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## Influence of Political Knowledge on Civil Servant's Perceptions towards Nigerian Federalism among Civil Servants in Bauchi State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

In Nigeria, the renewed calls and agitations from diverse sectors for the restructuring of Nigerian federalism has over the years been characterized by numerous inconsistencies and tensions. This study was designed to determine the influence of political knowledge on the perceptions of Bauchi state civil servants towards Nigerian federalism. A total of 396 respondents were selected through a stratified sampling technique from the population of 96,728. Data was collected using a set of questionnaires. Correlation and multiple regressions were used to analyze the data. The research unveils that, political structural knowledge has a positive and significant relationship with respondents' perception of federalism in Nigeria while political factual knowledge has a significant and positive relationship with citizens' perception of Nigerian federalism. The multiple regression results showed that political structural knowledge ( $B=.219, P<.001$ ) and political factual knowledge ( $B=.614, P<.001$ ) were found to be significant. The result has shown that among the predictors of federalism political factual knowledge is the highest predictor. Hence, it is recommended that the government design an enlightenment program targeting civil servants in Bauchi state in order to educate them and enhance their understanding and perception of Nigerian federalism.

**Keywords:** Political Knowledge, Perception, Influence, Federalism, Civil Servants

### Introduction

Federalism is a mixed or compound form of government that combines a central or "federal" government with regional governments (provincial, state, cantonal, territorial, or other sub-unit governments) in a single political system, with powers divided between them (Broschek, 2016). Federalism is a political framework that allows states to unify under a single government while still maintaining some autonomy and dependency (Tella et al., 2016). The goal is to centralize supreme authority while retaining a significant amount of semi-autonomy for the component states (Tella et al., 2016). Power is shared and apportioned between the national and state governments in this system. Both levels have their own agencies and officials who have a direct impact on the general public (Daniel, 2007; Tella et al., 2016). Polarization and punitiveness describe the current situation of American federalism.

Intergovernmental interactions are still shaped by political division, as they have been in prior years. Punitiveness, on the other hand, is becoming a more common feature of vertical decentralization. Punitive federalism is the use of threats and punishment by the federal government to discourage state and local acts that contradict its policy choices (Goelzhauser & Konisky, 2020).

From the context of Africa, Nigeria's federal experience is exceptional in Africa, noteworthy in the developing world, and significant globally. Although federal initiatives in Ethiopia, South Africa, and Sudan are in the early stages of development, they have the potential to be successful. Nigeria, on the other hand, is perhaps the only African country where "federalism is strongly entrenched," with its constituent sub-federal governments ranking among the continent's most powerful subnational units (Clapham, 2016).

Nigeria is exceptional in its long-standing commitment to using federal institutions to handle relations among its estimated 200 million people, who are divided into three major ethnic groupings (Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo), as well as hundreds of minor ethnic groups (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). The Nigerian federation currently consists of a federal government (seated in Abuja, the nation's capital), 36 states divided into six quasi-official geopolitical zones, and 774 legally entrenched local government areas (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

Empirical studies have linked citizens' knowledge and perception with federalism. As noted by Carpini and Keeter (1996), knowledge can be considered citizens' knowledge and perceptions of federalism have been related in empirical studies. Knowledge can be considered a crucial prerequisite for meaningful political engagement (Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Dalton, 2000). Political knowledge, according to Ondercin and Jones-White (2011), has a substantial role in people's willingness to engage in various forms of political behavior. Political awareness is an important component of "political sophistication," an attitude that has been linked to high turnout, low prejudice, and a readiness to participate in political activity (Choma & Hafer, 2009). In general, it may be considered that persons with a high level of political intelligence are better equipped to engage in political life and effectively make their voices known in the political decision-making process.

On the other hand, citizen perceptions suggest that a comprehensive grasp of how perceptions are generated is vital to any service organization because it allows for the design of strategies to manage customer perceptions of service performance. Perceptions differ according to the physical context of service locations (Wakefield & Blodgett, 2018). However, it is clear that the incessant over-centralization of the system, the growing view of unfairness in income distribution and marginalization of some segments of Nigeria, and the deficiency of fiscal autonomy for the Nigerian states remain alarming challenges for the Nigerian federalism (Tella et al., 2016). Hence, there is the need to expand the notion of the influences of political knowledge beyond the conventionally focus on democratic principles to consider the conduct of a conceptually and theoretically comprehensive examination of the influences of political knowledge on the perceptions of the Nigerian citizens particularly civil servants in Bauchi state towards Nigerian federalism. Looking at the above-mentioned discussion on issues and critics surrounding the concept of federalism in general and the Nigerian federal structure in particular, the researcher argues that there is a need to examine the influence of

citizen perception and knowledge on Nigerian federalism. This will create an avenue for the researcher to investigate in more in-depth what Nigerian people perceive and know about the federal system and inform the policy on the way forward.

Previous studies on federalism have focused on problems and prospects of power distribution (Uhunmwangho & Ekpu, 2011); fiscal federalism and challenges of development in Nigeria (Nwede & Orga, 2013); impact on revenue generation for economic development (Okolie & Ochei, 2014); democratization and linguistic complexity (Spirlin, 2016); the impact of fiscal decentralization on economic development (Mykola et al., 2019). With regards to this, the research argued that despite the challenges identified in the previous studies on federalism in Nigeria as reported in the above-mentioned studies, there is no study that set an investigation on the influence of political knowledge on federalism as a system of government in Bauchi State, Nigeria. In an attempt to fill in this gap this study aims to examine the relationship between political knowledge and civil servants' perception of Nigerian federalism and the most influence of political knowledge factors on the civil servant's perceptions on Nigerian federalism among Bauchi state civil servants.

## **Literature Review**

### **Influence of Political knowledge and civil servant's perception on federalism**

An effective and well-organized state needs citizens with the proper political knowledge, traits of character, and skills. It is rationally obvious that such kind of citizenry requires fundamental processes to gain structural political knowledge (Wikifield & Bloodgett, 2018). Once citizens acquire political knowledge, they select representatives that would commendably meet up to their interests, demands, and needs. Thus, structural political knowledge influences citizens to prove ideological limitations and attitude reliability with debatably strong indications to leaders or representatives about their interests and inclinations (Senninger, 2018). Furthermore, from the time when Aristotle and Plato first initiated such political discourse, it has become reasonably strong that citizens' political knowledge remains comparative to the specific form of government in a state. Thus, while democratic regimes need democratic electorates with particular knowledge, skills, and character, these types of democratic values may not all be appropriate to military regimes or other nondemocratic forms of government (Smith, 2001).

Federalism in Nigeria necessitates regional coalitions and careful competition management based on integration, including national and tribal characteristics, making federalism in Nigeria challenging and leading to other issues. The reality now demonstrates that the intensive exploitation of the principle of federalism, based on a desire for containment and supremacy and including the dissemination of conspiracy theories and tribal interpretations of events, does not help create what the country most urgently requires, namely, to improve the lives of Nigerians by fostering tolerance and national reconciliation and by replacing the desire for dominance, containment, and tyranny with the desire for freedom.

According to Carpinini and Keeter (1996) knowledge is an important prerequisite for meaningful political participation. Empirical research has demonstrated convincingly that political knowledge contributes significantly to citizens' proclivity to engage in various forms of political behavior (Ondercin & Jones-White, 2011). In this regard, political knowledge is an important component of what has been dubbed "political sophistication," an attitude strongly

related to turnout, low levels of prejudice, and a willingness to engage in political action. In general, those who score high on political sophistication are more likely to participate in political life and effectively make their voice heard in the political decision-making process (Choma & Hafer, 2009).

### Conceptual Model of the Study

#### Political Theory of Federalism

This idea emphasizes the fact that federalism is a superior solution to all difficulties associated with a political system. Because it revolves around political power, the remedy is political. As a result, political motivations play an important part in the development of federal systems. Riker (1987) proposed this theory, which advocates the scientific study of political phenomena. The political theory of federalism has the advantage of portraying federalism as basically a political response to various scenarios involving the power of a political bargain and the influence of political knowledge on federalism (Bednar et al., 1999). The theory explains the emergence of new federations since 1945, such as India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Nigeria, and the West Indies, as well as the origins of older federations such as the United States, Switzerland, Canada, and Australia (Bednar et al., 1999). The theory's importance stems from the fact that it fills a gap left by other classical theories, namely, it explains how federations are formed through aggregation or disaggregation. Based on the above assumptions political theory of federalism can be appropriate and fit the study; since this study is about Nigerian federalism the theory provides ways on how certain issues related to inter-governmental relations can be enhanced without coercion. Furthermore, the political theory of federalism is an appropriate theory to explain Nigerian federalism given its political and socio-cultural diversity. It's on this note that this study aimed to investigate factors that influence federalism among Bauchi state civil servants.

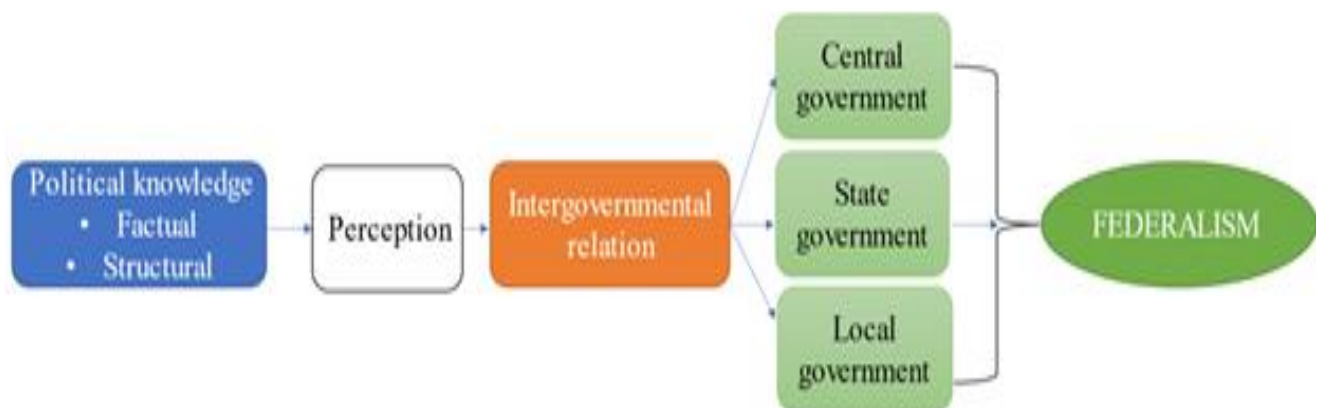


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

#### Methodology

This study employed a survey research design, which is used in conjunction with a cross-sectional design, which is the collection of data from a single sample of the population. In this regard, this study aimed to examine the relationship between respondents' knowledge and perception of federalism. Therefore, a survey research design was employed to answer the objectives of the study. Table 1 shows the sample size based on the percentage distribution of the population of each ministry.

Table 1

*Sample Size*

S/N	Ministries	Population	Percentage	Sample Size
1.	Health	9,707	24.5	102
2.	Education	13,907	35.1	148
3.	Agric	12,203	30.8	129
4.	Finance	3,804	9.6	41
	<b>Total</b>	<b>39,621</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>420</b>

Descriptive analysis was used to assess the frequency distribution and percent of the demographic profile of the respondents such as gender, age groups, and marital status, education level, job cadre, years of working experience, and so on.

**Measurement**

This study used a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was adapted from past studies and modified to suit the objectives of the present study. The question formats were based on a five-point Likert scale and validity and reliability were tested before the main data collection began. It is containing four sections (Sections A – D). Section A has items that ask about civil servant's profiles; section B were items measuring civil servants' political structural knowledge, section C measures political factual knowledge, whereas section D contains items measuring civil servants' perception towards Nigerian Federalism. Table 2 shows the summary of the questionnaire contents for this study.

Table 2

*Summary of Questionnaire Contents*

Section	Description
Section A	Characteristics of Respondent
Section B	Political Structural Knowledge
Section C	Political Factual Knowledge
Section D	Perception on Federalism

**Section A: Respondents' Characteristics**

This section consists of questions on civil servants' gender, age, educational level, cadre, years of working experience, grade level, ministry/department/agency, and membership of professional bodies/trade unions. The questioning formats in this section were in multiple options forms, dichotomous choice, and open-ended. A total of 8 questions were asked in this section.

**Section B: Political Structural Knowledge**

In the political structural knowledge section, 46 statements were provided where the civil servants were asked to respond using a "5-point Likert scale". The respondents were asked to select from "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Agree", and "Strongly Agree" with respect to both positive and negative statements.

**Section C: Political Factual Knowledge**

While in the political factual knowledge section, 30 statements were provided where the civil servants were asked to respond using a "5-point Likert scale". The respondents were asked

to select from “Strongly Disagree”, “Disagree”, “Agree”, and “Strongly Agree” with respect to both positive and negative statements.

#### **Section D: Civil Servants’ Perception towards Federalism**

This is the 4<sup>th</sup> section of the questionnaire and was mainly on the civil servants’ perception towards federalism. Civil servants were asked here to indicate their level of agreement with statements describing perceptions of federalism using a four-point Likert’s scale. The respondents were asked to select from “Strongly Disagree”, “Disagree”, “Agree”, and “Strongly Agree” with respect to both positive and negative statements. Twenty-two (22) statements were used in this section.

The result of reliability for all three instruments is good. The reliability of Political Structural Knowledge is .927, Political Factual Knowledge is .895, and Perception on Federalism was .836. The reliability of the study constructs is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

#### *Reliability Analysis Result*

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>Number of Items</b>	<b>Cronbach Alpha Value</b>
Political Structural Knowledge	46	.927
Political Factual Knowledge	30	.895
Perception on Federalism	22	.836

#### **Results**

Table 4 showed the demographic information of the respondents for this research which consists of gender, level of education cadre, years of service grade level, ministry as well as membership in the union. The result on age distribution revealed that those whose age ranges between 20-30 years of age were 95 (24.0%), those who were between 31-40 years were 142 (35.90%) while those between 41 to 50 years were constitute 122 (30.8%) of the total responses obtained. However, the respondents aged 51-60 years were only 37 (9.3%), making this category the least in number. Results on the gender distribution of the respondents show that males constitute the majority, with about 223 responses, which is 56.3% whereas female respondents were 173 (43.7%). Furthermore, the result of the study shows the level of educational attainment of the respondents. As shown in Table 4.1, those who had up to the Ph.D. level of education were 14 (3.5%) while those with MSc were 101 (25.5%) and those with BSc. /BA were 176 (44.4%). More so, those who attained only a Diploma/ NCE level of education were 85 (21.5%) whereas those with only SSCE/O-Level were only 20 (5.1%). In the respondents’ cadre, the result obtained shows that those in the executive cadre among the respondents were 82 (20.7%), while those in the administrative cadre were 140 (35.4%) and those in the professional cadre were 123 (31.1%). For secretarial cadre, they constitute 37 (9.3%) of the respondents whereas those in the clerical cadre were only 14 (3.5%).

Inquiry on the years spent on service revealed that those who spent less than 5 years were 16 (4.0%), those who spent between 6 to 15 years were 62 (15.7%) whereas those who spent between 16 to 25 years were 129 (32.6%) and finally those who have been in service for 26-35 years constitute 189 (47.7%). The distribution of the respondents based on ministry revealed that those from the Ministry of Health were 97 (24.5%), those from the Ministry of

Education were 139 (35.1%), whereas those from the Ministry of Agric were 122 (30.8%) and finally, those from Ministry of Finance were 38 (9.6%). On membership of trade unions, the result of the study revealed that the majority of the respondents (222), which is equivalent to 56.1% were members of various unions while the remaining (174), that is 43.9% responded as not belonging to any union or trade organization. The distribution of the respondents based on various unions showed that 95 (24.0%) belongs to Nigerian Union of Journalist (NUJ), while 142 (35.9%) belongs to Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC). More so, those that are members of Trade Union Congress (TUC) were 122 (30.8%) while those other unions not mentioned were only 37 (9.3%). This shows that the Bauchi civil servants belong to various trade organizations.

Table 4  
*Socio-Demographic Characteristics*

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Age	20-30	95	24.0
	31-40	142	35.9
	41-50	122	30.8
	51-60	37	9.3
Gender	Male	223	56.3
	Female	173	43.7
Level of Education	PhD	14	3.5
	MSc	101	25.5
	BSc/ BA	176	44.4
	Diploma/ NCE	85	21.5
	SSCE/ O-Level	20	5.1
Cadre	Executive	82	20.7
	Administrative	140	35.4
	Professional	123	31.1
	Secretarial	37	9.3
	Clerical	14	3.5
Years of Service	Less than 5 Years	16	4.0
	6-15 Years	62	15.7
	16-25 Years	129	32.6
	26-35 Years	189	47.7
Ministry	Health	97	24.5
	Education	139	35.1
	Agric	122	30.8
	Finance	38	9.6
Membership of Union	Yes	222	56.1
	No	174	43.9
Name of Union	NUJ	95	24.0
	NLC	142	35.9
	TUC	122	30.8
	Others	37	9.3

Table 5 outlined the correlation result between Political Knowledge and Perception of Federalism. The results indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between political structural knowledge and respondents' perception on federalism ( $r=.482$ ,  $p .000$ ). the



result further revealed that political factual knowledge also has a significant and positive relationship with the respondents' perception on federalism ( $r = .708$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

Table 5

*Correlation between Political Knowledge and Perception on Federalism*

Variables (n=396)	r	p
Political Structural Knowledge	.482	.000
Political Factual Knowledge	.708	.000

Table 6 displays the multiple regression results of the two factors of the study, the result revealed that the overall model was significant with an  $R^2 = .531$ . This model explained 53.1% of the variance with  $F = 182.587$ ,  $P < .001$ . As shown in Table 6, the result showed that political structural knowledge ( $B = .219$ ,  $P < .001$ ) and political factual knowledge ( $B = .614$ ,  $P < .001$ ) were found to be significant. The result has shown that among the predictors of federalism political factual knowledge is the highest predictor.

Table 6

*Multiple Regression on Influence of Political Structural and Factual Knowledge on Respondents' Perception on Nigerian Federalism*

Variable	b	Beta	t	Sig.
Political structural knowledge	.022	.219	5.790	.000
Political factual Knowledge	.500	.614	16.207	.000

$R = .731$ ;  $R^2 = .534$ ; Adjusted  $R^2 = .531$ ;  $F = 182.587$ ; Sig.  $F = .000$

\* $p < .01$

\*\* $p < .001$

**Discussion**

The correlation result for this study showed there is a significant relationship between respondents' political structural and factual knowledge and their perception of Nigerian federalism. This indicated that there is a strong and significant relationship between political factual knowledge and respondents' perception on federalism. This implies that a relationship does exist between political structural and factual knowledge and the perception of Bauchi State civil servants on Nigerian federalism which is good for the system. This result supports the findings by Senninger (2018) who reported that factual knowledge about the political system has a significant relationship with citizens' perceptions and attitudes towards the political system in the country. Factual political knowledge (which means information recall for factual information) has an effect on the perceived complexity of messages that are crucial in disseminating political knowledge for the citizens to understand. This intuitively suggests that higher levels of objective political facts may indeed have an ultimate consequence on the way people perceive the message and further one's political knowledge.

Based on the multiple linear regression results on the influence of political factual knowledge and political structural knowledge on citizens' perception of Nigerian federalism. The result obtained as shown which revealed that political structural knowledge has a positive and significant influence on respondents' perception of federalism in Nigeria, this outcome shows that for every unit increase in political structural knowledge, there will be 0.130 likelihood of respondents having a positive perception of Nigerian federalism. Therefore, the higher the

political knowledge, the higher the likelihood of respondents exhibiting a good perception of Nigerian federalism. This outcome supports the findings of Kleinberg and Lau (2019), who emphasized that political knowledge is positively related to the perception of the government system. Furthermore, political knowledge has been proven to predict the extent to which people's vote choices fit their values and priorities, as well as ideological constraint, political participation, and knowledge of current political actors and events. Granger et al (2019) pointed out that followers with political understanding are more inclined to take charge and enact change, which they believe is because having this knowledge makes enacting change seem less hazardous. Leaders who want to improve their followers' political education should also work on developing high-quality relationships with them, as these ties are positively linked to political knowledge.

On the other hand, the result of the political factual knowledge has a significant and positive influence on citizens' perception of Nigerian federalism. This outcome shows that for every unit increase in political factual knowledge, there will be 0.500 likelihood of respondents having a positive perception of Nigerian federalism. Therefore, the higher the political factual knowledge, the higher the likelihood of respondents exhibiting a good perception of Nigerian federalism. This result is in agreement with the study by Tolochko and Boomgarden (2019) who confirmed that factual political knowledge contributes immensely and positively shedding light on knowledge about politics in relation to democracy and various systems of government. There is a general belief that making informed decisions requires factual information, which indicated that a higher level of factual and structural knowledge regarding politics and beyond have a direct effect on citizens' perception. There is no federal system that is commonly viewed as successful, whose people do not acquire higher knowledge about politics, and does not have a federal political culture and a strong will to use federal principles and arrangements (Bednar, 2009).

### Conclusion

Based on this outcome of the current study, it can be concluded that political knowledge if enhanced, will have a significant impact on the citizens' perception on Nigerian federalism. The enhancing political knowledge of citizens will enhance their perception and understanding of the country's federal system of government. Hence, it is recommended that the government design an enlightenment program targeting civil servants in Bauchi state in order to educate them and enhance their understanding and perception of Nigerian federalism.

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