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THE IMPACT OF POLITICS ON THE HEALTH CONDITIONS OF CIVIL SERVANTS IN KATSINA METROPOLIS

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Abstract

Politics is a major factor that affects the lives of individuals, especially civil servants. A civil servant who does not support the elected government may experience delays in salary payments, and if care is not taken, they might even be dismissed from their job. This can lead to various health problems among the affected civil servants. The central objective of this paper is to examine the impact of politics on the health conditions of civil servants in the Katsina metropolis. The study adopted the Political Economy Theory as a theoretical framework. The paper adopted triangulation methods to collect both quantitative and qualitative data during the fieldwork. A total of Three Hundred and eighty-four (384) respondents were randomly sampled for the study. The purposive sampling method was adopted to sample five participants to elicit the qualitative data. The excessive politicization of civil servants has created an environment of anxiety, depression, work stress, favouritism, and inefficiency, thereby hindering effective service delivery. The paper concludes that Politics, especially in our beloved country, Nigeria, is often described as "a dirty game", implying that politicians are frequently seen as untrustworthy. Unfortunately, most of these same politicians are responsible for formulating most national policies. When policies are poorly designed or implemented, their consequences affect everyone, including civil servants. Such political influences can negatively impact the physical, social, and mental well-being of civil servants, ultimately undermining their overall health and job performance. The study recommends that all levels of government establish clear, transparent policies that protect civil servants from political interference in their access to health benefits.

Keywords: Civil Servants, Health Conditions, Impact, Katsina Metropolis, Politics

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Introduction

A health system, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), encompasses organizations, institutions, resources, and individuals working collectively to enhance health outcomes. WHO's framework identifies six critical building blocks: service delivery, the health workforce, health information systems, access to essential medicines, financing, and leadership and governance. Notably, leadership and governance serve as the linchpin for regulating and guiding all other facets of the health system. The efficiency and effectiveness of a health system hinge on a multitude of factors, including financial, social, economic, environmental, and workforce resources, as well as visionary leadership committed to driving change (Azevedo, 2023). Politics plays a crucial role in affecting the lives of civil servants, especially those working at the government level. Their rights are often denied, along with other responsibilities and benefits to them as civil servants. As a result, many of them suffer from various health-related problems such as anxiety, depression, hypertension, and loneliness. In many settings, political instability, favouritism, delayed salaries, poor governance, lack of entitlement, and inadequate investment in the health sectors contribute to stress, reduced productivity, and increased vulnerability to physical and mental health problems among civil servants. The lack of action can be attributed to a lack of political will; however strong the evidence, unless those who hold political power are willing to implement action through policy measures, progress towards achieving health equity between and within countries will be limited. An increasing number of commentators have highlighted the importance of political determinants of health and called for greater attention to them. Yet despite its central importance to public health, little is known about how political will operates to successfully enact pro-equity policies or not (Chancel, 2022). Health inequities have been defined by Whitehead (2021) as those "differences in health which are not only unnecessary and avoidable but, in addition, are considered unfair and unjust." Braveman & Gruskin (2020) extend this definition and argue that equity in health occurs when there are no systematic inequalities in the distribution of health due to the unfair distribution of resources or other unjust or unfair processes (such as discrimination).

Politics these days has become a kind of painkiller that forces many civil servants to participate. This, in return, means that if you do not show loyalty either through your words or through your financial contributions, your job may be at risk. In many workplaces, especially where political influence is strong, employees often feel pressured to express support or make financial commitments to protect their position. This creates an unhealthy environment in which job security depends not on merit or performance but on compliance and fear. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the impact of politics on the health conditions of civil servants in Katsina Metropolis.

Statement of the Problem

Politics is a system that influences people's lives without considering their social class. It often creates divisions based on race and leads to discrimination among civil servants. Politics clearly affects the health conditions of civil servants. When civil servants are unwilling to support the elected government, it can create problems at work, potentially negatively affecting their physical and mental health. Thus, politics has increasingly become a dominant factor that influences the lives of civil servants, adversely affecting their psychological well-being and overall job performance. The excessive politicization of civil servants has created an environment of anxiety, depression, work stress, favouritism, and inefficiency, thereby hindering effective service delivery. In Nigeria, politics has created a

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situation where even individuals with limited education, such as secondary school leavers, can influence or disrupt the work of civil servants and traditional rulers, thereby hindering administrative progress. This occurs in an environment where freedom of speech and fundamental human rights are often disregarded, while political thugs enjoy undue privileges and protection.

Conceptual Explication:

Civil Servants: Refer to the government employee who works in the public service for a specified period until retirement.

Health Conditions: Refer to the overall physical and mental well-being of civil servants, including how political factors, such as interference, favouritism, or workplace pressures related to government policies and administration, may influence their physical, stress levels, and psychological state.

Impact: Refer to the outcomes of something, whether positive or negative.

Politics: Is the process or domain by which groups of individuals make collective decisions, exercise power, and govern themselves. It involves the activities, actions, and policies used to gain and hold authority in a society, organization, or government.

The Impact of Politics on the Health Conditions of Civil Servants

The impact of politics on the health conditions of civil servants is evident, as a principal officer in any portfolio often lacks the autonomous power to undermine what is right or wrong, leaving them vulnerable to political pressure that can negatively affect their well-being. Civil servants these days are no longer respected by politicians. A director or permanent secretary in any ministry or agency does not have the power to recommend applicants without the consent of politicians who act as chairpersons over the work. These political interferences are among the reasons many civil servants suffer from various health problems. This constant political interference weakens the professionalism of the civil service and places civil servants under continuous pressure. They often fear victimization, dismissal, or being sidelined if they make decisions that do not align with the interests of these political actors. As a result, many civil servants experience stress, anxiety, and frustration in their daily work.

Over time, this unhealthy work environment, an abusive place, exposes them to various health-related problems such as hypertension, depression, burnout, and other stress-induced illnesses. In extreme cases, the feeling of powerlessness and job insecurity can negatively affect their mental, emotional, and social well-being, post-trauma, and psychologically distort.

How Politics Affects the Health Conditions of Civil Service

Politics affects the health conditions of civil servants in many ways. One of the factors is the delays of salary payments, which can lead to severe health problems such as depression, anxiety, hypertension, stress disorder, and other issues that can affect the mental health of individuals. Another factor is unfair promotion and appointment, which is common in our beloved country, Nigeria. In such cases, a junior staff member may be promoted to a higher rank based on political connections rather than merit. This has happened in many past and present administrations. Katsina is one of the six North-West states with the highest number of federal civil servants. It is also one of the two states, along with Kebbi State, that operate almost like a one-party system. Because of this political structure, civil servants

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who are not in a position of power or who choose to join opposition parties often find it difficult to cope with the resulting conditions.

Theoretical framework

The study adopted Adam Smith's political economy theory in 1776. The theory explains how and why politics have affected the lives of individuals, especially civil servants. Politics has become a driving force that pushes workers and ordinary people to participate in the political system. When individuals are not connected to the system, even a secondary school leaver can become a challenge to a principal officer who has risen through the ranks of the civil service. Political economy theory further suggests that when civil servants become disenchanted with politics or are perceived to be involved with opposition parties, they often face consequences such as delay in salary payment, unfair promotion, and biased appointments. These challenges can expose them to stress and other health-related problems. Political explains that the accumulation of resources and the distribution of extracted mineral resources form the backbone of any developing country. The absence of good political leadership pushes the country backward, and many individuals, especially civil servants, become frustrated as their voices remain insignificant.

Research Design

The study adopted a survey research design, which involved the administration of structured questionnaires and a Key Informant Interview with sampled civil servants in selected areas of Katsina Metropolis, Katsina State, Nigeria. These areas, GRA, Layout, Shagari low-cost, and Dutsen Tsafe low-cost, are in Katsina Metropolis and have a large number of civil servants. The reason for choosing this specific number is that they possess adequate knowledge of the subject matter. Therefore, a cross-sectional study was conducted, in which data were collected from the targeted population. A total population of three hundred and eighty-four (384) was selected for this study. A sample of 384 respondents was drawn for the quantitative data, while five participants were selected for the qualitative data to complement the quantitative findings.

The interview guide was developed based on the primary research objectives:

1. Do you have any experiences or observations regarding the impact of politics on the health conditions of civil servants?
2. Does politics have a negative effect on the health and well-being of civil servants?
3. What is the percentage or rate of the negative impact of politics on the health and well-being of civil servants?
4. What kinds of dilemmas or challenges do civil servants face as a result of politics?
5. What measures or strategies do you think could help minimize this issue?

Study Area

Katsina State was created on 23rd September 1987 from the defunct Kaduna State. The state is one of the six North West states located between the axis of Kaduna, Kano, Jigawa, Zamfara, Sokoto, and has a border with the Niger Republic. Katsina is a mono-lingual and mono-ethnic state, as the majority of its people are Hausa/Fulani. The state has thirty-four (34) Local Governments comprising Bakori, Batagarawa, Batsari, Bindawa, Baure, Charanchi, Dandume, Dutsi, Faskari, Funtua, Ingawa, Jibia, Kafur, Kaita, Kankia, Kusada, Mai'adua, Malumfashi, Mani, Mashi, Matazu, Musawa, Rimi, Sabuwa, Safana, Sandamu, and Zango. The Major activity of the state is agriculture, which is the mainstay of the state's economy, as 80% of the population is engaged in farming and animal rearing. The major crops cultivated in the state are maize, cotton, groundnut, guinea corn, millet, rice, beans, and soya beans, while livestock is essentially cattle, sheep, goats, fish farming, and poultry.

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Methodology

TABLE 1: Impact of Politics on the Health Conditions of Civil Servants

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Depression	97	25.2
Anxiety	84	21.9
Stress	71	18.5
Hypertension	74	19.2
Loss of memory	58	15.2
Total	384	100

Source: Survey Work (2025)

Table 1 represents data on the impact of politics on the health conditions of civil servants. The majority of the respondents, with the following percentage 84.8% answered with depression, anxiety, stress, and hypertension, while a total number of 15.2% indicated loss of memory. This means that a number of 84.8%% respondents in the study area fall within this category, which constitutes the highest proportion in the sample.

A key informant interview conducted with Secondary School staff stated that:

> Of course, yes. Politics, one way or another, affects the general well-being of civil servants, since they depend directly on the government for their livelihood, whether through salaries, wages, or stipends. A good administrator elected through the political process can introduce excellent policies, such as housing schemes, high-quality, affordable education, improved healthcare facilities, better infrastructure, and many other initiatives. All these contribute positively to the physical and mental well-being of civil servants (KII, with Secondary School Teacher, P.1, 2025).

TABLE 2: Politics Affects the Health Conditions of Civil Service in Katsina

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	276	71.9
No	108	28.1
Total	384	100

Source: Survey Work (2025)

From the data above, 71.9% of the respondents said Yes, while 28.1% said No. This implies that the majority of respondents are affected by politics, which clearly affects their health.

During a key informant interview, a secondary teacher revealed that:

> Politics, especially in our beloved country, Nigeria, is often referred to as "a dirty game", meaning that politicians are often seen as untrustworthy. Unfortunately, most of our national policies are made by these same politicians. Poorly formulated policies inevitably affect everyone, including civil servants, and this can have negative effects on their physical, social, and mental well-being (KII, with Secondary School Teacher, P.2, 2025).

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TABLE 3: Kinds of Dilemmas or Challenges Civil Servants Face as a Result of Politics

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Loans	44	11.5
Stress and health	94	24.5
Job insecurity	101	26.3
Unfair promotion & appointment	103	26.9
Delay salary and benefits	42	10.0
Total	384	100

Sources: Survey Work (2025)

Table 3 above from the study explains the kinds of dilemmas or challenges civil servants face as a result of politics. A total of 11.5% of the respondents reported loans, 24.5% reported stress and health, 26.3% reported job security, 26.9% reported unfair promotion & appointment, and 10% reported delayed salary and benefits. This implies that job security and unfair promotion and appointment constitute the highest proportion among the sampled, and such job security and unfair promotion and appointment can lead to various diseases. Furthermore, they may result in the fatal death of civil servants.

A key informant interview conducted with an Assistant Lecturer (AL) stated that:

> These challenges cannot be overemphasized. To mention but a few: i. lack of respect from the general public since civil servants don't earn much and people worship money nowadays. ii. Lack of appreciation from the general public. iii. Being sentimental and biased while coming up, implementation, and execution of public policies. iv. Stigmatization and lack of proper trainings (KII, with Assistant Lecturer, P.3, 2025).

TABLE 4: Percentage or Rate of the Negative Impact of Politics on the Health and well-being of Civil Servants

Level of Impact	Frequency	Percentage
Low	87	22.7
Moderate	107	27.9
High	190	49.4
Total	384	100

Source: Survey Work (2025)

From the data above, 22.7% of the respondents said Low, while 77.3% said Moderate and High to the question. This implies that the majority of the respondents are affected.

> Well, I can't precisely give a number, but surely a very high number of health-related issues and the general well-being of civil servants are directly associated with politics. Bad policies with respect to health schemes, bad conditions of health care facilities, and worst of all, bad social welfare for civil servants (KII, with level 09, Ministry of Special Duties, P.4, 2025).

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TABLE 5: Measures or Strategies You Think Could Help to Minimize this Issue

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Promoting Job Security	108	28.1
Merit-based Appointment	97	25.2
Professionalism and Neutrality	94	24.5
Transparency and Accountability	85	22.2
Total	384	100

Source: Survey Work (2025)

Table 5 presents data on measures or strategies to minimize the political influence on the health conditions of civil servants. The majority of the respondents, with the following percentage 53.3% answered with promoting job security and merit-based appointment, a total number of 24.5% indicated professionalism and neutrality, while 22.2% said transparency and accountability. This means that 53.3% of respondents in the study area fall into this category, which constitutes the highest proportion in the sample.

During a key informant interview session, a participant said:

> Civil servants, as the name implies, are considered servants and are often treated that way. Since civil servants are treated differently from politicians in terms of financial and social benefits, I do not believe there will be much difference in their overall well-being and general health conditions. These strategies establish clear and transparent policies that protect civil servants from political interference in accessing health benefits. Ensure equitable allocation of resources for health services to prevent favouritism or political bias (KII with Paramilitary officer, 2025, P.5).

Discussion of Findings

The study found that civil servants who are not actively engaged in their work often struggle to meet their basic needs. This inability to sustain their livelihood can lead to several health-related problems, such as anxiety, depression, hypertension, work-related stress, and other complications that may even result in sudden death. Evidence from the interviews further revealed that civil servants, as the name implies, are perceived as "servants" and are often treated in that manner. Since civil servants receive significantly fewer financial and social benefits compared to politicians, the study found that there is little difference in their overall well-being and general health conditions, as both are influenced by disparities in access to resources and support. The findings also highlight the need for clear and transparent policies that protect civil servants from political interference in accessing health benefits. Ensuring equitable allocation of health-care resources is essential in preventing favouritism or political bias. Furthermore, the study identified several challenges confronting civil servants. These challenges cannot be overemphasized and include: Lack of respect from the general public, largely due to low earnings and the societal tendency to value individuals based on their financial status. Lack of appreciation, as civil servants' contributions are often undervalued. Sentimentality and bias in the formulation, implementation, and execution of public policies, which undermine effective service delivery. Stigmatization and inadequate training, limiting their professional growth and effectiveness.

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Conclusion

Politics, especially in our beloved country, Nigeria, is often described as "a dirty game", implying that politicians are frequently seen as untrustworthy. Unfortunately, most of these same politicians are responsible for formulating most national policies. When policies are poorly designed or implemented, their consequences affect everyone, including civil servants. Such political influences can negatively impact the physical, social, and mental well-being of civil servants, ultimately undermining their overall health and job performance. Politics is a major factor that affects the lives of individuals, especially civil servants. A civil servant who does not support the elected government may experience delays in salary payments. In some cases, even face the risk of dismissal. These political pressures create financial instability, job insecurity, and emotional stress, all of which can lead to various physical and mental health problems.

Recommendations

i. Government at all levels should establish clear and transparent policies that protect civil servants from political interference in accessing health benefits.

ii. The government should provide equitable allocation of resources for health services to prevent favouritism or political bias.

iii. The government should adjust bad policies with respect to health schemes, bad conditions of health care facilities, and worst of all, bad social welfare for civil servants.

iv. The elected government that is in office through the political process should introduce excellent policies such as housing schemes, qualitative and affordable education, better healthcare facilities, improved infrastructure, and many more initiatives that can serve as a pain relief to civil servants.

v. The government should avoid unfair promotion & appointment, as these are major factors that contribute to various health-related problems among civil servants.

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