

Public Service Administration in Nigeria: A Study of The Challenges of The Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission, 1996–2025

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Abstract: This study traces the historical development of the civil service from its early antecedents to the emergence of modern administrative institutions in Nigeria and situates the establishment of the Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission within the creation of Nasarawa State in 1996. The study examines the historical mandate, strategic functions, administrative challenges, reform initiatives, and broader implications of the Commission for Governance and Public Service Delivery in the state. It demonstrates that the Commission has played an important role in recruitment, appointment, promotion, transfer, discipline, retirement, and the management of human resources within the state civil service. However, its effectiveness has been constrained by inadequate staffing, insufficient funding, weak technological infrastructure, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and delays in interdepartmental communication, inadequate professional training, and difficulties associated with record management. These challenges have affected the timely processing of personnel matters and, by extension, policy implementation and service delivery, particularly in critical sectors such as education and health. The study also identifies reform measures undertaken by the Commission, including the strengthening of recruitment and disciplinary procedures, digitisation of personnel records, performance-based management, improved interdepartmental collaboration, and strategic redeployment of personnel. The study argues that although these reforms have contributed to improving administrative efficiency and accountability, their sustainability depends on adequate resources, institutional capacity, transparency, and continuous professional development. The study concludes that strengthening the institutional capacity and operational autonomy of the Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission is essential for improving public service delivery, institutional legitimacy, workforce morale, and effective governance in Nasarawa State.

Keywords: Public Service, Public Administration, Civil Service, Civil Service Commission

INTRODUCTION

The Civil Service is rooted back to ancient civilization and dated back to 462 B.C., Pericles, a renowned leader in ancient Greece, introduced a scheme for the compensation of officials, thus facilitating the continued participation in public administration by citizens who had to work daily for their living [1] It is also of interest to note that in AD 219 the ancient Chinese had worked out a system of classifying men into nine grades according to their ability, knowledge, experience, and character. This system of nine- grade classification was officially adopted for the classification was officially adopted for the selection of men for government service. The official appointed to administer the system was called Chung Cheng, that is, Impartial Judge, a forerunner of our present day Civil Service Commission [2].

However, the origin, structure and performance of modern Civil Service dates back to the 20th century, with the introduction of the British colonial rule in Nigeria. By 1900, a decentralized colonial service with headquarters in each of the protectorate was established. By 1904, the colony of Lagos was amalgamated with the protectorate of Southern Nigeria. This was followed by the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914 bringing into existence a country

called Nigeria. By 1914, there were two civil services in the two Nigeria's protectorate headed by a Governor-general in the person of Lord Lugard and two Lieutenant Governors each for the North and South respectively, while an administrator was in charge of Lagos. The British imposed a unified civil service in Nigeria, which was mainly concerned with the maintenance of law and order and the mobilization of enough local resources in order to ensure their administration was self-sufficient. The nationalist agitation for independence brought about the introduction of the Nigerianization policy [3].

In the case of Nasarawa State, the civil service commission has been an integral part of the state institutional framework since its creation on 1st October 1996. The civil service in Nasarawa, like other states in Nigeria, serves because the administrative machinery of the government, chargeable for policy implementation, public service delivery, and powerful governance [4]. The Civil Service Commission in Nigeria is responsible for overseeing the recruitment, promotion, transfer, discipline and hearing of appeals of civil servants at each of the federal and state levels. These Five functions are fundamental in retaining the efficiency, professionalism, and accountability of the civil service, that is the primary mechanism through which authorities regulations and programmes are carried out. Established via colonial authorities and evolving via numerous political regimes, Nigeria's civil service system has undergone several reforms geared toward strengthening recruitment requirements, setting up truthful disciplinary measures, and making sure merit-based promotion practices. However, a lot of challenges have traditionally hindered the powerful implementation of those capabilities [5].

Historically, the development of civil service commissions throughout Nigeria displays the British colonial administration's impact, which delivered formalized administrative systems to manage local governance. After independence in 1960, the need for localized administrative control led to the establishment of self-sufficient civil service commissions in every area, later extending to character states to ensure fair and merit-based hiring practices [6]. The Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission (NSCSC), created within this framework, was tasked with managing the unique administrative requirements of a newly formed state. Its establishment aimed to support impartial recruitment, professional standards, and efficient human resource management, foundational to effective governance [7].

Nasarawa State creation became so as to address socio-political and economic demanding situations, specially aiming to help ethnic and political representation in governance and public administration. Civil service development became significant to this imaginative and prescient, because the nation required a nicely-prepared administrative structure to make certain balance and drive socio-economic growth within the newly formed region [8]. Recruitment, discipline, and promotion are cornerstones of any civil service system, and these processes in Nasarawa have undergone significant development influenced by historical, socio-political, and administrative factors. Understanding the evolution of these processes within the Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission (NSCSC) offers insight into the state's overall approach to governance and public service. However, establishing a functional Civil Service commission in Nasarawa became difficult because of useful resource obstacles and a lack of adequate infrastructure. The inherited administrative structure and workforce from Plateau State provided a basis, however sizeable efforts have been required to conform the machine to the unique needs of Nasarawa [9] The early years of Nasarawa's civil service were marked by efforts to create key Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) responsible for handling various administrative functions. Recruitment and training of staff became a priority, although challenges such as insufficient budget allocations, inadequate facilities, and limited technical expertise often hindered progress. The lack of trained professionals, particularly in specialized areas of public administration, highlighted the need for consistent investment in human resources [10]. More to that, there is a lack of comprehensive historical documentation as there is inadequacy of well documented historical accounts of the Civil Service evolution, and development in Nasarawa State. Existing information is often fragmented, scattered or lack depth necessary to fully understand the Commissions role and impact over the years. There is also an unclear understanding of the Commission influence in governance and

security that is to say the linkage between the Commissions policies, practices, and their implication for governance and public service delivery and security in Nasarawa State are not well established.

Conceptual Clarification

Public services

Public services are defined as services governed by public policy that provide direct provision to individuals, families, and communities, rather than operating under market principles. They are characterized by their redistributive nature, where funding and service recipients are not necessarily the same, and their success is measured by effectiveness in achieving policy aims rather than efficiency [11].

Civil Service

The term civil service has been differently conceptualised according to their persuasions. While some view them not only as implementers of government policy and part of the bureaucracy responsible for servicedelivery,² others view them as strictly those government workers in Ministries, Departments and Agencies.³ Besides, there is even the debate as to whether public service and civil service is the same.⁴ In spite of these opinions, this study maintains that the civil service is the vital arm of government that performs the function of implementing government policies in ministries, agencies, parastatals and departments.

Civil Service Commission

Civil service commission is defined as an independent body set up by the government with the responsibility of remitting workers into the service based on merit. The body also is in charge of the discipline, promotion and dismissal of workers. Either the president or governor appoints the chairman and members.

Historical Mandate and Strategic Functions of Commission in Governance in the State

The establishment of the Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission (NSCSC) in 1996 was a direct outcome of the creation of Nasarawa State from the defunct Plateau State under the States Creation and Transitional Provisions Decree No. 37 of 1996, signed into law on 1 October 1996 [12]. This new administrative body was constitutionally empowered by Section 197 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) to handle appointments, promotions, discipline, and retirement of civil servants in the core service of the state [13]. Its creation mirrored the operational structures of similar commissions across the federation, such as the Plateau State Local Government Service Commission, which also derived its mandate from constitutional provisions and state-level legislation regulating the career service [14]. At inception, the NSCSC inherited not only the personnel but also the service rules, records, and operational ethos of the Plateau State Civil Service Commission, adapting these to the specific socio-political and administrative realities of Nasarawa State [15]. This foundational inheritance provided the structural basis for recruitment policies, promotion guidelines, and disciplinary procedures, ensuring continuity and stability in public administration during the fragile early years of the state's existence [16].

From the onset, the Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission (NSCSC) was tasked with the responsibility of standardizing the human resource base of the state by ensuring that all recruitment and promotion processes adhered strictly to the *Public Service Rules (PSR)* and the *Schemes of Service* [17]. The Commission's strategic role was evident in its early policy decisions, which included harmonizing staff records, defining clear entry qualifications for various cadres, and streamlining promotion pathways to eliminate bottlenecks inherited from Plateau State's bureaucracy [18]. In these formative years, the NSCSC functioned not only as a regulatory body but as a stabilizing force, working to professionalize the civil service by instituting merit-based procedures, an approach consistent with best practices outlined in comparative studies of sub-national civil service commissions across Nigeria [19]. According to Haruna Abubakar Liman, the Director of Planning, Research and Statistics, these early years were characterized by deliberate efforts to "recruit officers who could grow with the new state's institutions" and to lay a human capital foundation that could sustain the state's governance framework [20].

The NSCSC's historical mandate also encompassed the administration of transfers,

secondments, and retirements, functions which were exercised within the limits of the PSR and in accordance with state-specific regulations [21]. For instance, secondments were conditional upon the consent of both the releasing and receiving ministries, departments, or agencies (MDAs), with an initial tenure of two years subject to renewal after performance assessment [22]. These operational procedures closely reflected the model already in place in the Plateau State Local Government Service Commission, where inter-departmental transfers were used as a strategic tool for skills redistribution and institutional capacity-building [23]. Over time, the NSCSC began introducing reforms, including the digitization of personnel records an initiative aimed at improving transparency, reducing cases of file tampering, and facilitating faster decision-making in line with recommendations from both state and federal public service reform reports [24]. These structural and procedural developments collectively established the NSCSC as an indispensable organ in Nasarawa State's governance architecture, with its strategic functions directly impacting the effectiveness of public service delivery [25].

By the early 2000s, the Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission (NSCSC) began redefining its strategic priorities in response to both internal administrative pressures and broader national public sector reforms. This period coincided with the Federal Government's introduction of the *Public Service Reform Strategy (2003)*, which placed emphasis on transparency, capacity building, and results-oriented management in state institutions [26]. In line with these reforms, the NSCSC introduced more rigorous merit-based recruitment examinations and performance appraisal systems, adopting tools from the *Scheme of Service for the Civil Service of the Federation* and tailoring them to the state's administrative needs [27]. Studies have shown that such alignment between federal and state-level human resource management significantly enhances consistency in service standards and staff mobility within Nigeria's federal system [28]. The Commission also began to leverage training partnerships with institutions such as the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), recognizing that strategic human resource management was not just about filling vacancies, but about cultivating long-term institutional capacity [29].

From a governance perspective, the NSCSC's expanding role also reflected the growing complexity of state administration in the wake of democratic consolidation after 1999.⁵ Online records from the Bureau of Public Service Reforms reveal that by 2005, many state civil service commissions were grappling with the dual challenges of political interference in appointments and the need to comply with due process in line with the *Public Procurement Act (2007)* and the *Fiscal Responsibility Act (2007)* [30]. The NSCSC's response was to institutionalize recruitment guidelines that insulated certain categories of appointments from political patronage, thereby improving public trust in its operations [31]. Furthermore, in sectors such as education and agriculture both of which account for a significant share of the state workforce the Commission began to implement strategic redeployments aimed at addressing manpower gaps, particularly in rural communities where service delivery was weakest. Haruna Abubakar Liman, Director of Planning, Research and Statistics, confirmed in an interview that this redeployment policy was backed by "a deliberate mapping of manpower needs across MDAs to ensure equitable distribution of human resources" [32].

The increasing reliance on digital record management was another strategic development in this period. By 2010, the NSCSC had initiated the digitization of staff files, a move influenced by global trends in e-governance and Nigeria's own *National ICT Policy* of 2004, which encouraged state governments to deploy technology for administrative efficiency [33]. Empirical studies have shown that digitization not only reduces cases of misplaced files and fraudulent alterations but also speeds up processing time for key decisions such as promotions and retirements [34]. For the NSCSC, this meant that disciplinary cases, transfers, and promotions could be tracked with greater accuracy, enhancing both accountability and institutional memory [35]. As documented in the *African Journal of Public Administration*, these procedural advancements placed the NSCSC in a stronger position to fulfil its constitutional role while also contributing to broader governance reforms in Nasarawa State [36].

By the mid-2010s, the Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission (NSCSC) had begun consolidating its statutory role through the integration of performance-based management systems,

a shift that reflected broader trends in African public administration reform [37]. The *Public Service Rules* (2008 Revised Edition) provided the primary legal and procedural framework for personnel management, but the NSCSC went further by adopting internal performance benchmarks for recruitment, confirmation, and promotion decisions [38]. This initiative mirrored findings in the *Journal of African Public Administration*, which emphasized that decentralized agencies that embed measurable performance criteria into personnel decisions tend to achieve higher institutional accountability and lower turnover rates [39]. As part of this reform momentum, the NSCSC increasingly required Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) to submit quarterly manpower reports, creating a clearer alignment between workforce planning and state development priorities [40].

The Commission's historical mandate also evolved in response to governance pressures linked to resource constraints and service delivery gaps. One of the Commission's strategic priorities during this period was optimizing human resource allocation to high-demand sectors such as health and education. This meant prioritizing the deployment of pharmacists, nurses, and teaching staff to underserved rural areas while simultaneously ensuring that surplus personnel in urban administrative roles could be retrained or redeployed [41]. Online data from the *Africa Capacity Building Foundation* supports this approach, noting that strategic redeployment reduces service delivery inequalities and strengthens citizen trust in government institutions [42]. As Haruna Abubakar Liman observed in an interview, "we do not just transfer people to fill vacancies; we consider the socio-economic impact of their deployment on both the origin and destination communities" [43].

Administrative Challenges Faced by the Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission

i. Inadequate Staffing and Delays

The Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission (NSCSC) operates as the central institution for managing recruitment, promotions, disciplinary measures, retirement, transfers, and other key administrative functions in the state's public service. While its constitutional and statutory mandates provide a framework for governance efficiency, the Commission continues to face significant administrative challenges that affect its operational capacity and service delivery. These challenges stem from structural limitations, procedural bottlenecks, resource constraints, and the changing dynamics of public administration in Nigeria.

Over the years, the NSCSC has had to navigate issues such as inadequate staffing, delays in processing vital documents, lack of modern digital infrastructure, and interdepartmental coordination difficulties. External factors ranging from state budgetary constraints to political transitions further complicate its ability to execute reforms effectively. Such challenges not only slow down decision-making processes but also risk undermining public trust in the civil service system.

This section examines these administrative difficulties in detail, starting with 4.2.1, which will focus on institutional capacity limitations, followed by subsequent parts exploring procedural inefficiencies, political and socio-economic pressures, and the Commission's internal resource management concerns. Each subsection draws on empirical findings from official reports, scholarly works, and first-hand accounts obtained through interviews with key officials of the Commission.

ii. Institutional Capacity Limitations

The effectiveness of the Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission (NSCSC) is significantly shaped by its institutional capacity, which encompasses the human, technical, and structural resources necessary to carry out its statutory functions. One of the persistent challenges has been inadequate staffing across critical departments, a problem that has placed excessive workloads on the few available officers. According to the Director of Finance and Accounts, Ode Musa Danladi, the department currently operates with only three officers when a minimum of five is required to effectively handle budgeting, payroll, and financial reporting functions [44]. With equivalent staffing shortfalls across other departments, where delays in processing retirement, transfer, and secondment requests are often linked to insufficient personnel and poor inter-ministerial communication. Such shortages undermine timely policy implementation and strain the

administrative efficiency of the Commission.

Another dimension of institutional limitation is the absence of adequate technological infrastructure. While there have been commendable steps towards digitizing personnel records progress remains slow due to lack of funding and skilled ICT personnel [45]. The absence of a fully functional e-governance platform means that processes such as promotions, transfers, and disciplinary cases are still largely paper-based, leading to inefficiencies and document misplacement among other systemic risk and administrative errors [46]. There is also the inconsistent flow of resources from the state government, insufficient and, in some years, delayed [47].

Procedural bottlenecks in the Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission (NSCSC) often stem from weak institutional linkages between the Commission and various Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs). For example, the Commissioner for Retirement, Transfer, and Secondment, Isa Salisu, noted that delays in MDAs' submission of staff disposition lists and other essential documents frequently result in stalled retirement and transfer processes [48]. Such inefficiencies create backlogs that disrupt staff mobility and career progression, and in some cases, delay the replacement of retired officers, thereby affecting service delivery in critical sectors such as health and education [49]. The absence of a synchronized data-sharing framework means the Commission must rely on manual requests and follow-up letters, which prolong processing times and create opportunities for miscommunication [50].

The NSCSC's challenges are further compounded by inadequate training and professional development for its staff. Despite the technical nature of its functions, there are limited opportunities for officers to update their skills, particularly in areas such as ICT, modern human resource management, and legal compliance under the Public Service Rules (PSR) [51]. According to Danladi Obagu of the Planning, Research, and Statistics Department, most officers learn on the job, and training is sporadic due to budgetary constraints [52]. This has a cascading effect: under-trained personnel are more likely to make procedural errors, which then require additional time and resources to correct. Studies on public administration in Nigeria consistently emphasize that continuous capacity building is essential to reducing bureaucratic delays and enhancing the professionalism of the civil service [53].

The cumulative effect of these institutional weaknesses is a diminished capacity for long-term strategic planning [54]. This operational mode keeps the NSCSC locked in a cycle of short-term crisis management rather than enabling it to shape the long-term trajectory of the state's human resource policy [55].

iii. Bureaucratic Bottlenecks and Procedural Delays

Bureaucratic bottlenecks within the Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission (NSCSC) have long been recognized as a critical impediment to efficient service delivery. The Commission operates within a procedural framework heavily influenced by the Public Service Rules (PSR) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which, while designed to safeguard fairness and due process, can result in protracted administrative timelines [56]. For instance, the multi-layered approval process for staff transfers involves the originating MDA, the receiving MDA, and multiple internal committees of the NSCSC before final ratification by the Chairman [57]. This layered system ensures compliance but frequently delays decisions by several months, particularly when any of the parties involved fail to respond promptly.

The challenge is compounded by interdepartmental dependencies. Departments responsible for personnel actions such as recruitment, promotion, and retirement often rely on supporting documentation from other MDAs, which are not always forthcoming in time [58]. According to Isa Salisu, Commissioner for Retirement, Transfer, and Secondment, delays in the submission of staff disposition lists by MDAs and the absence of accurate vacancy records significantly extend the time required to process transfers and secondments [59]. These inefficiencies not only frustrate affected officers but can also stall the strategic deployment of skilled personnel to areas where they are urgently needed.

Comparative studies in public administration show that such bureaucratic delays are common in state civil service commissions across Nigeria, particularly where manual record systems persist

[60]. In some states, the adoption of a “one-stop approval desk” model has streamlined these processes, cutting average processing times by more than half [61]. For the NSCSC, introducing similar reforms would require both procedural adjustments and the political will to reduce entrenched hierarchical controls, ensuring that operational efficiency does not come at the expense of accountability.

Beyond procedural delays in staff transfers and secondments, the bureaucratic culture within the Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission (NSCSC) often shapes the pace and quality of other core administrative functions such as discipline, promotions, and conversions. The Commission’s Promotion, Conversion, and Discipline Department, for example, must follow a rigid sequence of verification, panel hearings, and formal documentation before any sanction or promotion is approved [62]. While these steps ensure due process, they can significantly prolong case resolution, leading to frustrations among both complainants and respondents.

According to Randolph Moses Para, Commissioner for Promotion, Conversion, and Discipline, some disciplinary cases especially those involving financial misconduct in secondary schools or the Ministry of Agriculture have remained open for months due to incomplete investigation reports or unresponsive MDAs [63]. This has a ripple effect on staff morale, as delayed resolutions create uncertainty, undermine trust in the Commission’s impartiality, and in some cases, stall career progression for officers whose promotion files are tied to pending investigations [64].

Efforts and Reforms Undertaken to Address These Challenges

Over the years, the Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission (NSCSC) has recognized that its operational effectiveness depends not only on the enforcement of existing public service rules but also on its capacity to adapt to emerging governance demands. In response to challenges such as bureaucratic delays, infrastructural limitations, and outdated administrative processes, the Commission has initiated several reforms aimed at enhancing efficiency, transparency, and accountability. These reforms range from procedural streamlining in disciplinary processes to partial digitalization of records and improved collaboration with other state agencies. The following subsections examine specific reform strategies and their outcomes in detail.

Policy Reforms in Disciplinary and Recruitment Processes

One of the most significant reforms undertaken by the Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission (NSCSC) in recent years has been the harmonization of disciplinary procedures with updated recruitment protocols. This approach aims to ensure that the integrity of the service is preserved not only by removing or correcting erring officers but also by raising entry standards for new recruits [65]. This dual strategy reflects an understanding that institutional efficiency is achieved through both preventive and corrective measures.

In the area of discipline, the Commission has strengthened compliance with the Public Service Rules (PSR), particularly in cases involving financial misconduct and dereliction of duty [66]. According to Randolph Moses Para, Commissioner for Promotion, Conversion, and Discipline, between 2021 and 2023 most disciplinary cases involved the misappropriation of public funds, notably diversion of examination fees and agricultural inputs [67]. Resolutions to these cases included dismissals, compulsory retirements, demotions, and formal warnings, with offenders required to refund misappropriated sums where applicable [68].

Parallel to this, the Recruitment, Appointment, and Confirmation Department has implemented stricter verification processes during staff intake [69]. As Joel O. Olugbo explained, prospective employees now undergo multi-stage vetting, including background checks and credential verification, to ensure suitability before confirmation [70]. This shift is in line with scholarly arguments that recruitment reforms must be aligned with disciplinary frameworks to maintain organizational integrity over the long term [71]. By tightening both ends of the personnel management spectrum entry and retention the NSCSC seeks to build a civil service grounded in competence and accountability.

The reforms undertaken by the Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission (NSCSC) have had notable impacts on administrative efficiency and accountability. In disciplinary cases, the introduction of more rigorous review panels has reduced delays in case resolution, ensuring that

erring officers are promptly sanctioned in line with the Public Service Rules [72]. The adoption of a case-tracking mechanism within the Commission, although still rudimentary, has helped streamline the process and minimize bottlenecks often created by document misplacement or interdepartmental delays.

Equally important is the Commission's attempt to align disciplinary sanctions with broader reform initiatives in recruitment and confirmation. As observed by scholars, without a transparent and predictable disciplinary system, reforms in recruitment processes tend to lose credibility because potential entrants perceive the service as compromised [73]. By ensuring that those who enter the service are subject to consistent accountability standards, the Commission strengthens public confidence in its operations. This approach was echoed by Joel O. Olugbo, Commissioner for Recruitment, Appointment, and Confirmation, who explained that transparency at the entry level reinforces citizens' trust that the civil service remains a merit-based institution [74].

Furthermore, the interdepartmental collaboration fostered by these reforms has proven significant. For instance, the Planning, Research and Statistics Department plays a coordinating role in generating data to inform both recruitment quotas and disciplinary outcomes [75]. As Danladi Obagu noted, delays in statistical reports can create uncertainty in staffing, hence reforms have included digital record keeping to bridge this gap [76]. These developments reflect a broader trend across Nigerian civil service reforms, where digitization and inter-agency cooperation are recognized as critical steps toward efficiency [77]. Collectively, these reforms underscore the Commission's evolving role as both regulator and custodian of ethical standards in Nasarawa State governance.

Broader Implications of These Challenges on Governance in Nasarawa State

The challenges encountered by the Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission (NSCSC) extend beyond administrative efficiency and have far-reaching consequences for governance in the state. Weaknesses in areas such as staff discipline, recruitment transparency, record management, and inter-departmental coordination undermine the ability of the Commission to serve as an effective regulator of the civil service. These shortcomings affect the implementation of government policies, delay service delivery, and erode public trust in state institutions.

In the long run, these challenges threaten the credibility of the NSCSC as an impartial arbiter of civil service rules and diminish the institutional strength of the civil service as a whole. This has direct implications for policy continuity, development planning, and the quality of governance in Nasarawa State, where the civil service remains the backbone of governmental operations.

Institutional Legitimacy and Public Trust

The credibility of any state institution rests heavily on the perception of fairness, transparency, and accountability in its operations. In Nasarawa State, the Civil Service Commission (NSCSC) occupies a strategic position in shaping governance outcomes by managing recruitment, promotion, and discipline of public officers. However, lapses in the execution of these responsibilities have often generated skepticism among citizens regarding the institution's impartiality. When disciplinary actions appear inconsistent or selective, as was noted in some cases of diversion of agricultural inputs in the Ministry of Agriculture, the wider public interprets such irregularities as evidence of systemic bias or corruption. This erosion of trust directly weakens the legitimacy of the NSCSC and, by extension, the state government's broader governance agenda [78].

Another dimension to the legitimacy crisis lies in the Commission's ability to respond to public expectations for fairness in appointments and promotions. Reports from the NSCSC annual reviews indicate persistent complaints about delays in processing staff confirmations and pensions [79]. According to Joel O. Olugbo, Commissioner for Recruitment, Appointment and Confirmation, these delays are often due to the slow submission of staff disposition lists and incomplete documentation from ministries [80]. While the explanation highlights bureaucratic inefficiencies rather than deliberate negligence, the public tends to perceive such shortcomings as evidence of administrative incompetence.

The moral example set by public service managers proves weather the civil service commissions uphold ethical standards and consistently discipline erring officers, they enhance their

symbolic authority as custodians of state morality [81]. The NSCSC, by virtue of its disciplinary role, is uniquely positioned to either strengthen or diminish the moral fibre of governance in Nasarawa State. The challenge, however, remains whether the Commission can sustain transparent processes amidst financial constraints, political interference, and entrenched patronage networks.

Service Delivery and Policy Implementation

Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission (NSCSC) operates as the administrative backbone of the state, and its decisions on recruitment, confirmation, promotion, and discipline directly influence the quality of the workforce entrusted with executing public policies. When recruitment processes are merit-driven and transparent, ministries and departments are better positioned to deliver on state programmes. However, when these processes are delayed or marred by irregularities, the chain of policy implementation is disrupted. As noted by Musa Dangana Giza, Chairman of the NSCSC, inefficiencies in documentation and coordination between ministries often slow down recruitment and retirement processes, thereby affecting the timely replacement of staff in critical service areas [82].

The Commission's role in service delivery is further complicated by persistent financial and structural challenges. According to Ode Musa Danladi, Director of Finance and Accounts, inadequate staffing and the lack of modern technological tools in the finance department have limited the Commission's capacity to handle payrolls and disbursements effectively [83]. This has direct consequences for civil servants' morale and, by extension, their commitment to implementing government policies efficiently. Studies in public administration have shown that delays in the payment of salaries and pensions often lead to absenteeism, low productivity, and even resistance to policy directives [84]. Thus, the financial management limitations within the NSCSC weaken its ability to sustain smooth governance operations.

Another pressing concern relates to the mismatch between policy objectives and administrative readiness [85]. The NSCSC's struggle with record digitisation and document management, as highlighted in its 2017 and 2020 reports, underscores this challenge [86]. Without modernized administrative structures, policy implementation risks being inconsistent and uneven across ministries. This situation is exacerbated in key sectors such as health and education, where delays in replacing retired staff or confirming new appointments create service gaps that affect citizens directly. For instance, the delay in deploying pharmacy technicians and teachers in 2021 was linked to bureaucratic bottlenecks within the Commission [87]. These inefficiencies not only undermine service delivery but also weaken the citizens' perception of government effectiveness.

Workforce Morale and Disciplinary Measures

The morale of the civil service workforce in Nasarawa State is intimately tied to the way disciplinary measures are conceived and enforced by the Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission (NSCSC). Civil servants often perceive fairness in disciplinary processes as a determinant of their commitment to duty and loyalty to the state. According to Randolph Moses Para, Commissioner for Promotion, Conversion and Discipline, the Commission handles cases of misconduct in strict adherence to the Public Service Rules (PSR), which remain the guiding framework for disciplining erring officers [88]. This has included cases ranging from misappropriation of examination fees in secondary schools to the diversion of agricultural inputs in the Ministry of Agriculture. By ensuring that sanctions such as compulsory retirement, dismissal, or demotion are meted out, the Commission reinforces a culture of accountability within the service.

However, while discipline is necessary to maintain standards, excessive reliance on punitive measures without accompanying corrective strategies can demoralize the workforce. Scholars argue that public servants tend to perform better when disciplinary action is balanced with opportunities for professional growth [89]. In Nasarawa State, although the Commission has applied punishments to erring officers, there has been less emphasis on counselling or retraining mechanisms. This creates an impression among civil servants that disciplinary measures are primarily punitive rather than corrective. Such perceptions have been shown in studies on Nigerian public service to reduce trust in administrative structures, which in turn negatively impacts overall workforce morale [90].

Furthermore, the handling of disciplinary matters has implications for the image of the NSCSC

itself. If workers perceive the Commission as fair and transparent in resolving cases, trust is strengthened. Conversely, perceptions of selective justice or administrative delay can undermine staff confidence. For example, delays in concluding disciplinary cases caused partly by inadequate record-keeping and bureaucratic bottlenecks have often left accused officers in prolonged uncertainty [91]. Such experiences foster frustration and, in some cases, lead to decreased productivity among those awaiting outcomes. Therefore, while the Commission's disciplinary role strengthens governance accountability, it also highlights the delicate balance between maintaining order and sustaining morale within the civil service.

The disciplinary powers of the Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission (NSCSC) have also been exercised with a view to restoring integrity in key government sectors. In several documented cases, particularly those involving the misuse of resources in the education and agriculture sectors, the Commission not only enforced sanctions but also demanded restitution of public funds [92]. This dual approach of punishment and restitution demonstrates the Commission's effort to protect both public interest and institutional credibility. It also reflects broader reforms in Nigerian public administration that emphasize accountability as an antidote to entrenched corruption.

Nevertheless, sustaining workforce morale under these circumstances remains a challenge. Studies have shown that civil servants subjected to disciplinary proceedings often feel stigmatized even after serving their punishment, which affects reintegration into the workforce [93]. This has created a lingering problem in Nasarawa State, where officers demoted or compulsorily retired frequently perceive themselves as victims of institutional bias rather than as beneficiaries of corrective justice. To mitigate this, some commissions across Nigeria have introduced post-disciplinary rehabilitation programmes, such as retraining workshops or redeployment into less sensitive roles [94]. The NSCSC, however, has not fully institutionalized such practices, which underscores the need for reforms that balance discipline with morale-building strategies.

On a broader scale, the ability of the NSCSC to enforce discipline effectively has a ripple effect on the credibility of governance in Nasarawa State. A disciplined workforce is crucial to policy implementation, service delivery, and public trust in institutions. As Mrs Florence B. Iyakwari, Permanent Secretary of the Commission, noted, ensuring discipline is not merely about punishing wrongdoing but about setting standards that inspire compliance among all officers [95]. This view suggests that morale is not only shaped by how sanctions are applied but also by the degree to which civil servants perceive the system as fair, transparent, and consistent. Thus, strengthening disciplinary frameworks with human-centred reforms is essential for creating a motivated, efficient, and trustworthy civil service.

One significant implication of the Commission's work is its influence on public trust in state institutions. Effective handling of disciplinary cases, such as those involving the misuse of educational funds or diversion of agricultural inputs, signals to the public that accountability mechanisms are functioning [96]. This has the potential to strengthen citizen confidence in government, thereby reinforcing state legitimacy. However, when disciplinary measures are perceived as selective or politically motivated, they erode trust and create skepticism about the fairness of governance processes [97]. In this sense, the Commission's credibility has direct consequences for democratic consolidation in Nasarawa State.

At a broader level, the Commission also contributes to the state's economic and social development agenda by ensuring that the civil service remains an effective instrument of policy implementation. A disciplined, motivated, and professionally managed workforce enhances the capacity of the state to attract investment, manage resources effectively, and respond to social challenges [98]. Conversely, a weak and demoralized civil service undermines reform efforts, slows down developmental projects, and perpetuates inefficiency. As Commissioner Joel O. Olugbo (Recruitment, Appointment, and Confirmation) observed in his interview, the Commission's ability to sustain transparent recruitment and promotion processes directly affects the quality of governance outcomes across sectors [99].

The overall implication, therefore, is that the NSCSC does not merely regulate personnel matters; it actively shapes the political economy of Nasarawa State. Its effectiveness in balancing

discipline with morale, fairness with efficiency, and autonomy with accountability determines the extent to which the state civil service can function as an engine of governance and development.

CONCLUSION

The study has examined the development, functions, challenges, and reforms of the Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission from 1996 to 2025. Established following the creation of Nasarawa State in 1996, the Commission has played a central role in managing the state's human resources through recruitment, appointment, confirmation, promotion, transfer, retirement, and disciplinary functions. Over the years, it has evolved from establishing basic administrative structures and personnel procedures to adopting reforms such as merit-based recruitment, performance appraisal, personnel digitisation, strategic redeployment, and improved coordination with Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). These developments demonstrate the Commission's importance in maintaining an effective administrative structure and supporting the implementation of government policies and programmes.

Despite these developments, the study reveals that the Commission continues to face significant institutional and administrative challenges. Inadequate staffing, limited financial and technological resources, dependence on paper-based records, weak interdepartmental coordination, insufficient professional training, and bureaucratic bottlenecks have affected the efficiency of its operations. Although adherence to the Public Service Rules is necessary for ensuring due process, the multiple stages involved in recruitment, promotion, transfer, retirement, and disciplinary proceedings can result in prolonged delays. The Commission has responded through measures such as improved recruitment and disciplinary procedures, verification processes, case tracking, digitisation of records, and greater interdepartmental collaboration. However, these reforms remain constrained by limited resources and institutional capacity. The study further establishes that these challenges have implications for workforce morale, public trust, policy implementation, and the quality of public service delivery.

Thus, the Nasarawa State Civil Service Commission remains a critical institution in the governance and development of the state. Its effectiveness depends not only on its statutory responsibilities but also on adequate staffing, funding, technological infrastructure, professional capacity, and efficient coordination with other government institutions. Strengthening digital personnel management, expanding professional training, reducing unnecessary procedural delays, improving MDA coordination, and ensuring transparent and consistent recruitment and disciplinary practices would enhance the Commission's effectiveness. Such measures would strengthen administrative efficiency, improve staff morale and accountability, facilitate effective policy implementation, and contribute to more responsive public service delivery and sustainable socio-economic development in Nasarawa State.

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