

SERVICOM AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM IMPLEMENTATION IN SELECTED MINISTRIES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Efficient public service delivery is tied to a nation's ability to foster economic growth, reduce poverty and promote inclusive progress through consistent reform implementation. Service Compact with all Nigerians (SERVICOM) plays a key role in guaranteeing accountability, openness and citizen's satisfaction in the public service. While reforms attempt frequently begin with good intentions, their implementation faces several challenges. These challenges have crippled the actual implementation of the public service reforms and their impact. This study therefore investigated SERVICOM and the implementation of public service reforms in selected federal ministries in Nigeria. The study adopted a convergent parallel research design. The population of the study was 953 SERVICOM officials from the Federal Ministry of Defence and Federal Ministry of Works. A sample size of 282 was determined using Taro Yamane's formula. A Structured and Validated questionnaire was used to collect data. Quantitative data was analysed using inferential (Pearson correlation) statistics at 5% level of significance. Findings showed that there was a significant relationship between SERVICOM unit oversight function and reform implementation ($r = 0.64$, $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that SERVICOM plays a pivotal role in the implementation process of public service reforms, but is plagued with challenges as related to funding, bureaucracy and training. The study recommended that there is a need for enhanced oversight mechanisms by SERVICOM and improved funding by the government, for effective implementation of public service reforms.

Keywords: Ministries, Defence, Works, Public service, Public service Reforms, SERVICOM.

1. Introduction

In the global context, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) added a new layer of urgency to public service delivery reforms. Goal 16, in particular, emphasizes the need for effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels of governance (United Nations, 2023). This shows that reforms are not solely a matter of domestic concern but are also linked to international development agendas. Nevertheless, public service delivery reforms are not a one-size-fits-all proposition (Nwekeaku and Obiorah, 2019). As highlighted by Lee and Usman (2018), the nature and pace of reforms should be context-specific, considering a nation's unique political, economic, and social dynamics.

To understand the public service delivery in Nigeria, it is essential to journey through its historical evolution. A series of transformative events, colonial legacies, and post-independence challenges have shaped Nigeria's public services development. Examining this

historical trajectory provides valuable insights into the nation's current challenges and opportunities in public service delivery. The roots of public service delivery in Nigeria can be traced back to the colonial era when the British established their administrative structures. Colonial authorities introduced rudimentary forms of public services to facilitate governance and resource extraction (Sanusi, 2010). These services were primarily geared towards maintaining law and order, collecting taxes, and managing colonial interests.

Today, Nigeria's public service delivery is a complex interplay of historical legacies, governance reforms, and contemporary challenges. The country continues to struggle with corruption, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of institutional capacity (United Nations, 2016). These challenges note the importance of understanding the historical evolution of public service delivery in Nigeria as a foundation for addressing its current complexities. Nigeria's reform agenda has been influenced by socio-political dynamics. The nation's diverse population, multi-ethnic composition, and historical regional disparities have shaped reform initiatives (Hoffmann, 2023). Governments have had to balance fostering unity and addressing the unique needs and demands of various regions and ethnic groups. Political transitions and changes in leadership have also been instrumental in shaping reform agendas. Each new administration brought its own vision and priorities for public service delivery.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Public Service Reforms

Public Service Reforms (PSRs) are essential mechanisms for shaping modern governance paradigms. The intersection between governance, technology, and societal demands has led governments to adopt diverse strategies to ensure the efficient delivery of services while upholding inclusivity and environmental sustainability (Ohiole&Ojo, 2015). One salient aspect of contemporary public administration is the growing emphasis on citizen-centric approaches (UNDP, 2016). UNDP further stresses that government is recognising the significance of citizen engagement, involving people in decision-making processes, and tailoring services to meet diverse needs, thereby fostering a sense of ownership and accountability.

The digital revolution has significantly impacted public service reforms, leading to the emergence of e-governance initiatives, smart city projects, and data-driven policymaking (Milakovich, 2021). According to Alghamdi and Agag (2023), artificial intelligence, block chain technology, and big data analytics are promising avenues for revolutionising administrative processes, making them more agile and responsive to citizens' requirements. To enable achieving the goal of reform and fostering sustainable development, global challenges should be addressed.

2.2. The Nigerian Public Service

The Nigerian public service, a blend of tradition and modernity, is a complex entity that has faced numerous challenges and opportunities in the 21st century. The country's history is deeply rooted in its colonial past, with the British colonial administration shaping the bureaucratic structures and practices that continue to define the public service. The transition to self-governance in 1960 marked the beginning of efforts to indigenize the service and adapt it to the nation's unique needs. The Nigerian public service is characterized by a Weberian

bureaucratic model, characterized by hierarchy, specialization, and formalized procedures. However, this model has faced criticism for its perceived inefficiencies, rigidities, and susceptibility to corruption. Political interference is another enduring challenge, with the appointment and promotion of civil servants often subject to political considerations. The Nigerian public service operates in a system characterized by the division of powers between the federal government and states, which raises questions about capacity and resource allocation. Despite these challenges, the Nigerian public service has made efforts to promote gender equality and diversity, with progress in increasing women's representation in leadership positions.

2.3. Public Service Reforms in Nigeria

The significance of public service reforms in Nigeria can be understood by examining the historical context of the country's civil service. The reforms were driven by the need for modernization, efficiency, and transparency in governance. Addressing issues like corruption, inadequate infrastructure, and weak institutions was crucial. External factors like globalisation and international pressures also influenced the reform agenda. Nigeria's reform initiatives over the years has taken different directions, such as the National Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), the Treasury Single Account (TSA) system, and civil service reforms like the Performance Management System (PMS). The digitalisation of government processes played a central role, with initiatives like the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) and the National e-Government Strategies, highlighted by Adekanye and Ajayi (2016), emphasising the potential of e-government initiatives to enhance transparency and streamline service delivery.

In critical sectors such as healthcare and education, reforms sought to improve access, quality, and equity, as exemplified by the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program discussed by Dike (2017), reflecting initiatives to address challenges in primary education access and infrastructure. These reforms aimed to consolidate government funds, reduce leakages, and enhance financial transparency. The focus was on enhancing the capacity effectiveness and professionalism of civil servants.

2.4. Origin of Service Compact with all Nigerians (SERVICOM)

The SERVICOM policy is a Nigerian government initiative aimed at improving service delivery in the public sector. Originating from the Kuru conference in Accra, Ghana, SERVICOM aims to eradicate inefficiency and corruption in Nigerian public services. The initiative comprises a set of programs and measures aimed at improving service delivery in various aspects of life. President Obasanjo highlighted the poor quality of service delivery, stating that Nigerians are being deprived of basic services due to inefficiency and corruption. SERVICOM originated from technical assistance provided by the British government via the Department for International Development (DFID) to the federal government of Nigeria. The policy aims to eradicate inefficiency and corruption from Nigerian public services and incorporate quality into government services. The problem identified by the President is consumers struggling for public services, exerting influence through influential individuals and budgeting time and money to pursue services. This has led to consumers losing faith in public services in Nigeria. The Service Compact with all Nigerians was officially launched in Abuja on March 21, 2004, in collaboration with the special presidential retreat on service

delivery.

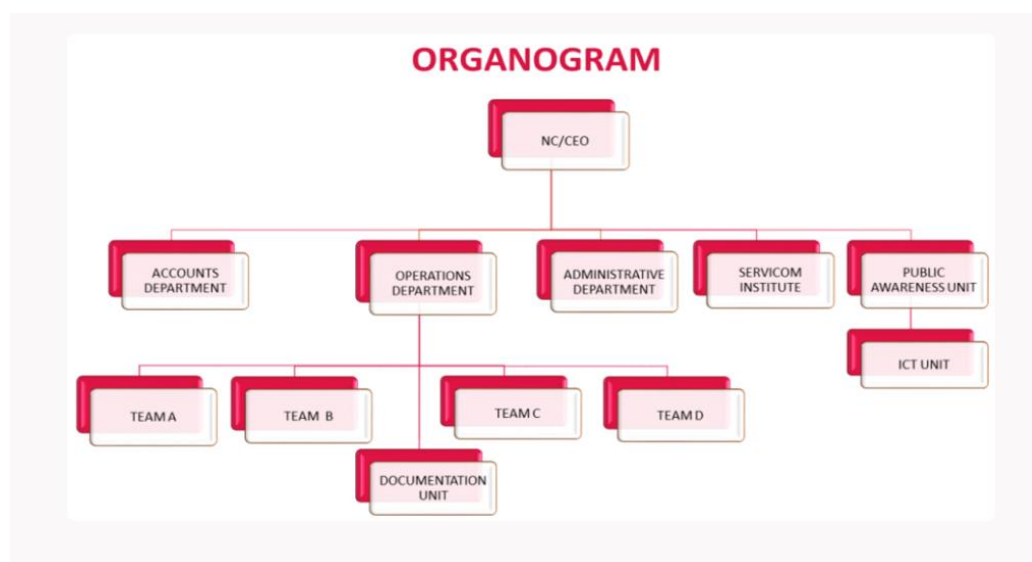
2.4.1. Principles of SERVICOM

SERVICOM is based on five fundamental principles:

1. Conviction that Nigeria can only realize its full potential if citizens receive prompt and efficient services from the state.^[1]
2. Renewal of commitment to the service of the Nigerian Nation.^[2]
3. Consideration for the needs and rights of all Nigerians to enjoy social and economic advancement.^[3]
4. Direct coordination, supervision and implementation of content specific reforms
5. Dedication to providing the basic services to which each citizen is entitled in a timely, fair, honest, effective and transparent manner.

2.4.2. The Management of SERVICOM

The management team of SERVICOM comprises a national coordinator, the chief SERVICOM officers, the Head of the SERVICOM institute and a public awareness manager. Every government ministries and departments is being mandated to have access to the SERVICOM Charter as the chief mechanism where the implementation of the policies takes place. Under the SERVICOM charter, each Ministry, Department, Agency and Parastatals has a Ministerial SERVICOM unit. The SERVICOM unit is responsible for spear heading the strategy for SERVICOM compliance through a review and monitoring mechanism that relies on SERVICOM Index. There is also in place a customer Grievance Redress mechanism reinforced by the publishing of each Ministry or Departments performance.



Source: SERVICOM Website

2.4.3. Objectives of SERVICOM

The most important objective of SERVICOM is to meet the challenges of nation-wide service failure in the public service delivery system. Under SERVICOM, the public service is expected to provide the basic services to which each citizen is entitled in a timely, fair, honest, effective and transparent manner.

2.5 History and Development of the Ministry of Defence

The Ministry of Defence in Nigeria, was established on October 1, 1958 and Muhammadu Ribadu as its first minister. Its main purpose is to oversee the country's national defence efforts, specifically concerning the Armed Forces. The ministry operates under the direct leadership of the Minister of Defence, who reports to the President of Nigeria. Over the years, the ministry's authority has expanded, overseeing existing military branches and facilitating the establishment of the Nigerian Air Force in 1964.

During the 1990s, the ministry played a pivotal role in guiding Nigeria back to democratic governance under the leadership of Sani Abacha, who served as Defence Minister and head of state simultaneously. In April 2022, plans were announced to enhance the ministry's functionality by centralizing various services within a new Ministry of Defence, resembling the Pentagon's structure. The ministry operates from its headquarters in Abuja and is structured with both civilian and military components. The Chief of Defence Staff Nigeria oversees the Armed Forces' joint operations and training, while individual Service Chiefs manage day-to-day operations within their respective branches. The ministry's overarching goal is to ensure the effective functioning of Nigeria's national defence apparatus.

Functions of the Ministry are to:

1. ensure that the Nigerian Armed Forces are prepared for combat on land, sea, and air;
2. maintain a proper balance in weaponry and personnel for both internal and external security needs;
3. provide for the welfare of Armed Forces personnel, including training, housing, healthcare, and other benefits to boost morale;
4. strengthen the capabilities of the country's Defense Industries to reduce dependence on foreign suppliers;
5. promote collective defense systems through cooperation at bilateral, sub-regional, and continental levels to safeguard African security and foreign policy objectives;

2.6 History and developments of the Ministry of Works

The Ministry of Works has a historical legacy dating back to the colonial era and has significantly contributed to Nigeria's infrastructure and housing development. The ministry is directed by Honourable Umar Ibrahim El-Yakub. Initially, the ministry focused on roads and bridges, the ministry's role expanded to include housing initiatives, infrastructure and urban planning. It has been instrumental in formulating policies, implementing infrastructure projects, and encouraging Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). Technological advancements, such as digital mapping, have enhanced project efficiency, and the ministry's efforts have stimulated economic growth, created jobs, and improved citizens' quality of life.

Functions of the Ministry are to:

1. be in charge of construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, and highways across the country. These infrastructure projects are essential for transportation, trade, and economic development;
2. make provision for affordable housing to Nigerians. These initiatives include public housing programs, partnerships with private developers, and the implementation of housing policies to address the housing deficit in the country;

3. work on urban planning and development: The ministry ensures that cities and towns are well-designed, with proper infrastructure and amenities. Effective urban planning is vital for sustainable development and improving the quality of life for citizens;
4. formulate policies to guide the planning, implementation, and regulation of infrastructure projects and housing initiatives across the country;

3 Theoretical framework

3.1 Bureaucratic Theory

The Bureaucratic Theory, proposed by Max Weber in 1992, which provides a comprehensive framework for understanding organizational structure and management. It emphasizes clear hierarchies, specialized tasks, standardized rules, and impersonality to maintain order and accountability. The theory has endured due to its foundational principles, providing valuable insights into organisational design. In today's dynamic world, organizations combine bureaucratic elements with more flexible approaches to balance stability and adaptability. Bureaucratic principles are relevant in public administration, particularly in designing and implementing reform initiatives. They contribute to accountability mechanisms, transparency, and rule-based decision-making, aligning with the ideals of bureaucracy in the Nigerian public service system. Applying bureaucratic theory to public delivery service reform involves transforming agencies' delivery systems, fostering a professional work environment, and ensuring consistent and reliable services.

3.2 The Diffusion of Innovations Theory

The Diffusion of Innovations theory, proposed by Everett Rogers in 1962, is a crucial framework for understanding how new ideas, products, and technologies spread within societies. It emphasizes the role of communication and social networks in spreading innovations, with influencers serving as bridges between innovators and the wider audience. The theory also highlights psychological and sociological factors that influence decision-making processes, highlighting that people are not uniformly receptive to change. The theory is relevant in the context of technology adoption, as it explains why certain gadgets or apps become universal quickly while others struggle to gain traction. It also helps innovators and businesses navigate the market landscape, identifying early adopters and addressing their concerns effectively. However, critics argue that the theory oversimplifies the complexities of human behavior and social interactions, overlooks the importance of innovation development and implementation, and assumes a linear adoption pattern.

4 Research Methodology

This paper adopted survey design. The study population was 953 public servants from two selected ministries in Nigeria; ministry of works and ministry of defence. They were purposively selected for the study because they are crucial to national development. Taro yamane's formula was employed to select 282 respondents for the purpose of data collection. The survey method, which involved the use of a questionnaire, was used because it requires systematic and scientific data collection from the population sample. Data was analysed using descriptive statistic while correlation analysis was employed in testing the hypotheses at a 5% significance level.

The hypothesis was: H_{01} : The effectiveness of the implementation of public service reform initiatives is not significantly influenced by SERVICOM.

5. Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

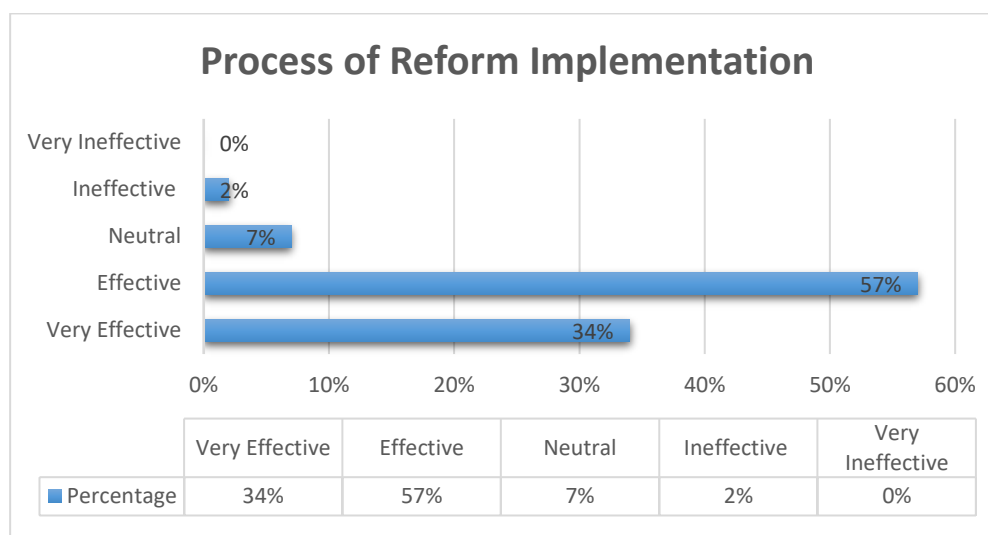
5.1 Descriptive Analysis

This section analyses other questions in the questionnaire. The close-ended question analysis is presented in descriptive statistics using percentages, bar charts and histogram.

5.1.1 Process of Reform Implementation

The evaluation of the implementation process of public service delivery reforms is a critical aspect of understanding the dynamics and success factors within governmental organizations. The responses from the questionnaire reveal diverse insights into the participants' observations. A majority of respondents, constituting 91%, expressed positive sentiments towards the implementation process, categorizing it as either 'Very Effective' (34%) or 'Effective' (57%). This optimism among the respondents means a general satisfaction with the strategies, methodologies, and outcomes associated with reforms.

Process of Reform Implementation



Source: Researcher's Analysis Output

The majority's positive perception may indicate effective leadership in the Ministries of Works and Housing and Defence. However, the 7% of respondents who marked their perception as 'Neutral' and the 2% who found the implementation 'Ineffective' signify a level of ambivalence and dissatisfaction. These responses warrant a closer examination of potential barriers or challenges faced during the implementation process. Koma (2015) noted that resistance to change is a common impediment in organizational reform.

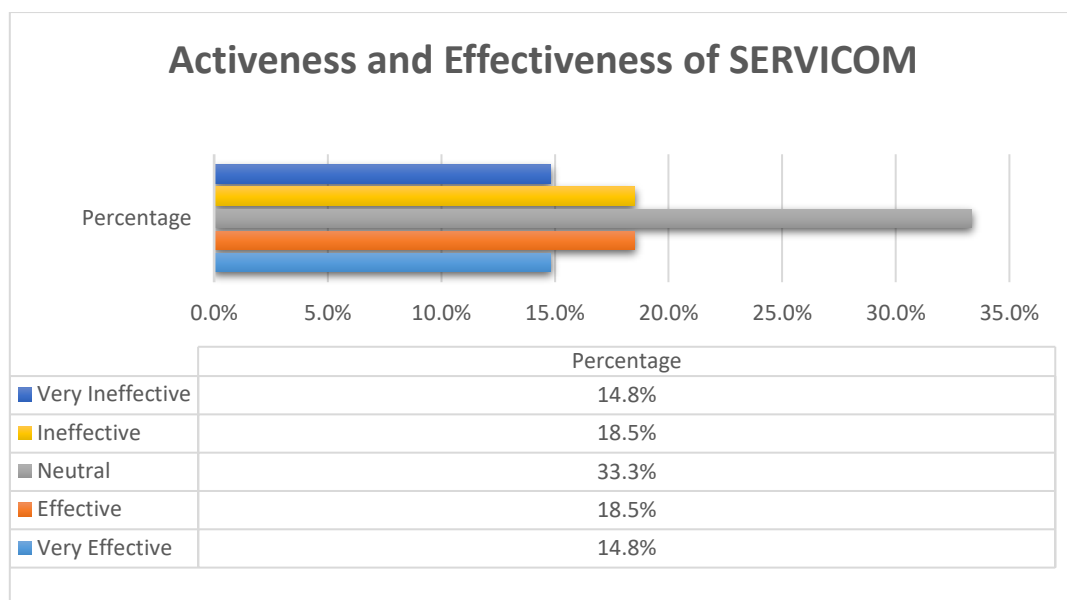
The 'Neutral' responses might be indicative of a lack of clear communication, inadequate stakeholder engagement, or a failure to address concerns effectively. Furthermore, the absence of respondents marking the implementation as 'Very Ineffective' is notable. This may suggest that even in cases where individual's express dissatisfaction, they do not perceive the implementation as a complete failure because unsuccessful reforms often still yield some

positive outcomes or lessons. The absence of 'Very Ineffective' responses might also indicate hesitancy among participants to express extreme dissatisfaction, possibly due to organizational hierarchies and power dynamics.

5.1.2 Activeness and Effectiveness of SERVICOM

The combined percentages of "Very Ineffective" and "Ineffective" (33.33%) indicate a substantial portion of respondents who express reservations or perceive lower levels of activity and effectiveness within the SERVICOM unit. This divergence in opinions highlights potential gaps in communication, resource allocation, or strategic alignment that may influence respondents' perceptions. On the positive side, the combined percentages of "Effective" and "Very Effective" (33.33%) reveal respondents who consider the SERVICOM unit to be active and effective in ensuring proper reform implementation.

Activeness and Effectiveness of SERVICOM



Source: Researcher's Analysis Output

5. Hypothesis Analysis

The hypotheses were formulated to address key aspects of public service delivery reforms. To conduct a hypothesis analysis, this research employed the correlation analysis.

Correlations

		Specific goals of the service delivery reforms in the two ministries	Objectives of the reforms	The effectiveness of the implementation of reform initiatives	Challenges of effective implementation of reform initiatives	SERVICOM department oversight and facilitation of proper delivery reform implementation	Outcomes of the reform initiatives
Pearson Correlation	Specific goals of the service delivery reforms in the two ministries	1.000	.403	.146	.255	.389	.865
	Objectives of the reforms	.403	1.000	.089	.194	.738	.379
	the effectiveness of the implementation of reform initiatives	.146	.089	1.000	.238	.737	.236
	Challenges of effective implementation of reform initiatives	.255	.194	.238	1.000	.326	.703
	SERVICOM department oversight and facilitation of proper delivery reform implementation	.293	.352	.622	.402	1.000	.643
	Outcomes of the reform initiatives	.865	.379	.236	.703	.635	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	Specific goals of the service delivery reforms in the two ministries	.	.152	.201	.070	.214	.000
	Objectives of the reforms	.152	.	.307	.132	.233	.012
	The effectiveness of the implementation of reform initiatives	.201	.307	.	.038	.036	.086
	Challenges of effective implementation of reform initiatives	.070	.132	.084	.	.109	.000
	SERVICOM department oversight and facilitation of proper delivery reform implementation	.837	.793	.929	.048	.	.043
	Outcomes of the reform initiatives	.000	.012	.086	.000	.072	.
N	specific goals of the service delivery reforms in the two ministries	282	282	282	282	282	282
	Objectives of the reforms	282	282	282	282	282	282
	The effectiveness of the implementation of reform initiatives	282	282	282	282	282	282

Hypothesis

H₀₁: The effectiveness of the implementation of public service reform initiatives is not significantly influenced by SERVICOM.

H₁₁: The effectiveness of the implementation of public service reform initiatives is significantly influenced by SERVICOM.

Decision Rule

If the p-value is less than the significance level (α), we reject the null hypothesis.

Given Information

- Significance level (α) = 0.05
- The p-value for the correlation between "Challenges of Effective Implementation of Reform Initiatives" and "Effectiveness of Implementation of Reform Initiatives" is 0.036.

Interpretation: Since 0.036 is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis.

Discussion: The rejection of the null hypothesis indicates a significant influence of the contribution of SERVICOM on the effectiveness of reform implementation. The absence of SERVICOM in the ministries can negatively impact the success of public service reforms. The result calls for a comprehensive approach to address these limitations of SERVICOM during the implementation of public service reforms. Understanding and mitigating these limitations, are essential for achieving meaningful and sustainable reform outcomes.

7. Discussion of Findings

The statistical results and analysis of this research indicate a substantial correlation between the oversight provided by SERVICOM and the overall success of reform initiatives. The positive correlation supports the significance of oversight and accountability mechanisms in ensuring effective public service reforms. The analysis is further showed that a dedicated oversight department, such as SERVICOM, acts as a check-and-balance system, foster transparency and adherence to reform objectives. However, the analysis also shed light on the perceived gaps in SERVICOM's activities, with some interviewees expressing the need for more proactive engagement and monthly checks on workers' needs. The findings also suggest that there was successes and challenges in reform implementation process in the ministries. The positive correlation between the stated objectives and outcomes, as evidenced by statistical analyses shows that a clear articulation of objectives of SERVICOM contributes significantly to the success of reform initiatives implementation. However, the identification of challenges such as bureaucratic bottlenecks, resource constraints, and resistance to change shows the complexity of implementation processes. In addition, the significant impact of the SERVICOM unit on the outcomes of reform initiatives as indicated by statistical results, suggests that a robust oversight mechanism enhances accountability and contributes to the success of public service reforms.

8. Conclusion

The Nigerian Ministries of Works and Housing and Defence have implemented several public service reforms, despite facing challenges such as external corruption, funding deficiencies, staff apathy, and bureaucratic obstacles. The study highlights the need for more work in the SERVICOM unit to achieve the primary aim. The complexities of implementing reforms extend beyond the SERVICOM department, requiring all departments to contribute effectively for accountability and efficiency. The research emphasizes the need for continuous adaptation, strategic planning, and collaborative efforts to foster effective service delivery in the ministries.

9. Recommendations

The analysis suggests several recommendations to improve public service reform implementation. These include enhancing oversight mechanisms, addressing limitations in

SERVICOM units, implementing uniform standards of operation and clear work schedules, implementing effective communication strategies, and fostering a positive organizational culture. Regular audits and assessments are crucial for transparency and accountability. Adequate funding and investment in training programs are also essential for maintaining the effectiveness of SERVICOM units. A positive organizational culture, promoting values like integrity and service excellence, and collaboration between departments and agencies are also essential. These recommendations will contribute to a more robust and effective public service reform system.

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