

N'MKPO-N'MKPO-CRACY IN THE NIGERIAN CIVIL SERVICE AND THE MINIMUM WAGE MENACE: IMPACTS ON WORK ETHICS AND LABOR ECONOMICS

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Abstract

Economics encompasses the major areas of microeconomics, which explores how people and firms produce and consume goods and services; it explores mass economic progress and inter-country trade. Labor economics on the other hand, is specifically concerned with the creation, consumption, and transfer of wealth, and the workers satisfaction. While economic methods may be used to study all kinds of issues, from land and other natural resource, to how much people should work, to how to develop human capital through education, labor economics talks about work ethics and provide insights in areas as diverse as how workers should be rewarded and how government should conduct fiscal and monetary policy, and how health care markets work. Over the years in Nigeria, these assertions above have not been met; leaving workers with little or no hope of any economic advantage in most their jobs. The concept 'n'mkpo-n'mkpo-cracy' describes the degree of the frustration in the Nigerian civil service giving the poor salary incentive called 'minimum wage'. This hazard, impacts on work ethics and labor economics in Nigeria, hence this paper uses the hermeneutic method to survey the problem associated to effective work among Nigeria workers, and the departure into seeking menial jobs and its effects on work ethics and labor economics. It concludes that this survival strategy in a new name 'n'mkpo-n'mkpo-cracy', have seriously impacted negatively on both the dignity of work, the worker and the Nigerian's labor economics.

Keywords: N'mkpo-N'mkpo-cracy, Minimum Wage, Labor Economics, Civil Service and Work Ethics.

Introduction

Labor economics is the synergy between work and motivation and cordial interaction between the employers and the employed and the systematic control of work and workers environment. This situation has become the governing propensity of work economics, and over time has moderated the principles of work, as a social contract and work ethics among nations.

Until recently in Nigeria, the dichotomy between the white collar jobs and other menial-unskilled jobs was based on the juice pecuniary and stabilized difference between the government jobs and other menial works, which made almost everyone, look for the former so that they can be gainfully employed and enjoy the country's minimum wage. This was heartbreakingly the experience of the old Nigeria, as today and unfortunately true the reverse is the case understanding the paradigm shift. This bane notably is one of the major reasons for the national brain drain and the increasing jakpa syndrome we are experience today in Nigeria. This empirical analysis and frustrating labor compensation among the working class amidst the high cost of leaving gives birth to this novel concept; N'MKPO-N'MKPO-CRACY; a crazy situation that have made most civil servants to engage themselves in other menial works as private employees so as to make up for their never enough salaries. This has affected the mental health of most Nigerian workers, leading to physical stress, sicknesses and even death in some cases. It has reduced most civil servants and cheapened civil service in the Nigerian State. The government should as a matter of urgency put into humane consideration this national crisis

situation and think of better ways to alleviate the economic frustrations of work conditions of the Nigerian, and restore the dignity of labor in the Nigerian civil service.

N'Mkpo-n'Mkpo-Cracy: Ideology, Historicity And Conceptual Analysis

The concept n'mkpo-n'mkpo, is an Igbo-African concept, signifying any menial job not requiring much skills and lacks prestige. It was originally a type of work reserved for the unlearned and unskilled people. As a matter of fact, studies from the history of work in the stone Age affirmed that labour in the iron Age were far more dignifying than n'mkpo-n'mkpo, as the former gather valuables unlike the latter scavenged in debris (Gimbutus, 1963). N'mkpo-n'mkpo it is understandably referred to as rubbish picking, fragments collection, waste gathering and gathering of remains of what has been used and thrown away.

Over time, the word was used to describe laborers who pick used and condemned items from dust bins, incinerators and sometimes from the waste bins to be recycled, like the metal scavengers. It is considered the dirtiest job for the lowest class of the people in the society. Those who engage in picking these condemned things naturally look dirty since they spend most of their time in the bin. These set of people, are not even listed among menial laborers but are considered to be at the lowest cadre of labor. The word was progressively used to refer to laborers who helped building engineers pick and clean up building sites after each stage to avoid injuries at the sites, and later on it became a generalized word used to describe all those who do menial jobs in recent time. Hence, my development of the concept, n'mkpo-n'mkpo-cracy to describe the situation of most Nigerian workers who willfully take up menial jobs considering their poor salaries. No wonder decrying this condition, Vivian Nwokolo said, I love the white collar job but only to realized it was all fantasies. (Nwokolo, 2021). This statement have remained the rhyme in the lips of most civil servants even among those of high rank, it is disparaging and should quickly be corrected as most of our young ones are already having apathy for the civil service. Hence, are preferring crimes of all sorts to make quick money which their parents could not make all their service years.

N'Mkpo-n'Mkpo-Cracy And The Nigerian Labour Economics

Labour economics involves the study of all that affects workers before, during, and after their work, especially at certain crucial periods of their lives like, [childcare](#), [education](#), [pay and incentives](#), [discrimination](#), their [non-work time](#), [pension reforms](#) and after death settlements. It is the study of the labour force as an element in the process of production. The labor force comprises all those who work for gain within the labour market, whether as [employees](#), [employers](#), or as [self-employed](#) who are seeking for job. Labour markets function through the interaction of workers and employers and can be bounded geographically within [countries](#) or regions, or global (IZA, 2019).

Labor economics also concerns itself with the mobility of workers within and across such markets and within and across their employers. In times of crises, labor economics can also help us to understand and provide solutions to the problems caused by economic shocks such as recessions or global pandemics like that caused by [Covid-19](#) (Ibid). It seeks to understand the functioning and dynamics of the [markets](#) for [wage labour](#). As a commodity, labour is that which is supplied by [labourers](#), and as an exchange for a [wage](#) paid by demanding firms. It is a social, institutional, political and cultural phenomenon. Since labour markets function through the interaction of workers and employers, labor economics looks at the suppliers of labor services (workers) and the demands of labor services (employers), and attempts to understand the resulting pattern of wages, employment, and income. These patterns exist because each individual in the market is presumed to make rational choices based on the information that they know regarding wage, desire to provide labor, and desire for leisure.

In a situation where these work equilibrium are lacking both in principles or praxes, then we find other survival strategies like apathy, lies, immoral and unprofessional attitudes play out as gross misconduct in work, and those who are unable to indulge in the above do other things instinctively to survive. Here, the worker begins to look for other measures of survival, and even fraud.

In his Labor Theory of Value, Karl Marx postulated that the value of a produced economic good can be measured objectively by the average number of labor hours required to produce it. In other words, if a table takes twice as long to make as a chair, then the table should be considered twice as valuable as the chair (Marx, 1818). This theory, suggestive of labor justice, has exposed the low and poor incentives of most Nigerian workers. Marx, using the principles of classical economics, explained that the value of labor power must depend on the number of labor hours it takes. And as this is not the case in the Nigerian labour calculations, Marx was therefore right when he said that workers are systematically exploited (Ibid). Thus, to realize their profits, capitalists must exploit their workers, when there is no labour control. This tension and frustration surrounding minimum wage and its subsequent effects on workers and the general appreciation of labour, is the reason for the incessant industrial tussle between the federal government and the labour congress, in order to restore the dignity of labour in Nigeria and maintain the principle of labour economics, following Marx's theory of labour value.

Minimum Wage Menace And Labour Struggle In The Nigerian Civil Service

The highest body on work and social justice is the international labour organization ILO. She is concerned with the promotion of workers' rights and they encourage decent employment opportunities and strengthen dialogue on work related issues. According to them, Minimum wages have been defined as the minimum amount of remuneration that an employer is required to pay wage earners for the work performed during a given period, which cannot be reduced by collective agreement or an individual contract (ILO, 1928. No.28). Wages have remained a problem of debate for Nigeria's organised labour movements in the past year. The major reason is because none of the four stages of labour force is exempted from the menace of poor salary neither the skilled, unskilled, semi-skilled and the professionals, as the inflation surge affects every worker.

Reacting to recent inflation in the cost of living, the labour movement have been calling for an upward review of the national minimum wage, currently the minimum wage in Nigeria is thirty thousand naira a month, and without begging the question, the fact is that work condition in the Nigerian civil service is a near failure and until the Nigerian government stands up to this reality, labour struggle and the government will continue to be at a loggerhead, leaving the workers at a cross road of insincerity, unprofessionalism, apathy, n'mkpoko- n'mkpoko-crazy that is; scavenging for other menial jobs to the detriment of their primary jobs which will adversely affect work ethics in the whole country. This can lead to civil disobedience as no one orates for sanity and morality in the face of injustice and like the social crusader and a civil right activist, Martin Luther King Jr. will say, "I became convinced that noncooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good (Luther King, Jr., P.37) and no other person have been more eloquent and passionate in getting this idea across the globe than Henry David Thoreau the father of modern civil disobedience. As a result, in 1848, Thoreau gave lectures at the Concord Lyceum titled "The Rights and Duties of the Individual in relation to Government". This forming the basis for his essay, which was first published under the title *Resistance to Civil Government* in an 1849 anthology by Elizabeth Peabody called *Esthetic Papers*. The later title distinguished Thoreau's program from that of the "non-resistants" who were expressing similar views. Speaking against labour economics, Thoreau asserts that because governments are typically more harmful than helpful, they therefore cannot be justified as even democracy is no cure for this, as majorities do not also gain the virtues of wisdom and justice all the time. Hence,

the judgment of an individual's conscience is not necessarily inferior to the decisions of a political body or majority, and so it is not desirable to cultivate respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right...Law never made men a whit more just; and, by means of their respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents of injustice" (Thoreau, 1849, P.7). The government, according to Thoreau, is not just a little corrupt or unjust in the course of doing its otherwise-important work, but in fact the government is primarily an agent of corruption and injustice. Thus, "not too soon, honest men rebel and revolutionize". This is not to say that you have an obligation to devote your life to fighting for justice, but you do have an obligation not to commit injustice and not to give injustice your practical support. Hence, the intention to correct the deceit in the Nigerian Labour especially, public and private employers. According Thomas Jefferson, 'when injustice becomes the law, resistance becomes duty'. Is there not a sort of blood shed when the conscience is wounded? Through this wound a man's real manhood and immortality flow out, and he bleeds to an everlasting death. (Ibid, P.8)

In the light of Thoreau's postulation, how well have the industrial conversations by the Nigerian labour union congress helped in solving this problem of poor minimum wage. Why has the relentless fight regarding poor and unfriendly remunerations, lack of basic amenities both in work places and in the general life of the citizens, and general apathy and lack of participatory trust in the Nigerian people even after decades of engaging protests and strike actions, not yielded much fruits? Are there other possible ways through which the government can be bent to become evenly more responsive on the issues affecting the Nigeria workers? Or are these resistant actions lacking in exploring the real technicalities of conscientious objection? These and many other questions constitute the rationale for the seeming failure of work ethics, because a hungry man does not appreciate morality, we must stand up and uphold work justice in Nigeria. According to the interactive Legal Consults; @Leges-Prudentia ILC. In an interview on May day, *On The Nigerian Workers; Sickness and Pain*. He said, the Nigeria worker leaves in the hot bed of unfair labour practice. This is the greatest injustice done to the Nigerian worker, that his wages are not calculated per hourly. If it was, the Nigerian worker will be earning not more one hundred and thirty seven naira and fifty kobo not enough to buy a bottle of coke (Leges, 2004). And continuing he said, even in the private space, workers are sacked for not meeting targets especially in banks and this is against global best practices, as it is not the duty of the worker to create jobs for themselves. It is the employer who creates jobs to be executed by the employed. The retired in most cases do not get their gratuity till they die, while the living among them continue to salivate for their pensions either on their wheel chairs or sick bed. (Leges, 2004). On the contrary, labour leaders most times, fail the workers by receiving uppercut in the left eye and be cooling off in the middle East enjoying themselves somewhere with the government sponsorship, these kinds of leaders cannot help Nigerian workers. The Nigerian Labour Congress must wake up especially on the issues of the minimum wage. They should not forget that Nigerian workers have right to civil disobedience and through gentle but insistence conscientious struggle continue to engage the government on fair wage which is their right and like D.H Thoreau say, ...I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right. It is truly enough said, that a corporation has no conscience; but a corporation of conscientious men is a corporation with a conscience. Law never made men a whit more just; and, by means of their respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents of injustice. How does it become a man to behave toward this American government today? I answer that he cannot without disgrace be associated with it. I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as my government which is the slave's government also. (Thoreau, 1837, P.7)

Just recently, the Nigerian Labour engaged the federal government on issues of minimum wage

to consider the proposed six hundred and fifty naira against the forty eight thousand naira proposed by the government and that meeting ended without any grace and the question is, what is eighteen thousand naira added to the thirty thousand naira good for today in Nigeria. It goes to show the level of disrespect the federal government have for her workers and how careless she has decided to be over them. Forgetting that when people are not earning enough money to cover for their basic expenses, they are forced to cut back on essentials such as food, housing, and healthcare, leading to decreased quality of life and increased stress, which affects their work input.

Impacts Of Poor Minimum Wage On Labour Economics And Work Ethics

Since the independence era, the structure and composition of the Nigerian civil service has changed and witnessed significant transformation. Immediately after independence, the Civil Service comprises the Federal civil service and the other civil services in three regions (East, West, and North) and later between the Federal civil service and that of the twelve states of the federation. Currently, the Nigerian civil service comprises the federal civil service, the thirty-six autonomous state civil services, the unified local government service, and several federal and state government agencies, including Parastatals and corporations. The federal and state civil services were organized around government departments, or ministries, and extra ministerial departments headed by ministers (federal) and commissioners (state), who were appointed by the president and governors, respectively. These political heads were responsible for policy matters. The administrative heads of the ministries were the permanent secretaries who were previously called Director-General. The chief director general was the secretary to the government and until the Second Republic also doubled as head of the civil service. As chief adviser to the government, the head of the civil service conducted liaison between the government and the civil service. Generally, the structure of Nigerian Civil Service is patterned on the British style. The service is divided into the following classes: administrative, executive, professional, clerical, and messengerial classes who function as a catalyst for crystallizing the shared goals of the society and as a machinery of public policy formulation and implementation. Despite its contributions to national development and democratic stability, the civil service over the years has been plagued by numerous problems. Prominent among these problems is politicization, lack of policy implementation and acute divide regarding salaries and allowance between the civil servants and the politicians. However, there were reforms deliberately made to improve the lives of workers like, The pension scheme of 1962, as amended in 1974 and 1993, relatively favorable to workers. (Omoruyi, 1991. P.1). It was a non-contributory benefit scheme that allowed government to allocate specific resources to the consolidated revenue meant to pay pensioners. This made public sector attractive to workers since their old age could be guaranteed after quitting service, especially in a country where there is no social benefit for the unemployed and senior citizens. The Udoji Commission of 1974 was set up during General Yakubu Gowon's administration to review and over-haul the entire public service, and to ensure development and optimum utilization of manpower for efficiency and effectiveness in the service. The major thrust of the commission is to carry out holistic reform of the civil service in terms of 'organization, structure and management of the public service; investigate and evaluate methods of recruitment and conditions of employment; examine all legislation relating to pension, as regarding all post; establish scale of salaries corresponding to each grade as a result of job evaluation...(Salisu, 2001, P.4).

Today, we hardly hear of reforms which are either aftermaths of worker engagements with the government or deep seated humane concern from government to favour her employees. Instead, you wake up every day with either increment on fuel or light tariffs or the likes.

The implication of this inconsiderate style of leadership where the civil servants are asked to make sacrifice while the life style of the politicians in the chambers are not in consonance with

their tongue given to the continued and busy increments of their allowances, the workers are left with no other choice than what we see today, as summarized in the statement; 'dem no dey carry government work for head' as played out in the following waves of ethical implications like; deliberate lack of commitment, apathy, mental health issues, death of morality and corruption,

Mental Health Complications

Mental health is the study of the emotional, psychological, and social well-being of man and how stress and other conditions affects how we think, feel, and act. According to World Health Organization (WHO), it is a "state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her abilities, in coping with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and contribute to his or her community(WHO, 2023). One major impact of low wage and n'mkpo-n'mkpo-cracy among most Nigerian workers is the ability to manage life giving the finance they get per month. This increases their stress level and mental health disorders. I can tell you for free that eighty five percent of Nigerian workers are in depths leading to sustained stress and mental health conditions. And the question is, how far and good can someone under this situation be a happy person. To manage this condition, Psychiatrists, Psychologists, licensed professional clinical counselors, social workers, nurse practitioners, and family physicians can help manage mental illness with treatments such as therapy, counseling, and medication. But the question is, what happens after the treatment if the situation that lead to the condition persists as the case is. This problematic suggests that the civil service of the Nigerian state have more abnormal worker with emotional and psychological disorders given to stress than the normal people and these plays out from their behavior considered to be misconducts. No, is a mental health condition as it is almost impossible for a stressed and hungry man to behave well. The minister of health should look into the mental state of the Nigerian workers by advising finance council of the Nigerian state that the mental wellbeing of worker go a long well to affects their social wellbeing and general interactions everywhere. The submission of health status report at appointments and acceptance of employment is not enough. Maintaining their mental health status is also very important.

Insincerity And Lack Of Conscientiousness To Work

Conscientiousness is the exercise of self-discipline and self-control in order to pursue and ultimately achieve a goal. It is the ability to be intentional, organized and determined to do things in altruism and not seeking immediate gratification. Somehow, it is the quality of sincerity that is; working with absence of pretence, deceit and hypocrisy. This noun, Conscientiousness is from the concept conscience; a person's moral sense of right and wrong, within the actions of human behavior. For K. H. Peschke, conscience is the ultimate subjective norm of moral conduct... seriously strive to conform to the demands of the objective world of truth (Peschke, P. 205).

With any feeling of aspersion on the federal government's effort, there is no gaining saying that the pecuniary welfare of the Nigerian worker is laughable, insulting, demeaning and unjust. And who can worker suffering this malady comfortably work conscientiously; they will seek self-gratification as a remedy for survival and practice all manner of mischiefs constructive enough to vindicate themselves and weather these counter reaction contravenes the active moral concern to duty, it is in a sense, a kind of conscientious objection for them, because they that conscientious objection is always a passive response to the requirement of law or order. As an ethical claim or right of an individual or a group to refuse to perform certain obligations on the grounds of freedom of thought, conscience or religion. It is a moral refusal based only on conscience to refuse cooperation due to either inhuman or unjust legislations. And as members of labour, they join a number of organizations in the world celebrate May 15th as the international world day of Conscientious Objection. In most cases, this action of insincerity and lack of conscientiousness to work leads to civil disobedience. The advisory council on education should advice the federal

government better to redeem the dignity of labour and not forget that 'no condition is permanent' in the words of M. Meredith in his book *The State Of Africa*, where he described the despotic leadership of Abacha when he said, even by the standards that Nigeria's military dictators had set, General Sani Abacha reached new level of notoriety (M. Meredith, P. 574). Any leader who cannot learn for history will live to regret in history, because no condition is permanent truly.

Corruption As Ocular Compensation

Naturally, workers who are not happy with their work due to unfair benefit will employ other means to survival. And we have identified n'mkpo-n'mkpo-cracy as one of such means for those who look for other things to support themselves legally. Others may route to criminality of different sort and all these will amount to corruption. And while you call it corruption, they see it as a kind of compensation. This is will the word ocular compensation come to bear. Not in the ophthalmological understanding which is the abnormality of people who are not born with eyes of identical optical power, while the brain usually compensate for and it is unnoticeable. But a kind of compensation where the cheated worker helps himself illegally as it stands, but justified situationally due to the injustice surrounding his wage. This kind of compensation is again problematic because it leads to stealing, fraud and embezzlement as no one is a judge in his case. It also stand for the eye for an eye kind of Machiavellian principle. Some workers have had to quote the passage in Leviticus that states, "and a man who injures his countryman, as he has done, so it shall be done to him...fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. Just as another person has received injury from him, so it will be given to him." (Lev. 24:19–21), forgetting the reaction of Mahatma. Gandhi, the nonviolence thinker who said; an eye for eye, makes the whole go blind (Gandhi), it will lead to an endless circle of violence.

Apathy

Apathy is the feeling of disinterestedness. In relations to work, apathy is the emotional withdrawal and a gradual change of situations, mood and indifference towards work. Apathy is presented as a lack of passion in one's job or a specific situation. It includes the absence or suppression of emotion, feeling, concern or passion, lack of motivation, low energy levels and passiveness and finally, detachment. Most civil servants are in this situation if not all of them. And to pretend that it is not affecting their health as I have opined earlier will fault the declaration of the World Health Organization who said; optimal health includes 'being of a state that maximizes one's potential for physical, mental and emotional growth (Heron et al, 2018). Apathy therefore falls short of WHO's definition of optimal health. Therefore, I will be right to say that most civil servants are not healthy mentally due to the lack of trust between the Nigerian worker and her employer. This is practically seen in the actions and attitudes of most workers. This reflects in the way most of them carry out their jobs unprofessionally. While I am not blaming the government for the unprofessional conducts, we must not pretend that it is difficult for a sad man to keep pretending, this is where we beg the government to quickly see to the happiness of their workers, while ask the worker to enliven a spark of peace, hope and friendliness in work places.

Conclusion

This work; *N'mkpo-n'mkpo-cracy in the Nigerian civil service and the minimum wage menace: impacts on work ethics and labor economics*, has accessed a seemingly new concept N'mkpo-n'mkpo-cracy, within the preview of additional job, freely done by most civil servants to survive amidst their low remuneration irrespective of its demining nature, and criticizes such as harmful, stressful and shameful, as it will be unnecessary if the government could just do a little of considerate augmentations for her workers. The work also calls up the effects and impacts on N'mkpo-n'mkpo-cracy on workers and work ethics. If Labour economics is considered as that which affects workers; before, during, training and education, pay and incentives, and after death and settlement. And relationship with employer and the general work gain experience both

by worker and employer, this work notices with discomfort that new policies or a commission to be set up to examine the Nigerian civil service relationship with the federal government, not only in salary matters, but a holistic methodologies of work, as the existing status quos falls short of the kpim (core) of labour economics. And until this is done, neither the chicken nor the rope will find rest.

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