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# Comparison analysis of retrenchment pattern between commercial banks and government parastatals in Nigeria

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## Abstract

This paper investigated the trend of retrenchment in commercial banks in North-eastern Nigeria, in comparison to retrenchment in government establishment. To achieve the stated objectives of the study, the paper was guided by two research questions and one research hypothesis. The paper sampled 104 banks staff from five leading commercial banks and 63 staff from federal government establishment. The study used structured questionnaire and data collected were analyzed using simple percentage, frequency count, weighted average and standard deviation. The hypothesis was tested using t-test analysis run in SPSS version 20 at significant level of 0.05. The results showed that commercial banks in the North-eastern Nigeria has many purposes which are business related factors for retrenching their staff unlike federal establishment which mostly based retrenchment on performance. Also, it was found that commercial banks in the study area are not following due process and the labour byelaw while retrenching their staff. The study found significant differences between the rate of retrenchment in the commercial banks and federal government establishment. The paper concludes that there is inconsistent pattern of staff retrenchment in commercial banks in the North-eastern Nigeria, whereas, the federal civil service has consistence retrenchment pattern. The paper recommends the government policy that will enforce the commercial banks to respect the right of retrenching staff. Also, the paper recommend that the government should encourage private establishment to allow minimum level of unionism in their establishment to cater for the rights of employees.

**Keywords:** *Retrenchment; commercial banks; government establishment*

## 1. Introduction

Globally, the banking industry is undergoing several changes and reforms as measures to counter the

challenges posed by economic recession, deregulation of financial sector, globalization of operations, and technological innovations. The commercial banks in Nigeria, is strictly profit making oriented financial institutions, set up for keeping and lending money and other valuation items for the purpose of making profit. Therefore, the commercial banks in Nigeria are responding to its shares of global recession with policies reforms and mass retrenchment. Staff retrenchment is considered by most national governments of the world, to be an issue that has to be given maximum attention, this has prompted many nations to come-up with a lot of policies, rules and regulations to minimize level of staff retrenchment and regulate the unemployment rate among populace.

Evidences from various studies have shown that both retrenched and general public affected with the aftermath effects of retrenchment. Newmorn, Baum, Zersch and Jolley (2012), argued that people who were affected by retrenchment find it very difficult to cope especially when they have family that absolutely depends on them. Likewise, the study conducted by Ahmed, A. I., Kakkar, G. and Sharma, K. D. (2016), indicated that most at times in Nigeria, the retrenchment in the banking industries outweighed other sectors and government establishment. A careful review of literature on the factors influencing retrenchment indicates numerous dynamics within and surrounding organizations. Williams et al. (2014) argued that government is not paying more attention to the retrenchment rate in the private sectors. More so, the study conducted by Umar and Olatunde (2011), reiterated that private firms are abusing employee rights during staff retrenchment than it is observable across the government establishments. Other evidences from empirical study by Udokwu (2012) and Siyanbola (2011) have shown that very few empirical studies have dealt with rate of retrenchment in the commercial banks in North-eastern Nigeria. More also, there is no evidence of any study compare the

retrenchment exercise by the commercial banks and federal government establishment in North-Eastern Nigeria.

## 2. Aims and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to empirically examine whether commercial banks and federal government services shared similar retrenchment pattern in North-Eastern Nigeria while the specific objectives include to:

- i. Compare the purpose of retrenchments between commercial banks and government
- ii. Compare the level of compliant to labour law by both the commercial banks and government agencies
- iii. Compare the rate of staff retrenchment between the commercial banks and government agencies

## 3. Research Questions

1. Are there differences between purpose of retrenchment between commercial banks and government establishment?
2. Which among the commercial banks and government establishment usually observed labour law while retrenching their staff

## 4. Research Hypothesis

**Ho1:** There is no significant difference between the rate of retrenchment in commercial banks and Government ministries, parastatals or Agencies in North-Eastern Nigeria

## 5. Literature Review

Wandera (2013), in his study that investigated the effects of retrenchment and staff rationalization in Kenya Tea Development Agency Holdings Ltd, conceptualized retrenchment as a form of dismissal due to no fault of the employee. According to Rama-Rao (2010), in the study on the effects of dismissal and retrenchment on staff, retrenchment “is a process whereby the employer reviews its business needs in order to increase profits or limit losses, which leads to reducing its employees”. However, Ogbegie (2015), in his study that explored the socio-economic effects of retrenchment, maintained that it is the duty of employer to give fair reasons for making the decision to retrench and follow a fair procedure when making such a decision or the retrenchment may be considered unfair.

In another study conducted by Munjuri (2011), that examined the criteria used to determine employees that supposed to be retrenched in Kenyan commercial banks, retrenchment is expressed as a term known as ‘reduction of workforce’ and in legal terms, it is regarded as ‘termination of contract’. In the industrial court, retrenchment is confined to be use as a means of discharging surplus labour. More so, Muñoz-Bullón and Sánchez-Bueno (2011), in their study that investigated the extent at which, the staff downsizing improves organizational performance among Spanish manufacturing firms. They expressed that human resources management perceived retrenchment as an activity to legally terminate any employment contract with the employee by offering a compensation package and such offer may come into as mutual acceptance or forced upon by one party, which of course would be the employer.

According to Coffie (2016), retrenchment could be methodically categorized into three common types, which are involuntary separation, voluntary separation and mutual separation. The involuntary separation happens when the employee has no control over the retrenchment planning and decision to retrench is fully decided by the employer. This is a common retrenchment exercise where companies can lay off workers due to cost, business or operational factors. The only thing that matters in this sort of exercise is valid grounds for such decision to be made, reasonable time to notify the selected employees and compliance to legal requirement when compensating them (Otuchikere and Ifeakandu, 2010). In another instances, unlike involuntary separation, voluntary separation gives employees the choice to decide if employee is willing and ready to accept his/her contract to be ceased. This type of retrenchment exercise gives both parties the advantage. Employees can review the criteria and terms and the lay-off package offered before they decide to apply for it. There is no compulsion or pressure to accept such lay off and they can still choose to continue working under new contract terms (Otuchikere and Ifeakandu, 2010). Thus, this sort of method can help them to reduce manpower cost such as medical and wage bills of those who are having continuous medical issues resulting in dip in work performance. Also, it helps to reorganize their manpower and promote career pathway for younger employees when senior employees are given a choice for alternative employment options when they offered an attractive lay off package. The last gasp of retrenchment type is mutual separation.

## **6 Methodology**

### **6.1 Research Design**

The survey research design method is adopted in this paper, due to its simplicity, convenient, flexibility and its comprehensiveness to gather data or information from the sample size.

### **6.2 Population of the Study**

The population of this paper comprises of permanent employees of the top five biggest commercial banks, the retrenched bank staff and Federal Civil Servants from Federal Parastatals, Ministries and Agencies operating in Adamawa state in North-Eastern Nigeria. Therefore, all 945 banks staff, and 161 retrenched bank staff and 2,806 federal civil servants served as population of this paper.

### **6.3 Sample Size:**

The sample size was determined by using sample size guide proposed by Kish (1965), that 10% of population less than 1000 people is enough as sample size to represent the whole population, likewise, in another sample size guide offered by Sudman (1976), it was suggested that 2.5% of population within the range 2000 and 4000 people is enough to be selected as sample size representing the whole population. Therefore, the researcher used the simple random sampling technique to select the total of 241 as sample size for this paper, comprised of 10% of Bank staff and retrenched staff and 2.5% of bank Federal Civil Servants from total population of 3,912.

### **6.4 Sampling Technique**

The study adopted both judgmental sampling technique and stratified sampling technique, to select the top five (5) biggest commercial banks listed in the Nigerian stock exchange market from the twenty-two (22) commercial banks in Nigeria. The randomly sampling technique was used to select the bank staff and federal civil servants, while convenient sampling technique was used to select the bank customers and the retrenched bank staff.

### **6.5 Instrument for Data Collection**

The researcher used a self-administered questionnaire for getting information from respondents.

### **6.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation**

The data collected for this paper were analyzed and presented using descriptive and inferential statistics such percentage, average and standard deviation, while t-test was an inferential tool used to test the hypothesis.

## **7 Analysis of Research Questions**

**7.1 Research Question I:** How relative is the purpose of retrenchments between commercial banks and Federal Civil Service?

**Table 1: Purpose of Retrenchment in Commercial Banks and Federal Civil Service**

Purpose	Responds Rate				Avg	Std Dev	Rmk
	SA Fx (%)	A Fx (%)	D Fx (%)	SD Fx (%)			
<b>Bank Staff (N=104)</b>							
Minimizing Personnel Cost	10(10%)	66(63%)	25(24%)	3(3%)	2.80	0.64	A
Reducing Incompetent Staff	9(9%)	49(47%)	40(38%)	6(6%)	2.59	0.69	A
Revenue Maximization	4(4%)	70(67%)	25(24%)	5(5%)	2.70	0.66	A
Personal Interest	6(6%)	58(56%)	33(32%)	7(7%)	2.61	0.66	A
Staff Intransigence	4(4%)	34(33%)	18(17%)	48(46%)	1.94	0.99	D
Achieving More Efficiencies	49(47%)	14(13%)	21(20%)	20(19%)	2.88	0.69	A
Responses to recession	54(52%)	21(20%)	11(11%)	18(17%)	3.07	0.71	A
<b>Federal Civil Servant (N=63)</b>							
Minimizing Personnel Cost	5(8%)	9(14%)	10(16%)	39(62%)	1.68	0.85	D
Reducing Incompetent Staff	31(49%)	21(33%)	8(13%)	3(5%)	3.27	0.96	A
Revenue Maximization	3(5%)	11(17%)	16(25%)	33(52%)	1.75	0.97	D
Personal Interest	6(10%)	8(13%)	12(19%)	37(59%)	1.73	0.93	D
Staff Intransigence	12(19%)	21(33%)	18(29%)	12(19%)	2.52	0.98	A
Achieving More Efficiencies	41(65%)	10(16%)	3(5%)	9(14%)	3.32	0.78	A
Responses to recession	0(0%)	10(16%)	9(14%)	44(70%)	1.46	0.92	D

Source: Field Survey, 2017

**7.2 Research Question 2:** Which among the commercial banks and government establishment usually observed labour law while retrenching their staff?

**Table 2: Extent of Law Observance among Commercial Banks and Government Establishment while Retrenching Staff**

Category	SA	A	D	SD	Avg	Std Dev	Rmk
	Fx (%)	Fx (%)	Fx (%)	Fx (%)			
<b>Retrenched Bank Staff (n=104)</b>							
Commercial banks are following guideline on retrenchment issues	5(5%)	12(12%)	20(19%)	67(64%)	1.57	0.48	D
The guidelines in the bank industry favored retrenched staff	0(0%)	14(13%)	15(14%)	75(72%)	1.41	0.74	D
Retrenchment issues are always decided by the top management in banks	77(74%)	12(12%)	14(13%)	1(1%)	3.59	0.5	A
Commercial banks adherence to due process in staff retrenchment	9(9%)	11(11%)	17(16%)	67(64%)	1.63	0.54	D
The retrenchment processing in	11(11%)	18(17%)	11(11%)	64(62%)	1.77	0.68	D

commercial banks is done with transparency

**Retrenched Bank Staff (n=16)**

Federal Civil Service are following guideline on retrenchment issues	39(62%)	9(14%)	10(16%)	5(8%)	3.30	0.52	A
The guidelines in the Federal Civil Services favored retrenched staff	45(71%)	6(10%)	10(16%)	2(3%)	3.49	0.68	A
Retrenchment issues are always decided by the top management in Federal Civil Services	56(89%)	5(8%)	2(3%)	0(0%)	3.86	0.52	A
Federal Civil Service adherence to due process in staff retrenchment	44(70%)	10(16%)	3(5%)	6(10%)	3.46	0.45	A
The retrenchment processing in Federal Civil Services is done with transparency	49(78%)	10(16%)	3(5%)	1(2%)	3.70	0.89	A

*Source: Field Survey, 2017*

**8. Analysis of the Research Hypothesis**

H01: There is no significant difference between the rate of retrenchment in commercial banks and Government ministries, parastatals or Agencies in North-Eastern Nigeria

**Table 3: T-test Result on Differences in the Rate of Staff Retrenchment in Commercial Banks and Federal Civil Services**

Respondent Types	N	Mean	Mean Diff	Std. Error Diff	t-test	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Bank staff	104	4.029	1.442	0.140	10.325	165	0.000
Fed. Civil Servant	63	2.587					

*Source: Data Analysis, (2017)*



## 9. Discussion

The result of Table 1 shows the respondents' perspective both in the category of banks staff and federal civil servant regarding purpose of retrenchment in their respective establishments. The results show that the purpose of retrenchment in banks include minimizing personnel cost (average =2.80), reducing incompetent staff (average = 2.59), revenue maximization (average = 2.70), personal interest among top officers (average = 2.61), efforts to achieve more efficiencies (average = 2.88) and measures as counter recession effect (average = 3.07). However, the purpose of retrenchment in the federal government establishment differed greatly, the results showed that the staff are retrenched in Federal government services to reduce incompetent Staff (average =3.27), to addresses intransigence among staff (average =2.52) and to achieve more efficiencies (average = 3.32). These results show that every possibility can lead to staff retrenchment in banks while few conditions prompt retrenchment in the study federal government establishment.

The findings from the analysis of the first research question shows that commercial banks in the North-Eastern Nigeria were retrenching their staff to minimize the personnel cost and to achieve reduction of incompetent staff as well as maximizing their revenue. The findings agreed with the earlier findings made from study conducted by Coffie (2016), on the retrenchment process and the bank coping mechanisms in Ghana, that one of the opportunities trail retrenchment for banks industry including reduction of cost, improved efficiency as well as improving competitiveness. Thus, commercial banks in the study area might resolve to retrench some members of their staff if noticed incompetency among the staff or lapses in the recruitment exercises as well making efforts to adjust to the minimal revenue and personnel cost. However, unlike commercial banks the Federal government establishments are only retrenched staff to achieve more efficiency and reduced incompetency. Comparatively, it has evident that commercial banks are retrenching their staff for many purposes including counter recession measure, while federal government establishment are not retrenched to cater for economic situations. This fact may not be unconnected with the fact that commercial banks are business oriented and have to take every measure that can guarantee better performance. This agreed with the findings made from a study conducted by Ochieno (2013), on the effects of retrenchment on organizational performance at the Telkom Kenya revealed, that among the reason for retrench in business oriented firms are to enhance execution and

profitability, lessen cost, improve quality and enhance competitive advantage.

The results from this section imply that the purpose of retrenchment differed greatly between the commercial banks and federal government establishment. This finding may not be unconnected with the fact that in most cases, the bank is strictly commercial enterprises that drive to gain more from daily business and could not afford to hold-on employees deems unsuitable for the jobs. Also, the businesses environment is control by both internal and external factors in which the banks as commercial organization have to respond with immediate effect. Therefore, any slight change in the business environment or policy from CBN or change in the competing banks or other financial institutions must be adjust to, in order to counter-effects the effects of policy from apex bank or adjustment from other competing business. In most cases, retrenchments become option for banks to adjust internally to the external pressures. These facts agreed with the conclusion drawn at the end of the study conducted by Oluitan, Ashamu and Ogunkenu (2015), on the effect of recapitalization on bank performance in Nigeria, that most banks began a massive retrenchment to cut their expenses. Likewise, the study conducted by Anifowoshe et al. (2011), on the post - consolidation of banks on human resource management in Nigerian banking sector revealed that staff were retrenched for the bank to adjust to the new merging banks. The results from the analysis on the effects of merger and acquisition in Nigeria banks on their performance in pre-and post-consolidation period conducted by Umoren and Olokoyo (2012), revealed that banks have various factors for staff retrenchment ranging from cost reduction, minimizing personnel cost, and reducing incompetent staff.

The results on the second research questions as presented in Table 2 shows the extent at which both the commercial banks and federal government establishment do observed labour law while retrenching staff. The results showed that in the category of banks staff, respondents unanimously disagreed to all items, expect third item, asserted that the top management decided the retrenchment issues (average = 3.59). This implied that commercial banks are not following guidelines during retrenchment (average =1.57). Likewise, guidelines are not favour the retrenched staff = 1.41. Also, retrenchment in commercial banks is not adherence to due processing (average = 1.63) and as well retrenchment in the commercial banks lack transparency (average = 1.77).

However, in the category of federal civil servant, all items regarding observance of labour law during retrenchment were agreed to. The results showed that guidelines on retrenchment are followed strictly (average = 3.30). Likewise, the guidelines regarding retrenchment in the federal government services favour retrenched staff (average = 3.49). The top management strictly partakes in the retrenchment issue (average = 3.86). Also, the due processing were followed during retrenchment at federal civil services (average = 3.46). The retrenchment process in the federal civil services is done with transparency (average = 3.70).

These results show that the level of law observance is more consistent in federal civil service than commercial banks in the North-eastern Nigeria. This fact agree with the conclusion earlier drawn from a study conducted by Okechukwu (2010), on the level at which Intercontinental Bank observed ethical aspect of staff downsizing, that banks like other private establishment in Nigeria, do not show much respects to the laid down guideline for hiring and retrenching employee. Likewise, the findings of the study conducted by Ogechukwu (2013), on the level of compliances of Nigerian commercial banks to ethic of retrenchment, found that there are excessive abuses of human rights as well as unethical practices in the retrenchment pattern of many commercial banks. More so, the findings made from a study conducted by Ayozie (2012), on the level of ethical considerations in Nigerian banking sectors regarding human resources management.

The study found that most commercial banks are not following guidelines while recruiting new staff and thereby forcefully ejected most of their staff in their fourth to fifth years in service after all efforts to manage them proved abortive. Likewise, the findings from a study conducted by Isrealstam (2012), on the level of compliance to the retrenchment law and its benefits on retrenched staff, found that in spite of stricter of courts on application of retrenchment law, employers are still implement retrenchments without giving thought to labour law compliance. Thus, it is imperatively observed from the findings of This paper that the federal civil services committed more to labour laws and regulation guiding staff retrenchment, while most commercial banks are ruthless about staff retrenchment as result of weakened judicial system and high rate of unemployment that make labor succumb to every conditions and terms put forth by the commercial banks during staff recruitment.

The results on the Table 3 reveal a significant t-test value 10.325 at degree of freedom of 165, p-value <0.001. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and

this implies that there is a significant difference between the rates of staff retrenchment in the commercial banks in compare to federal civil services. Also, the mean rating of 4.029 was depicted as mean rating for the bank staff in compare with the average rating of 2.587 from federal civil servant suggested that the commercial banks have higher retrenchment rate than federal civil services. These findings agreed with the findings earlier made from the study conducted by Ajede (2011), on the effect of bank re-capitalization and manpower planning and control, that commercial banks as a result of reform policy by Central Bank of Nigeria are retrenching their staff in high rate. Likewise, the study conducted by Odeh (2012), on the effects of retrenchment as a result of privatization of public enterprise and productivity indicated that despite high rate of retrenchment in the public enterprises, the rate is still low to what is recorded in the banking sector.

However, the findings from study conducted by Anifowoshe et al. (2011), on the post- consolidation of banks on human resource management in Nigerian Banking Sector did not established any significant differences between the rate of retrenchment in commercial banks and other private firms. Nevertheless, the study by Anifowoshe et al (2011) did not compare the bank services to public services. In a nutshell, the rate of staff retrenchment in the commercial banks of North-Eastern States in Nigeria is significantly higher than staff retrenchment in federal public services.

## 10. Conclusion

Retrenchment pattern in every sector is function of job security of employees within the sector and overall rate of unemployment in the society. This study has established inconsistent pattern of staff retrenchment in commercial banks in the North-eastern Nigeria, whereas, the federal civil service has consistence retrenchment pattern. In overall, this paper has evidently showed that various purposes which are economically motive were behind the retrenchment in the commercial banks in north eastern Nigeria, whereas, the in federal government services, the motive for retrenchment is to get rid of incompetence in the services. These different in the purposes of the two studied establishments also defined their level of observance the labour laws guiding recruitment exercise in their sector. Commercial banks in the study area are grossly abusing and not observing labour law while retrenching staff. This greatly differed from pattern of law observing by federal civil services, the federal establishments were found paying attention to some guidelines for staff retrenchment. In all, this paper



reaffirmed that the commercial banks have high rate of staff retrenchment in the North-eastern Nigeria, which is significantly higher than federal civil services within the same area.

## 11. Recommendations

1. The federal government of Nigeria, the labour union as well as other activists should ensure that banks develop a corporate strategy imbued with a rigorous implementation of retrenchment based on objectivity.
2. The commercial banks managers in north eastern Nigeria should ensure that the labour laws guiding staff retrenchment and staff rights were strictly followed to reduce the negative impact of incessant retrenchment practices on both the affected staff and the society.
3. The federal government of Nigeria needs to come up with policy that will enforce the private firm need to allow minimal level of unionism and ensure their registration with requires professional and regulatory bodies. The cut-off from regulatory bodies as well as professional bodies may prone the unethical activities among the bank staff, which likely to force the banks to retrench the offending official.

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