a responsibility that have direct impact on his/her constituency he/she tends to perform better than when given other responsibilities. We therefore accept the following alternative hypothesis.

H<sub>2</sub>: Workers in public service tend to increase their productivity on responsibilities that have direct impact on their local constituency than in other responsibilities.

### Hypothesis III

Workers perception of government policy tends not to significantly affect their work output when given a responsibility aimed at implementing that policy.

**Table 5: PPMC Analysis of Workers Perception and Work Output**

Variables	$\Sigma X_1$	$\Sigma X_1^2$	$\Sigma X_1 Y$	r	Z calculated	Z tabulated	n
	$\Sigma Y$	$\Sigma Y^2$					
Workers perception (x)	1022	10,461					
Worker's productive output (Y)	2398	65,406	24,519	0.10	1.0150	1.06	105

n = Number of respondents; significance level: 0.01

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

**Decision Rule:** When  $r = 1$  it signifies a significant relationship between variables X and Y which implies that an increase in X will lead to an increase in Y. If  $r = -1$  then the relationship between X and Y is insignificant. Based on the above rule the PPMC analysis showed a negative relationship because an insignificant correlation coefficient of 0.10 and  $Z_{\text{calculated}}$  of 1.0150 was obtained at 0.01 level of significance. Based on this analysis we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that workers perception of government policy tends to significantly affect their work output when given a responsibility aimed at implementing that policy.

### Discussion of Findings

From the analysis of the three hypothesis there are three main conclusions drawn. The first is that the absence of the feeling of relative deprivation by a worker in the civil service in terms of job related reward do positively impact on the production output of the worker. This finding is not peculiar to this study and is in line with the findings by Liu & Sakamoto (2005) in their study of the linkage between relative deprivation, efficiency wages and labour productivity with cases drawn from the Taiwanese manufacturing industries. They concluded that while evidence contradicts the assumption by many labour economists that efficiency in wages have a net positive effect on labour productivity they did found out that relative deprivation do have a negative effect on workers' productivity. This finding on relative deprivation having an effect on labour productivity have been the focus of previous studies as stated earlier (see, Akerlof 1984; Stark & Hyll, 2011; Veblen, 1899; Dur & Glazer, 2008; Nickerson & Zenger, 2008). In line with this Akerloff & Yellen (1990:255) observed that "according to the fair wage-effort hypothesis, workers proportionately withdraw effort as their actual wage falls short of their fair wage" a stance which agrees with Worworthy & Zabala (1895) result in their study of worker's productivity in the United States automobile industry over a twenty year period.

The second finding that workers in public service tend to increase their productivity on responsibilities that have direct impact on their local constituency than in other responsibilities. The logic behind this validated hypothesis is that people tends to take more care of things that affect them directly than otherwise. Westwood (2015) in a Forbes magazine presented an argument that is in line with our findings. He noted that when workers have personal interest in a workplace they tend to increase their input in the workplace.

Our third findings that workers perception of government policy tends to significantly affect their output when given a responsibility aimed at implementing that policy stems from the logic that as individuals workers in the civil service tends to internalize, personalize and appreciate a policy that is in line with their perception opinion than others. This gives an additional morale boost than when they are indifferent to a policy or finds the policy un-wanting. For example the encouragement to use contraceptives and its distribution by the Ministry of Health receives a lackadaisical approach by workers from catholic background due to their religious beliefs.

### Conclusion

This research was carried out to investigate the linkage between conflict of interest and workers productivity conflict of interest was captured using three variables which are:

- (i) Feeling of relative deprivation by the worker
- (ii) Responsibilities that have direct impact on the worker's local constituency
- (iii) Worker's perception of the government policy implemented.

Drawing evidence from data drawn from structured questionnaires collected from 105 respondents drawn from the federal civil service of Nigeria this study concludes that:

- (i) The absence of the feeling of relative deprivation by a worker in the civil service in terms of job related rewards like promotion, salary etc do indeed have a positive impact on the worker's productive output.
- (ii) Workers in the civil service tend to increase their productivity on responsibilities that have direct/immediate impact on their local constituency.
- (iii) Workers in public service tend to increase their productivity on responsibilities that have direct impact on their local constituency than in other responsibilities.

### References

- Akerlof, G. A. (1984). "Gift Exchange and Efficiency-Wage Theory: Four Views" *American Economic Review*, 74:79-83.
- Bossert, W. & D'Ambrosio, C. (2006). "Reference Groups and Individual Deprivation: An Axiomatic Characterization of Yiezhaki's Index of Individual Deprivation" *Economics Letters*, 90 (3): 421 – 426.
- Denga, L. & Ali, N. (1983). *An Introduction to Research Methods and Statistics in Education and Social Sciences*. Jos: Savannah Publishers Limited.
- Dur, R. & Glazer, A. (2008). "Optimal Contracts when a Worker Envis His Boss" *Journal of Law, Economics and Organization*, 24(1): 120 – 137.
- Ebert, U. & Moyes, P. (2000). "An Axiomatic Characterization of Yitzhaki's Index of Individual Deprivation" *Economics Letters*, 68 (3): 263 – 270.
- Mas, A & Morretti, E. (2009). "Peers at Work" *American Economic Review*, 99(1): 112 – 145.
- Nickerson, J. & Zenger, T. (2008). "Envy, Comparison Costs, and the Economic Theory of the Firm" *Strategic Management Journal*, 29, No. 13 (1): 429 – 450.
- Sakamoto, A. & Liu, J. (2005). "Relative Deprivation, Efficiency Wages and Labour Productivity in Taiwanese Manufacturing Industries" *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 23:303-341.
- Stark, O. & Hyll, W. (2011). "On the Economic Architecture of the Workplace: Repercussions of Social Comparisons among Heterogeneous Workers". *Journal of Labour Economics*, 29(2): 349 – 375.
- Worsworthy, J. R. & Zabala, C. (1985). "Effects of Worker Attitudes in Production Costs and the Value of Capital Inputs" *Economic Journal*, 95: 992 – 1002.
- Yeblen, T. (1899). *The Theory of the Leisure Class. Reports of Economic Classics*. New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1965.
- Yitzhaki, S. (1979). "Relative Deprivation and the Gini Coefficient" *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 93 (2): 321 – 324.