

## The Federal Character Principle and Its Impact on the Nigerian Public Service

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### Abstract

Federalism is one of the best frameworks for managing a pluralistic society, and Nigeria used it to run her multiethnic state. Despite this, there appears to be division, conflict, and discord rather than cohesion, unity, and consensus. Other political strategies, including the quota system and Federal Character, were adopted as a result of the quest for national integration. The application of Federal Character, which was fully adopted in 1979, has been the subject of numerous political disputes and is currently a hot topic in political as well as administrative discourse. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate how the federal character principle is implemented in Nigeria's public sector. This study used the historical research design and adopted systems theory as its theoretical framework. The study's conclusion was that Nigerian federalism is far from ideal and that the Federal Character Principle, which aims to foster national loyalty, promotes unity among Nigerians, and gives all citizens a sense of belonging to the country regardless of differences in ancestry, culture, language, or religion, has not been able to achieve this goal. Among other recommendations, the study suggests that there be mechanisms in place for the effective implementation of the federal character and quota system in the Nigerian civil service, including those related to patriotism, honesty, institutionalism, and fairness. This will lessen the likelihood of conflicts between Nigeria's various ethnic groups, which are often the main reason why certain ethnic groups are excluded from civil service recruitment.

**Keywords:** Federal character principle; public service; quota system

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### Introduction

Nigeria has a federal system of government with a constitutionally mandated division of powers between the federal, state, and local levels of government. Nigeria adopted a federal structure for a variety of reasons, including the need to grant the over 300 ethnic groups in the country the autonomy to grow at their own rate. Federalism was also intended to bring government closer to the people, particularly at the local level (Nwafor, 2019). The country's vastness and cultural diversity allow every region to flourish without fear of the Hausa, Yoruba, or Igbo tribes, who make up the majority, gaining control over the minority tribes. Nigeria is still struggling with one of the main effects of federalism, which is close to the federal character principle. This principle is centred on the fair distribution of elected and appointed political offices, quota systems for admission, and a preference for fiscal federalism. Nigeria gained its independence many years ago. Given that getting national positions and financial assets in Nigeria is still highly contentious, a fair allocation of collective economic assets as well as political equal treatment is now required. This is partially because the nation is multiethnic and the constitutional provision for the equitable distribution of economic resources to each region is not being properly implemented (Mukoro, 2018; AbdulRasheed, Raji & Amin, 2020).

The federal character system aims to maintain fair distributions of political and bureaucratic positions in the public sector at the federal, state, and local government dimensions. The policy's goals are to strengthen national cohesion and provide each Nigerian with a feeling of identity within the nation. Sani (2013) provided support for this viewpoint by stating that the goal was to achieve national integration by redressing the imbalanced structure and ethnic domination in the government. Therefore, the federal character principle, which is put into practice by the federal character commission, was created and launched to address negative effects that come from chances and resources that the federal government offers to its citizens but that, despite their apparent neutrality, have an adverse impact on people who are protected. In order to maintain a sense of belonging for all Nigerians, the federal character principle is designed to guarantee a strong and indivisible nation founded on justice and fairness (Federal Character Commission, 1996). Even though the aforementioned policy is commendable and the concept is strengthened by the country's constitution, its implementation has proven controversial. Some critics argue that the policy includes a merit system that will enable only qualified individuals to be hired into the Nigerian civil service, thus encouraging high-quality service delivery for the nation's development (Suberu, 2001; Okereka & Okolie, 2022).

Junaidu and Aminu (2015) claim that rather than being a solution to the issues it was supposed to address, the Federal Character Principle has turned into a problem. Sani (2013) asserts that the federal character principle is counterproductive when evaluating the Federal Character from a merit perspective. This paper's main contention is that the federal character principle's introduction and implementation have not succeeded in bringing competent and motivated workers to Nigeria's public service, where they could enhance administrative effectiveness and improve performance in the execution of government initiatives for long-term prosperity. In light of the aforementioned issues this paper examined federal character principle and its impact for public service in Nigeria.

## **Literature Review**

### **Federal Character Principle**

In actuality, nations exist to use organisations and all human resources at their disposal to provide security, safety, and above all the development of the citizens who have given up their sovereignty as a substitute for the aforementioned basic needs of life. Organisations do, in fact, contribute to the prosperity of nations by fostering efficiency, productivity, output level, and performance through institutional labour or a group of individuals known as workers. These employees are real people with hopes, dreams, and emotions. They provide their labour in exchange for fair pay and benefits, a healthy physical work environment, and a long-lasting employment relationship based on moral principles and best practices for human resources. Good performers, including permanent employees, are recognised to be more focused on their professional and personal development as well as the reputation of the company; in contrast, low performers and hourly workers are more concerned with their financial entitlements and chances of being retained. One could argue that employee retention and development are important sources of employee motivation that may lead to increased productivity (Agburu, 2012; Okolie & Ojomo, 2020). A prospective employee may consider a job for a variety of reasons. Several of these factors may also affect an employee's decision to extend their employment or not. El-Rufai (2011) found that most workers, regardless of employment status, cite compensation and the company's location as factors that will keep them with an organisation longer. Conversely, factors like a lack of obstacles and possibilities, a lack of opportunities for career advancement, and a low salary are listed as things that could cause workers to leave an organisation. In the Nigerian public service, there is a distinct narrative. The Nigerian public service possesses a tradition of hiring people primarily on a permanent basis, regardless of their performance or the aforementioned considerations. Additionally, an over-reliance on the Federal character principle may have had an impact on career planning, effective performance appraisal, and training and development in the Nigerian public service.

A few decades after Nigeria gained independence, the foundation of its federalism was shattered, which led to the civil war that raged there from 1966 to 1970. Before independence, some nationalists were unaware of or did not anticipate some of these issues. According to Nnamani, Tochukwu, Ugwuanyi, and Okeke (2022), political boundaries that were established at the time of independence did not cross tribal lines. The history, customs, beliefs, religion, languages, or tribal affinities are the factors that divide the ethnic groups. Political elites represented as well as defended their cultural groups as opposed to national unity, which encouraged ethnic accentuations and sparked the country's first military coup and counter-coup as well as the Biafran civil war. As a result, party politics became polarised along ethnic and tribal lines. The term "federal character" describes the unique aspiration of the Nigerian people to uphold national unity, encourage patriotism, and provide each citizen with a feeling of national identity, regardless of the differences in ancestry, culture, language, or religion that may exist and which they wish to support and integrate into the framework of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Constitution Drafting Committee's definition of federal character, which is presented above, seems woefully inadequate and has numerous flaws. As demonstrated by Afigbo (1989:5), federal character cannot be a goal. Furthermore, the definition's reference to "the desire to nourish" seems highly ambiguous. What is the want? In the event that the desire is known, what is it trying to feed? It would seem reasonable to argue that the Constitution Drafting Committee focused only on highlighting some of the most contentious issues that Nigerians were facing regarding how to ensure that all societal groups were represented in the creation and execution of governmental policies a concept known in Nigeria as "the National Question". The Constitution Drafting Committee (1977) made the following argument when urging support for the inclusion of the federal character principle in the 1979 Nigerian Constitution as a tactic for promoting equity, peace, and stability: historically, there has been inter-ethnic rivalry to ensure that one ethnic group or combination of ethnic groups dominates government to the exclusion of others. Therefore, it is imperative that certain measures be put in place to make sure that the majority of people in government positions, whether appointed or elected, come from a small number of states, or from a small number of ethnic or other sectional groups.

According to the earlier Constitution Drafting Committee (1977) definition of the term "desire of the peoples of Nigeria to promote national unity", a reevaluation of the Nigerian federal system is required in order to achieve viable growth and long-lasting unity. Afigbo (1989:6) asserts that the "federal character of Nigeria must be taken to mean...the character of the Nigerian federation". He claims that in order to comprehend and characterise the Nigerian federation, one must take into consideration the following elements: the intrinsic or primordial qualities of Nigeria's federal society that date back to earlier times; the effectiveness and calibre of statesmanship that has attempted to harness these qualities to a federal constitution; the level of harmony that exists between the fundamental characteristics and uses of Nigerian society; the framework and execution of the constitution; and the reality that the Nigerian federation's character has been fairly fluid in response to shifting views on statesmanship and other pertinent factors.

Nonetheless, Ekeh (1989:20) contends that "the issues addressed by the Nigerian federal character doctrine are...partially federal in nature. Unitary systems of government and federal character issues are closely related. Federal character, as defined by the constitution of 1979, aims to address the allocation of rights and benefits among the fundamental elements of any state structure. The main flaw in Nigeria's application as well as implementation of the

federal character principle is the focus on sharing the rights and benefits that come with being a part of the government, rather than on resource development or "cake-baking". It is therefore imperative that adjustments be made to this procedure in order to guarantee administrative efficacy for Nigeria's sustainable development. According to Gboyega (1989:177) and Okolie and Edo (2023), the federal character of Nigeria is explained by the fundamental goals and guiding principles of state policy found in the 1979 constitution. This means that the Federal Government's or any of its agencies' organisational structure and management of their operations must acknowledge Nigeria's federal character and the necessity of fostering national unity and commanding national loyalty. As a result, it will be avoided for members of a small number of ethnic or other sectional groups to predominate in the government or its agencies.

The aforementioned constitutional mandate was created in order to increase the involvement of individuals from various societal segments in the governance process in Nigeria. Onyeoziri (2002:17), however, notes that "a great deal of tension has been caused among the different federating units in the country among the implementation of the federal character." The following factors contribute to the tension: the vagueness that permeates its application in some contexts; the arbitrariness that appears to accompany its application even in contexts where it appears to be straight; the absence of political will on the part of the ruling class to use sanctions when regulations are broken; and the absence of clear guidelines for striking a balance between efficiency and equity in the application of the principle. These elements frequently draw attention to the drawbacks of applying the principle wisely and present significant obstacles to Nigeria's attainment of sustainable development (Onyeoziri, 2002). The federal character principle has been applied, and it has been shown to exacerbate ethno-regional conflict rather than heal it. Moreover, it is inherently incoherent when used as a policy tool to handle Nigeria's national issue (Onyeoziri, 2002). This is because, instead of treating every Nigerian citizen as an individual in and of themselves, it views each person as a member of an ethnolinguistic group within the state, which serves to both attract the individual and reinforce the honesty of those sub-structures rather than the nation as a whole. It defies logic for a policy intended to increase allegiance to the nation-state to be based on innate feelings and divisions as the foundation for acceptance.

### **Public Service**

Section 277 (91) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1979 Constitution, which is now section 169 of the 1999 Constitution, defines public service as the civil service (Ministerial departments), statutory corporations or parastatals, judiciary, legislature, and educational institutions. It also includes financial institutions that are wholly or primarily owned by the federal, state, or local governments, as well as the Nigeria Police or Armed Forces and other organisations in which the federal or state governments have a controlling share or interest<sup>1</sup>. The public service is the government bureaucracy of Nigeria. This is due to the fact that all levels of government use the public service as a tool to formulate and carry out their policies, plans, and initiatives. Services are the primary focus of most public services (Junaidu & Aminu, 2015). Any nation's public service stands out as the main apparatus of government used in the creation and execution of public policies. It accomplishes this by converting government plans and initiatives into tangible public services that the populace can utilise. The management of government affairs thus depends heavily on public administration, which is the main focus of public bureaucracy. The public service is intended to be the main engine of a country's social and economic development, regardless of the actual form of government in place. Proactively able to appropriately focus public service aspirations towards enhancing citizens' overall welfare constitutes one of the obstacles facing government and, of course, one of the justifiable expectations of the people in a developing nation like Nigeria. This is because the government's main duty is to provide citizens with services through the public sector in an efficient and timely manner at a cost that is reasonable, especially now that the nation is governed by civil law as a result of the global democratic wind that has swept over other nations (Oyedele, 2015).

However, throughout the years, there has been criticism of the Nigerian public service's effectiveness in serving different regimes and administrations, managing public affairs effectively, and ensuring the prompt and high-quality delivery of services. As a result, the Nigerian government has implemented several extensive reforms to its personnel management and organisational structure since the organization's founding with the goal of enhancing its performance. In fact, the political leaders of this nation have at various points tested the effectiveness of the Nigerian public service, which is the most important tool of the modern state. As such, it has experienced a number of socio-economic, structural, and political changes. Numerous tactics have also been implemented by the current civilian government to enhance the provision of services to the populace. It is unlikely, nevertheless, that these reform initiatives have improved the public service. SERVICOM is one of the main tactics intended to enhance service delivery (Okon, 2008). Moreover, the Nigerian government has always had the public service Ministers, Departments, and Agencies as a tool for achieving its development goals and objectives. It is regarded as the key to the expansion of African economies. It is in charge of establishing the proper, favourable conditions necessary for all economic sectors to function at their best. By providing the enabling policies for every economic sector, the public service is anticipated to serve a catalytic role in the economy under the New Public Management (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2011). Among the roles of public service are:

- i. Putting the current government's economic, political, and social policies into practice and enforcing them
- ii. Creating and carrying out public service
- iii. Generating income for the government
- iv. Maintaining financial, political, and managerial responsibility
- v. Helping the populace
- vi. Keeping an eye on and rating the effectiveness of public, private, and non-governmental organisations that provide services to the government
- vii. Spearheading every development project
- viii. Providing high-quality public services, including transportation, water, electricity, and education.

### **The Justification for the Federal Character Principle in the Public Sector of Nigeria**

A related policy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the quota system is a spin-off of the federal character principle found in the constitution. The creation and maintenance of fair access to potential for all of its citizens is the goal of this related policy. A quota system is any form of selection (for work, for admission to a school, etc.) in which a predetermined percentage of candidates must be of a specific sex, race, or ethnic background. A fixed number (quota) is allocated to every state or the local government area (catchment area) that is in a location that is advantageous to the institution being competed for. In Nigeria, quota systems and catchment area policies are factors to be taken into consideration during recruitment exercises and admission into universities, among other things. Afterwards, candidates are chosen in accordance with catchment area policies and the quota system. Although the quota system was in place before Nigeria gained its independence in 1960, the federal character principle was first formally recognised in the now-defunct Federal Republic of Nigeria Constitution of 1979. The goal of these policies was to address the problem of ethnic diversity in government. These essentially meant that decisions about appointments, promotions, recruitments, and admissions would now be made in accordance with these guidelines.

Sections 14(3) and (4) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 Constitution, which are under Chapter II of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 Constitution, essentially contain the Federal Character of Nigeria. In general, all provisions under Chapter II of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 Constitution are non-justiciable due to the ouster clause found in Section 6(6)(c) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 Constitution, which states the following: Except as otherwise specified by this Constitution, the judicial powers vested under the aforementioned provisions of this section shall not be applied to any matter pertaining to the constitutionality of any act or omission by any authority or person, or the compliance of any legislation or judicial ruling with the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy outlined in chapter II of this Constitution.

The Constitution's section 6(6)(c) allows for exceptions when it states, "...except as otherwise provided by this Constitution," so the ouster clause is not absolute. This means that if a clause in the Constitution requires adherence to Nigeria's federal character but is not included in Chapter II of the Constitution, it will still be enforceable in court. Section 147(3) of the Constitution, which requires the President to adhere to the Federal Character of Nigeria when appointing Ministers for the Federation is a good example of a provision that falls outside of the Chapter II of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 Constitution; a National Assembly Act enacted in accordance with Item 60(a) of the Exclusive Legislative List in Part I of the 2nd Schedule to the Constitution is another way that the Federal Character of Nigeria may be subject to legal action. The National Assembly shall "establish and regulate authorities for the Federation or any part thereof to promote and enforce the observance of the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles contained in this Constitution," according to the aforementioned Item 60(a) of the Exclusive Legislative List found in Part I of the 2nd Schedule to the Constitution. As of right now, the National Assembly has only passed the Federal Character Commission (Establishment) Act, which is all that the researchers are aware of today. In the meantime, the Constitution has already established the Federal Character Commission and outlined its fundamental duties. In carrying out the Federal Character Commission's mandate, the Commission has the authority to:

- a. Develop a fair formula for the distribution of all cadre positions in the public service of the Federation and its states, the Nigeria Police Force, the armed forces of the Federation, and other government security agencies;
- b. Encourage, oversee, and enforce adherence to the principles of proportionate sharing of all bureaucratic, economic, media, and political posts at all levels of government;
- c. Take appropriate legal action, such as prosecuting the head or staff of any Ministry or government body or agency that disobeys any federal character principle or formula provided or adopted by the Commission;
- d. Perform any additional duties that may be assigned to it by a National Assembly Act. The Federal Character Commission Act bestowed upon it additional responsibilities, such as: (i) devising a fair formula, contingent on the President's approval, for allocating socio-economic services, facilities, and infrastructure; (ii) devising mechanisms and plans, contingent on the President's approval, for addressing imbalances and mitigating the apprehension of relative deprivation and marginalisation within the Nigerian federal system as it exists in the public and private domains.

As far as the researchers are aware, no one has ever faced prosecution from the Federal Character Commission. The federal character principle outlined in the preceding sections of the Constitution is a noble goal that aims to unite and give every Nigerian, regardless of their cultural or religious background, a sense of belonging. But the way it is being implemented is very different from what it was intended to be, and this has angered some citizens. The perceived victims now have serious doubts about the government's impartiality in enforcing the federal character principle, which is a cornerstone of the Constitution. President Muhammadu Buhari's appointments to government positions have primarily been criticised for this reason, particularly in the southern part of Nigeria. The President's appointment of officials to these positions based on their ethnic backgrounds is the direct cause of the dissatisfaction. The appointments have sparked outrage throughout Nigeria and have been characterised as "lopsided," insensitive to the plurality and the diversity of the Nigerian State, and so on. President Buhari has even been referred to by some as the "President of Northern Nigeria" (Obidimma & Okeke, 2021). Because the appointments made by President Buhari's administration primarily benefit the Hausa/Fulani, the tribe of the President, it is widely believed and implied in Nigeria that all of the appointments are lopsided.

The major security offices, such as the Chief of Army Staff, National Security Adviser, State Chief of Protocol, Chief of Air Staff, and Chief of Defence, and the main economic offices, such as the Comptroller General of Customs and Immigration, Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Accountant General, and Group Managing Director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, are allegedly all from the North. In violation of the federal character



principle enshrined in the Constitution, individuals from the same region of the nation hold other key positions such as Attorney General of the Federation, Inspector General of Police, and Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). In summary, it is unquestionably true that the current administration has demonstrated the most egregious misuse of the federal character principle to date. This is a flagrant transgression of the federal character principle as well as the federalism principle itself, which is understood to be the foundation of the country. Nobody can feel a sense of belonging or unity in such a situation (Obidimma & Okeke, 2021). Similarly, President Bola Tunubu appointments to federal government positions in 2023 are also lopsided.

The researchers contend that since Nigeria's federal character is acknowledged by the constitution and stated as a unique aspiration of the Nigerian people, there ought to be a sufficient and capable legal framework for the implementation and advancement of that aspiration. This is so because the Nigerian people, from whom the government derives all of its powers and authority through the Constitution, are the owners of sovereignty, as stated in Section 14(2) of the Constitution. The researcher believes that there is a very strong chance that some citizens might forfeit their sense of national identity in situations where the Government of the Federation, any of its agencies, and the way it conducts its business are so blatantly at odds with Nigeria's federal character. Whether a majority or a minority of the populace experiences this kind of loss of national identity, it poses a serious threat to the country's integration, unity, loyalty, peace, and advancement. Citizens who feel as though their sense of national identity has been damaged or lost will naturally become disloyal and/or hostile to the government as a result of these negative feelings. This is the way that some cries and/or agitations were and continue to be nourished. One such example is the agitations of certain indigenous peoples in Nigeria for the exercise of their alleged right to self-determination, or secession. The researcher also believes that Nigeria's federal character cannot be effectively enforced or supported by a strong enough constitutional or legislative frameworks.

**The Federal Character Principle and Representation Bureaucracy**

Even prior to independence, there was a requirement for a representative bureaucracy. Nigerianization and Northernization were arguably the most contentious and explosive issues the country faced in the years leading up to independence. In order to keep Southerners out, the North started the process of Northernizing the public service, as described by Ayoade (2006). A Northerner with the necessary qualifications was given preference during recruitment. Therefore, issues pertaining to ethnic differences in our current political system have their roots in the colonial era, beginning with the divide and rule indirect rule system that the colonists used to govern the nation. Naturally, the people were unfamiliar with this system, which kept them apart from the proper governance of their own land. However, the Islamic administrative system that was in place in the West was largely responsible for the system's success in the country's north. In the country's eastern region, the same cannot be stated. According to Ayoade's (2009) account, the Northernization policy was actually more aimed at southern Nigerians than it was at foreigners. The intention was to create a cross-sectional representation of Northern society in the public service. In particular, the pre-independence scenario is shown in the Table 1.

**Table 1: Senior Posts in the Public Services of Nigeria**

	Federal May 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1959		Eastern April, 1 <sup>st</sup> 1959		Western April 30 <sup>th</sup> , 1959		Northern Oct. 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1959	
	Number %		Number %		Number %		Number %	
Expatriates	1,739	48.5	259	25.6	387	23.8	1,577	83.2
Nigerians	1,844	51.5	753	74.4	1,239	76.2	0,315	16.8

Source: The Nigerian Federal Public Service 1959, P. 23.

In 1959, 82.2% of senior positions in the Northern region public service were held by foreign nationals. Refer to the agreements with the West (23.8%) and the East (25.6%). Less than 1% of the higher positions in the federal civil service were held by people from the North. The North realised with this scenario that bureaucracy is the lifeblood of any political power, no matter where it exists. Thus, all efforts were made to secure public service after gaining political power, which is why the federal character policy and the quota system were relentlessly pursued. Although balancing seems like an appropriate objective to pursue, it ultimately reduces the public service's technocratic competence because the loyalty of the public service is seen as a consequence of its representation in the diverse society (Okereka, 2015a). In addition, it can be claimed that representative bureaucracy gives the ruling party a way to distribute favouritism by giving preference to candidates who represent the majority party, which the north has frequently controlled (Okereka, 2015b).

**Theoretical Framework**

The idea of the public service as a dynamic, open system has reinforced the need for understanding and acknowledging the interdependence that exists between government institutions and their surroundings, as stressed by systems theory. This refers to an entity made up of a settlement in interaction that sustains a dynamic, ongoing exchange of information

and energy with its surroundings in order to keep itself in a state of fairly secure equilibrium (Adamolekun, 1983). When it comes to attempting to explain the systems theory, the natural sciences have been the most vocal. The idea of a system's theory in general first appeared in this field. This theory is analysed by Berthallanify (1968) in a way that emphasises the whole above the parts. Whether of organisers, establishments, or societies, are examined collectively rather than individually because it is believed that each component's operation is inextricably linked to the operation of the whole. It is also acknowledged that the system is frequently extremely complex, consisting of a variety of subsystems that interact with one another on multiple levels and in multiple dimensions. David Easton (1965) used the systems theory in the field of social science to explain how the surroundings of an organisation can affect its behaviour. The theory's general premise is that any system, when taken as a whole, is greater than the sum of its parts. Systems theory is used in this work to explain the demands of environmental factors and how the public service is affected by them. This is due to the fact that government departments, agencies, and ministries do not function in a vacuum. They interact with each other, the workers and the policies of government. In this context, the researchers argued that environmental factors have a significant impact on the implementation of the federal character principle as a policy in Nigeria.

## **Conclusions**

This study examined the federal character principles and its impact on public service in Nigeria.. The means of delivering and governing public services is through public service. Any country's rate of development is mostly determined by the calibre of its public service. This is a result of the vital role that public employees play in the development and execution of governmental initiatives. As a matter of principle, public officials who are tasked with using the bureaucracy as a means of advancing societal growth ought to act morally and set an example for other members of society. Therefore, the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 Constitution (as amended) has established the model for the ethical conduct expected of public servants. Many public employees are not fully aware of the code of conduct's provisions, despite its utter ineffectiveness. Few people, even those who are aware of it, actually follow its provisions. The federal character principle, as it is applied in Nigeria, limits the efficacy of public bureaucracy and, ultimately, national development by shifting the focus from merit (based on effort and achievement) to the sharing of privileges and benefits accruing from representative bureaucracy. Applying the federal character principle to hiring and promoting employees as the cornerstones around which formal organisations should be constructed goes against some aspects of the Weberian bureaucratic model of rationality. The efficacy of administration and the anticipated function of public bureaucracies in implementing policies for sustainable development are impacted by this situation. In summary, the negative aspects of our country's history among different groups were merely historical. Nigeria would eventually correct any imbalances there with the right preparation, commitment, and sacrifice rather than causing rifts in the country and escalating tensions.

As a result, this study came to the conclusion that Nigerian federalism is far from ideal and that the Federal Character Principle, which aims to achieve representation and participation to create a sense of national unity, national loyalty, and a sense of belonging for every Nigerian citizen regardless of differences in ethnicity, culture, language, or religion, has failed to accomplish this goal. The government must reevaluate the federal character principle's implementation through merit-based enforcement measures based on public service reform initiatives that can inspire human potential and governmental institutions for sustainable development if the Nigerian public service is to fulfill its mandate of promoting sustainable development. Furthermore, it is imperative to include individuals who are dependable, prepared to serve, and capable of producing results. It does not matter where you're from, what language you speak, or your religious affiliation when someone is productive. Based on the study's conclusion, a couple of recommendations are put forth:

- i. In the Nigerian civil service, a mechanism for the effective implementation of the federal character and quota system, such as patriotism, honesty, institutionalism, and fairness, should exist. This will lessen the likelihood of conflicts between Nigeria's various ethnic groups, which are often the main reason why certain ethnic groups are excluded from civil service recruitment.
- ii. Nigerian values have institutionalised corruption and unethical standards, and because we celebrate the end rather than the means, the elite class has hijacked federal character for their own selfish interests at the expense of the general populace. As a result, the promotion of values in Nigeria is at an all-time low. Eliteism represents the interests of the few minority groups, but it is manipulated to serve the larger interests of the ruling class of petty bourgeoisies. For effective public service in the nation, the government must combat corruption and other vices in all spheres of the economy.
- iii. Merit should be given careful consideration, even when attempting to strike a geopolitical balance with regard to hiring and advancement in the Nigerian public service. Additionally, human potential, institutional development, and governance free from bias and unethical behaviour in government business should be the focal points of the federal government's reform initiatives.
- iv. For the public service to be managed effectively in the country's pursuit of sustainable development there needs to be a fundamental shift in the nature and character of the country's leading elites as well as the policy outcomes of the Nigerian state, which are founded on particularistic patterns and interests.
- v. The National Assembly should amend the Constitution further and/or pass legislation designating a breach of Nigeria's federal character as a criminal offence. This would allow the President or Governor to be tried while in office, despite the immunity granted to them by section 308 of the Constitution. If found guilty and found to have violated this law, they would be removed from office. The Supreme Court of Nigeria should be granted original jurisdiction to try the offender, and a fair amount of time should be allotted for the trial.

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