

**PROFESSIONALISM AND ADMINISTRATIVE EFFICIENCY OF RIVERS STATE
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES**

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between professionalism and administrative efficiency of Rivers State government agencies. The study adopted a quasi-experimental design taking cognizance of the cross-sectional survey approach; hence the study was correlational. The study's target population consisted of fifty-six respondents, with four individuals selected from each of the 14 Rivers State Government Agencies across different administrative roles, including Directors of Administration, Directors of Finance, Directors of Procurement, and Directors of Project. A census sample approach was chosen due to the manageable size of the population. A structured questionnaire was used in the collection of study data, and the gathered data were analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMCS) Statistics and presented with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Findings from data analysis revealed a positive significant correlation in the tested dimension of professionalism against the measures of administrative efficiency which include quality services and waste reduction. Relying on the study findings, we concluded that there is a positive significant relationship between professionalism and administrative efficiency. We, therefore, recommended that the dimensions of professionalism be utilized as it is seen to have a positive relationship with the measures of administrative efficiency of quality services and waste reduction leading to efficient government agencies.

Keywords: Professionalism, Administrative Efficiency, Quality Service, Waste Reduction

INTRODUCTION

Government agencies, established through legislative or executive authority, serve as foundational elements of governance. Their pivotal role includes overseeing and managing diverse sectors, such as strategic planning, policy implementation, regulation, and monitoring, to efficiently deliver public goods and services (Pollitt, Talbot, Caulfield & Smullen, 2004).

In the context of Rivers State Government Agencies, the concepts of professionalism and administrative efficiency emerge as linchpins for fostering good governance and ensuring effective public service delivery. The provision of public goods and services necessitates a steadfast commitment to transparency, accountability, responsiveness to public needs, and the ability to deliver services that are not only cost-effective but also of high quality (Kelly, Mulgan & Muers, 2000). The understanding of professionalism and administrative efficiency within Rivers State Government Agencies pertains to the standards, values, and practices that guide the effective execution of their functions in governance, management, and service delivery within these governmental entities.

Realizing the advantages of professionalism in Rivers State government agencies requires the establishment of a robust framework for the recruitment, training, and retention of professionals. Furthermore, the cultivation of a culture that esteems and rewards professionalism and ethical conduct holds paramount importance. Fostering professionalism within government agencies, an ongoing process in Rivers State as in any other jurisdiction, demands leadership commitment, merit-based recruitment and promotion, comprehensive training and capacity building, adherence to ethical codes of conduct, and a resolute dedication

to delivering optimal services to the public (Ingraham, 2006). When professionalism is elevated as a core value, it serves as a cornerstone for administrative efficiency and the creation of public value.

To fully harness the impact of professionalism on administrative efficiency, Rivers State government agencies must prioritize merit-based recruitment and training, uphold ethical standards, and instill a culture of professionalism within their workforce. This commitment to professionalism is indispensable for cultivating efficient and effective public administration in Rivers State.

This study delves into the relevance of professionalism by examining the relationship between professionalism and administrative efficiency in Rivers State governmental agencies. It particularly focuses on competence, honesty, integrity, and self-regulation as dimensions that can enhance efficiency, combat corruption, strengthen accountability, build public trust, enhance service delivery, mitigate economic impacts, improve the public image, prevent resource wastage, and counteract brain drain all of which may arise due to poor professionalism in government agencies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bureaucracy Theory

Bureaucratic theory, also known as the classical theory of bureaucracy, originated from the work of Max Weber, a German sociologist, in the early 20th century. This theory offers a comprehensive framework for comprehending and structuring complex organizations, with a particular focus on governmental entities. Weber conceptualized bureaucracy in two dimensions: as a social mechanism maximizing administrative efficiency and as a form of social organization with distinctive characteristics (Nyong, 2003). Sapru (2013) notes Weber's identification of bureaucracy as the most rational and efficient organizational form devised by humans, characterized by control based on knowledge, clearly defined spheres of competence, adherence to analyzable rules, and calculability in its operations (David, 1988).

Weber outlined six essential elements for an ideal bureaucracy: a hierarchical authority structure, impersonality, written standards of conduct, promotion based on achievement, a specialized division of labor, and efficiency. While the claim that bureaucracies are inherently efficient is debated among sociologists, bureaucratic theory has significantly influenced organizational structures and practices.

Despite ongoing discussions about the efficiency of bureaucracies, the bureaucratic theory remains foundational in understanding organizational structure, authority, and control. Its impact persists in shaping administrative practices, particularly in large organizations where formalization, coordination, and accountability are crucial. According to Weber, bureaucracy is the most efficient organizational type, essential for the functionality of increasingly complex societies. He believed that without the formalized structure of bureaucracy, a complex society would operate inefficiently and wastefully.

Weber's bureaucratic theory emphasizes the importance of strict control and intricate organizational structures for optimal performance. The theory asserts that bureaucracies contribute to better performance by minimizing arbitrary decisions, ensuring that hiring and promotions are merit-based, and maintaining a hierarchical structure that facilitates effective functioning. The bureaucratic organization, according to Weber, adheres to the idea type, which is a mental construct characterized by an organized hierarchy, defined spheres of

competence, technical qualifications for officials, fixed salaries, and a career structure with promotions based on seniority or achievement. From a technical standpoint, Weber argues that the purely bureaucratic form is the most efficient means of imperative control over human beings, offering precision, stability, discipline, and reliability in organizational operations.

In this study, the researcher relies on Weber's idea type of bureaucracy to evaluate the efficiency of the public service, recognizing its precision, stability, and reliability as essential factors in achieving administrative efficiency.

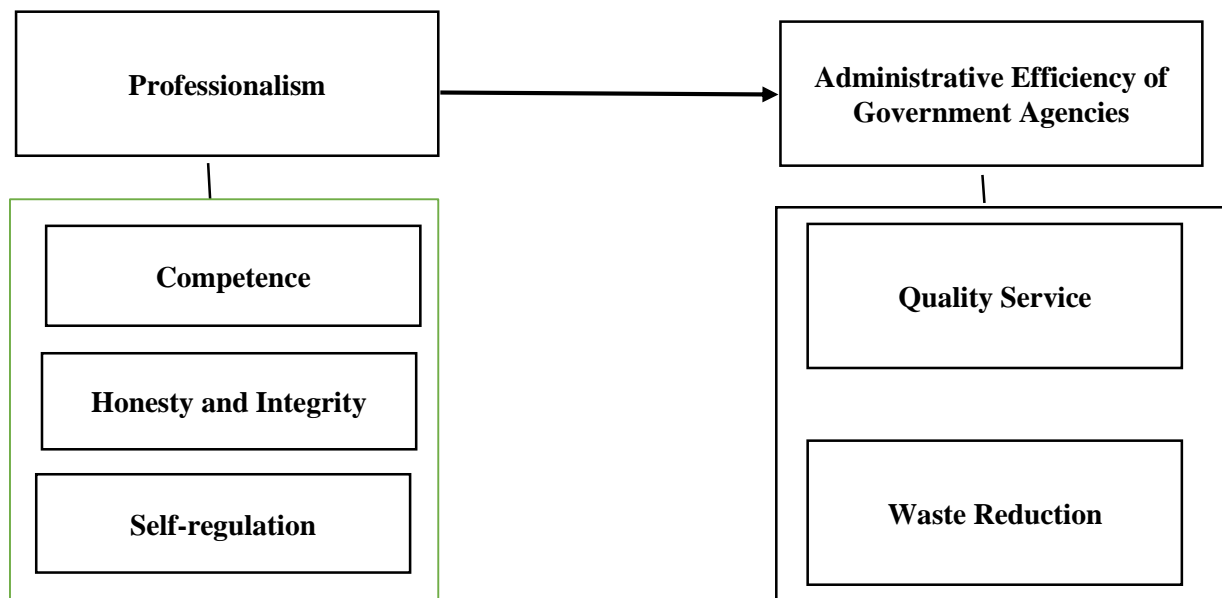


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Professionalism and Administrative Efficiency

The Concept of Professionalism

Professionalism in government agencies is an overarching value that determines how their activities will be carried out. It encompasses all other values that guide government agencies such as loyalty, neutrality, transparency, diligence, punctuality, effectiveness, impartiality, and other values that may be specific to the State. The notion of public service professionalism is intimately connected to a merit-based government agency system – a system based on competence and integrity aimed at achieving public interest objectives (Ingraham, 2006). The merit system is the opposite of a system where positions are allocated through cronyism, political or personal allegiance or patronage networks rather than professional merit and capabilities.

Government agencies must do many things that can be valued by the public but the most important values for the public are considered as the building blocks of public value (Kelly, Mulgan & Muers, 2000). These buildings of public value are to deliver quality public services, socially desirable outcomes and development of public trust in government. These sources of public value provide public managers with the foundation for new ways of thinking about the value they create for their citizens (Sami, Jusoh, Nor Irfan & Liaquat, 2018). These sources of public value are achievable through professionalism. The professional discloses all relevant information to the public but trusts that they will not misuse this information.

Similarly, the public trusts the professional because they consider them educated, members of a professional body, standard of practice, and services, etc. The professional focuses on doing

their tasks for public interests and professionally gives high-quality services to fulfill the requirements public's needs (Daykin, 2003). Professionalism in government agencies is always required to maintain an agency's long-range stability and congruence with a changing social environment. It is ethical obligation of a public manager to serve the public interest then it will be accepted as a legitimate profession by society (Fitzpatrick & Gauthier, 2001). To serve the public in a socially responsible manner is an important step to attain professionalism in a government agency.

There are different views about professionalism as some scholars say that professionalism emphasizes intelligence or education; however, some give priority to the temperament of the managers to treat with ordinary public (Sami *et al.*, 2018). A plethora of literature exists as to the meaning and nature of professionalism. However, professionalism suffers from definitional problems, and this is due to a lack of general agreement on the definition of a profession (Burke, 1988). However, Lester (2010) defines a profession as a reasonably well-defined occupation that meets a defensible set of criteria for being a profession, whether those are derived from a social construct, trait or sociological perspective. Such identifiable criteria include education founded on broad learning and culture, practical training and building expertise through experience, rational solutions to problems and formal control of entry routes (Lester 2010). The South African Social Science Professions cited in Devies and Steyn (2011) also state that a profession must practice unique skills and knowledge to the benefit of individuals and society and that there must be professional autonomy and a code of ethics. A profession is, therefore, characterized by such elements as occupation, education and training, code of behavior and service to the public.

Professionalism, therefore, derives from the notion of a 'profession' and represents the standard of practice. Rainey (1991) in the context views a profession as involving the application of a skill based on theoretical knowledge; intensive training at recognized educational institutions; organization into a professional association; existence of a code of conduct enforced by a statutory body and commitment to one's work as a calling.

From the foregoing, one deduces an important component of a profession as the existence of intellectual capacity which in the context enables for the proper identification and definition of professional goals. On similar ground, Benoit (1998) writes that if professionalism refers to the ongoing search for excellence in performance and quality of work in all its dimensions, respect for the client, a love for the product, a concern for detail, a taste for beauty, moral concerns, mutual assistance, updating of knowledge and skills, attention to tools, and especially the full development of the human being, then professional behavior is proposed for the Rivers State government agencies. Professionalism in the context of administration is viewed in terms of the overall principles and values that guide public service delivery such as loyalty, diligence, transparency, efficiency, effectiveness, impartiality, commitment etc., and these are acquired through formal processes of education and training. Daniel and Rose (1991) write that professionalism presumes specialized knowledge resulting from formal education and training. Thus, professionalism refers to an accountability mechanism rooted in internalized values and professional competence, often acquired through education, and reproduced by professional associations (Bovens, 2007).

Professionalism simply means competence, skills, rectitude, expertise, civility, and acumen, and the concept has been viewed by various scholars in the workplace. The concept of professionalism has been ascribed with divergent definitions by scholars who are professional to the core and those who are not (Mckay, 2019).

Professionalism is the demeanor, conduct, and standard that guides professionals in their job performance. Freidson (2001) conceptualized professionalism as an organized occupation gain, with the power to determine who is qualified to perform a defined set of tasks, to prevent all others from performing that task, and to control the criteria by which to evaluate the performance of the organized occupation creates the circumstances under which its members are free of control by those who employ them. The challenges of professionals are complex, especially where employee skills are not appropriate for the nature of services rendered, there will be a need to develop and build more value on the job. Thus, Furlong (2000) stated that professionals face complex and unpredictable situations that they need a specialized body of knowledge; if they are to apply that knowledge, it is argued that they need the autonomy to make their judgments; and given that they have that autonomy, they must act with responsibility-collectively they need to develop appropriate professional values. This implies that professionals need no control by their employees subject to trust, competence, and knowledge inherent in them to discharge their responsibilities efficiently. The concept of professionalism from the foregoing implies that it encompasses several attributes that are identified collectively to form what professionalism entails.

Those who are called professionals have specific skills and knowledge that make them inflexible but adhere to developing and improving such skills/knowledge. Every facet of work requires stable core knowledge and skills which gives effective and efficient service delivery in that field. These skills or knowledge could be academic qualifications, acquired skills, continuous practices, and abilities, to do something right in an acceptable manner. Those who have specialized knowledge do not rely on excuses even when challenges arise; but are focused and diligent to proffer solutions to such difficulties. Whenever thing that makes one sustain and succeed in their field is knowledge specialty.

In the view of Rowland, Martyn, Barber & Heal (2000), to have specialized knowledge is to have a solid knowledge of which of the subject matter, can be understood. It entails knowing the content in depth (Ma, 1999), knowledge that is gained through an act (Ball, et al, 2008). Employee knowledge influences the quality of service performance in the workplace, and it is a key factor to keep the job alive. Specialized knowledge is not a one-way thing, but it also entails knowing different meanings and approaches of operations of the job and different representations and content (Domoney, 2002), this is the ability to recognize formulated problems and proffer solutions to explore specific one (Ribeiron & Amaral, 2015) entails specialized knowledge. According to Li, Huang, and Yang (2011), an expert will possess deeper knowledge of the characteristics of his job performance. Flowing from the divergent views, in my view, specialized knowledge is knowledge in action.

Dimensions of Professionalism

Competency: Professionalism entails being able to get things done at the right time for the right people and at the right place. The craving for reliability and entrustment of public servants constantly makes service delivery effective and efficient to the recipient of such services. Employees' inherent ability to satisfy clients and the public promptly is an aspect of professionalism. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (2002), defined competence as knowledge, skills, and specifications which can cause one person to act better, not considering his special proficiency in that job. Professionalism ensures that government employees and leaders have the necessary qualifications, skills, and expertise to perform their duties effectively. This includes qualifications, training, and continuous professional development. It involves having qualified and knowledgeable personnel in key positions. Government agencies should hire individuals with the relevant education, experience, and skills for their roles.

Honesty and Integrity: Professionals have the attribute never to compromise their values, ethics, and integrity, which serve as the basis of keeping the job alive. Trusted employees exhibit qualities of honesty, sincerity, and a high standard of morality at all times and places. Where work or actions that require their services are outside their scope of expertise professionals will boldly admit it and solicit for a competent hand in that field. The notion of integrity as a professional concept has an impact on the ethics of human resources practitioners which can assist professionals in developing leaders, managers, and other organizational members to behave ethically (Parry & Procto-Thomas, 2002; Prottas, 2008).

Honesty and integrity of professional employees is a multileveled framework that incorporates personal integrity, moral integrity, and organizational integrity. These convey a sense of wholeness, completeness, and purity (Becker, 2009; Carter, 1996; De Bakker, 2007; Kaptein & Wempe, 2002; Pritchard, 2006), because integrity denotes three distinct but integrated dimensions (Dudzinski, 2004) for every professional. Professional integrity is a philosophical reflection on professional responsibilities, Pritchard (2006) traced professional integrity to its root, practice ethics, and he observed that moral norms are enshrined in the codes of ethics of all professional integrity. Even the psychosocial contract between employees and employers demands basic compliance with certain moral principles (Mirlenda, 2013). As a way of example, Velasquez (1982) postulates that individuals are moral agents and thus employees assume some measure of moral responsibility by vowing to abide by the regulations of the organizations.

Self-Regulation: The ability to maintain calmness, a business-like demeanour, and respectfully correct irate customers at any point in time is a requirement of as professional. Professional practitioners exhibit a high level of emotional balance and intolerance by accommodating the needs of others, especially beneficiaries of service delivery. Not only customers but others- colleagues, superiors, subordinates, and outside work environment. Self-regulation is always inseparable from true professionalism exhibitions. Self-regulation does not necessarily mean discipline in this context or strict and technical adherence to the rules and regulations of the organization or of employers. But it implies the view of Ajumogobia (2007) that workers are expected to cooperate and behave orderly and normally, to enhance job satisfaction and high productivity and profitability. Cole (2002) termed self-regulation as a formal managerial control device.

One of the most classical conceptions of professionalism in administration is Pugh's (1989). The author identifies these six elements of professionalism: a conscious self-awareness of distinctive, shared attributes among a group of people ('esprit de corps'), based on an explicit written knowledge base, commitment to apply this knowledge for the social good, according to a strictly adhered to code of ethics and conduct, formalised within an organizational structure of sorts and formal recognition of outstanding performance (Pugh 1989).

It is assumed that professionals will practice professionalism. However, professionals are often committed to developing and maintaining their own level of expertise, while professionalization (of the organisation), according to Shafer, Park, and Liao (2002), meets only limited success. The literature on professionals in organisations has focused on the compatibility of professional values and organisational role demands as well as on the adaptation and commitment of professionals to their employing organisations (compare Schwella 2015).

The public service as a profession, as it developed, espoused the values of probity, neutrality,

and fairness, among many others. It has embraced the merit principle in setting up career structures from recruitment to promotions. By running the administrative machinery that supports decision-making and implements the policies and programmes of the government-of-day, public servants play an indispensable role in the sustainable development and governance of a nation. Further, as an institution, the public service ensures the continuity of administration between transitions of power, which are the hallmarks of modern-day democracy. Given these crucial roles, a country expects its public service to demonstrate professionalism and ethics.

A professional or merit-based public service has a long history, including exams to qualify for public office. The rationale behind professionalism is that public servants should be neutral, impartial, fair, competent and serve the public interest in carrying out their duties. They should be top people who are compensated and adequately trained to perform their work. To effectively carry out government business in today's complex world of globalization, several core functions are crucial to public administration.

Measures of Administrative Efficiency

Quality Services

As a concept, quality is something positive and desirable; it is good or excellent, effective, purposive, economic, democratic, professional, uniform, reliable or ethical: something that meets certain 'standards. At an abstract level, quality can be defined as 'the distance between an objective and a result, with the implicit assumption that quality improves as this distance shrinks' (Santiago, Tremblay, Basri & Arnal 2008). However, this definition leaves scope for multiple interpretations, depending on who sets the objectives, for what purpose and how results are measured vis-à-vis objectives. It follows that any discussion of the concept of quality must proceed from basic and fundamental questions such as 'quality of what', 'quality for whom', and 'quality for what'. Indeed, over the years, quality service in some government agencies has become a complex and 'slippery' subject, with many competing definitions and interpretations. Consequently, scholarly and practice-oriented attempts to define, quantify and evaluate quality have generated many theories, conceptual models and measurement approaches (Turner 2011). Despite these attempts, no clear or universally accepted definition has yet captured all aspects of quality in the context of government agencies.

Basically, everyone requires service, and it might even be said that service and human life are inextricably linked. As defined by Kotler (2005), service is any useful activity that contributes to a set or unity and provides satisfaction, even if the result is unrelated to a tangible commodity. Sampara (1999) further contends that service is an activity that involves direct physical interactions between individuals and other people or machines and results in customer pleasure.

Administrative efficiency and quality service had elevated to the forefront of government administration. Therefore, the primary objective of government agencies is to provide customer-focused services. People frequently had to visit multiple offices, fill out the same forms repeatedly, or travel back and forth between departments carrying paperwork organized into sections with ambiguous responsibility divisions when they go to the government agencies for public affairs. Customer value could serve as the foundation of administration with a "customer-oriented" service mentality by actively dealing with customers (people), gathering customer-related data, and ultimately improving the services and products that the administrative institution offers (Chiang, 1999). According to Javier, (1997), government service quality improvement must be assessed from the perspective of the customer, broaden the focus to include more departments and units, and learn from the successful private sector

practices that can be applied to the public sector.

Public service quality emphasizes both the service itself as well as the organization or distribution of the service in the hands of society. Speed, precision, convenience, and fairness are used as a measure for gauging the caliber of public services. To provide public services to the community, the government must take these factors into account. Administrators place a greater focus on serving the community and putting the public interest ahead of their interests. The standard of bureaucratic service to society is called service (Sinambela, 2006). The definitions of the word "quality" are numerous and range from traditional to strategic. The traditional definition of quality typically refers to a product's immediate qualities, such as performance, dependability, usability, attractiveness, and so on. Strategically speaking, quality refers to anything that can satisfy societal demands or needs. According to Lovelock (1994), the idea of how a product combined with a service would provide a strength that advantages businesses to gain profit even in the face of competition is an intriguing one.

According to Sinambela (2006), the fundamental goal of public service is to satisfy society. To be satisfied, the service's quality must be demonstrated by: (1) Transparency, which includes providing services that are open, simple, and understandable to all parties who require them; (2) Accountability, which is defined as Service that can be accounted for in conformity with legal requirements, (3) Conditional, or services that are provided by the terms and capabilities of the provider and the recipient while upholding the standards of effectiveness and efficiency. Services that can foster community involvement in the implementation of public services about the aspirations, needs, and expectations of the community are (4) participatory. (5) Equality of Rights, such as Services that do not discriminate in terms of any aspect, especially tribe, race, religion, class, social status, and others, (6) Balance of Rights and Obligations, namely Services that consider the aspect of justice between the giver and the recipient of public service.

Waste Reduction

Waste reduction is used interchangeably with Lean. Lean means "Reduce the Waste". Waste in terms of industry is "defined as anything that does not add any value to the end product service from the customer's perspective". In government agencies, two types of waste generated are: - Waste which is seen or calculated, and Waste which is not seen or not calculated in terms of waste (Dixit, Dave & Singh, 2015). Lean is concerned with stabilizing and standardizing the work processes so that the critical problems become visible, and the workforce develops critical thinking capability so that they can solve the problems and improve the workflow. Lean practices have been efficiently utilized in manufacturing industries for the past two decades (Alsmadi et al. 2012).

Waste makes government agencies less able to achieve their objectives; it uses limited resources in ways that do not contribute to the agency's overall goals. Lean is an organizational performance management system characterized by a collaborative approach between employees and managers to identify and minimize or eliminate activities that do not create value for the citizens, or stakeholders. One-way Lean organizations strive toward their goal of perfection is by remaining constantly aware of waste so it can be avoided or eliminated (Kavanagh & Krings, n.d). The concept of efficiency plays a central role in public organizations (Rodgers & Antony, 2019). Modern issues for every government are effective service delivery, the improvement of quality and productivity, as well as the minimization of managerial costs (Asnan *et al.*, 2015). To cope with these challenges, the utilization of lean management practices is essential (Bateman *et al.*, 2018). Lean is not only about making services more efficient; rather, it is a new way of understanding efficiency (Modig & Åhlström, 2018).

Activities for analyzing and removing waste have been organized under the concept and philosophy of lean thinking. Although lean thinking has evolved in manufacturing, it has recently been applied in service operations with some degree of success (Alsmadi, Almani, & Jerisat, 2012; Romano, & Nicoletti, 2010; Piercy & Rich, 2009; Swank, 2003) (Bortolotti & Romano, 2012). Lean techniques are used to reduce waste and increase productivity. This is achieved by continuous pursuit, identification and elimination of waste through a systematic approach that relies on team integration and effective communication (Odomirok, 2015).

With shrinking budgets and a slow economy, it is becoming increasingly important for all government agencies to become more efficient. Citizens expect and deserve efficient and effective services from federal, state and local government agencies. One of the best methods to improve efficiency and eliminate waste is lean. Government agencies provide a wide range of services: security and law enforcement, scientific research, defense, processing benefit claims and tax returns, space exploration, food inspection, disaster relief, medical services, safety, diplomacy, parks and recreation, public works, and the list goes on. Yet, each type of service is provided through various types of processes, and those processes can be improved. The best suggestions for improvement generally come from the personnel who have to implement these processes daily. They will know what works, what does not work, and what the internal or external customer wants or needs. It is very important to identify the eight wastes before digging it. The Lean philosophy identifies eight sources of waste that detract from the value a customer receives from a business process. The acronym 'TIMWOOD' also applies to them.

Administrative Wastes

Information overflow: Overproduction does not occur in the same way as in administrative processes. The only type of "overproduction" that can occur in administration is when too much information is generated, and thus overproduction in administrative systems is information overflow. Overproduction is much less visible in services since there is no material flow. Generating more information than needed is a waste of effort and can lead to other forms of waste, for example, excess inventory and extra processing. Examples of information overflow are sending and receiving too many emails; copies of documents for different repositories and people, unneeded reports, and creating fully developed solutions where a basic concept is sufficient.

Waiting: Waiting occurs when an upstream activity does not deliver on time. Waiting is a common occurrence in services and strongly reduces customer satisfaction (Bortolotti, Romano, & Nicoletti, 2010). Waiting is the result of other problems such as wrong office layouts, data entry errors, lack of standardization, or poorly designed IT systems (Di Pietro *et al.*, 2013; Hines *et al.*, 2008; Lodge & Bamford, 2008). Other departments may take a long time to correct errors, poorly designed IT systems can have long loading times, and waiting occurs before a decision is made or a document is signed.

Extra processing: In administration, extra processing has to be performed as a result of mistakes or missing information. Correcting and verifying information is time-consuming and can be prevented. Hicks (2007) named this "failure demand" which he describes as the resources and activities that are necessary to overcome a lack of information. This may include generating new information and/or acquiring additional information. For example, failure demand occurs when a lack of functionality of information systems leads to an inability to perform certain functions. Additional resources that may be needed in case of failure demand

can be manual systems and end-user-developed applications (Hicks, 2007).

Motion: In services, the layout of buildings can cause unnecessary movement by employees to reach certain equipment (Bortolotti *et al.*, 2010; Bushell & Shelest, 2002). Customers may need to move around unnecessarily due to the layout of facilities (Di Pietro *et al.*, 2013). Attending meetings could also be an important source of motion waste, especially when these meetings are not essential. In information management, Hicks (2007) describes “motion” as the time and resources spent trying to identify the information elements that need to flow, naming it “flow demand.” An example of flow demand waste is the inability to automatically exchange information, which requires the operator to go back and forth between different software applications. The effort needed to arbitrate between multiple instances due to duplication is also a form of flow demand or motion.

Defective information: Defects in administrative processes are wrong or missing information. Defective information can be data entry errors, inadequate processing of information, or poor-quality inputs from customers (Bortolotti *et al.*, 2010; Middleton & Joyce, 2012). Hicks (2007) termed this “flawed flow” and describes it as the resources and activities that are necessary to correct or verify information to ensure information completeness and accuracy.

Variability in lead times: Although services are characterized by a higher degree of variability in customer demand (Johnston, Clark, & Schulver, 2012), many processes in services are routine and can be carried out more efficiently through standardization. A lack of standardization in routine processes creates variability in lead and waiting times, which is inconvenient for customers (Bhatia & Drew, 2006; Bortolotti *et al.*, 2010; Hines *et al.*, 2008).

Under-utilization of people’s talents and systems’ capabilities: Unused human potential leads to lost motivation and creativity in employees. What could be added is that this applies to IT systems as well. Some information systems are not fully used due to poor training or communication. This also results in lost opportunities for carrying out activities more efficiently and the systems cost money and effort to install and maintain. For example, Althuisen, Reichel, & Wierenga (2012) found that users often fail to recognize the performance-enhancing potential of DSSs. Such waste they name “harmful neglect”.

METHODS

The research employs a quasi-experimental design, incorporating a cross-sectional approach with a correlational survey to explore the relationships between variables. The study focuses on 14 Rivers State government agencies, with a total of 56 respondents, encompassing key administrative roles such as Directors of Administration, Directors of Finance, Directors of Procurement, and Directors of Projects. The sampling method involves selecting four individuals from each of the 14 agencies, utilizing a census approach to cover the entire target population due to its manageable size.

Data collection involves the distribution of questionnaires to the selected respondents, with completed questionnaires retrieved after three weeks. The collected data underwent analysis using both simple descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The hypotheses were tested through Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics, a statistical technique that examines the relationships between variables. The significance level for hypothesis testing was set at 0.05 (two-tailed), which is a standard threshold in statistical hypothesis testing. A 95% confidence interval was applied, providing a measure of confidence in the results.

The rejection or acceptance of null hypotheses was determined by the coefficient values in the Pearson correlation analysis. If the coefficient values indicate significance (* or **), the null hypotheses are rejected; otherwise, if no significance is indicated in the coefficient (r) value, the null hypotheses are not rejected.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) is the chosen tool for data analysis. This widely used software facilitates the application of various statistical techniques, ensuring a rigorous and systematic examination of the gathered data. The study draws meaningful insights from the analysis to contribute to the understanding of the relationships between variables in the context of Rivers State government agencies.

Below is Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Coefficient formula.

$$r = \frac{n\sum xy - \sum x\sum y}{\sqrt{\left(n\sum x^2 - \sum x^2\right) \left(n\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2\right)}}$$

IV DATA ANALYSIS

The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics organized and presented the data obtained from the study were presented in tables, and bar charts. It was also used to quantitatively describe the important features of the study variables using frequency, mean, and standard deviation to present the univariate data which provided information and responses of the respondents. Demographic information about the respondents was presented using tables and bar charts. This includes information based on how respondents appeared in the study questionnaire.

Bivariate analysis was presented with answers to the research questions and the results of hypotheses testing were presented in this section. Bivariate analysis involves examining the relationships between pairs of variables. Before testing the hypotheses, preliminary tests, normality, reliability, and validity were conducted.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Professionalism

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Our agency demonstrates a high level of professionalism for quality service, cost reduction, and waste reduction	48	1	4	3.19	1.024
Our agency adheres to established protocols and procedures for quality service, cost reduction, and waste reduction	48	1	4	3.06	1.040
Our agency adheres to ethical standards in their work for quality service, cost reduction, and waste reduction	48	1	4	3.25	.911
Our agency staff are knowledgeable and competent in their respective roles for quality service, cost reduction, and waste reduction	48	1	4	3.23	.928
Valid N (listwise)	48				

Source: SPSS Data Output, 2023

The data Table 1 illustrates that there is a high level of affirmation (where $x > 2.50$) as regards the indicators of professionalism which is a dimension of bureaucratic accountability. The construct examined the context and manifestations of professionalism within the target organizations with indicators aimed at examining respondents' perception of professionalism through its indicators. The results affirm to all four indicators of professionalism within the target organizations as also supported by the low disparity in response ($SD < 2.00$). These responses imply that the respondents in the agencies are strongly of the opinion that professionalism is an observed phenomenon in their organizations and hence are largely in the agreement range of the scale.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Quality Services

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
How satisfied are you with the quality service that meets your needs and expectations of your agency in terms of administrative efficiency?	48	1	4	3.02	1.041
How satisfied are you with staff members who are knowledgeable and competent in providing quality services in your agency?	48	1	4	3.15	.967
On a scale of 1-4, how would you rate the administrative efficiency of your agency in terms of quality services?	48	1	4	3.04	1.051
How satisfied are you with the overall administrative efficiency of your agency in terms of quality services	48	1	4	3.08	.942
Valid N (listwise)	48				

Source: SPSS Data Output, 2023

The data in Table 2 illustrates that there is a high level of affirmation (where $x > 2.50$) as regards the indicators of quality services which is a measure of administrative efficiency. The construct examined the context and manifestations of quality services within the target organizations with indicators aimed at examining respondents' perception of quality services through its indicators. The results affirm all four indicators of quality services within the target organizations as also supported by the low disparity in response ($SD < 2.00$). These responses imply that the respondents in the organizations are strongly of the opinion that quality services are an observed phenomenon in their organizations and hence are largely in the agreement range of the scale.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Waste Reduction

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The application of lean process management in our agency will reduce the cost	48	1	4	3.23	.951
Employees are concerned with waste elimination in their daily activities at the agency	48	1	4	2.92	1.164
How concerned are you about duplication of activities, mistakes, waiting time, and pointless movement of information in the agency	48	1	4	3.17	.996
How concerned are you with the continuous improvement of agency inefficiency on administrative efficiency of the agency?	48	1	4	3.08	.986
Valid N (listwise)	48				

Source: SPSS Data Output, 2023

The data in Table 3 illustrates that there is a high level of affirmation (where $x > 2.50$) as regards the indicators of waste reduction which is a measure of administrative efficiency. The construct examined the context and manifestations of waste reduction within the target organizations with indicators aimed at examining respondents' perception of waste reduction through its indicators. The results affirm to all four indicators of waste reduction within the target organizations as also supported by the low disparity in response ($SD < 2.00$). These responses imply that the respondents in the agencies are strongly of the opinion that waste reduction is an observed phenomenon in their organizations and hence are largely in the agreement range of the scale.

Professionalism and Administrative Efficiency Measures

Table 4 shows the result of the correlation matrix obtained for professionalism and administrative efficiency. Also displayed in the table is the statistical test of significance (p-value), which enables us to answer the study research question and generalize our study findings to the study population.

Table 4: Correlations Matrix for Professionalism and Administrative Efficiency

		Professionalism	Quality Services	Cost Reduction	Waste Reduction
Professionalism	Pearson Correlation	1	.973**	.976**	.992**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	48	48	48	48
Quality Services	Pearson Correlation	.973**	1	.979**	.983**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	48	48	48	48
Waste Reduction	Pearson Correlation	.992**	.983**	.985**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	48	48	48	48

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output 2023 version 20.0

Question 1: To what extent does professionalism relate to the administrative efficiency of Rivers State government agencies?

The correlation coefficient (r) result in table 4 was used to answer the research question 1 stated in this study. Table 4 shows a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) of 0.973 on the relationship between professionalism and quality services. This value implies that a very strong relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive, which implies that an increase in quality services was as a result of the adoption of professionalism. Therefore, there is a very strong positive relationship between professionalism and quality services of Rivers State Government Agencies.

Also, Table 4 shows a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) of 0.992 on the relationship between professionalism and waste reduction. This value implies that a very strong relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in waste reduction was as a result of the adoption of professionalism. Therefore, there is a very strong positive correlation between professionalism and waste reduction in Rivers State Government Agencies.

Therefore, to enable us to accept or reject hypotheses 1 and 2 as well as generalize our findings to the study population the p-value was used as shown below:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between Professionalism and Quality Services of Rivers State government agencies.

Equally displayed in Table 4 is the statistical test of significance (p-value) which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained from Table 4, the sig- calculated is less than the significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant positive relationship between professionalism and quality services in Rivers State government agencies.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between professionalism and waste reduction of Rivers State government agencies.

Further displayed in Table 4 is the statistical test of significance (p-value) which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained from Table 4.20, the sig- calculated is less than the significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between professionalism and waste reduction in Rivers State government agencies.

Following these results findings, we conclude thus:

- i. There is a positive significant relationship between professionalism and quality services in Rivers State government agencies.
- ii. There is a positive significant relationship between professionalism and waste reduction in Rivers State government agencies.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Relationship between Professionalism on Administrative Efficiency of Rivers State Government Agencies

This study in this regard investigated the relationship between professionalism on

administrative efficiency of Rivers State. The measures of administrative efficiency were quality service and waste reduction. The study employed a correlational investigation process, and it was revealed that there was a very high strong positive correlation between professionalism and administrative efficiency of Rivers State. The test of hypotheses revealed that there was a significant relationship between professionalism and quality service and waste reduction of administration efficiency of Rivers State government agencies. The findings above are highly supported by the works of Ingraham (2006) who asserted that professionalism is intimately connected to a merit-based government agency system – a system based on competence and integrity aimed at achieving public interest objectives. By this assertion, its professionalism was deemed expertise in service provision. Professionalism focuses on doing tasks for the public interest and professionally gives high-quality services to fulfill the requirements of the public's needs (Daykin, 2003).

Professionalism in government agencies is always required to maintain an agency's long-range stability and congruence with a changing social environment. Professionalism is an essential requirement to achieve these building blocks of public value. The findings of the study corroborate with that of Yuryeva *et al.*, (2015) who evaluated the problems of efficiency growth of state-run public authorities and governmental authorities with a focus on the professionalism of civil servants. The findings showed that the current practice of public administration is based on human resources knowledge and skills of management activity parties - is in the basis of its performance. These findings are also in line with that of the focus-group research with the participation of Ministers and Deputy Ministers of the Republic of Tatarstan and found that basic competencies that would determine improvement of the effectiveness of functions of the Head of the state-run public authorities of the republic include: strategic and analytical thinking, innovation, performance management, the ability of teamwork, communication skills, initiative, and managerial responsibility, adequate behavior in stressful situations, leadership. Heads of public authorities who defined the parameters of the success of employees were directly involved in the creation of the model of competencies.

Kroukamp and Cloete (2018) noted that there is a connection between professionalism and administrative efficiency. This assertion corroborates the findings of this study and the empirical work of Ighorhiohwunu (2021) who examined the relationship between professionalism and public service delivery efficiency in Oredo Local Government Secretariat, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, the findings showed that there was a revealed that there is a significant relationship between professionalism and public service delivery efficiency. As predicted, the study also showed that professionalism exerts a positive and statistically significant impact on public service delivery efficiency in Oredo Local Government Secretariat, Benin City, Edo state, Nigeria. The above assertion implies that a major essence of an organization's service delivery efficiency is professionalism. Therefore, professionalism has impetus in quality service delivery in Rivers State government agencies as revealed in the findings of the study. Thus, the relationship between professionalism and administrative efficiency of Rivers State agencies in terms of quality service delivery and waste reduction was positive and significant.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the relationship between professionalism and administrative efficiency of Rivers State government agencies. From the empirical results, we conclude that professionalism and its dimensions significantly relate to administrative efficiency and its measures, quality service, and waste reduction in the context of Rivers State government agencies.

VII RECOMMENDATION

Policies on capacity building through professional development should adhere to by ensuring that training and seminars, retraining, and reorganization of the system are enforced, by ensuring that the right persons are placed on the right job to yield the expected outcomes. This will make employees in Rivers State Government Agencies professional to the core in the discharge of their duties for quality service delivery.

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