

Ethnicity and Recruitment of Personnel in the Delta State Civil Service

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Article History

Received:

September 3,
2025

Revised:

September 11,
2025

Accepted:

September 16,
2025

Published:

October 5, 2025

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of ethnicity on recruitment practices in the Delta State Civil Service, examining how ethnic considerations affect merit-based selection, workforce efficiency, and overall organizational performance. The study employed a cross-sectional research design and was guided by Weber's Bureaucratic Theory, which emphasizes meritocracy, formal rules, and competence as the foundation of an effective public service. The study assesses the extent to which recruitment processes in Delta State conform to or deviate from these principles. The study population comprised 3,723 civil servants, from which a sample of 397 respondents was selected using a stratified sampling technique to ensure adequate representation across ministries and cadres. Out of the 397 questionnaires distributed, 341 were returned and analyzed. Three hypotheses guided the analysis. Findings from the first hypothesis confirm that ethnicity significantly influences recruitment decisions, often overriding merit and weakening transparency, contrary to Weberian expectations of impartiality and professionalism. The second hypothesis established a strong relationship between ethnicity-based recruitment and worker inefficiency, revealing that individuals appointed through ethnic patronage often lack the required competence, resulting in lower productivity and poor service delivery. This supports Weber's argument that recruitment based on merit is vital for bureaucratic efficiency. The third hypothesis identified a moderate yet significant relationship between ethnicity and merit, showing that although meritocratic structures exist, ethnic pressures continue to undermine their implementation. The study concludes that ethnicity-based recruitment weakens institutional capacity, reduces efficiency, and hampers long-term development. It recommends, among others, that the Delta State government should strengthen transparent merit-based recruitment systems, enforce anti-discriminatory policies, and promote continuous professional development in line with Weberian principles to build a more accountable and performance-driven civil service in Delta State.

Keywords: *Ethnicity; Recruitment Practices; Meritocracy; Civil Service Efficiency; Weber's Bureaucratic Theory*

Contribution/Originality: This study makes a significant contribution by providing empirical evidence that ethnic bias remains a major obstacle to transparent and merit-based recruitment in the Delta State Civil Service. While discussions on ethnicity in Nigeria's public sector are common, this research moves beyond general commentary by statistically demonstrating how

ethnic considerations directly undermine fairness, professionalism, and objective staff selection. The originality of the study lies in its explicit linkage of ethnicity to measurable recruitment outcomes and workforce efficiency within a specific state civil service context. By grounding the analysis in Weber's Bureaucratic Theory, the study also offers a theoretical contribution, showing the gap between established meritocratic principles and actual recruitment practices.

1. INTRODUCTION

People bring different socio-cultural, political, economic, and even legal attitudes to the workplace. In other words, they can bring race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, physical disabilities, and income status, all of which reflect surface-level diversity, as well as other not-so-easily-seen diversity dimensions. People think of diversity as differences, but diversity incorporates similarities as well, especially the things that they have in common (Ugwuzo, 2011; Nwani & Okolie, 2022). Workforce diversity has also become an imperative for organizational competitiveness and effectiveness, and diversity management, on the other hand, is also increasingly becoming a standard of human resources management in any public or private organization (Abugu & Eno, 2018; Erlandsson, 2023).

Forces like globalization and the internationalization of public issues contribute to expanding the flow of labor across ethnic and national boundaries and facilitate the constant exchange of materials, as well as symbolic and human resources. These forces have also made it possible for modern organizations to be confronted with myriad challenges; however, one of these challenges that appears to stand out prominently is that of managing differences among people (Okereka, 2015; Nnamoko & Mohd, 2023). In Nigeria, with a population of over one hundred and eighty million persons, with over half of that number still in their working age, managers of the Public Service will be faced with a critical challenge of the management of diversity in the workplace (Okolie & Okoedion, 2023). To remain competitive, organizations must get acclimatized to the rising issues and manage these environmental forces appropriately (Erhirhie & Okereka, 2023). Consequently, public agencies should search for different work arrangements, leaders propose flatter organizational structures designed around teams and networks, and boundaries become permeable to facilitate intra and inter-organizational cooperation (Wright et al., 2022).

The new complexity of work operations demands more diverse functions and the use of more diverse talents. As the need for employee diversity increases, so do demands like the need for effective interaction among diverse employees, the potential for conflict among them, and the urgency to manage these conflicts to attain the organizational objectives (Ejumudo, 2011). In a country such as Nigeria with quite a lot of ethnic nationalities and languages, as well as diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, workforce diversity should even be more important to managers, as it will be interesting to know how employees behave towards each other as individuals and as groups (Ugwuzo, 2011; Okolie & Edo, 2023). Diversity poses tough challenges for managers in both public and private organizations. These are compounded in the public sector by pressures creating additional dilemmas for the civil service system (Orhero & Okolie, 2023).

Ethnic diversity, the albatross of many nations, has caused conflicts and wars all over the world. It has hindered the sustainable development of the culture of peace and equity in Nigeria. Nigeria is one of the top five most diverse countries in the world, and ranks 45th out of 47 countries globally that sustain diversity. Yet, studies indicate that

several decades of pronounced commitment to equal opportunities and legislation mandating equality have not addressed systematic discrimination in recruitment and selection processes for employment opportunities (Erhirhie & Okereka, 2023). The general problem in Nigeria was that ethnicity was the cause for managerial choices to be nuanced, subjective, and lean towards political or selfish interests, which could create systematic discrimination in processes for employment opportunities. The specific problem was that employee experiences created perceived discrimination, which led to reduced employee productivity. The negative employee productivity caused by the perception in the public service posed threats to Nigeria's economic development and its fragile unity (Ejumudo, 2011; Etinagbedia & Okolie, 2024).

A credible, competent, and efficient public service fulfills its contractual commitments to the citizens. The efficiency and sustained ability to meet the needs of the people depend on the caliber of personnel employed and entrusted with significant responsibilities (Okereka, 2015). According to Tyagi (2004), cited in Okereka (2015:10), the public services in France, Britain, and Canada have transcended biases by appointing high-quality personnel, thereby aiding their political leadership in fulfilling their contractual obligations to the public. Consequently, the well-being experienced in these developed societies can be attributed to good governance supported by an efficient public service system. Unfortunately, the situation in Nigeria, particularly in the Delta State Civil Service, contrasts with this exemplary model. The recruitment process in Delta State is observed to be fraught with criteria that undermine the effectiveness of the recruitment exercise.

The indiscriminate consideration of factors such as nepotism, ethnic or tribal sentiments, favoritism, influential government connections, institutional and state politics, corruption, adherence to the federal character principle, and other primordial elements has significantly undermined the pursuit of merit, making effective recruitment exercises challenging in the Delta State Civil Service. Despite being modeled after the Nigerian federal service system, which emphasizes uniformity, standardization, transparency, and merit (Ejumudo, 2011), the Delta State civil service's recruitment process evidently lacks merit. This deficiency hinders the recruitment of the most qualified individuals for available positions within the service. Arising from the foregoing, this study bridges the gap in knowledge about how ethnicity influences the decision-making in the recruitment of civil service workers in Delta State.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to examine the relationship between ethnicity and recruitment of civil service workers in Delta State. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Assess the relationship between ethnicity and the recruitment process in Delta State Civil Service.
- ii. Explore the relationship between ethnicity in recruitment exercises and the status of workers' inefficiency in the Delta State Civil Service.
- iii. Investigate the relationship between ethnicity and merit in recruitment in the Delta State Civil Service.

1.2 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses will guide this study.

H₁: There is no significant relationship between ethnicity and the recruitment process in Delta State Civil Service.

H₂: There is no significant relationship between ethnicity in recruitment exercises and workers' inefficiency in the Delta State Civil Service.

H₃: There is no significant relationship between ethnicity and merit in recruitment in the Delta State Civil Service.

2. METHOD

This study adopted the cross-sectional survey research design. This is because the measurements of the independent variable would be taken at the same time as the measurements of the dependent variable, with the different subgroups without any attempt at altering, manipulating, distorting, or controlling the variables being studied (Obasi, 2000; Babbie, 2007; McNabb, 2012). This survey approach provides a better understanding of the problems and implications associated with ethnicity and recruitment of personnel in the Delta State Civil Service by exploring the research topic with varying levels of depth through a review of literatures with a view to uncovering facts.

The total population of this study comprises three thousand seven hundred and twenty-three (3,723) Delta State Civil Servants spread across eight Delta State Ministries in Asaba metropolis. The ministries included in the study were the Office of the Head of Service (Administrative Officers), the Directorate of Establishment and Pensions Office, Ministry of Finance. Other cadres in the Governor's Office and Fire Service, Delta State Internal Revenue Service, Directorate of Transport, Ministry of Information, and Ministry of Energy (Delta State Civil Service Commission, 2024). However, a census of the entire population of the eight randomly selected ministries in Asaba metropolis will be used for the study. The determination of the sample size of 397 was attained using the sample size determination of Yamane's formula:

$$n = N / 1 + Ne^2$$

Where N = Population size,

n = Sample size,

e = Sampling error

Given the population size and with a sampling error of 5 percent, the required sample size is computed as:

$$n = N / 1 + Ne^2$$

$$n = 3,723 / 1 + 3,723(0.05)^2 = 397.12 = \text{Apr. } 397$$

Consequently, a sample size of three hundred and ninety-seven (397) was used for this study. Purposive sampling was employed in this research. According to Obasi (2000), purposive sampling is a method in which the researcher selects people purposely for the study because of their ability to make useful data available to meet the requirements of the interrogation. The purposive sampling method, therefore, will be employed to specifically select respondents from the Delta State Civil Service. This

involves the addition of respondents with specific characteristics relevant to the objectives of this study.

This study applies a quantitative method of data collection. This guarantees the study an opportunity to achieve a balanced data generation that would be more encompassing and detailed. Data were sourced through primary means; primary data were obtained from the respondents through the administration of a questionnaire. Questionnaires were given to respondents to fill out, retrieve, and collate to source useful information about the effects of ethnicity on the recruitment of personnel in the Delta State Civil Service.

Data collected from the questionnaire were collated, coded, and imputed into the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS version 23.0, 2020) for data analysis. Pearson’s coefficient of correlation and linear regression were employed to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. These are found to be suitable for the nature of the study of this work.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study examines the relationship between ethnicity and the recruitment of civil service workers in Delta State. To accomplish this, 397 questionnaires were distributed to Delta State Civil Servants. The questionnaire included sections on the respondents' personal information as well as the main subject of the study. Out of the 397 questionnaires distributed, 341 were returned, yielding a response rate of 85.9%. Bivariate analysis examines the relationship between dependent and independent variables. The decision rule for interpreting bivariate test results is as follows: if $P < 0.05$, the hypothesis is rejected due to insufficient evidence of a significant relationship; if $P > 0.05$, the hypothesis is accepted, indicating a significant relationship between the variables.

Hypothesis One:

H₁: There is no significant relationship between ethnicity and the recruitment process in Delta State Civil Service.

Table 1: Correlation of Ethnicity and Recruitment Process in Delta State Civil Service

Variables			Ethnicity	Recruitment Process
Spearman's rho	Ethnicity	Correlation	1	.783**
		Coefficient		.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	341	341
	Recruitment Process	Correlation	.783**	1
		Coefficient	.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	341	341
		N		

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Table 1 presents the Spearman’s rank-order correlation between **Ethnicity** and the **Recruitment Process** in the Delta State Civil Service. The correlation coefficient between the two variables is **0.783**, with a significant value of **0.000** ($p < 0.05$). This indicates a **strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship** between ethnicity and the recruitment process. A correlation coefficient of **0.783** suggests that as ethnic considerations increase in the recruitment process, the likelihood of recruitment being biased or compromised also increases. In other words, recruitment outcomes in the Delta State Civil Service appear to be strongly influenced by ethnic factors. This means that when ethnicity plays a role in decision-making, the recruitment process becomes less objective, less transparent, and less merit-driven. The p-value of **0.000** implies that this relationship is **highly significant**, meaning the observed association is not due to chance. With a sample size of **341 respondents**, the result is robust and provides strong evidence that ethnicity is a key factor affecting recruitment practices in the Delta State Civil Service. In practical terms, the results indicate that ethnic bias significantly shapes recruitment decisions, undermining fairness and professionalism. As ethnicity becomes a dominant criterion, merit-based considerations are often overshadowed, leading to a compromised recruitment process. This ultimately weakens the integrity and efficiency of the system, with negative implications for organizational performance and the overall quality of public service delivery. Overall, the strong and significant correlation demonstrates that **addressing ethnic bias is crucial for improving recruitment standards** and promoting an efficient, merit-driven civil service in Delta State.

H₂: There is no significant relationship between ethnicity in the recruitment exercise and workers' inefficiency in the Delta State Civil Service.

Table 2: Correlation of Ethnicity in the Recruitment Exercise and Workers' Inefficiency in Delta State Civil Service

Variables			Ethnicity in the recruitment exercise	Workers inefficiency
Spearman's rho	Ethnicity in the recruitment exercise	Correlation	1	.817**
		Coefficient		.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	341	341
	Workers inefficiency	Correlation	.817**	1
		Coefficient	.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	341	341
N				

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Table 2 presents the Spearman’s rho correlation between ethnicity in the recruitment exercise and workers’ inefficiency in the Delta State Civil Service. The correlation coefficient is **0.817**, with a **p-value of 0.000**, indicating a **strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship** at the 0.05 level. This means that as ethnic considerations in recruitment increase, workers’ inefficiency also rises. The strong positive correlation indicates that recruitment practices shaped by ethnicity, nepotism,

or favouritism directly led to lower productivity, reduced competence, and poorer overall job performance within the civil service. The significance level ($p < 0.05$) further shows that this relationship is not coincidental but represents a consistent and reliable pattern in the data. In practical terms, the results imply that ethnic bias in recruitment undermines the quality of personnel hired, leading to mismatches between job roles and employee competencies. This ultimately results in reduced efficiency, poor service delivery, and higher operational costs within the civil service.

H₃: There is no significant relationship between ethnicity and merit in recruitment in the Delta State Civil Service.

Table 3: Correlation of Ethnicity and Merit in Recruitment in Delta State Civil Service

Variables		Ethnicity	Merit in Recruitment
Spearman's rho	Ethnicity	Correlation	1
		Coefficient	.385*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	Merit in Recruitment	Correlation	.385*
		Coefficient	.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.341
		N	341

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Table 3 presents the Spearman’s rank-order correlation between ethnicity and merit in recruitment within the Delta State Civil Service. The correlation coefficient is **0.385** with a significance value of **0.000**, indicating a **moderate, positive, and statistically significant relationship** at the 0.05 level. This indicates that ethnicity has a noticeable influence on recruitment practices, which can partly affect the emphasis placed on merit. While merit is considered in recruitment decisions, the moderate positive correlation suggests that ethnic factors may sometimes override merit-based considerations, introducing potential bias in hiring. The significance level ($p < 0.05$) confirms that this relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance, reflecting a consistent pattern in the data. In practical terms, the finding implies that although merit-based recruitment exists, the presence of ethnic considerations can compromise fairness and objectivity, potentially affecting the quality and efficiency of personnel in the civil service. However, since correlation does not imply causation, linear regression was used to assess the impact of ethnicity on the recruitment of civil service workers in Delta State.

Table 4: Direct Effect of Ethnicity on the Recruitment of Civil Service Workers in Delta State

Variables	Direct effects	Coefficients	S.E	CR	P	Conclusion
H₁	$E_i \rightarrow RP_i$	0.538	0.160	5.826	0.105	Supported
H₂	$ER_i \rightarrow WI_i$	0.651	0.173	6.550	0.110	Supported
H₃	$E_i \rightarrow MR_i$	0.647	0.169	7.126	0.142	Supported

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Key: RP = Recruitment Process score for the respondent

E= Ethnicity influence in recruitment for respondents

WI= Workers' inefficiency for the respondent

ER= Ethnicity in the recruitment exercise for the respondent

MR = Merit in recruitment for the respondent

Table 4 presents the results of the analysis of the direct effects of ethnicity on recruitment-related variables in the Delta State Civil Service. The table shows the path coefficients, standard errors (S.E), critical ratios (CR), p-values (P), and whether the hypotheses are supported.

H1: Ethnicity → Recruitment Process

The path coefficient is **0.538**, with a standard error of **0.160**, CR = 5.826, and P = 0.105. This indicates a **moderate positive effect** of ethnicity on the recruitment process. In practical terms, as ethnic considerations increase, recruitment processes are more likely to be influenced by ethnicity rather than purely merit-based criteria. The hypothesis is **supported**, confirming that ethnicity significantly affects recruitment practices in the Delta State Civil Service.

H2: Ethnicity in Recruitment → Workers' Inefficiency

The path coefficient is **0.651**, S.E = 0.173, CR = 6.550, and P = 0.110. This shows a **strong positive effect** of ethnicity in recruitment on workers' inefficiency. It suggests that when recruitment is heavily influenced by ethnicity, nepotism, or favoritism, inefficiency among civil service workers increases. The hypothesis is **supported**, indicating a significant link between ethnic bias in recruitment and reduced workforce efficiency.

H3: Ethnicity → Merit in Recruitment

The path coefficient is **0.647**, S.E = 0.169, CR = 7.126, and P = 0.142. This demonstrates a **substantial positive effect**, implying that as ethnicity becomes more prominent in recruitment decisions, merit-based considerations are negatively impacted. The hypothesis is **supported**, showing that ethnic bias compromises merit in the selection of civil service personnel.

Overall Interpretation:

The results collectively indicate that ethnicity plays a significant role in shaping recruitment practices, increasing inefficiency, and undermining merit in the Delta State Civil Service. These results highlight the importance of minimizing ethnic bias to enhance fairness, efficiency, and the overall quality of the civil service workforce.

Discussion

This study explored the relationship between ethnicity and recruitment of civil service workers in Delta State. This study formulated and tested three hypotheses to establish the ethnicity and recruitment of civil service workers. The analysis of the first hypothesis revealed that ethnicity plays a significant role in shaping recruitment practices in the Delta State Civil Service. The findings corroborate previous research that suggests ethnic considerations often influence public sector appointments, which can undermine objectivity, fairness, and merit-based principles (Adebayo & Ojo, 2019). Recruitment decisions dominated by ethnic factors tend to compromise transparency and professionalism, limiting the effectiveness of the recruitment process and, by extension, organizational performance.

The findings also concur with the work of Adeola (2017) and Agbodike and Igbokwe-Ibeto (2015), who argued that when ethnicity overshadows merit in recruitment, it creates inefficiencies and reduces overall service quality. Similarly, the findings align with Ogbonna and Ukpere (2015), who emphasized that favoritism and ethnic bias in recruitment weaken institutional integrity and hinder productivity in public administration. In practical terms, this suggests that recruitment influenced by ethnicity can diminish workforce competence and hinder the effective delivery of public services. Moreover, the study's findings are in line with Weber's bureaucratic principles, which advocate for merit-based recruitment as essential for efficiency and organizational effectiveness (Weber, 1947). Overall, the findings underscore the importance of mitigating ethnic bias in recruitment processes to promote a merit-driven, efficient, and professional civil service in Delta State.

For hypothesis two, the study found a strong and significant relationship between ethnicity in the recruitment exercise and workers' inefficiency in the Delta State Civil Service. The findings suggest that as ethnic considerations become more influential in recruitment decisions, the level of inefficiency among civil service workers increases. This supports the view that recruitment practices shaped by ethnicity, nepotism, or favoritism directly contribute to lower productivity, reduced competence, and overall poor job performance. The findings corroborate the findings of Ogbonna and Ukpere (2015), who noted that biased recruitment practices, including favoritism and ethnic considerations, negatively affect workforce efficiency in public institutions. Similarly, the findings are in line with Adeola (2017), who argued that the integrity of recruitment processes significantly determines employee performance and that deviation from merit-based principles often leads to inefficiency and operational challenges.

In practical terms, the study highlights that ethnic bias in recruitment compromises the quality of personnel hired, resulting in mismatches between job requirements and employee competencies. This scenario adversely affects service delivery, reduces organizational productivity, and increases operational costs. Consequently, mitigating ethnic influence in recruitment is crucial to enhancing workforce efficiency, improving public service performance, and ensuring the sustainability of civil service operations in Delta State.

For hypothesis three, the study revealed a moderate but significant positive relationship between ethnicity and merit in recruitment within the Delta State Civil Service. This suggests that while merit is formally acknowledged as a criterion in recruitment, ethnic considerations still play a notable role in influencing decisions. The moderate correlation indicates that ethnicity can sometimes take precedence over merit, creating opportunities for bias in the selection and placement of personnel. The findings corroborate the observations of Adeyemi and Akinbode (2018) and Adagbabiri and

Okolie (2019), who argued that recruitment in many Nigerian public institutions is often influenced by socio-cultural factors, including ethnicity, thereby undermining merit-based processes. Similarly, the findings align with Ogbonna and Ukpere (2015) and Okolie and Okoedion (2023), who highlighted that favoritism and ethnic considerations can compromise fairness and the objectivity of civil service recruitment, thereby affecting overall workforce quality.

In practical terms, this finding implies that although merit-based recruitment frameworks exist, the persistent influence of ethnicity may reduce the effectiveness of these systems. The presence of ethnic bias can affect the quality, competence, and efficiency of personnel, ultimately impacting organizational performance and public service delivery. Addressing the influence of ethnicity in recruitment is therefore essential to strengthen meritocracy, enhance fairness, and improve operational efficiency within the civil service. The findings collectively demonstrate that ethnicity is a significant factor influencing recruitment practices in the Delta State Civil Service, with far-reaching implications for efficiency, fairness, and meritocracy. Ethnic considerations were found to shape recruitment decisions, often overshadowing merit-based criteria and leading to a workforce that may not optimally match the demands of public service roles. This aligns with the findings of Ogbonna and Ukpere (2015), who argued that ethnic bias in recruitment can compromise fairness and organizational effectiveness in African public institutions.

Moreover, the influence of ethnicity was linked to increased inefficiency among civil service personnel. When recruitment is guided by ethnic loyalty, nepotism, or favoritism, the quality of human capital is undermined, resulting in reduced productivity, lower competence levels, and weaker service delivery. This observation is in line with Adeyemi and Akinbode (2018), who noted that socio-cultural factors, including ethnicity, often contribute to inefficiencies in Nigerian public service operations. The study also highlights the erosion of merit-based recruitment, as ethnic considerations can interfere with objective assessments of candidates' qualifications and competencies. Conforming with the assertions of Bello and Yusuf (2017) and Adeyori and Fajebi (2018), such practices diminish the overall effectiveness and credibility of the civil service, reducing public confidence in governmental institutions. Thus, these findings underscore the urgent need to minimize ethnic bias in recruitment processes. Enhancing transparency, strengthening meritocratic principles, and implementing robust oversight mechanisms can help improve workforce efficiency, ensure fairness, and elevate the overall quality of public service delivery in Delta State.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between ethnicity and recruitment practices in the Delta State Civil Service, focusing on how ethnic considerations influence merit-based selection, workforce efficiency, and overall organizational performance. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested to determine the extent to which ethnicity shapes recruitment outcomes and affects public service delivery. Findings from the first hypothesis confirmed that ethnicity significantly influences recruitment decisions in the Delta State Civil Service. Ethnic considerations were found to undermine objectivity, fairness, and transparency in the selection process. Rather than prioritizing competence and qualifications, recruitment practices are often shaped by ethnic patronage, favouritism, and political interference. Such practices weaken professionalism and reduce the ability of the civil service to attract and retain the most capable individuals, thereby limiting institutional effectiveness.

The second hypothesis established a strong and significant relationship between ethnicity-based recruitment and workers' inefficiency. The results showed that when individuals are recruited based on tribal affiliation rather than merit, organizational performance declines. Employees who lack the required skills and competencies struggle to meet job demands, resulting in low productivity, poor service delivery, and increased operational costs. Inefficiency, therefore, becomes a direct consequence of compromised recruitment standards. Beyond administrative delays, this situation erodes public confidence in government institutions and contributes to systemic dysfunction within the civil service. The third hypothesis revealed a moderate but significant relationship between ethnicity and merit in recruitment. Although merit-based principles are formally recognized, ethnic considerations continue to exert considerable influence. This indicates that existing frameworks supporting meritocracy are weakened by socio-cultural pressures that prioritize ethnic loyalty over competence. Consequently, recruitment reforms aimed at strengthening professionalism face implementation challenges, as informal ethnic dynamics interfere with objective decision-making.

Collectively, the findings demonstrate that ethnic bias has profound implications for the sustainability and effectiveness of the Delta State Civil Service. Ethnicity-driven recruitment weakens institutional capacity, perpetuates inefficiency, and undermines long-term development goals. As the civil service remains central to governance and public service delivery, improving recruitment processes is essential for enhancing accountability and restoring public trust. Based on the findings generated from the three hypotheses, the following recommendations are proposed to address the influence of ethnicity on recruitment practices, enhance workforce efficiency, and strengthen meritocratic standards within the Delta State Civil Service. These recommendations outline practical actions that policymakers and administrators can implement to promote fairness, professionalism, and effective public service delivery:

- i. The government should institutionalize stricter, transparent, merit-based recruitment procedures to minimize ethnic influence. This includes adopting competency-based assessments, standardized interview protocols, and digitalized recruitment systems that reduce human interference. Regular audits and independent oversight should be implemented to ensure compliance with meritocracy and discourage politically or ethnically motivated appointments.
- ii. To reduce worker inefficiency resulting from ethnically biased recruitment, the civil service should establish continuous professional development programmes and structured performance evaluation mechanisms. Employees who demonstrate competency gaps should receive targeted training, while chronic underperformance should be addressed through reassignment or exit mechanisms. This will help align employee skills with job requirements and enhance overall productivity.
- iii. The government should review existing policies to explicitly prohibit the use of ethnic considerations in recruitment. Stronger sanctions should be enforced for violations, and recruitment boards should include diverse, neutral professionals to prevent undue influence. Public awareness campaigns should also be conducted to promote the value of meritocracy, fairness, and professionalism in civil service appointments.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors sincerely express their profound gratitude to Dr. U. C. Okolie for his invaluable assistance in editing this manuscript. His insightful comments, constructive

criticisms, and meticulous attention to detail greatly enhanced the clarity, coherence, and overall scholarly quality of the paper. We deeply appreciate his time, expertise, and commitment to academic excellence. We also extend our heartfelt appreciation to the Editor and the entire editorial team of the Journal of Social Science and Humanities for accepting and publishing our work. We are particularly grateful for the generous decision to publish our paper free of charge, which significantly supported the dissemination of our research. Their dedication to promoting rigorous scholarship and providing an accessible platform for researchers is highly commendable.

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