# Representative Bureaucracy and Social Equity in Nigeria: A Critical Analysis

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## Abstract

This study analyzed the connection between representative bureaucracy and social equity in Nigeria by examining potential inclinations, perceived fairness, and efficacy. Representative bureaucracy suggests that the demographic attributes of public servants, such as gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background, can influence their decision making and policy outcomes, ultimately impacting social equity. Hence, the role of representative bureaucracy in promoting or hindering social equity cannot be overemphasized. Drawing on the existing literatures and empirical research, this study aims to address certain normative questions: (1) concerns about conformity to federal character principle in recruitments, (2) the effectiveness of the Federal Character Commission in ensuring balanced representation, and (3) the efficacy of representative bureaucracy in promoting social equity. The findings reveal a complex and nuanced relationship between the two variables and emphasize the importance of understanding the role of representative bureaucracy in enhancing social equity and its potential for promoting justice, fairness and democratic ideals. While some positive outcomes can be identified through the Federal Character practices on targeted recruitments, challenges persist. Factors such as political patronage, nepotism, indigeneity clause and corruption often undermine the potential of the representative bureaucracy to deliver equitable outcomes. This paper offers recommendations on the need to foster merit-based recruitment and promotion practices, enhancing diversity training, and culturally sensitive programmes as well as expunge the indigeneity clause from the constitution. This critical analysis contributes to

the theoretical and practical understanding of the representative bureaucracy and its implications for social equity.

**Keywords**: representative bureaucracy, social equity, federal character, democracy, inclusion.

## Introduction

Modern liberal democracies require systems of representation that tend to promise the participation of all adult citizens in societies' decision-making. This is evident in pluralistic federal systems. A federal system exists to allow a government to function over a nation of diverse peoples and cultures (Onwudiwe & Suberu, 2005). According to Ogban-Iyan, (1998), cited in Unanka, Ezeji and Onyenweigwe (2019). Federalism constitutes a method of political arrangement that brings together distinct states or entities, enabling each to maintain its political identity while distributing power among them. The success or failure of federalism depends on how federal system is supported by integrative weights in the state such as acceptable electoral system and effective legislative and executive arms of government. Hence, when implemented accordingly, the allocation of power along with the counter balancing/counter veiling mechanisms assist diverse nations to peacefully handle societal and political disputes ensuring fair representation across different branches of government, including the civil service, that has been difficult in notable federal systems like the USA, Australia, Canada, Germany and India. However, the matter was approached using diverse strategies – Affirmative Action (USA), Employment Equity (Canada), Positive Discrimination (Germany), Reservation Policy (India) and Federal Character Principle (Nigeria). All these policies are anchored on the concept of Representative Bureaucracy.

Nigeria is actively engaged in exploring federalism and how best to apply it. The country's political past is characterized by concerns of marginalized groups and the need for fair resource allocation (Akintoye and Utang, 2012). Marginalization manifests in terms of the perceived failure of the distribution of political power and public sector employment including the Civil Service to fairly reflect the country's linguistic, ethnic, religious and geographic diversity (Akintoye & Utang, 2012). The concept that the plurality of Nigeria should be evident in both political appointments and the Civil Service gained traction during the 1970s. This led to the formation of the Federal Character Principle - a purposeful strategy aimed at tackling issues of discrimination, bias and inadequate and imbalanced representation. The rationale behind it was to uphold the stability and unity of the Nigerian state. This has given rise to the establishment of health centres, unity schools, federal universities, and other tertiary institutions virtually in every state of the federation. Also, this direction is move to standardize and provide affirmative action in higher education by the

application of quotas for admission into federal universities and other tertiary institutions (Ogoke & Abiogu, 2020).

According to the FCC report of 2016, in order to achieve equitable representation in the federal civil service 2.75% of workforce in any ministry should come from each state and 1% by the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). There exist however, ministries with imbalances, reflecting either over representation or under representation. The degree of lopsidedness varies from ministry to ministry and from one organization to another, depending on factors like, ethnicity, labour mobility, methods of filling vacancies arising from resignation, withdrawals, deaths or dismissals (Unanka et al, 2019).

According to employment data since Nigeria's independence, the North has dominated top management positions in key ministries such as Defense, Interior, FCT, and Mines and Power due to its political strength and power in the political sphere. On the other hand, the South has dominated employment in the civil service due to its greater educational advancement. (Ugoh & Ukpere, 2012). Consequently, there exists an imbalance in the distribution of employment resulting from a combination of political influence and numerical superiority, as well as disparities in educational advancement and skill attainment. Also going by the appointments made during former President Buhari's administration (2015-2023), it is evident how appointments were tilted to the North as against the South.

These issues raised heretofore constitute the focus of this research and the aim is to investigate representative bureaucracy; evaluate how effectively it addresses social equity concerns, and whether it perpetuates or challenges the existing power dynamics and structural disparities.

The paper employs a qualitative research method that includes interviews and document analysis, allowing for an in-depth exploration of various perspectives regarding representative bureaucracy and social equity in Nigeria. Additionally, the paper draws upon published empirical research to provide a comprehensive understanding and a nuanced assessment of the dynamics shaping representative bureaucracy and social equity in Nigeria.

**Representative Bureaucracy**

Representative Bureaucracy is conceived as a system of public service whose members reflect the demographic composition of the population it seeks to serve and to which its policy applies (Agocs, 2012). This is a system of public service where its workforce is sourced from all segments of the society and serve at all levels in the departments both in the lower cadre or management cadre.

Representative Bureaucracy was coined by J. Donald Kingsley (1944) in his seminal work on Representative Bureaucracy; Kingsley posits that bureaucracies need to be democratic in order not to replicate the basic inequalities of the groups they serve,

maintaining that a democratic state must have a representative bureaucracy to distinguish itself from autocracies (Kingsley, (1944) cited in Jalali, (2018). The theory of representative bureaucracy suggests that a public workforce representative of the people in terms of race, ethnicity and gender will help ensure that the interests of all groups are captured in bureaucratic decision-making process. Therefore, active representation of group interests occur because individual bureaucrats reflect the view of those who share their demographic backgrounds (Bradbury & Kellough, 2010). In other words, the theory of representative bureaucracy leads the thought that a demographically diverse public sector workforce (passive representation) will result to policy outcomes that reflect the interests of all groups represented (active representation) (Bradbury & Kellough, 2008). An all-encompassing definition of representative bureaucracy is that it is the study of the relationships between the composition of the public workforce and the socio-demographic characteristics of the society it seeks to serve, the consequences of the workforce composition for society at large, specific societal groups, and internal organizational performance as well as the institutionalization of group rights and privileges (Peters, Patrick & Eckhard, 2013). In effect, the design of representative bureaucracy is meant to serve as an internal check on government bureaucratic policies and behaviours (Jalali, 2017).

If the theory of representative bureaucracy suggests that organizations perform better if their workforces reflect the characteristics of their constituent populations according to Andrews, Boyne, Meier, O'Toole & Walker, (2005), it implies that non-representative bureaucracy (non-passive representation) will likely lead to non-performance or generation of social tensions (destructive conflict) of the federal state, possibly resulting from agitations/protests or general feeling of marginalization and frustration from disadvantaged groups in the general population as reflected also in the bureaucracy (Unanka et al, 2019).

The prevailing notion of human nature used by the advocates of representative bureaucracy claims that a strong sense of group identity can compromise the efficiency of policy and service decisions made by bureaucrats, and in order to avoid such problems, bureaucracy should reflect the pluralism of the society they govern (Jamali, 2017).

Nevertheless, within the realm of literature on representative bureaucracy, intricate inquiries emerge regarding the definition of representation. Pitkin (1972) aver that political representation is the activity of making citizens' voices, opinions, and perspectives present in the public policy making processes. This is to say that, political representation occurs when political actors speak, advocate, symbolize and act on behalf of others in the political arena (Dovi, 2006 cited in Unanka et al, 2019).

According to Van Riper (1958) cited in Yagboyaju & Oyewo (2017), to be representative, a bureaucracy must (i) consist inter alia a reasonable cross-section of the body politic in terms of occupation, class and geography, (ii) must be in general

tune with the ethos and attitudes of the society of which it is part (Yagboyaju & Oyewo, 2017). In precise terms, representative bureaucracy is grounded on the notion that the proportion of each minority employed within a government agency at various levels should mirror the respective group's share in the total population. Essentially, it is a system based on the belief that in a true democracy, public servers should reflect public service – the racial, ethnic and gender composition of the government constituencies so that responsive public policy can be made (Unanka et al, 2019).

There are two components of representative bureaucracy, namely, passive or descriptive representation and active representation. The Passive representation derives from the expectation that minority public administrators, in particular, will have similar attitudes to minority citizens on issues of crucial import and relevance to those citizens, and the attitudes, in turn will influence policy decisions (Bradbury & Kellough, 2008).

It is noteworthy that, whereas, passive representation concerns the extent to which the background characteristics of administrators collectively mirror the population, active representation calls upon officials from disadvantaged groups to actively use their position to promote the interests of the groups they emanate from (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010). Accordingly, passive representation is viewed as an aspirational aim for making the bureaucracy more democratic or to alleviate social tensions within the framework of any of the three dimensions of representative bureaucracy, vis-a-vis political power balance, equal opportunity and diversity management (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010 in Unanka et al, 2019).

(1) Political Power-Balance: This denotes an elitist emphasis within the framework of representative bureaucracy. By this conception, representation of the civil service towards the ruling class helps states to establish control and guarantee harmony and stability (Kingsley, 1944). If the bureaucracy reflects the ruling elite, it enhances efficiency and societal cohesion. According to the Power-Balance perspective, representative bureaucracy evaluates whether a bureaucracy is representative focusing on the state or geopolitical region as a criterion.

(2) Equal Opportunity: The representative bureaucracy prioritizes balancing bureaucracy with democracy and ensuring equal opportunities by traditionally focusing on the middle and working classes. This approach distinguishes between active and passive representation, as noted by Mosher (1968) and Dolan and Rosenbloom (2003). However, the 'representative bureaucracy as equal opportunity' perspective has now shifted its focus to ethnicity and gender as crucial factors in determining representativeness, while diminishing the importance of political and territorial characteristics, which were central to the 'representative bureaucracy as power approach' (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010).

(3) Diversity Management: In this dimension, representative bureaucracy focuses on the benefits of diversity for the performance of public sector organizations (Pits, 2005; Wise & Tschirhart, 2000). Originating in the US, in a private sector context, this managing diversity approach was gradually adopted by Anglo-Saxon and Western European scholars focusing on public sector organizations (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010).

Agocs (2012) posits that for power-balance, achievement of equal opportunity or diversity management, "the knowledge, skills and social networks that members of ethno-cultural or racialized groups bring to their work as public servants can help them to communicate more effectively with these communities and to provide more relevant, sensitive and appropriate service delivery to them than majority group members may provide".

## Nigeria and Representative Bureaucracy

The riddle of the Nigerian State has been variously described as a geographic expression (Awolowo, 1947), the mistake of 1914 (Bello, 1962), the product of political cloning (Ayoade, 2003), an artificial state, and the handiwork of 19th and 20th centuries imperialism created to serve colonial exigencies rather than ethnic cohesion (Akintoye and Utang, 2012).

Nigeria is a federation consisting of diverse ethnic groups that can each be distinguished by the area they inhabit, particular language, culture, religion and resources (Anderson, 2011; Affin, 2007; Oluwo, 1995). The major groups consist of the Hausa/Fulanis in the North, the Yorubas in the South-West and the Igbo in the South-East. Additional ethnic nationals, the Edo in the Mid-West; the Kanuri in the North-East, the Tiv and Nupe in the Middle Belt, and the Urhobo, Isoko, Ijaw, Itsekiri and Efik in the Niger-Delta area. The numerical and hegemonic strength of the three major ethnic groups within the Nigerian federation meant that Nigeria has a tripodal ethnic structure with each of the three groups constituting a pole in the competition for political and economic resources, while the ethnic minorities are forced to form a bewildering array of alliances around each of the three dominant groups (Mustapha, 2007).

Horizontal imbalance argues therefore from the structural inequality built into state sizes and educational advancement evident in contemporary Nigeria today. The North with more than twice the land area as well as the population of the Southern states put together maintains hegemony over political affairs. The South with the higher educational advancement dominates the public service that lays emphasis on maintenance of its rules and regulations in recruitment and employment (Ezeji and Ozoigbo, 2017). Mutual fear and suspicion have been the hallmark that characterizes the relationship amongst the geo-political parts. This clarifies the reason Nigeria has encountered challenges in conducting credible elections and acceptable census that are perceived to be fair and acceptable to all ethnic groups. Primordial identities have

continued to take precedence over national interests (Adetiba & Rahim, 2012; Osaghae & Suberu, 2005; Nnoli, 1986).

**Table 1: Representation of political appointments in the Federal Government, Nigeria by geopolitical zones as at August, 2018.**

| G/Zone | Min. | Min. State | Perm. Sec. | S.Adv. To President | S.Asst. to President | S.Asst. to Vice-President | Chief Executive | Total | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NC | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 48 | 62 | 14.2% |
| NE | 3 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 21 | 0 | 37 | 66 | 15.1% |
| NW | 4 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 26 | 0 | 50 | 85 | 19.5% |
| SE | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 43 | 52 | 1.9% |
| SS | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 15 | 0 | 52 | 75 | 17.2% |
| SW | 5 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 38 | 1 | 48 | 96 | 22.0% |
| Total | 23 | 14 | 1 | 8 | 111 | 1 | 278 | 436 | 100% |

Source: FCC (2018)

There exist minorities in both the North and South who feel marginalized and want a fair share in the political and economic life of the nation. These minorities especially those that are oil-bearing detest "internal colonialism" whereby "ethnic-based" political domination is used to appropriate the resources of the oil-bearing communities for the benefit of the dominant groups. (Bassey, 1995). Achieving the herculean tasks of fostering inclusiveness, accommodating diversity, and promoting national unity among the diverse ethnic communities requires a social and political framework in the form of Federal Character that takes cognizance of the country's federal configurations. Federal Character refers to the;

"Distinctive desire of peoples of Nigeria to promote national unity, foster national loyalty and give every citizen of Nigeria a sense of belonging to the nation notwithstanding the diversities of ethnic origin, culture or religion which may exist and which it is their desire to nourish, harness, to the enrichment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria" (CDC Vol.1, 1977:x)

Ugoh & Ukpere (2012) drawing from Mustapha (2007) highlighted the interplay between communal identities and administrative boundaries that led to a number of ethnic, regional and religious cleavages in the Nigerian political life among which are cleavages (a) between the three major ethnic groups on the one hand and the 350 odd ethnic groups on the other hand (b) between the North-South in respect of the 1950 and 2006 censuses (c) between the 36 states grouped into six (6) zones with three in the North and three in the South.

The South's dominant position in educational resources and the provision of necessary skilled staff is balanced by the North's greater population, size and influence. Here also, Nigeria has been characterized by political and bureaucratic inequalities as well. The result is fear of domination and discrimination and fear of marginalization and being short-changed by rival groups (Ugoh & Ukpere, 2012).

During the post-independence era, the Nigerian state found itself in a dilemma where political setting was dominated by Northern executives leaving its administrative functions to a Southern dominated bureaucracy (Ayoade, 2000). The interaction of this unevenness is evident in the circumstance where the political leadership faced challenges in implementing its policies due to a lack of bureaucratic support, a deficit experienced by the North in terms of the necessary workforce. This imbalanced allocation of educational and political assets played a significant role in contributing to the collapse of the First Republic (1966), military intervention and the Civil war (1967-1970). The bid to resolve the dilemma of Northern political domination and southern domination of the bureaucracy led to the promulgation of the Federal Character Principle in 1979 constitution (Ayoade, 2000).

**Overview of the Federal Character Principle and its Guidelines**

Balanced representation and the equitable distribution of power was made a constitutional issue in 1979 through the incorporation of the Federal Character Principle. This principle is enshrined in Section 14(3) and (4) of the 1979 constitution, and it has been preserved in the subsequent 1999 constitution with its amendments. These sections explicitly state;

14(**3**) the composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigerian unity, and also to command national loyalty thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic groups or their sectional groups in that government or any of its agencies

14(**4**) the composition of the Government of a state, local government council or any of the agencies of such government or council, and the conduct of the affairs of the government or council or such agencies shall be carried out in such a manner as to recognize the diversity of the people within its area of authority and the need to

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promote a sense of belonging and loyalty among all peoples of the Federation (1999 Nigerian Constitution as Amended).

The aim of the Federal Character principle is to realize a representative civil service encompassing various ethnic groups and component states. It is linked with objective of achieving national unity in addition to facilitating to secure and maintain stability in the country (Kayode, 2015; Adamolekan, Eroro and Oshionebo, 1991). Also, to lend practical effectiveness to the federal character principle, the creation of the Federal Character Commission was enacted through Decree 34 of 1996, and its existence was firmly established within the framework of the 1999 constitution. The roles and authorities outlined in sections 4 and 5 of the FCC Act can be categorized into four main groups;

a) To work out an equitable formula for sharing posts and services;

b) promote, monitor and ensure compliance

c) redress in a fair manner the problems of existing imbalance in the public service and in the economy throughout the federation;

d) prosecute defaulters

The commission functions at the national, state, and local tiers, carrying out similar tasks at each level. Nonetheless, in adherence to the FCC Act of 1996, every state within the federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) must be fairly represented in both the public service and civil service. This representation entails recruiting the most capable individuals from each state and the FCT. If there is a shortage of positions, a zonal distribution is implemented. In cases where there are two positions, they are allocated between the Northern and Southern zones. If natives of a state or the FCT are unable to fill all the available positions, preference is granted to residents of other states within the same zone to occupy the vacancies. Only when no suitable candidates from the zone are found, will consideration be extended to individuals from a different zone (Kayode, 2015). As a result, every state is required to contribute 2.75% of the overall workforce within any federal institution in Nigeria, whereas the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) is responsible for providing 1%. The commission establishes both a minimum and maximum threshold for the representation of a state's workforce within an establishment. This range spans from 2.5% to 3.0%. In effect, the statistical division of the FCC monitors the composition of different institutions grouping them into; (a) not represented (NR) 0%; (b) grossly under-represented (GUR) under represented 1.5%; (c) adequately represented (AR) between 2.5% and 3%; (d) over-represented (OR) between 3.1% and 3.9% and (e) grossly over-represented (GOR) above 4% (Ugoh & Ukpere, 2012).

**Social Equity and John Rawl's Theory of Justice**

Social equity is a term that connotes fairness, rights and justice in the provision of public services.  Conventionally, social equity is usually embedded within the social contract. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712- 1778) maintained that the ultimate welfare of everyone boils down to freedom and parity, both of which are interdependent and cannot exist independently. He contended that imbalances in distribution and economic needs give rise to inherent disparities and differences that become more permanent in their effects.  John Locke (1632-1704) on the other hand, contended that a significant function of government is to safeguard inherent rights; in contrast, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) proposed that inequality is absent in the natural state but emerges from conflicts and civil wars, and the acknowledgment of inherent equality is pivotal for establishing a harmonious and equitable society.

 It is the practice of egalitarianism, the principle that all citizens, regardless of their economic resources or personal characteristics, have the right to be treated equally by the political system. Modern debates about social justice generally began with philosophers considering why societies influenced by social contract theory still exhibit enormous inequalities.

 Social equity is defined in Rawl's 'Theory of Justice' thus, "Each person has the same and indefeasible [permanent] claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme of liberties for all" this notion of social equity also provides a solid philosophical underpinning for the value of social equity. Accordingly, social equity is a flexible, needs-based process that recognizes inequalities and works toward fairness in every area of society including education, housing, healthcare, and more. Rawlsian justice pays attention to the welfare of the minority and the disadvantaged, and describes the notion that:

"Justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by the greater good shared by others. It does not allow that the sacrifices imposed on a few are outweighed by the larger form of advantages enjoyed by many" (Rawls, 1974:3-4)

Rawl's seminal work in 1971 "Theory of Justice" portrayed the need to promote social equity in which he described the importance of creation of institutions and policies that promote a just and fair society for those at the bottom (Rawls, 1971).  Rawls' theory of justice aims to elucidate the unjust nature of evident social disparities and to define the nature of a fair society. Within his framework of justice, Rawls endeavors to tackle the issue of how resources and advantages are fairly distributed. He asserts that a society can be deemed just when its attributes align with universally accepted normative principles. This rationale underscores why the theory of justice commences by establishing foundational principles, emphasizing the inherent inviolability of each individual;

"Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of the state cannot override… Therefore, the rights secured by justice are not subject to political bargaining or to the calculus of social interest" (Rawls, 1971:60)

Rawls presents two fundamental principles of justice: the first one, termed the principle of equal liberty, ensures every individual's entitlement to significant fundamental freedoms that do not infringe upon the freedoms of others (1971). These encompass rights like property ownership, free expression, assembly, and freedom from unjust arrest. The second principle, referred to as the difference principle by Rawls, accentuates the notion of equal opportunity and the equitable allocation of socio-economic inequalities. This principle signifies that societal and economic statuses are structured for the collective benefit and accessible to all.

Recently, the concept of social equity has been broadened to include far more categories than race and gender, including sexual and gender identity, economic status, physical and mental disability, and more (Frederickson, 2005). Inequality itself has evolved from blatant discrimination, as observed in the 1960s, to subtle inequalities of access and influence that curtail political engagement and influence, leading to biased political reactions favouring wealthier factions.

Adler's definition of social equity views it as "equal treatment to which all are entitled by virtue of being human" (Adler, 1981). On another note, some definitions of social equity expand and apply it to public rights, access, and redistribution policy (Svara & Brunel, 2005).The Standing Panel on Social Equity in Governance of the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) aver that social equity is the fair, just and equitable management of all institutions serving the public directly or by contract; and the fair and equitable distribution of public services, and implementation of public policy, and the commitment to promote fairness, justice and equity in the formation of public policy (NAPA, 2000). Additionally, Johnson and Savara (2011) put forth a new interpretation of social equity. They believe social equity is the active commitment to fairness, justice, and equality in the formulation of public policy, distribution of public services, implementation of public policy, and management of all institutions serving the public directly or by contract. They further submit that public administrators, including all persons involved in public governance should seek to prevent and reduce inequality and injustice based on significant social characteristics and should promote greater equality in access to services, procedural fairness, quality of services and social outcomes (Johnson & Savara, 2011).

The issue of equity cannot be over-emphasized as the establishment of a just, equitable and inclusive society offering equal prospects for all can result to a fair environment where everyone has the potential to thrive. Inequality erodes trust and leaves governments susceptible to the influence of special interests. When feelings of injustice and exclusion persuade a culture, the group/community exhibits lower levels of trust, weaker community connections, lower quality of social relationships and cooperation and feelings of disrespect between individuals – all of which may trigger and jeopardize economic and political stability (Wilkinson, 2011). In some

cases, the conflict generated by inequity and poverty can provoke extreme measures of international and domestic terrorism and violence (Wooldridge & Bilharz, 2017).

## Representative Bureaucracy: Challenges in Attaining Social Equity in Nigeria

The maintenance of Federal Character in Nigeria's heterogeneous state requires the practice of representative government and representative bureaucracy. This is highly solicited given the tension created by structural imbalances within the federal system. There are concerns that the northern region, with an imbalance in its population and land area compared to other regions, may attain political dominance whilst the bureaucratic dominance of the South in labor force development and production is also a thorny issue. The federal character principle, a modified form of affirmative action, originated with the purpose of managing various divisive influences within the country.

In the light of the above, certain challenges mitigate the actualization of a representative bureaucracy and thus, social equity in Nigeria. There is no effective application of the federal character principle in terms of achievement of a balanced mix of staff and reduction of the fear of marginalization. The Federal Character Commission quota guidelines are flouted due to ethnicity, nepotism, corruption, and politicization of employment policies and procedures. There is the interference of top politicians who use employment offers as a tool for patronage. More so, the fact that offenders do not usually receive commensurate punishment reinforces the tendency to tinker with the guidelines by establishments (Okotoni & Adegbami, 2021).

**Table 2: Patronage Politics in Lopsided Political appointments in Nigeria**

| S/N | PREVIOUS HEAD | CURRENT HEAD | AGENCY | STATE OF ORIGIN | TIME APPOINTED | ETHNIC GROUP | ZONE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Ibrahim Magu | | EFCC | Borno | 2017 | Majority | North |
| | | Abdulrasheed Bawa | | Kebbi | 2021 | | |
| 2 | Modibbo Hamman Tukur | Modibbo Hamman Tukur | NFIU | Adamawa | 2019 | Majority | North |
| 3 | Mohammed Adamu | | IGP | Nasarawa | 2018 | Majority | North |
| | | Usman Alkali Baba | | Yobe | 2021 | | |

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| 4 | Yusuf Magaji Bichi | Yusuf Magaji Bichi | DSS | Kano | 2018-tDate | Majority | North |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | Ahmed Abubakar Rufai | | | Katsina | 2018 | Majority | North |
| | | Eghosa Osaghae | NIA | Edo | 2021 | Minority | SS |
| 6 | Abubakar Malami | Abubakar Malami | AGF | Kebbi | 2015-2023? | Majority | North |
| 7 | Zainab Adamu Bulkachuwa | | | Gombe | 2014 | Majority | North |
| | | Monica Dongban-Mensem | Appeal Court | Plateau | 2020 | Minority | NC |
| 8 | Abdul Kafarati | | | Gombe | 2017 | Majority | North |
| | | JOHN T.TSOHO | Federal High Court | Benue | 2019 | Minority | NC |
| 9 | Ibraham Muhammad Tanko | | | Bauchi | 2019 | Majority | North |
| | | Olukayode Ariwoola | Chief Justice of Nigeria | Oyo | 2022 | Majority | South |
| 10 | Ibrahim Attahiru | | | Kaduna | Jan-May 2021 | Majority | North |
| | | Farouk Yahaya | Chief of Army staff | Sokoto | 2021-Date | | |
| 11 | Amina Bala Zakari | | | Jigawa | July-Oct 2015 | Majority | North |
| | | Mahmood Yakubu | INEC Chairman | Bauchi | 2015-Date | | |
| 12 | Abayomi Olonisakin | | | Ekiti | 2015 | Majority | South |

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| | | Lucky Irabor | Chief of Defense Staff | Delta | 2021 | Minority | South |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12 | Sadiq Abubakar | | Chief of Air Staff | Bauchi | 2015 | Majority | North |
| | | Isiaka Amao | | Osun | 2021 | Majority | SW |
| 13 | Baru Maikanti | | GMD, NNPC | Bauchi | 2017 | Majority | North |
| | | Mele Kyari | | | 2019 | | |
| 14 | Abdullahi Muhammadu Gana | | C.G, NSCDC | Niger | 2015 | Majority | North |
| | | Ahmed Abubakar Audi | | Nasarawa | 2021 | | |
| 15 | Hameed Ibrahim Ali | Hameed Ibrahim Ali | C.G of Customs | Bauchi | 2015 | Majority | North |
| 16 | Abba Kyari | | Chief of Staff | Borno | 2015-2020 | Majority | North |
| | | Ibrahim Gambari | | Kwara | 2020-date | | |
| 17 | Babachir Lawal | | SFG | Adamawa | 2015-2017 | Minority | NC |
| | | Boss Mustapha | | Bauchi | 2017-date | Majority | North |
| 18 | Mohammed Babandede | | Head, NIS | Jigawa | 2016-2021 | Majority | North |
| | | Idris Isah | | Kaduna | 2021-Date | | |
| 19 | Ja'afaru Ahmed | | Prisons | Kebbi | 2019-2021 | Majority | North |
| | | Haliru Nababa | | Sokoto | 2021 | | |
| 20 | Abbas Masanawa | | | Katsina | 2019 | | |

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| | | Ahmed Halilu | Currency Printing | Adamawa | 2022 | Majority | North |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 21 | Elias Mbam | | RMFAC | Ebonyi | 2016-2022 | Majority | SE |
| | | Mohammed Bello Shehu | | Kaduna | 2022-Date | Majority | North |
| 22 | Ekpo Nta | | ICPC | Akwa Ibom | 2012-2017 | Minority | SS |
| | | Bolaji Owasanoye | | Ondo | 2018 | Majority | SW |
| 23 | Ambassador Shinkafi | | Federal Character Commission. | Zamfara | 2015 | Majority | North |
| | | Muheeda Dankaka | | Kwara | 2020 | | |

**Source:** Eghweree and Ehimiyen (2022) updated

**Table 3: Patronage Politics vs Working of the Federal System: Where the Regions Stand**

| S/N | ITEM & Corresponding Year | NO/% Where the Regions Stand | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | NC | NE | NW | SE | SS | SW |
| 1 | NO. of president produced 1966-2023 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| 6 | Poverty ratio in the year 2022 | 96.2 | 78.9 | 98.2 | 49.5 | 75.6 | 50.1 |
| 9 | Occupants of petroleum ministers 1970-2022 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 11 | Rate of absolute poverty 2010 | 59.5 | 69.0 | 70.0 | 58.7 | 55.9 | 49.8 |
| 12 | Derivation principle 1954-1959 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| 13 | Derivation principle 1968-1980 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 |
| 14 | Derivation principle 1990-1999 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 |

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| 15 | Derivation principle 1999-2023 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

**Sources:** Eghweree and Ehimiyen (2022), Oviasuyi and Uwadiae, (2010), National Bureau of Statistics (2010).

Table 2 shows Nigeria's patronage politics in lopsided appointments into some key positions, detailing the previous heads and the current heads with their various states of origin and geopolitical zones. As reflected in Table   2, states from the northern geopolitical zones dominated the political/executive leadership positions in Nigeria which also were findings from previous studies (Ugoh & Ukpere, 2012; Mustapha, 2007) indicating the failure of the Federal character principle to achieve passive representative bureaucracy among the states/geopolitical zones over time.

Table 3 also highlights the patronage politics in Nigeria's federal system showcasing where the geopolitical zones stand. Also, noteworthy to observe is that though certain appointments went to certain regions, it did not have a significant impact on poverty reduction of those regions. For example, North-West geopolitical region has produced six (6) presidents from 1966-2022, however, National Bureau of Statistics (2022) records a poverty rate of 98.2% in the region. This goes to prove that in some cases, patronage politics does not favour the regions being patronized.

The information provided above indicates inadequate execution of the Federal Character principle by the FCC in attaining balanced representation.  Not quite in the front burner yet is the transparent inclusion of other less privileged members of the society that cut across ethnic lines or boundaries. These include the female/male disparity and the management of the physically challenged. The United Nations Women lays emphasis on the equal representation of every population, including women in decision-making. It declared women's equal participation and leadership in political and public life are essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. However, this is yet to manifest in Nigeria as she ranks 130th in the 2023 World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report ranking on women political participation.

An unintended consequence of the Federal Character principle is the subversion of merit in an attempt to achieve even spread of employment in bureaucracies. The transfer and secondment of staff from states/zones for purposes of equalization could conceivably displace a staff on ground or rob one of his seniority and/or promotion. Mediocrity is promoted especially in cases where a new staff lacks requisite skills but supersedes qualified staff on ground (Madugba & Baba, 2013).

A more perturbing situation is where citizens are denied employment on the basis of their State of origin (Okotoni & Adegbami, 2021). The application of the indigeneity criterion which is provided for in the constitution has added a justification for this discrimination. Two classes of citizens emerge; indigenes and non-indigenes, or indigenes and settlers who may have been resident from birth and attend to all civic

responsibilities. Alienation of a segment of the population results to erosion of citizenship as certain positions are reserved only for indigenes of a State or Zone. Hence, claims to an indigene status are a legitimate basis for excluding potential, albeit more qualified competitors.

Furthermore, the fragmentation of Nigeria into an increasing number of dependent states and local governments is also to a large extent a consequence of the desire by the ethnic groups to enjoy the benefits of indigeneity. The adverse effects of this balkanization of states includes loss of political and fiscal autonomy, loss of fiscal federalism where each tier of government has control of revenue sources commensurate with its fiscal responsibilities. The formula for distribution among states and local governments pays little or no attention to socio-economic indices or revenue efforts. It is based on mainly population, and derivation has been whittled down from 50% to 13% causing agitation for resource control by oil-bearing communities and states.

These challenges are particularly salient when viewed through the lens of John Rawl's theory of justice.

## Impact of an Unrepresented Bureaucracy in Nigeria

The federal character principle was established to ensure equitable representation of all ethnic groups and regions in government institutions. Flouting its guidelines perpetuates inequality by favouring certain groups/regions over others, leading to marginalization and resentment among unrepresented populations. Secondly, it undermines national unity. A situation whereby the guidelines are not followed can exacerbate tensions between different ethnic groups which further undermines the efforts to foster national unity. This manifests in the simmering tensions between diverse ethnic groups, notably highlighted by the persistent grievances of the south-east region and the Niger delta. (Idike, Ukeje, Iwuala, Onele, Ekwunife, Nwachukwu & Meissner, 2019).

From Buhari administration to the current leadership under President Bola Tinubu, the south-east has lamented its perceived marginalization and exclusion from key decision-making spheres and government appointments. This ongoing marginalization has intensified feelings of alienation and disenfranchisement among the people of the south-east and regional fault lines.

Addressing these grievances and fostering inclusive governance is paramount for nurturing unity, tranquility, and progress in Nigeria. It is imperative for Nigeria's leadership to heed the calls for inclusive and equitable representation, lest the country continues to be engulfed by the flames of insecurity, disunity and inequity.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Nigeria's colonial past has forged a historical diversity based on ethnic, linguistic and religious distinctions. Howbeit the goal of social equity is to establish and maintain equality in the society. In government operations, practices such as due process and equal access to services are examples of simple fairness and equal treatment (Goggins, 2017). The modest achievements of the Federal Character principle notwithstanding, suggest the failure of the federal character principle to active-passive representative bureaucracy among states and geopolitical zones where the Northern majority (Hausa/Fulani) dominates in political leadership (executive) positions, while the Southern majority (Yoruba/Igbo) dominates the bureaucracy (Mustapha, 2007). The array of challenges arising from an unrepresentative bureaucracy or imbalanced employment in Nigeria embody issues such as nepotism, corruption and discrimination rooted in the concept of indigeneity. As a result, the absence of proper passive representation and the gap in the anticipated passive-active representation gives rise to significant socio-political concerns.

The Nigerian political system is marked by conflict, fueled by a tripod ethnic structure, profound divisions, and persistent disparities in education, economy, and society. These factors gave rise to what O'Connel (1967) described as aggressive ethnicity. It has resulted to fear of discrimination and domination. Regrettably, this prevailing state of affairs in present-day Nigerian society is aggravated by the apparent failure of the Federal Character principle, making the nation vulnerable to ethno-regional conflicts.

Undoubtedly, having a representative bureaucracy is essential in Nigeria due to its socio-political advantages and diversity, which include enhancing the democratic nature of the bureaucracy, promoting power equilibrium, providing equal opportunities, and easing tensions. Consequently, in anticipation of future research with updates and broader data, this paper makes the following recommendations:

The federal government of Nigeria and states within the northern geopolitical zones should continue to implement policies and initiatives focused on educational and employment parity (power-balance) in order to narrow the gap in representation of their geopolitical zone within the civil service. Simultaneously, the federal government and states from the southern geopolitical zones should also adopt strategies to maintain and attain power-balance in representative bureaucracy and active, substantial political representation/dominance, respectively. It is believed that addressing the disparities in substantive political (elected and appointed) representation should be a crucial aspect in resolving ethnic and regional tensions and conflicts in Nigeria. This resolution will naturally occur through the electoral process as Nigeria's democracy evolves. It is necessary for the National Assembly to expunge the indigeneity clause. There is also need to continue the pursuance of the Federal Character principle without compromising the gains of the merit system. The paper believes that achieving power-balance through both representative

bureaucracy and substantive political representation would help the Nigerian ethno-regional groups to secure control and ensure harmony and stability within the nation.

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