IMPLEMENTATION OF ETHICAL STANDARDS AND VALUES AND THE CRISIS OF ETHICAL DECLINE IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC SERVICE

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ABSTRACT
The continued impunity due to flagrant non-adherence to ethical codes and standards by public officials in the Nigerian public service has led to inability of the sector to provide goods and services to the people. This paper analysed the nature and state of ethical decline in Nigerian Public Service. It also investigates the causes of ethical decline, as well as appraise strategies and mechanisms for promoting and enhancing ethical standard in Nigerian Public Service. Purposive sampling technique was used to draw 76 samples for interview schedules. The study also utilized extensively policy documents and implementation reports. The findings identified lack of financial accountability and probity, incessant breakdown of discipline, institutionalisation of corruption at all levels and segments of the public service, and disregard for rules and regulations as the nature and state of unethical behaviour in Nigerian Public Service. The findings also revealed that the continual monopolisation of state power by ruling elites and the lack of respect for rule of law that endangers effective implementation of policies and regulations are causes of unethical behaviours in the public service. The findings further ascertained that enforcement of sanctions and punishment on every erring public official will dissuade them from actions that runs contrary to the ethos of the public service. The paper concluded that the implementation of ethical standards in the Nigerian public service have been very poor.

Keywords: Ethics, Ethical Standards, Values, Ethical Decline, Public Service

I. INTRODUCTION
With the attainment of political independence in 1960s, most countries in Africa inherited a public service whose main features of state machinery were those of their former colonial governments. Haque (2001) admits that post-independence African public services uphold pre-colonial administrative systems that promote ascendancy of politics over administration, which implies the subordination of private capital and entrepreneurship to the state. Jabeen (2007) concludes that all these constraints led to low human development and quality of governance in South Asian countries, like their counterparts in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Despite the fact that public service is saddled with the responsibility of service delivery to citizens, most public services in SSA has performed dismally in the area of service delivery. This precipitated the necessity for reforms by several SSA countries with the intention of situating the service in a position to accomplish the yearnings of citizens.

Public service globally, and in SSA in particular is experiencing a gradual decline in their efficiency and effectiveness. Thus, ethical decline among officials of the SSA public service has assume a devastating proportion with records of massive corruption. This has attracted immense criticisms from members of the public leading to loss of confidence by members of the society in the capability of the service to provide efficient services to the them. Hence, Sakpere (2021) reported that public sector globally is currently undergoing series of reforms in order to reposition the service in a way that it can effectively fulfil its functions so as to meet the needs and yearnings of members of the society. The purpose of these reforms, according to Mayne and Zapico-Goni (1997) is to reinvigorate the public service.

In strengthening bureaucratic reforms, Bryson, Crosby and Bloomberg (2014) advocates a paradigm shift from Traditional Public Administration (TPA) and New Public Management (NPM) to a new perspective that emphasises democratic values, and authorises and advances public values. Bryson et al regards this new perspective as a budding procedure and modus operandi for public administration to redress issues threw up by TPA and NPM. Bryson et al recognises the need to focus on efficiency by TPA while the NPM should focus on efficiency and effectiveness, and the new approach highlights public value governance. In order to
fortify democratic political culture, Finkel (2014) advocates necessity for civic education on programmes as requirements that achieves consequential influence on developing democracies such as those in SSA countries as regards increasing political information, growing perspectives of empowerment and mobilising citizens. In contrast, Finkel did not reveal how bolstering democratic political culture is associated with or link to prevailing indigenous culture to promote values, transparency and accountability in SSA public service.

Rahman (2012) recommends the necessity for parliamentary control through parliamentary committees in managing the government and holding it accountable. However, Rahman, recognises legislative or parliamentary ineffectiveness as a major constraint in holding government accountable in some developing countries like Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and SSA, for their poor performance in advancing democratic governance and accountability in government. Deriving his contention from recent developments in the developing countries public sector, McCourt (2013) recommends cognitively complex problem-solving approach to public service reforms that utilises six models of reform. McCourt highlights six models such as public administration, decentralisation, pay and employment reform, new public management, integrity and employment reforms, and bottom-up reforms. McCourt give detailed account of these six models as the new diversifications for public service reforms in developing countries like Nigeria.

Olowu (2005) attributes the growth of person and political freedoms by several governments in Nigeria to opening of democratic space since 1990s in the country. Eventually, this in due course led to changes in the strategies executed by African countries for economic management through emergence of private sector that differs from approaches employed by the state. These developments according to Olowu (2005) have impacts on public service accountability and transparency in Nigeria. Rasheed and Olowu (1993) elaborates further that lack of accountability, unethical behaviours, and corrupt practices have become entrenched and even institutionalised norms of behaviour in Sub-Sahara African public services. They attribute the near failure of Sub-Sahara African public services to bending of ethics and rules of conduct. This paper therefore, analyses the nature and state of ethical decline in Nigerian Public Service. It also investigates the causes of ethical decline, as well as appraise strategies and mechanisms for promoting and enhancing ethical standard in Nigerian Public Service.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Nigerian public service has gone through several reforms in order to build and position it in such a way to provide services that meet the yearnings of citizens it ought to serve. However, the Nigerian public service has come under severe criticism as being corrupt, inefficient, incompetent and inept due to lack of transparency and accountability, poor standard of behaviour and unethical conduct in the discharge of their duties. Olowu (1993) ascribes failure of the service to decades of strengthening executive institutions at the expense of building a virile and efficient public service. Ake (1993) chastised political leaders who took over power at independence and continued with the inherited public service that has no affinity to the society, people and indigenous structure. Hope (1997) admitted that the transformation of most African countries public service from bureaucratic administrations that reiterated good governance and rule of law; to those that advocate supremacy of political values and dominance over bureaucratic administration, resulting in politicize bureaucracy (Shellukindo and Baguma, 1993).

The transparency international corruption index of 2019 published in January 2020 ranked countries by their perceived levels of public sector corruption based on Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). The results revealed that Sub-Sahara Africa accounts for 18 of the 31 most corrupt countries in the world. World Bank (2006) identifies lack of ethics, transparency and accountability as the major cause of corruption in the region. The World Bank further avers that where the political and bureaucratic elites are not under any form of scrutiny by extra – legal institutions such as the media, pressure groups, and political parties etc., hence, ethics, transparency and accountability in the Nigerian public service is jettisoned. Bozeman (2008) proffers that for there to be transparency and accountability, ethical standards must be part of the public service culture.

Tindifa (2009) affirms that ethics, transparency and accountability mutually reinforce one another. Tindifa infers that ethics sets proper standards of behaviour, which holds public institutions and society accountable, while accountability promotes efficient public administration and management, which ensures proper allocation of resources and promote accessibility to efficient services by the people in an equitable, transparent and legitimate manner. Substantiating further, Hill (1980) describes ethical code as a code of conduct, bylaws and values regulating the attitude and behaviour of members of the society.
2.1 Public Service Ethics

Upholding the principles and standards of right conduct by public office holders at all levels of government is an important aspect of public service ethics. An essential requirement in this regard is that public servants are required to respect the rule of law and the dignity of citizens in carrying out their official duties. Furthermore, various countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have initiated several reforms aimed at rejuvenating their public administration systems. An important element in the reform package is the rejuvenation and institutionalisation of codes of conduct by various countries. In Nigeria, code of conduct and other institutional arrangements have been put in place to provide overall guidance and ensure integrity and responsible behaviour in the public services (Sakyi & Bawole, 2009).

The poorly spelled out ethical codes and standards by SSA public service has led to weakening of ethics and accountability in their respective public services. Ethics has been referred to as a cornerstone of accountability, hence it is imperative that an effective ethical codes and standards is put in place to ensure an efficient public service delivery and good governance in SSA. In the same vein, effective ethical codes and standards are fundamental to values and ethics, which are significant in establishing sustainable social systems that will promote transparency and accountability, and are components of good governance. Ara and Islam (2019) identifies three core components of public service ethics, and these are values, norms, and morals (standards of behaviour).

2.2 Public Service Values

Values are major determinants of organisational culture and vital in ascertaining, controlling and instructing behaviour. Compliance with high-level public service values can attract tangible public trust and confidence. Contrarily, poor implementation of values or supporting inappropriate values can lead to decline in these vital elements of democratic governance, as well as to ethical and decision-making dilemmas (MacCarthaigh, 2008). Just as a core set of public service values is necessary, it applies equally that distinct values are appropriate for peculiar sections of the public service. Ara and Islam (2019) reveals that values involves individuals, group and social statements, opinion, attitudes towards freedom, justice, honesty, loyalty, neutrality, responsibility etc. of the public service officials.

The value system of public sector organisations especially in Nigeria have been facing serious setbacks, this may not be unconnected to ethical decline ravaging the sector. Bozeman (2007) further decries the public values failure bedevilling the system that was alluded to inability and failure of the market or public sector to provide the needed goods and services necessary to attain public values, which are operationalised with regard to a set of eight criteria. For instance, Bozeman proposes that political processes and social cohesion should be adequate to ensure effective communication and processing of public values. Kalambokidis (2014) asserts that citizens will be able to make informed judgements when transparency exist and is allowed to take pre-eminence in the operation of the public sector in practice.

Davis and West (2009) observes that public value creation is the extent to which public value criteria are achieved, and these criteria are accomplished through input, process, output, and outcome measures. Hence Bozeman (2007) establish that public values are measurable, though there can be difference of opinion on ways of conceptualising and measuring values. MacCarthaigh (2008) infers that due to disparity in values within different sections of the public service, it is imperative for managers and supervisors of various sections of the service to coordinate, reconcile and manage the conflicting values between individuals and among various sections of the organisation. For example, a distinction may be established between technical, regulatory and administrative tasks, or between those parts of a bureaucracy that has direct relation with the public and those which do not. Ethical dilemma or value conflicts is bound to occur when the goals, relationships and responsibilities cannot meet the demand on the public service (MacCarthaigh, 2008).

Moulton (2009) and Jacobs (2014) suggests that analysts, citizens, and policy makers should concentrate on the purpose of public values and on the approaches to be adopted and executed in order for institutions and processes to arrive at a consensus on procedure to accomplish public values in practice. MacCarthaigh (2008) concludes that myriad of dynamics opposes traditional values in the public service. This involve the emergence of new style of governance and the decentralisation of authority, market-based reforms (like the New Public Management), politicisation and political expectations, the upsurge in the use of agencies, decentralisation or relocation, transformation in human resource management and recruitment, and the emergence of new technologies and methods of information transmission.

2.3 Public Service Morals and Standards of Behaviour

Morality refers to the standards of behaviour by which people are judged particularly in their relationships with others. Geuras and Garofalo (2005) admit that morality implies good character and right
actions that build and support noble and virtuous character. Furthermore, Shaw and Barry (2010) sees morality as equitable conduct, fairness, moral eminence and freedom from the smear of dishonesty. Nonetheless, Akinyemi (2002) asserts that breakdown in morals, work ethics, discipline, social responsibility and general civility among citizens.

Moral problems occur regularly in SSA public sector organisations; hence, it can be concluded that ethics could imply moral principles that control or define an individual, groups behaviour, or the moral correctness of distinct actions. Forester (1981) depicts moral behaviour as the preparedness to carry out tough decisions with regard to right and wrong in the event of value conflicts. Moral problems also entail using public position for self-aggrandisement. Moral problems are managerial dilemmas in government. They exemplify a conflict between government financial performance and unethical practices of public administrators. This accounts for why York (1984) observed that at the core of administrative ethics are attitudes, standards, and system of values, which have been incorporated in the public servant.

The nature of the responsibility of government is open to interpretation, but it entails efficient and effective delivery of public goods and services to the people. Lewis and Gilman (2005) and Cooper (2006) concludes that part of functions of government is to protect loyal employees, provide good road and preserve the environment. However, the predicament of public sector management is that government usually fails in accomplishing these functions. Hence Svara (2007) proposes that public officials need to discharge their obligation with a duty-based approach that emphasises their responsibilities as public servant and the idea of public services.

Moral issues vary by individuals, group, region, country, culture and time (Shaw & Barry, 2010). For instance, contractors in South and Central America (and large parts of Africa and Asia) believe that it is appropriate to tip government officials to facilitate needed documents, permits and contracts. It is referred to as bribery in the United States (Bruce, 2001). Government officials in the United States, however, believe that it is appropriate to work for foreign firms that have business relationships with the government after they retire. It is treason in South and Central America and a large part of Asia (Geuras and Garofalo, 2005). Moral standards of behaviour vary between people because the goals, norms, beliefs and values on which they are sustained also varies. And those goals, norms, beliefs and values in turn differ because of variations in the religious and cultural traditions and the economic and social-situations in which the individuals are living or immersed.

III. METHODOLOGY
This research adopts the historical descriptive method of analysis by deploying the qualitative research method to analyse data and information to arrive at a conclusion.

3.1 Population and Sample
Six states were selected in all, with one state from each geopolitical zone of the country, namely: Niger (North Central), Gombe (Northeast), Kebbi (Northwest), Abia (Southeast), Cross River (South-south), and Ogun (Southwest). While two local governments councils were selected from each state, namely Kontogora and Lapai LGAs (Niger state), Shongom and Nafada LGAs (Gombe), Argungu and Ngaski LGAs (Kebbi State), Obinggwa and Arochukwu LGAs (Abia state), Bekwarra and Odukpani LGAs (Cross River), and Odogbolu and Ado-Odo/Ota LGAs (Ogun state). The article concentrated on selected parastatals, ministries, departments and agencies that make up the Nigerian public service. The MDAs selected at federal level were Federal Ministry of Special Duties, Nigerian Customs and Excise Services, and National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC); at the State level Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Local Government Service Commission, and State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB); and at the local government level, Community Health Department.

3.2 Data and Sources of Data
The empirical data is drawn from content analyses of interviews, public opinion research reports (POR), archival and library research. Interviews were conducted 76 managerial cadre staff in Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of federal, state and local governments in order to elicit information from the respondents.

3.3 Data Analysis
The research instruments utilised for data collection in this study were basically interviews and data from public opinion research reports (POR), archival and library research. This study also employed
conceptual and contextual analysis of relevant literature and official documents to evaluate the area of investigation.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Nature of Ethical Decline in Nigerian Public Service

a. Politicisation of the top hierarchy of the Public Service
   Appointment of officials into the top hierarchy of the public service has been politicised in such a way that it is at the discretion of the political office holders (President and Governors) and not by merit. Succession planning as a criterion for appointment into top bureaucratic position is no more based on merit, rather it has been subjected to the whims of politicians. Since the returning to democratic rule, huge public resources were spent on many public officials for their training and capacity development. However, at the point that these officials should be elevated to occupy vacant top hierarchical positions, they are forced to proceed on retirement because the government in power prefers an official that is subordinate. These actions of the present administration may be responsible for the state of the economy. Public institutions affected by this action include the Police, Army, Airforce, Navy, Immigration, Customs, NNPC and many other parastatals of government. Thus, patronage and allegiance to political office holders is now the criteria for promotion and not merit.

b. Lack of Financial Accountability and Probity
   Many of the top bureaucratic hierarchy of the public service were appointed to do the bidding of the politicians. Hence, they are not committed to financial accountability and probity. The political office holders benefit from the public service through the diversion of funds meant for the public to personal gains, and any step to at implementing financial accountability and probity will unearth corruption acts that they have engaged in. The parliamentary scrutiny of public budget implementation (expenditure) by Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in the past 6 years in Nigeria has exposed rot and high degree of corruption in the public service.

c. Incessant breakdown of Discipline
   The politicisation of public service and ascendancy of politics over administration (bureaucracy) has exposed the service to all forms of unethical behaviours and attitudes that exemplify public service indiscipline. Also, absenteeism, lateness, negligence in carrying out duties, corruption and mismanagement of public resources are some forms of indiscipline occurring in the public service.

d. De facto Institutionalisation of corruption at all levels and segments of the Public Service
   The politicisation of public service has led to institutionalisation of public service corruption at all levels and segments of the public service. The most common corrupt acts committed by public service officials include theft, absenteeism, bribery, lateness, falsification of figures, embezzlement of the organisation’s fund and fraud.

e. Disregard for Rules and Regulations
   Many of the public service officials do not adhere to rules and regulations guarding their actions. The public service in Nigeria is currently experiencing increasing number of misconduct cases. This sharp increase being witnessed is as a result newly recruited employees of the public service, whose recruitment were sponsored by politicians who happens to be their godfathers. The increasing numbers of political godfathers who happens to provide security for these public officials have increased the degree of impunity in the public service.

f. Loss of Direction
   The impunity that pervades the public service and exacerbates indiscipline among employees of the public service leading to loss of direction. The attitude to service by public officials indicates a workforce that have lost touch with the reality of the purpose and goals of the service.

g. General Decline in Efficiency and Effectiveness
   The public service is enmeshed with accusations of inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the sector due to poor service delivery. Due to the impunity that has ravaged the sector, employees’ skills are underutilised and this have reduced the productivity of the public service.
4.2 Causes of Ethical Decline in Nigerian Public Service

Ethical decline thrives in Nigerian public service due to a number of factors and instruments that have played a part and still creating problems. Decline in public service ethics and accountability can be contextualized when public officials deliberately violate, contravene or disregard their ethical obligations/standards when discharging their official functions. A common feature and trend currently transcending Nigerian public services is that ethical standards, moralism and fair play have been disregarded and corruption has become a recurring occurrence in the performance of public functions, resulting in systemic dysfunctions of the Nigerian public service. The causes of ethical degeneration are many and varied, but can arise from three main sources, namely political, cultural and economic factors.

1. Political Factor

a. Supremacy of the State over the Civil Society

The ruling elites could be referred to as the foundation of corruption in Nigeria as a result of the manner in which they exercise powers. Their continual monopolisation of state power has given rise to supremacy of the state over civil society and in turn has resulted in the ascendancy of the patrimonial state on economic and political power in the country. The continual control of decision-making by the ruling class through hijack of decision-making machinery has created the fertile soil and environment for corruption to thrive. Rose-Ackerman (1997) affirms that government officials do not separate their private interest from public interest, hence they at will take advantage of public/state assets which they misappropriate for their personal gains.

Ouma (1991) alleges that the governed have been part of this problem of the patrimonial state in many African countries including Nigeria. Ouma noted that as soon as a new administration comes to power, members of the society begin to patronise the ruling elite in order to enjoy patronage for their personal gain. Kpundeh (1994) avers that patronage have been a thriving system in Nigeria because those citizens who engage in it are the ones that receive one political appointment or the other from ruling elites. Elliot (1994) concludes that where patronage remains the basis for appointment, corruption thrives as well and permeates into every sector of political and economic life of the country including the private sector.

b. Increasing the Role of State Activity

Apart from the emergence of patrimonial state in Nigeria, centralisation of decision-making machinery of the state has also led to increasing multiplication of public enterprises. This also resulted in the enlargement of bureaucracy with growing discretionary power that was employed in order to siphon public treasury. Inability and lack of political will from the ruling elites to curb these trends of using public organisations to embezzle public funds provided the fertile soil for corruption thrive.

The increasing predominance of activities of government imply the inability to avert bureaucracy. This implies that transactions with public officials when obtaining a driver’s licence, international passport, contracts from public organisation require approval having gone through bureaucractic processes that requires exercise of authority. In the process of passing through bureaucractic tracking for approval, clients or members of the public are placed in a predicament to offer bribes and kickbacks under compulsion in order to complete the transactions. Hence, the extent to which corruption occurs is as a result of government involvement in the economy.

Government is expected to create a conducive environment through policies formulated and implemented for business to thrive. However, the involvement of government in the economy has created a lacuna for systematic exploitation of illegal income earning opportunities (such as bribes, kickbacks or settlement syndrome) through rent seeking opportunities by public officials. These incentives for corrupt practices came into existence because of the significant control that public officials execute over the instruments regulating valuable socio-economic benefits and private organisations are prepared to carry out illegal payments in order to acquire those benefits (Coolidge & Rose-Ackerman, 1997).

c. Ascendancy of Politics over Administration

Nigerian leaders after attaining independence, carried on with the inherited colonial bureaucratic administration and harped on the sovereignty of politics rather than the impartiality of administration. This was achieved specifically through emphasising political values and dominance over bureaucractic values. Thus, a politicised administrative system rather than a career system of administration based on high degree of professionalism emerged. In Nigeria today, promotion to the highest position of bureaucratic ladder is no
longer based on merit rather, it is based on nepotism occasioned by patronage or running errands for political office holders. Hence Shellukindo and Baguma (1993) concluded that “politics has since become the most significant state activity, and the politician whether a party leader or head of a military junta occupies a position of unquestionable supremacy in matters of decision making.” Nevertheless, the ensuing ‘associate-alliance’ aids the legitimisation and entrenchment of political supremacy over administrative values.

Shellukindo and Baguma affirms that these associates are interconnectedly attached devotedly together by patronage, fear or exploitation. More often than not, this associate-alliance are interested in exploiting what is going on for their self interest. In a situation political leadership is necessitated by greed, which is what happens all the time, those that patronises these greedy political leaders are the corrupt followers who collaborate with these political leaders to persecute those who uphold the rule of law and see them as dangerous.

2. Economic Factor
   a. Elusive Development

Hope (1997) ascribes the centralised economic decision-making system being practiced in many SSA countries and Nigeria in particular as prone to corruption. The centralisation of decision-making jettison bottom-up approach (which promotes accountability) and settles for top-bottom approach that elevates authoritarianism. Citizen participation in decision-making is not allowed by authoritarianism, and this creates room for ethical deficit and dilemma, which also creates the environment for ethical decline to take place in the public service. Ayitteh (1998) identify increasing state activity that has led to the eventual increase in the size of the public service. This in turn has resulted in increased public expenditure in terms of recurrent at the expense of capital projects that can stimulate the economy. Hence, the continual implementation of recurrent expenditure at the expense of capital project has resulted in elusive development in Nigeria. Inability of the Nigerian government to allocate more funds to capital projects and infrastructure has affected the growth of SMEs, which in turn is affecting the economy, thereby exacerbating poverty in the country.

Shellukindo and Baguma (1993) concludes that since public officials also partake of the economic hardships associated with these prevailing relapses in the economic conditions, they are prone to engage in corrupt acts in order to sustain their lifestyle or level of affluence or simply to survive or be frugal. Hence, in countries as diverse as Nigeria, the real value of public service emoluments and wages and their living standards has fallen due the high inflationary trends ravaging the economy. In the current prevailing situation confronting officials of the Nigerian public service, these officials are bound to jettison morals and civil values and engage in corrupt acts to be able to supplement their incomes. Robinson (1990) reports that salaries and living standards of public officials in some African countries including Nigeria deteriorated due to dwindling economic conditions. This is because the worsening economic situation led to the gradual depreciation and shrinking of wages of public service officials.

Lindauer (1994) relying on purchasing power index, attests that the situation led to demotivation and lost of self esteem thereby affecting their efficiency and compelling the public service officials to engage in corrupt acts by jettisoning every sense of morality and ethical conduct. These unethical behaviours, notwithstanding how much justification for it due to economic situations to enhance their supposedly meagre income, are destructive and harmful to the public service, and will eventually worsens the state of the economy.

b. Decline in the Earnings of Public Officials

Shellukindo and Baguma (1993) were of the view that public officials in African Public Service are poorly compensated, hence their performance in terms of discharging their duties have been on downward trend. This has also resulted in decline of ethical standard and also creating an environment for corruption to thrive. Deficiencies in public service remuneration can occur in two ways: wage levels and wage structure. The value of wages and salaries is being eroded due to the economic situation in Nigeria, which has affected the cost of living such that the wages can barely last a week. The downturn in the state of Nigerian economy also came with increasing high rate of inflation that has eroded the purchasing power of the Nigerian currency (Lindauer & Nunberg, 1994). The negative impact of the decline of income of the various cadres, and the resulting wage compression has led to the public service employees to devise other ways of augmenting their income.
3. Socio-Cultural Factor

a. Lack of Respect for Rule of Law

Adamolekun and Bryant (1994) argues that ethical decline is encouraged in the public service when the rule of law is not respected. Adamolekun et al avers that the lack of respect for rule of law endangers effective implementation of policies and regulations. McCarthy (1994) avers that the ruling elites in patrimonial states as found in SSA, has held the formal bureaucratic organisations hostage and taking advantage of them by meddling in powers and functions of government for personal interest. This is executed by dominating over the state machinery for enforcement of law and order. Such situation bequeaths substantial disposition in deciding actions to be taken and produces unfounded and untenable decisions that may be unlawful but undisputable in the courts. In such situation ethical decline is bound to flourish and possibly take place with impunity.

b. Absence of Exemplary Ethical Leadership

Ethical decline has been on the rise in Nigerian public service because political leaders and senior bureaucrats have failed to exemplify exemplary, impeccable and ethical leadership. Thus, lack of respect for the rule of law that promotes impunity thrives in the discharge of their duties, hence, personal and private interests takes the centre stage over national interests. As a result of the worsening level of impunity in public service, officials of the service are not held accountable for their actions. This implies that public service officials have a penchant for ignoring ethical standards, hence they do not conduct themselves in line with the ethics of the public service. Brownsberger (1983) is of the notion that lack of exemplary ethical leadership has been the bane of Nigerian political life. It has continued to divert loyalty away from the policy process and the abstract state and route allegiance towards public servants who engage in flagrant act of unethical behaviours.

c. Socio-Cultural Norms

The extensive prevalence of individualism (which is the norm of western culture) has led to exceptional allegiance towards one’s family, tribe, and friends. Such allegiances are to the detriment of allegiance to the state, for their sustenance often entails the breach and violation of rules and regulations. Elliot (1994) reports that socio-cultural norms may be onerous to comprehend fully in the African context. Such norms remain a persuasive force in everyday African life that ascertains who is employed, promoted, and who is awarded contracts as a result of nepotism and unethical behaviours in public service.

Prah (1993) acknowledges that socio-cultural norms propagate favouritism and establish unethical social networks within the administrative system, leading to the blossoming of unethical behaviour and a corrupt culture mostly among public officials. Even now it looks like there is no existing or candid indignation, shame and criminality attached to those acts of unethical behaviour and corruption. Indeed, extant literature reveals that acute unethical behaviour and corruption acts is prevalent among nations with diverse ethnic groups as is the case with Nigeria.

Other studies as reflected in the works of Schleifer and Vishny (1993) and Mauro (1995) argues that splitting up into cleavages along ethnic and linguistic divides has a connection and relationship with corruption. Thus, the ingredients and determinants that enhances the incentives for unethical behaviour and corruption to occur are prospects that take advantage of situations to flourish on fragile or weak institutions. These weak institutions are susceptible to compromises due to lack of ethical leadership, which also have consequences on public accountability and integrity. The ascendancy of the patrimonial state as a result of execution of state power, the growing function of the state through centralised economic decision making; economic slowdown and evasive development that have resulted in increase in poverty and diminishing standard of living; poor adherence to the rule of law that impedes institutional effectiveness in the interest of members of the society; and sociocultural ethos or code of behaviour that control and determine relationships among members of the society and the elites in the society who have been part of the cancer called unethical behaviours and corruption.
4.3 Strategies and Mechanisms for Enhancing and Promoting Ethical Standard in Nigerian Public Service

Some strategies and mechanisms enhance and govern the ethical behaviour of public service officials. Many countries including Nigeria have put in place regulatory frameworks that can enhance and promote ethical behaviour in the public service.

a. Sanctions and punishments.

A great impediment to promoting ethical behaviour in public service is the poor enforcement of rules and regulations. Hence, enforcement of sanctions and punishment on every erring public official will dissuade public servants from actions that run contrary to the ethos of the public service. It is expected that in order to serve as deterrent to all employees of the public service, sanctions must be executed to the letter. Strict sanctions could be sufficient to discourage and curb unethical behaviour and make public officials obey instructions, rules and regulations guiding the public service.

As a means of upholding an organisation’s philosophy and culture, deviation from ethical conduct should be accompanied by punitive measures. Managers of public sector organisation must know what options they can execute on erring employees and also be acquainted with the type of penalties to be deployed for specific infractions. McDonald and Nijhof (1999) suggested six main penalties that could be deployed for unethical behaviours, namely: oral reprimand, written reprimand, adverse personal appraisal, demotion, Suspension and termination. Lawal (2002) also recommends strict sanctions on erring public officials organisations that contravenes business and societal ethics as a means of serving as deterrent to other prospective offenders.

b. Moral campaign and Advocacy

This method helps in engaging in massive advocacy and campaign so as to enforce discipline and moral values among public sector employees. Advocacy exposes unethical behaviours being exhibited by public servants and recommend remedies. It also creates awareness on the need to exhibit ethical behaviours when discharging their duties, and sensitize public servants on the right behaviour when discharging their duties (Ogundele, 2010). Olou (1993) reports that successive Nigerian governments engaged in media campaigns in the forms of war against indiscipline during Buhari/Idiagbon regime (1984/1985), or the programme for mobilisation for social and economic recovery (MAMSER) by the Directorate for Social Mobilisation during the Babangida regime (1986-1994).

c. Organisational Reward System

Managers of public sector organisations need to resuscitate the sector’s reward system and always reward committed employees in kind, cash and status so as to motivate other staff members to be committed, diligent, and hardworking when discharging their duties. Just like other aspects of an organisation’s strategy, it is imperative that employees that display high sense of ethical standards should be rewarded. This act of managerial initiative will spur such an employee to be committed to do more for the organisation, while also challenging others who performed below expectation to be more committed and work harder in discharging their duties. McDonald and Nijhof (1999) identified five possible reward incentives that an employee that is diligent and display high ethical standards could be rewarded. They include individual verbal or written recognition, wider appreciation or commendation, positive reference in the performance appraisal, a perk and money reward. Lawal (2002) also reiterates that an employee should be recognised and rewarded in terms of elevating such a person in status and in kind. This gesture from the management of the public sector organisation will act as a motivation for other members of staff to imbibe a sound ethical behaviour.

d. Enlightenment Massive education, training and development in schools, colleges and universities.

Ethics and accountability should be introduced as a compulsory subject in the curriculum cutting across all levels of education, namely, primary secondary and tertiary institutions. This will result in the establishment of culture of values, moral attitudes and ethical standards as a way of life. Officials of the public sector should be made to undergo training in ethical values and standards, as envisaged in the Public Service Ethics/Integrity Resource Project, under the on-going public service reform program, for enhancing the capacity of public functionaries in analysing and resolving the commonly encountered ethical dilemmas.

Lawal (2002) also proffers that actions that will assuage the conscience of the public such as embarking on wide-spread propaganda and campaign that promotes ethical behaviour sound moral values, and these campaigns should be spearheaded by individuals, organisations and public institutions and agencies. The public service educational enlightenment campaign embarks upon include one man one vote (2014),
change begins with you (2017); War Against Indiscipline (1986); MAMSER (Mass Mobilization for Self-Reliance, Social Justice, and Economic Recovery) (1987) etc. (Olowu, 1993).

e. Revival of culture of excellence.

Culture plays significant roles in upholding ethics in the society. Before the advent of colonialism in Nigeria, the various empires, kingdoms and societies have ethos in place that defines how people live, interact and account for their actions. The culture promote communalism, which is community efforts in family relations, community administration and governance, reward system and sanctions for committing various forms of misconduct. However, the advent of colonialism destroyed the communal spirit Africa is known for and replace with individualism. It further imposed its ethos which is at variance with what is in place in the communities, thus, destroying the accountability of the society it met. Africa had a robust excellence culture which modernization and civilization had robbed off their social fabric. Lawal (2002) ascribes to reinvigoration of culture of excellence through the reactivation of African traditional values such as honesty, truthful, respect, considerate and accountability etc.

f. Development of Professional ethical codes of conduct.

Gray (1990) posit that public sector organisation are under obligation to formulate their ethical codes of conduct in such a way that its focus is to promote ethical standards and professional development among the various specialised professions in the public service. In his view, Lawal (2002) prescribes the development of different specific codes for different professionals and that the codes should be religiously and effectively enforced in order to obtain both global and investors’ confidence, admiration and respect.

g. Religiosity.

Implementing the doctrines of the different religious beliefs can also promote ethical standards and moral values in employees of the public sector, and more importantly, the implementation of these religious doctrines in an organisation is a necessity in providing the needed framework in ascertaining what is right and wrong.

h. Developing and promoting a sound ethical behaviour.

The employees in an organisation needs to know the values and culture of their organisation and this need to align with their individual values and culture. Hence, it is significant for organisations to enforce this profound approach to transform the perception, values and orientation of the society and at the same time the operations of organisations. Lawal (2002) recommends investing extensively in education, training, and development in the organisation that is tailored towards establishing ethical standard based on ethical principles and sound values, which in turn builds a spirit of excellence that inspires employees to be efficient and effective through inculcating in them shared values.

4.4 Resolving Ethical Problem in Nigerian Public Administration

Due to the size of the Nigerian Public Sector, ethical problems are bound to emerge. However, Dibie (2014) identified eight factors that could aid in resolving ethical problems in Nigeria. Figure 1 shows ways of resolving unethical behaviour of public administrators and political leaders.

a. Establish Competent Public Administration based on Merit

The Nigerian public service is enmeshed in nepotism and patronage as a result of its recruitment process and this has been reflecting in the performance of its functions. Many members of the public interviewed unilaterally affirm the quality of the economy is a reflection of the quality of the public service, which they claim is inefficient and ineffective in achieving its goals. Roger and Njoku (2001) argue that government must start by developing a public administration that is responsive to the needs of the people implication of this is that the nation's civil service must be competent and possess a significant level of professionalism. Dibie (2008) was of the view that recruitment into the public service should be based on merit and higher qualifications. Likewise, appointment or placement into senior positions should be assigned to people who are competent, qualified and possess the ability and expertise to carry out the functions assigned to the position efficiently. Mbaku (1994) assert that appointment into Public administration positions should not be turn into collateral for political support, or offered to candidates because bribes were offered. or used to meet an obligation to one's ethnic group.

b. Establish and Enforce a Professional Code of Ethics

The establishment of professional ethics and a code of conduct, either as a group or individually, can be considered as an endeavour to redress some of the unanticipated ethical dilemmas in several developing nations like Nigeria. The uncertainty regarding the outcomes of available preferences and poor execution of
sanctions have been the cause why public officials do not uphold ethical behaviour and standards in many countries (Dibie, 2014).

c. Transparency and Accountability

The efficiency and effectiveness of public sector organisations depends on how accountable and transparent they are to the organisations. Action of public officials in discharging their duties must be seen and should also follow due process in dealing with members of the society. Officials in the public sector are expected to be transparent in all decisions and actions that they take. These officials must be able to provide acceptable reasons for their decisions and keep information under control and only divulge it when the need arises. OECD (2000) acknowledge that public inquiry is expedited by a transparent and democratic process, legislature oversight functions, access to public information. OECD further substantiates that transparency should be strengthened through mechanisms like disclosure systems. Geuras and Garofalo (2005) portrays transparency as the actions of public officials being visible rather than hidden (or covert).

Public servants are expected to be accountable for their actions to their superiors and, more extensively, to the public. Accountability is expected to lay emphasis both on adherence to rules and ethical principles and on attainment of results. Agencies as well as government organisations are to domicile internal mechanisms for effective accountability, or where such cannot be attained the civil society should be consulted. Accountability can be attained only when the necessary mechanisms are strengthened to ensure that deliver adequate controls are provided in order to enable suitable flexible management. Accountability in the public sector is referred to as bureaucratic accountability, and it implies that officials in the public sector embrace decisions that take the interests of the public into consideration (Lewis and Gilman, 2005). In addition, Henry (2010) states that in bureaucratic accountability, public officials in a democratic state are inhibited by a variety of restrictions from executing decisions and policies that are anti-democratic, unfair, unethical or illegal.

d. Participation and Consultation

Dibie (2014) reveals that the extent of participation of public sector officials in decision-making ranges from partial involvement to total devolution. Consultation on the other hand may imply a high level of ongoing involvement to the mere exchange of information. Nevertheless, both participation and consultation are strongly interrelated. However, both Henry (2010) and Standwick and Sandwick (2010) defined participation beyond mere involvement on voting day. They described public participation as any activity of a group (or persons) directly or indirectly with the purpose of getting involved in determining the actions, decisions and policies of the government or public organisation. Dibie (2007) identifies the scope of activities that public officials participate in to include intelligence gathering, consultation and advisory planning, programme administration, negotiation, delegated decision-making and control.

e. Exit, Voice and Loyalty

Hirschman (1970) affirms that in a situation where the public is discontented with the worsening performance of public organisations in the quality of service being rendered. Hirschman argues that public officials may choose to put in more effort to improve the organisation's performance from within by exercising their voice. They may also choose to leave the organisation for another (exit) where their concerns are taken care of. In the same vein, loyalty provides the needed support for voice to be utilised in order to decide on exit. Hirschman proffers that there is a tendency for voice to increase based on the extent of the degree of loyalty. Thus, loyalty avert or delay exit, but trigger voice. Hence, the warning of exit must be authentic in order for loyalty to be able to facilitate voice.

Hirschman further alleged that loyalty heightens the enthusiasm of clients to negotiate the reality of exit averse to the lack of confidence of an improvement in the quality of service being rendered. Thus, when loyalty is predicated on material exigencies, it becomes more inconsequential, which will accede to more evaluation of exit options. However, when loyalty is rooted in core values, it takes a strong and unfeigned allegiance to safeguard and protect the organisation from exit or designate exit as a threat, or sees exit as a dangerous possibility, but not a feasible option because it increases the supposed adverse effect for the exit option. This implies that when loyalty is elicited or attained from a combination of core values and self-interest or from core values alone, exit options will be devalued subjectively from the start.

f. Whistle Blowing

Amundsen and de Andrade (2009) describes whistle blowing as a way of bringing to the fore by letting people know of misconduct or unethical behaviour that is taking place within an organisation. Organisations can provide some avenues like “hotlines” to facilitate whistle blowing. A whistle blower is one who leaks or an informant. Whistle blowing can be accomplished through four means, namely: Reporting misconduct or an unlawful act to the proper authorities, have nothing to do with unethical behaviour in workplace, to be a witness in a court of law, and disclosing incontrovertible evidence of unethical behaviour to the media. At the
early stage of President Buhari administration (2015-2017), whistle blowing took the centre stage in the fight against corruption. Some scholars (Rosenbloom, Karvchuk and Clerkin. 2009; and Dresang, 2010) describes whistle blowing as another form of curbing unethical behaviour in public organisations by making oneself heard until rendered incommunicado.

Whistle blowing can come from within an organisation (internal whistleblowing) or from outside the organisation (external whistleblowing). It is essential that organisations, be it public or private, should approve enforcement of whistleblowing to ensure that issues of unethical behaviour are taken care of within the organisation in order to prevent employees from seeking solution from outside (OSCE, 2004). OSCE proposes ways to promote internal whistle blowing in organisations, and they include setting up an agency to be saddled with exposing unethical practices (a policy which should be open, transparent, well published and include formal mechanisms for reporting violations), such as emergency lines and mailboxes, effective interaction about the process of disclosing concerns, such as a specific chain of command, or the recognition of a specific person to be in charge of complaints (OSCE, 2004).

g. Social Responsibility

Social responsibility is very significant to tackling dilemma of unethical behaviour in the public sector. The two strategies of social responsibility are traditional and stakeholder. Standwick and Standwick (2010) describes the traditional strategy as one in which public managers carry out the wishes of the public. Shaw and Barry (2010) attests that the traditional approach motivates managers of both public and private organisations to be socially responsible and deploy their resources to be involved in profit making ventures for as much as they comply with the regulations. Boatright (1997) further reiterates that profit making is the foremost social responsibility of business in order to defray future costs. Shaw and Barry (2010) concludes that other social concerns will not be achieved when social responsibility is not accomplished.

h. Social Audit

Vinten (1999) establish that ethics audit is an appraisal of the status of ethics in the organisation. The essence of the appraisal is to ascertain that the organisation pays due attention to its obligation, especially to those directly and indirectly affected by its decisions. The success of ethical reform relies on the accomplishment of regularly carrying out social audits. Social audits involve actions carried out to identify, measure, evaluate, report on and monitor the effects of the organisations on their stakeholders and society as a whole. Stillman (2010) affirms that social audit, in contrast to a financial audit, emphasises social action rather than on fiscal accountability. Stillman concludes that social audit is significant in measuring achievement under the affirmative social responsibility strategy.
5. CONCLUSION
The widespread lack of ethics and accountability in Nigerian public service has led to its dismal performance in the provision of public services and economic development. Unethical behaviours by public officials has distorted the functions of the public sector organisations leading to anomaly in governance of the country. The findings revealed that ethical standard in Nigerian public sector have largely failed to accomplish the desired resuscitation of the public service due to poor enforcement of ethical codes on erring officials as a result of weak states’ institutional capacity. Aside from the enforcement of ethical codes which is desirable, more importantly is the adoption and enforcement of achievable strategy in order to resuscitate ethical standard, values and accountability in the Nigerian public service. The implication is that strategies need to be deployed to enhance ethical standards in the public sector.

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