



Recruitment of Workers Based on the Indigenship System: An Instrument of Disunity among the Five South Eastern States of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The recruitment of workers based on the indigene/ non-indigene system has been identified as a source of disunity among the five southeastern states of Nigeria. This system prioritizes job opportunities for individuals who are considered "indigenes" of a particular state, often at the expense of those who are not. This has led to a sense of exclusion and marginalization among non-indigenes who may have lived and worked in a state for several years but are still considered outsiders. The research was anchored on social identity theory while thematic method was used as data were generated from secondary sources. However, discrimination based on indigene system can lead to limited access to job opportunities, inequality and unfair treatment, poor representation, marginalization and exclusion, loss of talent and potential, low morale and sense of belonging, division and conflict, and ultimately hinder the country's progress towards socio-economic development. It is important for employers to balance the advantages of the indigenous system with a commitment to equal opportunities for all candidates.

Keywords: Recruitment, Workers, Indigenship System, Disunity, Employment opportunities and workers.

Introduction

Our nature, which gave rise to our wants, aspirations, and future, has made us exceptional human beings. We have ended up in this place called Nigeria, either by accident or by the hand of God. The act of appointing or recruiting inhabitants of a specific location by the government of that geographic area is referred to as recruitment based on the indigenous system in its literal sense. Although such a discriminatory activity has advantages and disadvantages, it is important to exercise caution when doing so, especially in a diverse nation like ours, as such activities put the country's peace and unity at risk (Human Right Watch Report, 2016). The indigenship system has been a controversial issue in Nigeria, particularly in the context of resource allocation, political representation, and employment opportunities. Many Nigerian states and local governments have adopted policies that prioritize indigenes over non-indigenes in recruitment and selection processes for public sector jobs and other opportunities. While some argue that these policies promote local identity and cultural diversity, others argue that they perpetuate inequality and exclusion (Akintunde, 2017). The indigeneity system has been criticized for promoting ethnic and regional divisions, particularly in multi-ethnic states such as Nigeria. In the five south-eastern states of Nigeria (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo), the indigeneity system has been a particularly contentious issue, as various groups compete for access to resources and power based on their claims to indigeneity. Some have argued that the system has contributed to tensions and conflicts among different ethnic and regional groups in the region.

The southeastern region of Nigeria is primarily inhabited by the Igbo people, one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria. Oriji (2011) argued that the origin of the Igbo people and their migration to their present-day location are subjects of debate among scholars. According to one popular theory, the Igbo people are descended from the ancient Nri kingdom, which was founded in the Niger River valley around the 9th century. The Nri kingdom was known for its advanced political and religious institutions, and it is believed to have influenced the development of Igbo culture. Another theory suggests that the Igbo people migrated to their present-day location from the nearby Cameroonian highlands sometime between the 10th and 15th centuries (Oriji, 2011). This theory is supported by linguistic and archaeological evidence, which suggests that the Igbo language and certain cultural practices have their roots in the Cameroon highlands. Regardless of their exact origins, the Igbo people have a rich cultural heritage and have significantly contributed to the development of Nigeria as a whole. Today, the southeastern region of Nigeria is home to a diverse range of ethnic groups, including the Igbo, the Ibibio, the Efik, and the Ogoni, among others. Disappointingly, some people prefer to use their actions and plans to undermine the culture and unity of this geopolitical region rather than promote it (Oriji, 2011). Those in the corridors of power in the various states of the southern geopolitical zones are prominent among these groups. Because of the actions of some state chief executives, we now live in a divided society with a high rate of unemployment in the area.

It is important to note that discrimination based on ethnicity or place of origin is illegal in Nigeria, as contained in Article 42(1) of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution. However, there have been reports of non-indigenous people being sacked from their jobs in some parts of the country, including the south-eastern states. The reasons behind these sackings can vary, but some may be attributed to a perceived threat to the economic opportunities or political power of the indigenous population (Nwakanma, 2011). Sacking non-indigenous people may be seen as a form of ethnic or tribal discrimination, which can lead to tensions and conflicts between different groups. It is important for governments and communities to address these issues through dialogue and peaceful means and to uphold the principles of equality and non-discrimination enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution. Indigeneity in Nigeria is complex and controversial. The country's Constitution recognizes the rights of indigenous peoples to their ancestral lands, but it does not provide a clear definition of who qualifies as an indigenous person. This has led to disputes and conflicts over land, resources, and political power. The Nigerian government has taken steps to address the issue of indigeneity and promote peaceful coexistence between different ethnic groups. However, the problem of sacking non-indigenous people in the south-eastern states continues to be a source of concern and a challenge to the country's unity and stability.

Some people in the region are faced with joblessness because they were relieved of their appointments at their workplace, not out of corruption or incompetence but because they are not from a particular region or state department rating of seats; such acts hide under the umbrella of creating massive employment opportunities for their children in the indigenous population. The former governor of Abia State approved the disengagement of over three thousand (3000) workers, who are non-Abians (Nwakanma, 2011). This wicked action made him the number one south eastern state Governor to do so publicly and rudely. Other states criticize his wicked action but still discriminate against non-indigenes in their own state. The question on the lips of every concerned citizen of the region is: will this exercise promote our unity and brotherhood both as a region and as a country at large? What could be the possible causes of this unfriendly exercise? Are there no better ways of handling the situation than the mass sacking of individuals whose families depend on them for feeding?

Clarifications of Key Concepts

Recruitment of Workers

Recruitment of workers is the process of attracting and selecting qualified individuals to fill job vacancies within an organization. According to Nigerian scholars, recruitment can be defined as the process of identifying, attracting, and selecting suitable candidates for employment in an organization (Adeyemo & Adeniji, 2013). On a similar note, Kehinde & Ayodele (2015) state that recruitment is a critical function of human resource management, as it helps organizations acquire the right talent that matches their job requirements and organizational culture. Effective recruitment practices can lead to improved organizational performance, employee retention, and job satisfaction.

Recruitment of workers can be defined as the process of identifying and attracting potential employees to fill job vacancies within an organization (Mabogunje, 2012). It involves a series of activities, including job analysis, sourcing candidates, screening applicants, conducting interviews, and selecting the most qualified candidates for employment (Oluwadare & Arogundade, 2014). According to Oluwadare & Arogundade (2014), recruitment is an essential function of human resource management that determines the success or failure of an organization. The authors emphasized that effective recruitment practices can enhance an organization's productivity, competitiveness, and profitability. Furthermore, Oshagbemi et al., (2017) emphasized that recruitment is a strategic process that involves the identification of the right people with the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience to meet an organization's objectives. They noted that the recruitment process should be designed to attract a diverse pool of candidates and should be free from discrimination.

On a similar note, other scholars, such as in the study conducted by Olu-Owolabi & Adebayo (2019), defined recruitment as "the process of identifying and attracting potential candidates to fill job vacancies in an organization." They also highlighted the importance of effective recruitment practices in enhancing the quality of the workforce and improving organizational performance. Another study by Adeoye et al., (2019) focused on the challenges faced by Nigerian organizations in recruiting workers. They defined recruitment as the process of attracting, selecting, and appointing suitable candidates for jobs in an organization. They identified challenges such as a lack of qualified candidates, high competition for talent, and inadequate recruitment methods as significant barriers to effective recruitment. Furthermore, Olufemi (2021) described recruitment as a strategic process that involves sourcing, attracting, and selecting qualified candidates to fill vacant positions in an organization. He emphasized the need for organizations to use a variety of recruitment sources and methods, including online job boards, social media, employee referrals, and campus recruitment, to ensure a diverse pool of candidates.

In summary, Nigerian scholars define recruitment of workers as a strategic process of attracting and selecting qualified candidates for job vacancies in an organization. They highlight the importance of effective recruitment practices in enhancing organizational performance and identify challenges such as a lack of qualified candidates, high competition for talent, and inadequate recruitment methods as significant barriers to successful recruitment.

Indigeneship System

Indigeneity in Nigeria refers to the concept of being an original inhabitant or native of a particular geographic location within the country. It is a complex and controversial issue, as the criteria for determining who is considered an indigenous person varies across different regions and ethnic groups in Nigeria. Several Nigerian scholars have attempted to define the concept of indigeneity in Nigeria. Essien (2006) states that indigeneity is the rights and privileges accruable to an individual or group who, by virtue of ancestral or historical connections, can claim prior and superior rights of habitation, ownership, and

control of land and resources within a specific geographic location. The indigeneity system in Nigeria refers to the practice of granting preferential treatment to individuals or groups based on their ancestral ties to a particular geographical area. This system is rooted in the belief that those who can trace their lineage to a particular region are the "true" natives or indigenes of that area and therefore deserve special privileges and protection.

Adewale (2015) defined indigeneity as "the status of being a member of an indigenous community, with the attendant rights, privileges, and obligations that come with such membership. Iwilade (2017) defined indigeneity as the social and political recognition of an individual or group as having an ancestral or historical connection to a particular place within Nigeria and the attendant rights and privileges that come with such recognition. It is important to note that these definitions are not universally accepted, and there are ongoing debates and discussions around the concept of indigeneity in Nigeria.

Empirical Review

Madu et al., (2017) investigated the influence of indigeneity and interpersonal relationships on the employment of staff in two selected federal university libraries in south-western Nigeria. The research objectives and hypotheses were clearly stated, and the research design was appropriate for the study. The use of the census sampling technique ensured that the entire population of professional and paraprofessional librarians in the selected libraries was included in the study. The findings of the study revealed that indigeneity and interpersonal relationships significantly influence the employment of staff in the libraries under study. These findings have practical implications for employment practices in federally owned institutions in Nigeria. The recommendation for employment equity regulating agencies to promote, monitor, and enforce compliance with the principle of proportional sharing of employment opportunities across ethnic and tribal divides is particularly noteworthy. The study is well conducted, and the findings have important practical implications for employment practices in Nigeria. However, the generalizability of the findings may be limited to federal university libraries in the south-west region of Nigeria.

The study by Adetiba (2013) explores the issue of ethnic conflict in Nigeria and highlights the negative impact of ethnicity on national integration and development. The study argues that ethnicity has contributed to ethnic conflicts in Nigeria due to resentment towards other ethnic groups or fear of dominance, leading to violence as a means of protection. The study identifies inequality among ethnic groups as a product of colonialism, which resulted in the three major ethnic groups dominating other ethnic groups, leading to their inability to access socio-political goods. The study emphasizes the importance of an integrative socio-political framework that recognizes the participatory role of every ethnic group in governance to manage ethnicity in Nigeria. The study also highlights the importance of adopting inclusive governance that acknowledges the socio-political and economic power of every ethnic group and promotes a system devoid of ethnocentric and exclusionary social, political, and economic policies.

The study conducted by Asogwa et al., (2017) focuses on the indigene-settlers conflict in Enugu State, Nigeria, specifically the Oruku-Umuode conflict. The study employed documentary and survey methods of data gathering and used the social identity theory as a tool for analysis. The research found that the deprivation of basic entitlements to the Umuode community by their Oruku neighbors, due to their relegation as settlers, was the key factor that led to the conflict. The study also found that the complex nature of the conflict and the solidarity it generated in the two communities developed along the traditional caste system of freeborn and slaves. The scholars recommend the employment of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms as a solution to such complex conflicts between indigenous and settler communities.

Nwakoby et al., (2021) studied the relationship between enlistment and organizational effectiveness in the Anambra State Civil Service Commission, Awka. The study aimed to determine if the recruitment process in the organization encourages the appointment of qualified employees and if there is a relationship between sound recruitment and organizational effectiveness. The researchers also sought to identify the factors that hinder the organization from enlisting qualified employees. It was anchored on decision-making theory and employed survey research, with a sample population of 5,468 employees. The data were analyzed using simple percentages and chi-square statistical techniques. The study found that the enlistment process at the Anambra State Civil Service Commission does not encourage the appointment of qualified employees that enhance the organization's service delivery. However, the researchers also found a relationship between sound enlistment and organizational effectiveness in the organization. Additionally, the study identified political influence, ethnicity, and corruption as factors that hinder the enlistment of qualified employees by the organization.

Method

In order to carry out this study, a variety of sources were utilized to gather data. These sources included publicly available journal articles, newspapers, and government documents, which were all carefully selected based on their relevance to the research objectives. The main focus of the study was to investigate the recruitment of workers based on the indigeneity system, and as such, articles and documents that provided insights into this particular topic were given priority. The use of publicly available sources allowed for a wide range of information to be gathered, as well as providing access to diverse perspectives on the topic of identity-based recruitment. Journal articles, in particular, were useful in providing in-depth analysis and discussions of relevant issues, while newspapers offered a more current and up-to-date view of the subject matter. Government documents, on the other hand, provided important information on policies and regulations related to indigeneity and recruitment.

Theoretical Foundation:

Social Identity Theory

The Social Identity Theory (SIT), which was indeed proposed by Henri Tajfel and his colleagues in the early 1970s, SIT suggests that people define themselves and derive their self-esteem based on the social groups to which they belong, such as their nationality, religion, race, gender, or profession. According to SIT, individuals are motivated to maintain a positive social identity, which can lead to in-group favoritism and discrimination against out-groups. It is a psychological framework that explains how individuals identify with groups and how this identification shapes their behavior and attitudes. In the context of the recruitment of workers based on the indigeneity system, social diversity theory can be applied to understand how individuals identify with their cultural group and how this affects their likelihood of being recruited for a job. The indigeneity system is a practice that prioritizes individuals who are indigenous or have ancestry in a particular region or community for job opportunities. The system is designed to provide preferential treatment to individuals who are members of a particular cultural group in recognition of their historical and cultural contributions to the region. Applying social identity theory, individuals who identify with the cultural group that is being prioritized by the indigeneity system are more likely to benefit from the system. They are likely to feel a strong sense of belonging to the group and identify with its values, beliefs, and traditions. As a result, they may be more likely to apply for jobs that are reserved for indigenes and may also perform better in job interviews or assessments.

On the other hand, individuals who do not identify with the cultural group that is being prioritized may feel excluded or marginalized by the system. They may perceive the system as unfair and discriminatory, which may lead to negative attitudes towards the job and the organization offering it. To mitigate these negative effects, organizations that implement the indigeneity system can take steps to ensure that the system is transparent, fair, and accessible to all qualified candidates, regardless of their cultural background. This may involve setting clear criteria for indigeneity, providing opportunities for training and development to underrepresented groups, and promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Factors that promote the recruitment of workers based on the indigeneship system in Nigeria

The indigenous system of recruitment in south-east Nigeria involves giving preference to individuals who are from the same tribe or region as the employer. Some factors that promote the recruitment of workers based on the indigenous system in Nigeria include:

1. Nigerians have a strong sense of cultural and ethnic identity. Employers often prefer to hire people who share similar cultural and ethnic backgrounds to themselves, as they feel more comfortable working with individuals who share similar values and beliefs.
2. Familiarity and trust: Hiring someone from the same community or region can create a sense of familiarity and trust. Employers may feel more confident in hiring someone they know or who has been recommended by someone they know, which can reduce the risk of hiring someone who may not be a good fit for the job.
3. Language and communication: Nigeria is a country with over 500 languages. Hiring someone who speaks the same language as the employer can facilitate communication and make it easier to convey instructions and expectations.
4. Networking: The indigenous system of recruitment relies heavily on personal connections and networking. Individuals who are well-connected within their community or region are more likely to be recommended for job opportunities, creating a network of employment opportunities.
5. Affirmative action policies: The Nigerian government has implemented affirmative action policies that aim to promote the employment of indigenous people in both the public and private sectors. These policies are designed to address historical inequalities and promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

It is important to note that while the indigenous system of recruitment has its advantages, it can also lead to discrimination and the exclusion of individuals who do not belong to the same cultural or ethnic group as the employer. It is therefore important for employers to balance the advantages of the indigenous system with a commitment to its use and equal opportunities for all candidates.

Problems encountered by persons discriminated against during recruitment based on the Indigeneship system in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the indigene system is a common form of discrimination that affects individuals who are perceived to be from a different state or ethnic group than the one where a job or opportunity is being offered. Here are some of the problems encountered by persons who were discriminated against during recruitment based on the indigene system in Nigeria:

1. Limited access to job opportunities: Persons who are discriminated against based on the indigeneship system are often denied job opportunities in certain regions or organizations. This limits their chances of securing a job and hinders their career growth.
2. Inequality and unfair treatment: Discrimination based on indigene system violates the principles of equality and fairness. It creates a situation where some people are given preferential treatment over others, leading to inequality and resentment.
3. Poor representation: When recruitment is based on indigeneship, it can lead to a situation where the workforce is not representative of the diversity of the country. This can be detrimental to the development of the workforce and the overall growth of the country.

4. Marginalization and exclusion: Discrimination based on indigene system can lead to the marginalization and exclusion of certain groups from social, political, and economic activities. This can lead to social unrest, political instability, and economic underdevelopment.
5. Loss of talent and potential: Discrimination based on indigene system leads to the loss of talented and potential individuals who are denied opportunities to pursue their dreams and contribute to society's growth and development.
6. Low morale and a sense of belonging: Discrimination in recruitment based on indigeneship can lead to low morale and a sense of alienation among non-indigenous persons. This can affect their productivity and sense of belonging in the workplace.
7. Division and conflict: Discrimination based on indigene system can create division and conflict among different ethnic groups, leading to inter-ethnic tensions, violence, and insecurity.

Indigeneship system in Nigeria generally undermines meritocracy, promotes inequality, and hinders the country's progress towards socio-economic development.

Conclusion

It is important for the Nigerian government, especially the south-east governments, and employers to recognize the negative impact of discrimination based on indigeneity and take steps to promote diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunities for all candidates. This can be achieved through policies and programs that promote meritocracy, discourage discrimination, and provide support and opportunities for marginalized groups. It is only through these efforts that Nigeria can realize its full potential and achieve sustainable socio-economic development. Therefore, we owe it as a duty to work for her betterment and that of her citizens, especially for the unity of the human race as well as the Igbo tribe called the south-east region, which happens to be people of the same tribe and language.

Recommendations

Discrimination based on indigeneity is a significant issue in Nigeria, particularly in the area of recruitment. It can be a frustrating and demoralizing experience for those who are discriminated against, and it is important to take steps to address the problem. The recommendations provided are very comprehensive and are a good starting point for addressing discrimination based on indigeneity in Nigeria.

The first recommendation, advocating for policy change, is crucial in ensuring that discriminatory policies are eliminated. It is important to have laws that protect against discrimination, and the government must be encouraged to implement such laws.

Educating employers on the negative impact of discrimination and promoting merit-based recruitment processes is also essential. This will help create a level playing field for all candidates and ensure that the most qualified individuals are hired. Engaging in constructive dialogue is also important to foster understanding and find ways to address the issue.

Providing emotional and psychological support for those who have been discriminated against is also crucial. It is essential to create a safe space where individuals can share their experiences and receive support.

Promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace is another important recommendation. This can help create a more welcoming environment for people from different ethnic backgrounds and ensure that everyone feels valued and included.

Considering alternative job opportunities is also important, as some organizations may be more accepting of individuals from different ethnic backgrounds. Seeking legal redress is also an option for those who believe they have been discriminated against.

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