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Exploring promotion practices, impact on public servants' commitment, efficiency, responsiveness, and goal attainment in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper explored the influence of promotion practices on the commitment, efficiency, responsiveness, and goal attainment of public servants in Nigeria. Public sector organizations are vital for national governance and development, particularly in countries like Nigeria. The performance of public servants, who play a crucial role in policy implementation and service delivery, is significantly influenced by their perceptions of fairness and transparency in promotion practices. Despite the importance of these employees, they encounter challenges such as political interference, nepotism, and bureaucratic inefficiencies, which complicate promotion decisions. These issues can undermine employee motivation and overall organizational performance. This study draws on the Expectancy Theory of Motivation to investigate how various promotion practices, whether merit-based, seniority-based, or influenced by other factors, shape public servants' perceptions of reward expectancy and, subsequently, their work behaviors. The study is a cross-sectional survey. The research indicates that when promotions are viewed as merit-based, public servants exhibit higher levels of commitment, efficiency, responsiveness, and achievement of goals. In contrast, promotion systems perceived as politically biased or lacking transparency correlate with lower morale and diminished organizational outcomes. Using a survey of 1,216 Nigerian public servants, the study identifies significant demographic trends that influence employee perceptions and performance outcomes. The findings demonstrate strong correlations between transparent, meritocratic promotions and positive employee behaviors, including heightened job satisfaction, efficient task execution, and proactive goal pursuit. Conversely, opaque and politicized promotion practices result in disengagement, reduced efficiency, and poor alignment with organizational goals. Thus, it is imperative to strategically align professional development with promotion criteria. Policy reforms are essential to remove political influences from the promotion process. Advocating for changes that minimize bias and prioritize merit over political affiliation will foster a more equitable and objective system, ultimately benefiting both public servants and the communities they serve in Nigeria.

Keywords: Promotion Practices; Commitment; Efficiency; Public Servants; Nigeria

1. Introduction

Public sector organizations play a crucial role in the governance and development of nations, particularly in a diverse and populous country like Nigeria. The performance of public servants, who are the backbone of these institutions, is central to achieving national goals, effectively implementing policies, and providing public services. As the Nigerian government strives to modernize and reform its public sector, one key area of focus is the system of promotion practices. Promotions in the public service are not merely administrative tasks; they are integral to shaping employee behavior, motivation, and overall performance. This paper explores how promotion practices within the Nigerian public service

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impact essential organizational outcomes, such as commitment, efficiency, responsiveness, and goal attainment. Promotion practices in the public sector have long been a subject of scholarly interest, as they can significantly influence employee morale and organizational effectiveness. Generally, promotion in public administration refers to the advancement of employees based on merit, seniority, or a combination of both (Gould-Williams, 2020).

In Nigeria, promotion decisions are often complicated by challenges such as political interference, nepotism, and bureaucratic inefficiencies, raising concerns about their fairness and transparency (Akanji & Akinbo, 2019). I was further avowed that such practices can affect employees' sense of justice and their overall commitment to organizational goals. Recent studies suggest that promotion practices grounded in meritocracy tend to enhance public servants' motivation and efficiency (Oyebisi & Oyewole, 2021). Conversely, when promotions are perceived as politically driven or opaque, the consequences for organizational performance can be detrimental (Okafor, 2022). Employee commitment in the public sector, particularly among Nigerian civil servants, is often influenced by the perceived fairness and clarity of promotion systems. When promotions are based on transparent criteria and align with employees' expectations for career advancement, commitment to organizational goals is strengthened (Setyawati, Woelandari & Rianto, 2022).

In contrast, a lack of clear promotion pathways can foster feelings of alienation and disengagement, undermining public servants' dedication to their roles. This is especially crucial in Nigeria, where the public sector is essential for achieving developmental goals, such as improving infrastructure, healthcare, and education systems (Ogunyomi & Akinlolu, 2020). Efficiency in public service is another area closely linked to promotion practices. Promotions that recognize and reward merit can lead to increased productivity and initiative among employees, resulting in more efficient public service delivery (Meier & O'Toole, 2019). However, in systems where promotions are perceived to be tied to political patronage rather than individual performance, public servants may be less motivated to perform at their highest potential (Abubakar & Olanrewaju, 2021). This is particularly concerning in Nigeria, where public service delivery often faces challenges related to corruption, inadequate resources, and political instability (Ojo, 2019).

The responsiveness of public servants to the needs of citizens is significantly influenced by the practices surrounding promotion. Public servants who perceive fair treatment and adequate rewards for their work are more inclined to demonstrate proactivity in addressing public concerns and engaging in the policy implementation process. In contrast, when promotion systems lead to feelings of dissatisfaction or perceptions of inequity, employees may become disengaged and less responsive to the needs of citizens (Ogunyemi & Olorunfemi, 2021). For Nigeria, where bureaucratic inefficiencies and delayed service delivery remain pressing issues, it is imperative to cultivate a workforce of responsive public servants to enhance citizen trust and satisfaction with governmental institutions. Furthermore, the efficacy of promotion practices is closely linked to the attainment of goals within public institutions. The Nigerian government has established ambitious targets across various sectors; however, progress has frequently been impeded by inefficiencies in public administration.

When promotion practices align with institutional objectives, they can foster a sense of commitment and efficiency among public servants, driving them to work towards shared goals. Conversely, if promotion decisions are viewed as arbitrary or influenced by extraneous factors, the collective efforts required to achieve these goals are likely to be undermined. This paper aims to examine the relationship between promotion practices and essential outcomes, such as commitment, efficiency, responsiveness, and goal attainment, within the Nigerian public service. By investigating current promotion systems, employee attitudes, and organizational performance, this study seeks to provide insights into optimizing promotion practices to enhance the effectiveness, accountability, and responsiveness of public service in Nigeria. The correlation between promotion practices and employee outcomes, including commitment, efficiency, responsiveness, and goal attainment, has been widely acknowledged as a critical determinant of organizational performance. In the context of public service organizations in Nigeria, the implications of promotion practices on these outcomes have been inadequately explored, particularly given the intricate socio-political and economic landscape that characterizes these organizations.

Public servants in Nigeria are tasked with delivering services that significantly impact national development; however, there is increasing evidence that public institutions grapple with challenges such as diminished employee morale, substandard service delivery, inefficiencies, and a waning commitment to organizational goals (Olowu & Sulaimon, 2020). Although several studies have focused on promotion practices within Nigerian public institutions, they have predominantly concentrated on the procedural mechanics of promotions rather than the broader implications for organizational outcomes among public servants. Promotion is often regarded as a crucial motivator within the workplace, influencing employee engagement with their roles and the overarching objectives of their organizations. However, research pertaining to promotion practices in Nigeria's public sector has largely prioritized issues of fairness, corruption, and procedural dimensions of promotions (Ojo, 2019). While these issues are significant, they do not

comprehensively address the nuanced ways in which promotion practices can affect critical outcomes, such as employee commitment, efficiency, responsiveness, and goal attainment.

Given that these outcomes are fundamental for realizing the overarching objectives of the public sector, it is essential to elucidate the specific mechanisms through which promotion policies exert their influence and how these effects may differ across various tiers of public service (Akinmoladun & Alabi, 2022). There is a direct correlation between job satisfaction and job commitment (Adeniyi, 2024). Commitment to an organization, often fostered through opportunities for career advancement, can be compromised in environments where promotions are viewed as arbitrary or influenced by nepotism and patronage. These issues are prevalent in the Nigerian public service (Tella, Ayeni, & Popoola, 2019). The efficiency and responsiveness of public servants to the needs of citizens can also be significantly impacted by the perceived fairness of promotion systems. Employees who believe they will not be justly rewarded for their efforts may disengage from their work, leading to diminished performance. Additionally, the attainment of personal and organizational goals by employees may be influenced by how promotion practices are structured, particularly when these practices align or misalign with public servants' expectations for career progression and the objectives of the organization.

Although promotion practices are central to employee satisfaction and organizational performance, there is a lack of empirical evidence regarding how these practices affect four critical outcomes in Nigeria's public sector. This gap in the literature presents an opportunity to investigate the relationship between promotion practices and the performance-related behaviors of public servants. Understanding these dynamics is especially important for policymakers and administrators in Nigeria, where the public sector plays a vital role in the country's development but faces challenges related to inefficiency, corruption, and low public trust. Given the significant human resource challenges in Nigeria's public administration, there is an urgent need to identify strategies for optimizing promotion practices to foster commitment, improve efficiency, and enhance the responsiveness and goal attainment of public servants. This research aims to explore the effects of promotion practices on the commitment, efficiency, responsiveness, and goal attainment of public servants in Nigeria. By addressing existing gaps in the literature and providing a more comprehensive understanding of how promotion systems influence key organizational outcomes, this study seeks to offer valuable insights that can guide policy reforms aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of Nigeria's public service.

Research on the impact of promotion practices on public servants' performance and organizational outcomes has evolved over time, focusing on commitment, efficiency, responsiveness, and goal attainment. Early studies primarily examined the general relationship between motivation and job satisfaction among public sector employees (Olanrewaju & Oluwaseun, 2016); however, they did not directly link promotion practices to specific organizational outcomes. In the mid-2010s, scholars like Nwachukwu and Ugwu (2017) began to explore how promotion and career development affected the motivation and performance of public servants in Nigeria, emphasizing the need for transparent promotion processes to enhance commitment. Despite this progress, there remained limited examination of the distinct effects of promotion practices on public servants' efficiency, responsiveness, and goal attainment. Recent studies have started to address these gaps, with researchers like Akintoye and Folarin (2021) investigating the impact of promotion on public servants' commitment and efficiency, finding a positive relationship between perceived fairness in promotion and job performance. Yet, a comprehensive understanding of how specific promotion practices influence overall goal attainment and responsiveness in the Nigerian context is still lacking. This paper aims to fill this gap by focusing on the nuanced impacts of promotion practices on public servants' commitment, efficiency, responsiveness, and goal attainment in Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

In Nigeria, public service is a vital component of national development, responsible for ensuring efficient governance, social welfare, and the execution of public policy. The effect of human resource management practices, particularly promotion systems, on public servants' commitment, efficiency, responsiveness, and goal attainment is essential for achieving these objectives. This literature review synthesizes recent research on the relationship between promotion practices and key performance outcomes in public service contexts, specifically focusing on Nigeria. The review discusses the theoretical foundations of promotion practices, evaluates empirical findings, and identifies gaps for future research.

2.1. Impact of Promotion Practices on Public Servants' Commitment

Employee commitment, especially organizational commitment, is a significant factor affecting the overall performance of public servants. A commitment-oriented promotion system indicates to employees that their efforts are valued,

thereby fostering emotional and attitudinal engagement with the organization. In Nigeria, promotion practices frequently serve as recognition for dedication and performance, enhancing loyalty (Oluwole & Taiwo, 2021). However, when promotion systems are perceived as opaque or influenced by nepotism or political patronage, this can undermine employees' commitment and lead to a culture of disengagement (Ogundele, 2019). Research by Odo (2020) found that public servants in Nigeria reported low levels of commitment when promotion decisions were viewed as unfair, resulting in diminished trust in leadership and organizational objectives.

2.2. Promotion Practices and Efficiency

Efficiency in the public sector refers to the capacity of public servants to achieve organizational goals while minimizing resource use. Promotion practices that reward high performers and encourage merit-based advancement contribute to greater efficiency by motivating employees to enhance their productivity. However, in Nigeria, challenges such as slow promotion cycles, politicized appointments, and favoritism can hinder efficiency. A study by Aluko (2022) emphasized that delayed promotions and a lack of career development opportunities often demoralize employees, leading to low morale and inefficiency. Conversely, promoting employees based on clear and transparent criteria can enhance organizational efficiency by motivating workers to achieve higher performance levels and ensuring that positions are filled by individuals with the necessary skills and competencies.

2.3. Promotion Practices and Responsiveness

In public service, responsiveness refers to civil servants' ability to address public needs and demands in a timely and effective manner. Promotion practices that prioritize competency, dedication, and public service values are likely to increase responsiveness, as employees are more inclined to align their behaviors with organizational objectives. Oyetunde and Adebayo (2023) found that in Nigerian public institutions, promotion systems rewarding exemplary performance and public-oriented attitudes lead to higher levels of responsiveness, particularly in service delivery. Conversely, when promotions are based on political affiliations or social networks, the responsiveness of public servants can be significantly compromised, as observed in various governmental agencies in Nigeria (Adebayo, 2021).

2.4. Promotion Practices and Goal Attainment

The relationship between promotion practices and goal attainment in the public sector is influenced by several factors, including organizational culture, clarity of job roles, and the alignment of individual career aspirations with institutional objectives. Promotion practices that prioritize merit, skill acquisition, and professional development tend to facilitate goal attainment by ensuring that the right people are in the right positions at the right time. Research conducted by Idowu (2021) on Nigerian public service organizations suggests that public servants who view the promotion system as fair and merit-based are more likely to strive toward achieving organizational goals, as they feel their contributions are both acknowledged and valued. Conversely, when promotion practices are perceived as biased or unjust, it often leads to frustration, disengagement, and suboptimal performance, ultimately undermining goal attainment at both individual and organizational levels.

The literature emphasizes the significant role that promotion practices play in shaping public servants' commitment, efficiency, responsiveness, and overall goal attainment. While promotion practices in Nigeria can motivate and enhance public servants' performance, they are frequently undermined by systemic challenges such as political interference, lack of transparency, and bureaucratic inefficiencies. Further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of promotion practices on public sector performance, particularly within the Nigerian context. There is also a need for comparative studies that assess how promotion systems differ across various levels of government and their impact on organizational outcomes. Future studies should examine the psychological and socio-cultural dimensions of promotion practices to better understand how public servants' perceptions of fairness and equity influence their behaviors.

2.5. Theoretical Framework

The paper titled "Exploring Promotion Practices' Impact on Public Servants' Commitment, Efficiency, Responsiveness, and Goal Attainment in Nigeria" is grounded in the Expectancy Theory of Motivation. This theory posits that individuals are motivated to act based on the expected outcomes of their efforts. In the context of public servants in Nigeria, the study investigates how promotion practices, as a form of reward, influence employees' perceptions of the likelihood of achieving desired outcomes (such as career advancement) based on their performance, and how these expectations, in turn, affect their commitment, efficiency, responsiveness, and goal attainment in their roles. This theory provides a framework for understanding how motivation is shaped by the perceived relationship between effort, performance, and rewards within the public sector.

2.6. Expectancy Theory of Motivation

The Expectancy Theory of Motivation, proposed by Victor Vroom in 1964, is built on the premise that individuals are motivated to act in a particular way based on the expected outcomes of their actions. The theory identifies three key factors that influence motivation: Expectancy (the belief that effort will lead to desired performance), Instrumentality (the belief that performance will lead to a specific outcome or reward), and Valence (the value placed on the reward or outcome). According to this theory, individuals are more likely to be motivated when they perceive a clear link between their efforts, performance, and a valued reward, as they seek to maximize positive outcomes and minimize negative ones. The paper is framed within the context of Expectancy Theory of Motivation, a psychological framework developed by Victor Vroom in 1964. Expectancy Theory suggests that individuals are motivated to act based on their expectations of the outcomes of their actions. The theory identifies three core components that influence motivation: expectancy (the belief that effort will lead to desired performance), instrumentality (the belief that performance will lead to a reward), and valence (the value placed on the reward). In the Nigerian public sector, where bureaucracy, politics, and institutional challenges often complicate performance dynamics, promotion practices play a crucial role in shaping employees' perceptions of future rewards and recognition.

According to Expectancy Theory, employees are likely to be more committed, efficient, responsive, and goal-oriented if they believe that their efforts will result in the achievement of career objectives, such as promotions, which in turn offer meaningful rewards (e.g., financial benefits, job security, or professional recognition). The paper likely explores how promotion practices in the Nigerian public service can impact these motivational factors by influencing public servants' expectations about their careers. For example, if promotions are perceived to be based on merit, performance, or effort, public servants may have high expectancy, believing that their efforts will lead to desired outcomes. This belief can result in greater commitment to their jobs, improved performance, enhanced responsiveness to public needs, and a heightened focus on goal attainment. Conversely, if promotion practices are seen as arbitrary, politically motivated, or based on favoritism, the instrumentality component may be compromised. In such cases, employees may feel that promotion and advancement depend more on external factors than on their efforts. This perception can diminish the valence of the reward (promotion), making it seem unattainable or less meaningful, which in turn could lead to reduced motivation and job satisfaction. Furthermore, the paper may discuss the role of organizational fairness and transparency in promoting positive motivational outcomes.

When public servants believe that promotions are based on clear criteria and linked to individual performance, it can strengthen their belief in the instrumentality of their efforts, motivating them to work more efficiently and responsively. In contrast, opaque or inequitable promotion practices may foster cynicism, lower commitment, and decreased performance as employees doubt the fairness and legitimacy of the reward system. The paper positions promotion practices as a critical factor in shaping the motivational climate of the Nigerian public service. By applying the principles of Expectancy Theory, it highlights how aligning promotion practices with public servants' expectations about effort, reward, and fairness can influence key outcomes such as commitment, efficiency, responsiveness, and goal attainment. This theoretical framework offers insights into the psychological processes that drive employee behavior in response to promotion policies and practices, suggesting that organizational changes could enhance motivation and performance in the public sector.

3. Results

Table 1 Demographic Profiles of Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	662	54.4
Female	554	45.6
Total	1216	100%
Marital Status		
Single	395	32.5
Married	745	61.3
Others	76	6.3

Total	1216	100%
Age		
25-30	105	8.6
31-35	271	22.3
36-40	224	18.4
41-45	331	27.2
46-50	183	15.0
51 and above	102	8.4
Total	1216	100%
Year in Service		
0 – 10	380	31.3
11 – 20	638	52.5
21years and above	198	16.3
Total	1216	100%
Educational Qualification		
NCE/OND	184	15.1
Bachelor's Degree	833	68.5
Master's Degree	195	16.1
Doctorate	4	0.3
Total	1216	100%

Field survey (2024)

The public sector is crucial for the governance and development of any nation. In Nigeria, the efficiency, responsiveness, and achievement of goals by public servants are vital drivers of national progress. There has been considerable focus on how promotion practices affect the commitment and performance of these public servants, particularly regarding enhancing productivity. This report examines the findings of a study on the influence of promotion practices on public servants' commitment, efficiency, responsiveness, and goal attainment in Nigeria. The study is based on a survey conducted with 1,216 public sector employees representing various demographics. Table 1 presents the demographic breakdown of the sample. Among the 1,216 respondents, the gender distribution was nearly equal, with 54.4% male and 45.6% female. This demographic balance indicates inclusive representation, which is essential for understanding the diverse impact of promotion practices across gender groups.

Regarding marital status, 61.3% of the respondents were married, while 32.5% were single. Marital status may influence employees' commitment, as family responsibilities often correlate with career stability and long-term engagement. Additionally, 6.3% of the sample fell under the "other" category, which may include widowed or separated individuals; further exploration is needed to understand their unique experiences. In terms of age, a significant portion of the sample (27.2%) was between 41 and 45 years old, with 22.3% in the 31-35 age bracket and 18.4% aged 36-40. This age distribution reflects a mature workforce with substantial experience in the public sector. The predominant age group (31-45) is particularly relevant for evaluating how promotion practices impact career advancement and job satisfaction.

The year in service category indicates that 52.5% of respondents had between 11 and 20 years of experience. This segment is crucial for exploring how long-term tenure affects perceptions of promotion and job performance. Concerning educational qualifications, a significant majority (68.5%) held a bachelor's degree, while 16.1% had a master's degree, and only 0.3% possessed a doctoral degree. These educational qualifications are important for understanding the correlation between promotional decisions and academic credentials, as well as whether higher qualifications influence job performance and organizational commitment. The relatively low proportion of doctorate

holders may suggest that promotions in Nigeria's public sector are not always linked to educational attainment, but rather to tenure and other factors such as job performance.

Table 2 Employee Commitment

S/N	Employee Commitment	Strongly Agree	Agree	(Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I am willing to exert extra effort to contribute to the success of my ministry/parastatal as a civil/public servant.	453 (37.3)	552 (45.4)	172 (14.1)	39 (3.2)	0 (0.0)
2	I am proud to be a civil/public servant.	565 (46.5)	594 (48.8)	48 (3.9)	9 (0.7)	0 (0.0)
3	I am satisfied with the support and resources provided to me to perform my duties effectively.	646 (53.1)	431 (35.4)	116 (9.5)	9 (0.7)	14 (1.2)
4	I am willing to stay in the civil service till retirement.	672 (55.3)	441 (36.3)	89 (7.3)	5 (0.4)	9 (0.7)

Field survey (2024)

Table 2 examines how promotion practices influence key organizational outcomes, specifically, employee commitment, efficiency, responsiveness, and goal attainment, within Nigeria's public sector. Based on data gathered from a survey of civil servants, the study provides insights into how these practices shape employee attitudes and behaviors, offering valuable information for improving public service delivery and enhancing employee satisfaction. The primary aim of the study is to assess the impact of promotion practices on public servants' commitment, which is crucial for improving efficiency, responsiveness, and goal achievement in public sector organizations. Employee commitment is often regarded as a predictor of high performance since it drives motivation, job satisfaction, and responsiveness to citizens' needs (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). By examining respondents' attitudes toward their roles and the support they receive from their institutions, the study underscores the significance of commitment in fostering positive organizational outcomes.

In the context of the Nigerian public sector, employee commitment represents not only individual job satisfaction but also the overall health and performance of public institutions. Public servants who are highly committed to their work are more likely to contribute positively to the success of their ministries or parastatals. Survey results revealed that a substantial proportion of respondents (82.7%) expressed a willingness to go above and beyond to contribute to their organization's success, indicating a strong sense of commitment. Furthermore, nearly all respondents (95.3%) expressed pride in being civil servants, and 88.5% were satisfied with the resources and support provided by their ministries. Additionally, over 90% of respondents indicated their intention to remain in civil service until retirement, suggesting that job security and career stability are significant factors contributing to their commitment.

Promotion practices are critical determinants of public servants' organizational commitment. Research indicates that transparent, merit-based promotion systems significantly enhance employee morale and job satisfaction, fostering greater organizational loyalty (Harris, 2018). In Nigeria, the promotion process plays a pivotal role in shaping employees' perceptions of fairness and opportunity within the public service. Promotions based on merit and performance tend to lead to higher job satisfaction, while delays or perceived inequities in promotion practices can result in frustration and decreased commitment (Chikezie & Akinbuli, 2019). The study shows that public servants who believe promotions are fair and performance-based are more likely to exhibit higher job satisfaction and commitment. However, concerns about favoritism and a lack of transparency in promotion processes remain prevalent, which can undermine public servants' trust in the system.

Promotion practices also impact goal attainment and organizational efficiency. In the Nigerian public sector, the ability to achieve organizational goals is closely tied to efficient coordination and employee motivation. Public servants who feel committed to their roles are typically more productive, which facilitates goal achievement (Robinson & Judge, 2013). The study's findings indicate that employees who reported high levels of satisfaction with their working conditions and available resources were more inclined to go the extra mile in their duties. Furthermore, aligning individual career goals with organizational objectives is a key factor in enhancing efficiency. Public servants who

perceive their career advancement as linked to their performance are more motivated to achieve both personal and organizational goals (Harris, 2018).

Responsiveness is a critical factor in the effectiveness of the public sector and relies heavily on the motivation and commitment of public servants. The study revealed that a majority of public servants in Nigeria feel a strong sense of duty toward the citizens they serve. However, for this sense of responsibility to translate into tangible results, it is essential that public servants feel supported and empowered by their institutions, particularly regarding career advancement and promotion opportunities. Promotions based on merit and performance not only enhance individual job satisfaction but also improve overall organizational responsiveness. Public servants who believe they are deserving of promotion are more likely to engage proactively with the needs of the public, ultimately contributing to more efficient and responsive public service delivery (Chikezie & Akinbuli, 2019).

The study emphasizes the vital role that effective promotion practices play in enhancing public servants' commitment, efficiency, responsiveness, and achievement of goals. Transparent, merit-based promotion systems are essential for fostering a motivated and dedicated workforce, which, in turn, drives improved organizational performance and better public service delivery. To further improve the commitment and efficiency of Nigeria's public servants, the government should prioritize reforms to ensure that promotion systems are transparent and merit-based, addressing concerns about favoritism. Additionally, expanding career development opportunities through training and mentorship programs can enhance employees' professional growth and skills. Strengthening support mechanisms within ministries is also crucial to ensure public servants have the resources they need to perform their duties effectively. By focusing on these key areas, Nigeria can strengthen the commitment of its public servants and improve public service delivery, ultimately supporting the nation's broader development goals.

Table 3 Employee Efficiency

S/N	Employee Efficiency	Strongly Agree	Agree	(Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I am adequately equipped with the necessary tools and resources to perform my duties efficiently as a public servant.	561 (46.1)	550 (45.2)	96 (7.9)	9 (0.7)	0 (0.0)
2	I receive clear and specific instructions on tasks and responsibilities, which helps me work efficiently as a public servant.	630 (52.0)	508 (41.8)	71 (5.8)	5 (0.4)	0 (0.0)
3	I can manage my time effectively to accomplish tasks and meet deadlines.	635 (52.2)	499 (41.0)	68 (5.6)	14 (1.2)	0 (0.0)
4	There are opportunities for automation of tasks to improve efficiency.	593 (48.8)	489 (40.2)	121 (10.0)	4 (0.3)	9 (0.7)

Field survey (2024)

The significance of effective promotion practices in the public service sector cannot be overstated, particularly in Nigeria, where the relationship between employee motivation and organizational performance directly impacts public administration. A recent study highlighted employee efficiency as a crucial aspect of public servant performance, emphasizing the importance of adequate resources, clear instructions, time management, and automation in completing tasks. The study's findings offer valuable insights into how promotional strategies affect employee outcomes such as commitment, efficiency, and overall goal achievement. As shown in Table 3, there is a clear correlation between promotion practices and employee efficiency within Nigeria's public service. A substantial portion of respondents (91.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that they were sufficiently equipped with the necessary tools and resources to perform their duties effectively. This finding suggests that providing adequate resources—a factor often linked to promotion—plays a crucial role in enhancing public servant performance (Mohammed & Abdulkadir, 2021).

Moreover, 93.8% of respondents confirmed that they received clear and specific instructions regarding their tasks and responsibilities, underscoring the vital role of clear communication, a key component of promotion practices that can boost efficiency (Osibanjo, 2022). Effective time management is another essential element contributing to employee efficiency. With 93.2% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that they manage their time effectively to meet deadlines, it is evident that employees who feel supported in their roles tend to be more efficient (Nwachukwu et al., 2021). This indicates that when public servants are provided with the right tools, clear expectations, and the autonomy

to manage their time, they are more likely to achieve performance goals and contribute to organizational success. The study also found that a significant number of respondents (89%) agreed or strongly agreed that there were opportunities for task automation to enhance efficiency. Automation in public administration is crucial for improving performance by minimizing human error and streamlining repetitive tasks (Adeniyi, 2024).

The positive responses to this aspect of the survey suggest that promotion strategies that incorporate technological advancements could be vital for enhancing operational effectiveness in the public sector. Promotion practices in Nigeria's public service are essential not only for operational efficiency but also for fostering employees' commitment to their roles and their ability to meet organizational goals. When public servants perceive their work environment as supportive-through adequate resources, clear directives, and automation opportunities-they are more likely to demonstrate increased commitment to their responsibilities (Adesina, 2020). Additionally, commitment serves as a precursor to goal attainment, as motivated employees tend to align their personal objectives with organizational goals, contributing to the overall success of the public sector. The study's findings strongly indicate that promotion practices ensuring adequate resources, clear communication, effective time management, and task automation significantly enhance public servants' efficiency. These factors not only facilitate improved goal attainment but also strengthen employee commitment, fostering a more responsive and effective public service. Policymakers in Nigeria's public sector should consider these results when designing promotion strategies to keep the workforce motivated, efficient, and responsive to the public's needs.

Table 4 Employee Responsiveness

S/N	Employee Responsiveness	Strongly Agree	Agree	(Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I actively seek solutions and assist in resolving issues raised while performing my official assignments.	522 (42.9)	631 (51.9)	54 (4.4)	9 (0.7)	0 (0.0)
2	I demonstrate a sense of urgency in addressing work-related matters and meeting deadlines.	456 (37.5)	674 (55.4)	54 (4.4)	32 (2.6)	0 (0.0)
3	I take ownership of my responsibilities and strive for excellence in my job roles.	496 (40.8)	632 (52.0)	69 (5.7)	14 (1.2)	5 (0.4)
4	I effectively manage my workload and resources to maximise efficiency.	529 (42.5)	596 (49.0)	77 (6.3)	14 (1.2)	0 (0.0)

Field survey (2024)

The study provides an in-depth examination of how promotion practices within the public sector affect key aspects of employee performance, including commitment, efficiency, responsiveness, and goal achievement. A central focus of this research is employee responsiveness, which serves as a crucial indicator of how engaged and proactive public servants are in their roles. The data in Table 4 highlights the varying levels of responsiveness among public servants, revealing both strengths and areas for improvement within the Nigerian civil service. Employee responsiveness, as discussed in the study, emerges as a dominant positive trait. A significant majority of employees (94.8%) actively seek solutions and help resolve issues that arise during official assignments; 42.9% strongly agree, while 51.9% agree with this statement. This high level of commitment to problem-solving suggests that many Nigerian public servants are motivated and dedicated to their responsibilities.

When asked about their sense of urgency in handling work-related matters and meeting deadlines, 92.9% of employees expressed agreement, with a notable 37.5% strongly agreeing. This strong level of responsiveness is particularly noteworthy as it aligns with modern public sector performance expectations, which stress the importance of efficiency and timeliness. Moreover, an equally high proportion of respondents takes ownership of their responsibilities and strives for excellence in their roles, with 92.8% either agreeing or strongly agreeing. The significance of ownership in work roles cannot be overstated, as it reflects a profound sense of responsibility that is essential for effective public service delivery. Such attitudes directly impact the achievement of organizational goals; committed employees who take pride in their roles are more likely to contribute positively to public sector objectives.

The study also emphasizes employees' ability to manage their workloads and resources effectively. A total of 91.5% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they manage their workload and resources well, indicating a high

level of efficiency within the public service. This finding is particularly important considering the challenges the Nigerian public sector faces, including limited resources and increasing service demands. The capacity to manage resources effectively is critical for ensuring that public servants can deliver quality services, even in challenging circumstances. However, while the overall data reveal positive trends in employee responsiveness, the small percentage of employees who disagree or are neutral (around 5-7% in most cases) suggests that there may be pockets of disengagement or inconsistency in commitment levels across the sector. These nuances should not be overlooked, as they could reflect broader systemic issues that need to be addressed in promotion practices or managerial approaches to employee engagement.

The findings of this study indicate that promotion practices in Nigeria's public service may significantly influence the development of a highly responsive, committed, and efficient workforce. By fostering a sense of ownership among employees, encouraging urgency in task completion, and promoting effective resource management, Nigerian public servants demonstrate behaviors that align with the goal of enhancing public service delivery. Nevertheless, further investigation is required to understand the underlying factors contributing to the slight variability in employee responsiveness and how these factors can be addressed to further improve public sector performance.

Table 5 Employee Goal Attainment

S/N	Employee Goal Attainment	Strongly Agree	Agree	(Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I am aware of the goals set for me.	493 (40.5)	668 (54.9)	46 (3.8)	9 (0.7)	0 (0.0)
2	I receive sufficient support to help me achieve my public service goals.	507 (41.7)	659 (54.2)	46 (3.7)	5 (0.4)	0 (0.0)
3	I proactively seek guidance when faced with challenges that may hinder goal attainment.	363 (29.9)	731 (60.1)	117 (9.6)	5 (0.4)	0 (0.0)
4	I can adapt and adjust my goals to align with changing priorities.	532 (43.8)	579 (47.6)	100 (8.2)	5 (0.4)	0 (0.0)

Field survey (2024)

The exploration of promotion practices and their impact on the commitment, efficiency, responsiveness, and goal attainment of public servants in Nigeria has garnered increasing interest in the fields of public administration and human resource management. A recent study examining these dimensions provides valuable insights into the relationship between employees' goal attainment and broader organizational outcomes, particularly in the public service sector. By analyzing data from a survey of public servants, the research explores how various promotion practices shape employees' attitudes, behaviors, and performance outcomes within the Nigerian civil service context. The findings presented in Table 5, which detail employees' perceptions regarding goal attainment, contribute significantly to our understanding of how promotional strategies can influence public servants' engagement with their work.

At the core of the findings is the recognition that public servants generally demonstrate a high level of awareness and alignment with organizational goals. A majority of respondents (94.7%) either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, "I am aware of the goals set for me." This suggests that promotion practices, linked to clear communication and goal-setting initiatives, could enhance employees' understanding of organizational priorities. Goal clarity is recognized in organizational behavior literature as a crucial determinant of job satisfaction and performance (Locke & Latham, 2019). When employees are aware of their objectives, they are more likely to direct their efforts toward achieving them, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for their work outcomes.

Equally, the study highlights that a large proportion of employees feel they receive sufficient support to achieve their public service goals, with 95.9% of respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing with this statement. This underscores the importance of organizational support structures, such as training, mentorship, and accessible leadership, in facilitating goal attainment. According to Katz and Kahn (2019), organizational support systems are essential for enhancing employee motivation and performance, particularly in bureaucratic settings where role clarity and resource access may be limited. In the context of the Nigerian public service, adequate support can significantly improve the likelihood of goal achievement, thereby fostering higher levels of efficiency and responsiveness.

Another noteworthy result from the survey pertains to employees' proactive approach to seeking guidance when facing challenges. Approximately 90% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that they proactively seek assistance in such situations. This behavior reflects a culture of self-efficacy and initiative, which is crucial for navigating complex and often resource-constrained environments like the Nigerian public sector. The willingness to seek guidance indicates an employee's commitment to overcoming obstacles and pursuing professional development, which directly contributes to organizational goal attainment. This proactive stance is particularly important in public service, where bureaucratic procedures and institutional constraints can hinder efficiency (Cohen & Eimicke, 2020). Therefore, promotion practices that encourage autonomy and problem-solving skills can enhance employees' ability to respond effectively to challenges.

The respondents exhibited a high level of adaptability in their work processes. Over 91% of employees either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, "I can adapt and adjust my goals to align with changing priorities." This finding is particularly significant given the ever-evolving landscape of public administration, where changes in political leadership, policy shifts, and socio-economic challenges frequently require the recalibration of goals. The ability to adapt to changing priorities is a hallmark of organizational resilience and sustainability. Public servants who can adjust their goals to align with new priorities are more likely to remain productive and responsive, even in times of uncertainty. In this context, promotion practices that reward flexibility, innovation, and resilience can further enhance employees' capacity to meet the dynamic demands of their roles.

One broader implication of these findings is the critical role that promotion practices play in shaping employee attitudes and behavior within the public sector. By linking promotion opportunities to clear goal-setting, organizational support, and personal development, public sector organizations can cultivate a workforce that is committed, efficient, and responsive to changing priorities. The data suggest that when employees feel supported in achieving their goals, they are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of engagement and productivity, contributing to the overall effectiveness of public administration. However, the results also indicate areas where improvement is needed. Despite the generally positive outlook on goal attainment, a small percentage of employees (3.8%-8.2%) expressed neutrality or disagreement with certain statements, particularly regarding seeking guidance or adapting to changing priorities. This suggests that while the majority of employees are engaged and proactive, some barriers to full engagement may still exist, potentially due to factors such as lack of resources, inadequate leadership, or limited access to development opportunities.

The foregoing challenges need to be addressed through targeted intervention programs, such as leadership training, mentorship, and more transparent promotion practices, to ensure that all public servants are equally equipped to achieve their goals and contribute to organizational success. The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the link between promotion practices and employee goal attainment in Nigeria's public service sector. A clear awareness of goals, coupled with organizational support, proactive problem-solving, and adaptability, suggests that well-structured promotion practices can significantly enhance public servants' commitment, efficiency, and responsiveness. These outcomes are essential for improving overall organizational performance and achieving the developmental goals of the Nigerian state. Further research is needed to explore the nuances of these relationships and develop more comprehensive strategies for fostering goal-oriented behavior among public servants, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria, where public administration often faces challenges related to resource limitations and institutional inertia.

4. Theoretical Discussion of Findings

This examination considers the effects of promotion practices on the commitment, efficiency, responsiveness, and goal attainment of public servants in Nigeria. The Expectancy Theory of Motivation provides a compelling framework for understanding these observed outcomes. According to Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964), individuals are motivated when they perceive a clear connection between their efforts, performance, and the rewards they anticipate receiving. In the context of Nigeria's public service, the structure of promotions, whether based on merit, seniority, or political influence, can significantly impact employees' motivation and subsequent organizational behaviors. The survey findings align with the principles of Expectancy Theory, highlighting how public servants' perceptions of promotion practices influence their commitment and efficiency. For instance, the majority of respondents indicated a willingness to exert extra effort and remain in public service until retirement (see Table 2). This suggests that employees who believe their hard work will be rewarded with advancement or recognition are more likely to invest effort in their roles.

A fair and transparent promotion system enhances the expectancy component of the theory, where employees feel that their efforts will lead to positive performance evaluations and career growth. This is notably reflected in the data

showing a high level of satisfaction with the resources provided to public servants, with 53.1% of respondents strongly agreeing (see Table 2). This underscores the idea that employees engage more actively when they believe their actions lead to desirable outcomes. In respect of instrumentality, the belief that performance will lead to specific outcomes or rewards is central to understanding how promotion practices affect employee efficiency and responsiveness. The study reveals that public servants generally agree they have the necessary tools and instructions to perform their jobs efficiently (see Tables 3 and 4). This indicates a clear relationship between performance and expected rewards. However, this belief can be undermined if promotions are perceived as politically motivated or opaque, as noted in the introduction.

When promotions are viewed as disconnected from merit or performance, employees may become disengaged, decreasing their responsiveness and efficiency. Conversely, when promotions are based on performance and merit, employees are more likely to work efficiently and take ownership of their roles, as demonstrated by the high levels of agreement regarding their willingness to meet deadlines and proactively resolve work-related issues (see Table 4). At the heart of valence, the value placed on the reward, is another critical component of Expectancy Theory relevant to goal attainment in public service. Survey data reveals that employees are aware of the goals set for them (see Table 5), suggesting that the rewards tied to achieving these goals, whether in the form of promotions, career advancement, or job security, are meaningful. When employees perceive that the rewards associated with their performance are valuable, they are more likely to strive toward achieving those goals. The study finds that a majority of respondents feel they receive sufficient support in achieving their goals, with 41.7% strongly agreeing (see Table 5). This indicates that public servants are more motivated when the rewards (promotions) align with their personal and professional aspirations.

This theoretical framework offers valuable insights for public administration in Nigeria, particularly regarding the importance of transparent and merit-based promotion practices. In the context of the Nigerian public service, where political interference and nepotism can obscure promotion decisions, creating an environment where public servants believe in the connection between effort, performance, and rewards is essential. Enhancing the meritocracy of promotion systems would strengthen expectancy, instrumentality, and valence for public servants, thereby improving commitment, efficiency, responsiveness, and goal attainment. The findings suggest that when employees perceive promotions as linked to performance rather than political patronage, they are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of engagement and job satisfaction. The study illustrates how well-structured promotion practices, aligned with the principles of Expectancy Theory, can significantly enhance organizational outcomes in Nigeria's public service. By ensuring that public servants perceive clear connections between their efforts and the rewards they expect, policymakers can cultivate a motivated and committed workforce, ultimately improving public sector performance and contributing to national development goals.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study presents significant insights into the relationship between promotion practices and key outcomes such as commitment, efficiency, responsiveness, and goal attainment among public servants in Nigeria's public sector. The findings suggest that promotion practices, particularly those perceived as merit-based, are fundamental in fostering increased levels of employee commitment and efficiency. Public servants who believe their efforts will be recognized based on merit exhibit a stronger sense of ownership, responsibility, and dedication to their roles. Conversely, when promotion decisions are perceived as being influenced by political factors or nepotism, morale and overall performance become dampened. This observation appositely supports the expectations outlined in Vroom's Expectancy Theory of Motivation, which underscores the critical connection between effort, performance, and reward in enhancing employee engagement and their ability to contribute to organizational objectives.

Furthermore, while a majority of public servants indicate satisfaction with the resources and support available to them, there remain notable gaps in achieving full responsiveness and goal attainment. This situation underscores the necessity for reforms within promotion systems to ensure transparency, fairness, and meritocracy, elements essential for improving public servants' morale and operational effectiveness. Policymakers and administrators in Nigeria should consider these findings as they endeavor to refine promotion practices that align with national development objectives. By focusing on these areas, it is possible to cultivate a public service that is more efficient, committed, and responsive, thereby better equipped to address the socio-economic challenges facing the nation.

This study makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of how promotion practices influence key organizational outcomes in the Nigerian public sector. It effectively addresses a notable gap in the literature by examining the complex relationship between promotion practices and employee behavior within the framework of Expectancy Theory of

Motivation. To enhance the analysis, a more thorough exploration of how political interference and nepotism undermine merit-based promotions, along with their subsequent impacts on motivation and performance, would be advantageous. Furthermore, the paper could benefit from a deeper examination of the role of training and capacity-building programs in reinforcing the effectiveness of promotion practices, as these factors are crucial in ensuring that promotions are equitable and aligned with the professional development needs of public servants. Additional longitudinal studies would provide further insights into the long-term effects of promotion practices on employee commitment and efficiency, particularly in the context of ongoing public sector reforms.

Professional development must be strategically aligned with promotion criteria to optimize outcomes. When employees have access to relevant training and resources, they are better equipped to fulfill the requirements necessary for advancement. This alignment not only reinforces the "Expectancy" component of Expectancy Theory but also enhances the "Valence" element, as employees can clearly recognize the benefits of their efforts in terms of career progression. Involving public servants in the decision-making processes related to promotion practices is another vital step. By engaging employees in the development of these practices, organizations foster a sense of ownership and validate employee perspectives. This collaborative approach nurtures trust and reinforces the perception of fairness, thereby addressing concerns related to transparency. Finally, policy reforms are imperative to eliminate political influences from the promotion process. Advocating for modifications that mitigate bias and emphasize merit over political affiliation will ensure the establishment of a more equitable and objective system, effectively serving both the public servants and the constituents they represent.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

There are no conflicts of interest to report between the corresponding author and co-author of this manuscript. The authors reached a mutual agreement regarding the order of authorship, assigning the first and second authors.

Both corresponding author and co-author mutually agreed on who should be the first author and the second author.

Statement of ethical approval

The study fully complied with all ethical principles governing research involving human subjects, including informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, non-maleficence, beneficence, cultural sensitivity, and justice.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study.

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