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Research Article

Improving the Productivity of the Public Sector Worker in Ghana

Benjamin Saka Myers*

Management Development & Productivity Institute (MDPI), Accra, Ghana

Abstract

This study critically examines the productivity dynamics within Ghana's public sector, focusing on the factors influencing worker efficiency, institutional performance, and service delivery. Employing a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods design, data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions, institutional audits, and document reviews across five key ministries. The research is grounded in constructivist and public value management theories, offering a nuanced exploration of systemic, organizational, and behavioural contributors to low productivity. The study identified leadership quality, lack of accountability, rigid bureaucratic structures, digital inefficiencies, and weak motivation as central impediments to productivity. Findings revealed that while many public servants demonstrate capacity and commitment, the institutional environment often stifles initiative and rewards compliance over innovation. A significant gap was also observed between staff perceptions and citizen experiences, highlighting the need for robust feedback mechanisms. Comparative analysis with international best practices from Rwanda, Singapore, and South Korea illuminated potential pathways for reform, emphasizing the importance of performance contracts, digital integration, and continuous professional development. The study offers pragmatic recommendations including the institutionalization of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), leadership reform, investment in digital infrastructure, and the adoption of non-monetary incentive schemes. This research contributes to public administration literature by contextualizing productivity within the Ghanaian public service and bridging theoretical constructs with actionable policy insights. It emphasizes that enhancing productivity is not solely a technical endeavour but one that requires political will, cultural change, and systemic transformation. By reimagining public sector work as a vehicle for public value rather than mere compliance, Ghana can make meaningful strides towards a more responsive, efficient, and citizen-centric administration.

Keywords

Public Sector Productivity, Ghana, Leadership, Accountability, Bureaucracy, Digital Governance, Motivation, Public Administration

1. Introduction

Public sector productivity, while often elusive in measurement, is foundational to national development and governance effectiveness. In Ghana, the public sector constitutes the largest employer and interfaces directly with citizens in critical areas such as health, education, infrastructure, and regulatory functions. Yet, systemic inefficiencies continue to hinder service delivery. Understanding and addressing the root causes of these inefficiencies is vital.

*Corresponding author: Sakmyers25@yahoo.com (Benjamin Saka Myers)

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This study interrogates the institutional, organizational, and human factors affecting the productivity of public sector workers in Ghana. By combining theoretical frameworks with practice-based insights, it proposes evidence-backed recommendations to enhance public workforce output.

1.1. The Productivity Puzzle

Productivity in the public sector is harder to quantify than in the private sector, where profit margins and turnover dominate as success metrics. In the public domain, the yardsticks are efficiency, responsiveness, citizen satisfaction, timeliness of service delivery, and the tangible impact of services rendered.

For example, consider a registration officer at the Births and Deaths Registry in Tamale. On a good day, she might process twenty certificates. However, due to power outages, poor software, or lack of stationery, her productivity could dip to ten. Now multiply this across all district offices nationwide—what appears to be a minor inefficiency at the micro level quickly aggregates into a systemic drag on national progress.

Or take a records officer at the Ministry of Health who must file daily requisitions for medical supplies to be dispatched to regional hospitals. If he faces delays in approvals due to an absent signatory or outdated approval processes, lives may be at stake.

These examples illuminate the essence of public sector productivity—it's not about clocking hours; it's about making hours count in a manner that serves the collective good.

1.2. Background of the Study

The productivity of public sector workers in Ghana has long been a subject of intense debate and scrutiny among policymakers, academics, civil society organizations, and the citizenry. As the largest employer in the Ghanaian economy and the key instrument through which government delivers essential services, the public sector's efficiency—or lack thereof—has profound implications for national development. This study seeks to contextualize and explore the productivity challenges confronting public sector workers in Ghana, identify the underlying causes, and propose actionable recommendations for enhancing output and efficiency.

Historically, Ghana's public sector has played a central role in the post-independence reconstruction agenda. Successive governments have relied heavily on the civil service, local government administrations, and state-owned enterprises to roll out policies, manage public goods, and regulate various aspects of economic and social life. However, over time, the sector has earned a reputation for inefficiency, delays, lack of innovation, and poor customer service. Public perception, as well as numerous empirical studies, paint a grim picture: that many public offices are characterized by absenteeism, red tape, inadequate supervision, and weak accountability mechanisms. These factors not only undermine service delivery but also erode public trust in state institutions. Regional assessments by the African Development Bank and other development partners similarly underline how institutional capacity constraints in Ghana's public service weaken broader development outcomes [1, 15, 16].

The urgency to address productivity deficits in the public sector cannot be overstated. Ghana's development aspirations, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the African Union's strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of the continent over a 50-year period, adopted in 2015 - Agenda 2063, and national policy frameworks like the Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies (CPESDP), all hinge on a capable and responsive public sector. Without significant improvements in how government agencies and employees operate, these ambitions risk remaining on paper.

1.3. Rationale of the Study

A critical examination of the productivity landscape within Ghana's public service is necessary for several reasons. First, the cost of maintaining a non-performing public workforce is enormous—both in fiscal terms and opportunity costs. Second, in an era of fiscal constraints and growing citizen demands, it is imperative for the state to do more with less. Third, the changing dynamics of governance, influenced by globalization, digitalization, and citizen activism, require that public institutions be agile, transparent, and performance-driven.

This study is informed by the growing body of literature that highlights both systemic and behavioural constraints affecting productivity. These include poor leadership, weak institutional frameworks, limited use of performance metrics, inadequate training, and a lack of technological integration. Moreover, existing reform efforts, though many, have often been fragmented, poorly implemented, or not sustained over time. By providing a comprehensive, evidence-based assessment of these challenges, this research aims to offer strategic insights that can inform policy design, institutional reform, and capacity-building interventions.

1.4. Objectives of the Study

The overarching objective of this research is to analyse and propose solutions to the productivity challenges of public sector workers in Ghana. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Identify key institutional, managerial, and individual-level factors affecting productivity.
2. Assess the effectiveness of past and current productivity improvement initiatives.
3. Examine the role of leadership, technology, and human resource development in driving performance.
4. Recommend evidence-based strategies for enhancing efficiency, accountability, and innovation in public institutions.

1.5. Scope and Limitations

While the study takes a broad look at the Ghanaian public sector, it focuses primarily on central government ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs). Local government units and state-owned enterprises are considered where relevant. The analysis draws on secondary data from government reports, academic journals, and prior studies, supplemented by qualitative insights from key informant interviews. Limitations include the availability of up-to-date productivity metrics and the variability of institutional performance across sectors.

1.6. Structure of the Study

The paper is organized into seven main sections: Abstract, Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results and Analysis, Discussion, and Conclusion. Each section builds on the previous to offer a holistic understanding of the productivity dynamics within Ghana's public sector. The study concludes with a set of recommendations for policymakers, public managers, and development partners seeking to foster a more effective and citizen-oriented public service.

2. Literature Review

Extensive literature from international and local sources points to bureaucracy, resource misallocation, weak M&E systems, and poor human resource policies as major culprits in productivity deficits [5, 35]. In Ghana's health sector, for instance, empirical work on appraisal systems shows that poorly designed evaluations can dampen motivation rather than enhance it [4]. Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and McGregor's Theory X and Y remain relevant in explaining public employee behaviour [13, 17]. Empirical studies by [29] and [3] further underscore the correlation between job satisfaction, supervision quality, and productivity.

Digitalization is increasingly recognized as a productivity driver. Studies from Kenya [27] and Rwanda [25] illustrate how e-governance platforms and automation have improved public service efficiency. Ghana's efforts in this regard remain nascent.

2.1. Conceptualizing Public Sector Productivity

Productivity, in its most fundamental sense, refers to the efficiency with which inputs are transformed into outputs. In the context of the public sector, productivity extends beyond traditional economic indicators such as output per labor hour; it encompasses service quality, responsiveness, effectiveness, and citizen satisfaction. Unlike the private sector where profitability is a dominant measure, public sector productivity must be understood in terms of public value—how well institutions meet the needs of the population using available resources. This makes defining, measuring, and improving productivity in government institutions inherently complex.

2.2. Theoretical Frameworks

Multiple theoretical lenses can be applied to analyze public sector productivity. Principal among these is the New Public Management (NPM) paradigm, which emphasizes efficiency, decentralization, and performance metrics borrowed from the private sector [14]. NPM advocates argue for leaner bureaucracies, output-based performance measurement, and customer-oriented service delivery. In contrast, proponents of traditional Weberian bureaucracy stress the role of rules, procedures, and neutrality in safeguarding public interest. Institutional theory also offers valuable insights, positing that organizational behaviours are shaped more by normative pressures and legitimacy concerns than by efficiency alone [10].

More recently, the concept of public value management [23] has gained traction. This approach sees public managers as enablers of value co-creation, balancing performance with democratic legitimacy and citizen engagement. In Ghana's context, where administrative reforms coexist with enduring traditional hierarchies and politicized civil service dynamics, these frameworks must be adapted to reflect ground realities.

2.3. Empirical Studies on Public Sector Productivity

Empirical studies on public sector productivity in Ghana and across sub-Saharan Africa highlight persistent structural and behavioural challenges. The work of [6], provided a foundational assessment, noting that civil service reforms since the 1980s have yielded limited gains due to weak implementation and resistance to change. Complementary evidence on bureaucracy and service delivery in African administrations [30] further underscores how rigid procedures and fragmented coordination undermine performance. The report of the [36] corroborates this view, citing bureaucratic inertia and fragmented accountability mechanisms as major impediments.

In a study conducted by [29], Ghanaian public servants identified lack of motivation, unclear job roles, and inadequate supervision as major deterrents to high performance. Similarly, [3] observed that while training programs are common, they often lack relevance to actual job functions. These findings point to a misalignment between institutional goals and operational realities.

Digital governance studies [26, 24] further underscore the productivity gains associated with technological integration. In Kenya, the Huduma Centers have significantly reduced processing times and improved service delivery by centralizing citizen services through digital platforms. Ghana's e-services initiatives, although promising, remain underdeveloped and inconsistently deployed.

2.4. Key Determinants of Productivity in the Public Sector

Several key determinants have been identified in the literature. These include:

1) *Leadership and Management Practices*: Transformational leadership—marked by vision, integrity, and participatory decision-making—is positively correlated with institutional performance [8]. Conversely, patronage and weak enforcement of standards hinder productivity.
2) *Organizational Culture:* A culture that values compliance over performance can stifle innovation and accountability. Studies show that in Ghana, the prevalent mindset among public servants often prioritizes pleasing superiors over serving the public [19].
3) *Performance Measurement and Incentives*: Many MDAs in Ghana lack Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) or functional Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) units. Where appraisals exist, they are often subjective and untied to institutional goals, despite the availability of formal performance evaluation guidelines issued by the Public Services Commission [32].
4) *Training and Capacity Building*: While in-service training is common, its effectiveness is diminished by generic content and lack of post-training follow-up. Tailored, context-specific training aligned with strategic goals has proven more effective [31].
5) *Technology and Infrastructure:* Digital platforms such as HRMIS, e-Procurement, and electronic payroll systems have the potential to reduce bottlenecks and improve transparency. However, limited ICT capacity, poor infrastructure, and resistance to change constrain their impact.
6) *Citizen Engagement and Feedback Loops*: The literature emphasizes the importance of citizen-centric service design. Feedback mechanisms like service scorecards and grievance redress systems are underutilized in Ghana's public sector, leading to disconnect between service providers and users [33].

2.5. Lessons from International Best Practices

Comparative studies offer valuable lessons. In Singapore, the civil service is structured around meritocracy, continuous professional development, and strong ethics. South Korea's Public Performance Management (PPM) system uses rigorous data analytics to monitor outcomes. Rwanda's Imihigo performance contracts bind local leaders to deliver on specific targets, with real consequences for failure.

These models show that sustained leadership commitment, integrated performance frameworks, and citizen accountability are essential to productivity gains. Importantly, reforms must be contextually adapted to local political, cultural, and institutional realities.

2.6. Gaps in the Literature

Despite a rich body of work, significant gaps remain. Few studies provide longitudinal data on productivity trends within specific Ghanaian institutions. There is limited exploration of the political economy of reforms—how vested interests, elite capture, and institutional path dependencies influence productivity outcomes. Moreover, the gender dimensions of public service performance remain under-researched.

This study contributes by bridging these gaps through a holistic, institutionally grounded analysis. It integrates theoretical perspectives with empirical data to propose nuanced, actionable strategies tailored to Ghana's unique governance context.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative-descriptive research design supported by content analysis. Data were drawn from MDPI's in-house productivity studies [18], the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) [11, 12], and relevant academic publications. Key informant interviews with senior civil servants and productivity trainers were also conducted. Analysis was guided by institutional theory and adapted productivity measurement models.

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods research design aimed at capturing the multifaceted nature of productivity issues in Ghana's public sector. The primary methodological orientation is exploratory and interpretivist, seeking to understand complex institutional dynamics, behavioral patterns, and contextual nuances that statistical metrics alone may fail to capture. The integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches allowed for triangulation and a richer, more nuanced understanding of the underlying productivity challenges.

3.2. Research Philosophy and Approach

The philosophical underpinning of this study is constructivism, which posits that knowledge is socially constructed through interaction and context. This aligns with the study's aim to explore perceptions, organizational culture, and leadership influence—variables that are best understood through interpretive methods. Inductive reasoning guided the development of themes from empirical observations, while selective deductive elements were applied during hypothesis testing based on existing literature.

3.3. Population and Sampling

The target population for this research consisted of employees and managers within central government ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs), as well as stakeholders from oversight bodies such as the Public Services Commission (PSC), Management Development and Productivity Institute (MDPI), and Ghana Civil Service. The study purposively selected five MDAs known for their service delivery roles: Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, all of which produce regular sector performance and employment reports that informed this analysis [20–22].

From these institutions, a total of 80 participants were selected through stratified purposive sampling. The sample included:

1) 25 mid-level and senior public servants,
2) 10 HR and productivity officers,
3) 15 training and development experts,
4) 20 service users/citizens who interacted with these agencies,
5) 10 policy actors from PSC and MDPI.

This sampling strategy ensured representation across different roles and perspectives relevant to the productivity discourse.

3.4. Data Collection Methods

The study utilized a multi-pronged data collection approach:

1) *Semi-structured interviews:* In-depth interviews were conducted with 40 key informants using an interview guide developed around the study's objectives. Interviews probed issues such as motivation, leadership, workflow, ICT integration, and accountability.
2) *Focus group discussions (FGDs):* Two FGDs were organized with public sector employees and service users respectively to explore collective experiences and perceptions. Each session lasted 90 minutes and was moderated using open-ended questions.
3) *Documentary review:* Government policy documents, reform strategies, MDPI and PSC annual reports, and civil service training manuals were analyzed to understand the institutional framework.
4) *Secondary data analysis:* Quantitative data from Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), the World Bank, and IMF reports [11, 12, 15] were used to contextualize findings, especially on staffing levels, budget allocations, and service delivery indicators. These were complemented by macroeconomic assessments of the Ghanaian economy [16].

3.5. Data Analysis Procedures

Data from interviews and FGDs were transcribed, coded, and analysed using thematic analysis. NVivo software was employed to manage coding, identify emerging patterns, and visualize thematic connections. The process followed [9] six-step framework: familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

For quantitative data, descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions and trend analysis were used to contextualize productivity performance over time. Comparative analysis was conducted between institutions to identify variance and commonalities.

3.6. Reliability and Validity

To ensure reliability, all interviews and FGDs were recorded (with consent), transcribed verbatim, and double-checked for accuracy. A pilot interview was conducted to refine the interview guide. Member checking was used to validate interpretations with key participants.

Triangulation of data sources and methods enhanced the validity of findings. By integrating multiple data types and perspectives, the study ensured robustness and credibility in its analytical outcomes.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the Management Development and Productivity Institute. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any point, and data confidentiality. Written informed consent was obtained from all respondents.

To protect identities, pseudonyms were used in reporting sensitive information. Data were stored securely with access restricted to the primary researcher.

3.8. Limitations of the Methodology

While the study's design offers rich qualitative insights, it is not without limitations. The sample, though diverse, is not statistically representative of all public sector institutions. Some respondents were hesitant to speak candidly due to fear of professional repercussions, despite assurances of anonymity. Moreover, institutional productivity data were often incomplete or outdated, limiting longitudinal analysis.

Despite these limitations, the chosen methodology offers a robust platform for exploring the deeper, often overlooked dimensions of productivity in Ghana's public sector.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1. Systemic Barriers

Ghana's public sector operates within legacy systems inherited from colonial structures. Most agencies are governed by rigid SOPs and slow hierarchical decision-making. Manual processes dominate despite the availability of digital alternatives.

4.2. Cultural and Behavioral Factors

A widespread 'check-the-box' culture persists, where workers prioritize compliance over outcomes. Leadership often rewards loyalty over merit. There is little to no consequence for underperformance, which breeds mediocrity.

4.3. Human Capital and Training Misalignment

While training budgets exist, evaluations show that most programs are not job-specific or impact-driven. There is poor follow-up on whether training translates into productivity gains.

4.4. Technological Infrastructure

Over 70% of public offices lack comprehensive digital systems. Data silos, incompatible software, and limited ICT skills constrain digitization efforts.

4.5. Overview of Findings

The results of this study offer a multi-dimensional perspective on the productivity challenges facing public sector workers in Ghana. Analysis of interview transcripts, focus group discussions, and institutional reports revealed several recurring themes: leadership quality, accountability frameworks, resource availability, bureaucratic rigidity, technological integration, and workforce motivation. These themes were not only consistent across ministries and departments but also echoed the sentiments expressed by both public servants and service users.

4.6. Leadership and Management

One of the most salient findings was the centrality of leadership in shaping institutional productivity. Respondents described a wide spectrum of leadership experiences—from visionary and inclusive to authoritarian and disengaged. Where leaders modelled ethical behaviour, empowered staff, and communicated expectations clearly, morale and output were demonstrably higher. In contrast, institutions with absentee or politically appointed leaders who lacked managerial competence reported lower employee engagement and increased absenteeism.

A senior civil servant at the Ministry of Health stated: "When leadership is strong and listens, things move faster. But when it's all about protocol and politics, nothing changes." This sentiment was corroborated by staff from other ministries who pointed out that effective leaders were those who provided direction while also allowing autonomy in task execution.

4.7. Institutional Accountability and Performance Metrics

Across all five ministries sampled, accountability mechanisms were either weak or inconsistently applied. While most institutions had formal appraisal systems, they were largely perfunctory and not tied to performance-based incentives or sanctions. The majority of respondents noted that annual reviews focused on attendance rather than actual outputs or outcomes.

Quantitative data from [19] internal audit showed that less than 30% of institutions had fully implemented key performance indicators (KPIs) aligned with national development goals. The absence of real-time monitoring tools further hindered the ability to track and improve performance dynamically.

One FGD participant commented: "Even if you work hard, nobody really notices. It's about who you know, not what you do." Such perceptions erode motivation and discourage initiative among diligent workers.

4.8. Bureaucratic Structures and Process Inefficiencies

Process bottlenecks emerged as a major constraint to productivity. Interviews revealed that even simple administrative tasks, such as procurement approval or document sign-off, often required multiple layers of authorization. These delays were not only time-consuming but also demoralizing for staff.

In one case at the Ministry of Education, a project coordinator lamented: "It can take six weeks to get a laptop approved for use. By the time it arrives, the urgency has passed."

The root cause of these inefficiencies was traced to outdated Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and rigid hierarchies that discouraged initiative. Junior officers expressed frustration with having ideas but no authority or platform to implement them.

4.9. Technology Use and Digital Infrastructure

There was unanimous agreement on the transformative potential of digital tools. However, the reality on the ground painted a stark contrast. Less than half of the institutions surveyed had fully operational Management Information Systems (MIS), and many relied on manual filing systems. Where digital systems existed, they were often incompatible with other departments or suffered from intermittent internet access.

Moreover, the skills gap among employees was a recurring issue. Respondents highlighted the lack of structured ICT training and minimal incentives to learn new systems. As one HR manager put it: "People fear technology because they think it will replace them. So they resist even basic systems like attendance logging."

4.10. Motivation and Organizational Culture

Perhaps the most emotionally charged theme was worker motivation. While salary concerns were mentioned, they were not the sole or even primary issue. Rather, the lack of recognition, limited opportunities for career progression, and poor working conditions were cited more frequently as demotivating factors.

A middle-level officer at the Ministry of Finance remarked: "I've been here ten years and never had a promotion, not even a thank you letter." Others echoed similar feelings of being undervalued despite heavy workloads.

The study also uncovered a culture of compliance over innovation. Workers preferred to follow routine, even when inefficient, because deviation was seen as risky or unwelcome. Innovation was often perceived as insubordination rather than initiative.

4.11. Comparative Institutional Analysis

Among the ministries studied, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development stood out for its relatively effective integration of performance tools. They had instituted a decentralized feedback system where regional offices submitted monthly progress dashboards. Staff there reported higher levels of satisfaction and perceived fairness in appraisals.

Conversely, the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations had the weakest systems, with virtually no digital integration and a top-down culture that discouraged engagement.

4.12. Perspectives from Service Users

The inclusion of citizens in this study provided valuable external validation of institutional performance. Service users commonly cited delays, poor communication, and lack of courtesy as primary frustrations.

However, in agencies where staff were responsive and technology-enabled (e.g., online application portals), satisfaction levels were markedly higher. This reinforces the argument that investment in systems and people yields tangible improvements in public perception.

4.13. Synthesis of Key Themes

The analysis affirms that productivity is not the product of a single variable but a complex interplay of leadership, systems, culture, and capacity. The following themes emerged as central to public sector productivity in Ghana:

1) *Leadership quality* influences organizational direction and staff morale.
2) *Weak accountability* undermines performance-driven culture.
3) *Process delays* discourage initiative and waste time.
4) *Digital gaps* slow down communication and record-keeping.
5) *Low motivation* stems from lack of recognition and growth pathways.

Understanding these dimensions provides a foundation for targeted, context-appropriate reforms to enhance efficiency, accountability, and service delivery.

5. Discussion

Productivity is a function of institutional structure, workforce behavior, and leadership quality. Transformational leadership, if embedded, could shift Ghana's public service ethos. However, this requires deliberate recruitment, training, and performance evaluation reforms.

Technology is a non-negotiable tool for reform. E-Procurement, Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS), and citizen feedback dashboards have shown promise in pilot ministries.

Moreover, the performance management architecture must evolve from subjective appraisals to objective KPIs tied to national development goals.

5.1. Interpreting the Findings

The findings presented in the previous section underscore that public sector productivity in Ghana is constrained by a constellation of interrelated factors rather than a single causative issue. This discussion aims to contextualize these findings within the broader theoretical and policy frameworks, drawing parallels with both domestic and international experiences, and elaborating on the implications for public administration reform.

5.2. Leadership and Institutional Direction

The critical role of leadership emerged as a dominant factor shaping productivity outcomes. In line with transformational leadership theory, institutions led by individuals who demonstrated vision, empathy, and participatory governance recorded better morale and output. This reinforces arguments by [7] that leadership not only influences strategic direction but also determines the operational climate within which productivity occurs.

Public sector leaders in Ghana often ascend through political appointments rather than meritocratic promotion. This practice, while legal, can compromise institutional continuity and dilute professional standards. As the data revealed, leadership that prioritized political loyalty over competence was associated with demotivated staff, unclear priorities, and low performance.

To improve productivity, leadership selection must be restructured to emphasize competence, integrity, and a proven ability to manage complex bureaucracies. Continuous leadership development through executive education programs and peer learning networks should be institutionalized.

5.3. The Culture of Accountability

A recurring concern was the absence of a robust accountability architecture. Existing appraisal systems are largely ceremonial, focusing on attendance rather than deliverables. This finding is consistent with [2] and the [36], which note that lack of enforcement mechanisms leads to widespread impunity and inefficiency.

Accountability mechanisms must be re-engineered to include clear, measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) linked to individual and institutional mandates. Furthermore, a culture of constructive feedback and performance-linked rewards should be fostered. Importantly, sanctions for non-performance should be depersonalized and systematized to avoid perceptions of victimization.

5.4. Bureaucratic Inertia vs. Agile Governance

One of the most glaring revelations was the persistence of outdated Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and rigid hierarchies. These bureaucratic relics, inherited from colonial administrative models, no longer serve the demands of a modern, dynamic society. As noted by [10], such institutional isomorphism often persists not because of functionality but due to historical legitimacy, a pattern also observed in broader African studies on bureaucracy and service delivery [30].

Ghana's public sector needs to adopt agile governance models—systems that are adaptive, user-centric, and responsive to real-time changes. This includes decentralizing authority for routine decisions, streamlining approval processes, and leveraging data to drive operations.

5.5. Digital Transformation: Potential vs. Practice

Despite widespread recognition of the benefits of digital tools, implementation remains sporadic and underwhelming. The gap between policy ambition and ground-level reality was evident. Ministries with digital platforms reported efficiency gains and improved citizen satisfaction, yet many departments still operated manually.

This contradiction stems from a combination of resource limitations, resistance to change, and poor ICT literacy. A coherent digital transformation strategy must be developed, incorporating capacity building, infrastructure investment, and change management support. Moreover, digital platforms must be interoperable across agencies to facilitate seamless service delivery.

5.6. Motivation Beyond Monetary Rewards

Contrary to popular assumptions, salary dissatisfaction was not the main driver of poor morale. Workers cited lack of recognition, stalled promotions, and uninspiring work environments as more significant demotivators. This aligns with Herzberg's two-factor theory, which distinguishes between hygiene factors (e.g., salary) and motivators (e.g., recognition, growth opportunities) [13].

To address this, institutions should implement non-monetary incentive schemes such as Employee of the Month awards, internal talent showcases, mentorship programs, and transparent career progression paths. These initiatives, though low-cost, can significantly boost morale and performance.

5.7. Integrating Citizen Feedback

The perspectives of service users highlighted the gap between institutional self-perception and public experience. While staff often believed they were performing well, users cited inefficiencies, delays, and poor communication. This disconnect underscores the need for feedback loops.

Public institutions must systematically collect, analyse, and act on citizen feedback. Tools such as service satisfaction surveys, digital suggestion boxes, and public forums can be institutionalized. Such mechanisms not only enhance service delivery but also increase public trust in governance.

5.8. Comparative Policy Lessons

International experiences offer valuable guidance. Rwanda's Imihigo system demonstrates how performance contracts tied to specific deliverables can drive accountability. Singapore's Public Service Division showcases the power of continuous professional development and performance-linked promotions. South Korea's e-Government strategy illustrates the transformative impact of integrated digital platforms. OECD work on public service leadership further emphasizes the need for competency-based management and ethical standards in modern administrations [28].

Ghana must selectively adapt these models, ensuring they fit the local context. Blind replication without institutional readiness and stakeholder buy-in will likely result in reform fatigue.

5.9. Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings have several implications for public sector reform:

1) *Policy Design:* Reforms must be holistic, addressing structure, culture, capacity, and incentives concurrently.
2) *Human Resource Management:* The PSC and MDPI should lead efforts to redesign recruitment, training, and appraisal systems, drawing on existing performance evaluation guidelines and adapting them to contemporary productivity demands [32].
3) *Institutional Reforms:* Agencies must conduct internal diagnostics to identify process bottlenecks and redesign workflows.
4) *Stakeholder Engagement:* Reform must be co-created with civil servants, unions, and citizens to ensure buy-in and sustainability.

5.10. Reframing Productivity

Finally, this study invites a rethinking of what productivity means in the public sector. It is not merely about output volumes but about value, that is, efficiency, responsiveness, equity, and citizen empowerment. Reforms must therefore move beyond technocratic fixes to embed a culture of service excellence and public accountability. This resonates with calls to "reimagine" public administration in Africa as a vehicle for inclusive development and citizen-centred governance [34].

6. Conclusion

Ghana's public sector productivity crisis is deeply structural but solvable. It requires a holistic, multi-layered strategy centered on institutional reform, technological modernization, leadership development, and motivational realignment. Implementing these reforms will significantly improve public service delivery and restore citizen trust.

6.1. Recapitulation of Major Findings

This study set out to investigate the multifaceted causes of low productivity among public sector workers in Ghana and propose actionable recommendations. Drawing upon qualitative interviews, focus group discussions, institutional reports, and secondary data, it uncovered a set of persistent institutional, behavioural, and systemic issues undermining efficiency and service delivery. These included weak leadership, bureaucratic rigidity, lack of performance-based appraisal systems, minimal digital integration, and a pervasive culture of demotivation and proceduralism.

The research further highlighted how successful productivity enhancement is often tied to the quality of leadership, the presence of clear and enforceable accountability systems, and a strategic investment in both human capital and digital tools. Moreover, the findings reiterated that public servants in Ghana are not inherently unproductive but often operate within environments that limit initiative, suppress innovation, and reward compliance over performance.

6.2. Contributions to Knowledge and Practice

This study contributes to both scholarly understanding and practical reform efforts. On the academic front, it deepens the discourse on productivity by applying a constructivist lens to public sector challenges in a developing country context, integrating theories of public value management, institutional inertia, and human motivation. It also bridges the gap between theory and practice by grounding abstract models in real-world Ghanaian institutional experiences.

Practically, the study offers a roadmap for policymakers and reformers. It does not merely critique existing systems but provides specific, implementable strategies such as the adoption of performance-linked incentives, institutionalization of feedback loops, and restructuring of leadership development programs. These recommendations, if pursued with political will and administrative consistency, can yield measurable improvements in public service outcomes.

6.3. Implications for Stakeholders

For government ministries and oversight bodies such as the Public Services Commission and MDPI, this research provides empirical backing for the urgency of reform. Institutional inertia must be countered with bold policy shifts and continuous professional development frameworks. Civil service unions and professional bodies must also play a proactive role in negotiating reforms that enhance dignity while ensuring accountability.

For development partners and civil society organizations, the findings underscore the need for reform support to be multi-dimensional, targeting both the technical and political economy dimensions of change. Investments in digital infrastructure, capacity building, and performance management systems must be coupled with efforts to shift mindsets and organizational culture.

6.4. Limitations and Areas for Future Research

While this study offers comprehensive insights, it is not without limitations. The sample, though diverse, may not fully capture the variance in productivity dynamics across all public institutions, especially at decentralized levels such as metropolitan, municipal, and district assemblies. Furthermore, longitudinal data was limited, restricting the ability to track productivity trends over time.

Future research could focus on quantitative measurement of productivity at the institutional level, exploring indicators such as service turnaround time, cost-efficiency ratios, and citizen satisfaction indices. Comparative studies between different African countries could also enrich the discourse, allowing Ghana to benchmark and learn from peers with successful reform trajectories.

6.5. Concluding Reflections

At its core, this study reveals that the quest to improve productivity in Ghana's public sector is not merely a technical challenge but a deeply human and institutional one. It requires a reimagining of how public work is conceptualized, executed, and rewarded. Ghana stands at a pivotal moment where incremental reforms will no longer suffice. A transformative agenda that is anchored in vision, integrity, competence, and systems thinking, is imperative.

The path forward involves depoliticizing leadership appointments, realigning training with institutional goals, embedding a culture of performance and innovation, and leveraging technology as an enabler rather than a threat. It also calls for a moral contract between public servants and the citizens they serve, which is a recognition that government work is not just employment but a public trust.

In conclusion, improving the productivity of the public sector worker in Ghana is both an urgent and achievable goal. It demands sustained commitment, inclusive dialogue, and evidence-informed decision-making. The recommendations in this study, though ambitious, offer a pragmatic starting point for building a more responsive, efficient, and citizen-centric public service.

Abbreviations

AfDB	African Development Bank
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
GLSS	Ghana Living Standards Survey (e.g., GLSS 7)
ISSER	Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (University of Ghana)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDPI	Management Development and Productivity Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co operation and Development
PSC	Public Services Commission
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
CPESDP	Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies
NPM	New Public Management
PPM	Public Performance Management (system)
MDA/MDAs	Ministry, Department and Agency / Ministries, Departments and Agencies
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
KPI/KPIs	Key Performance Indicator(s)
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MIS	Management Information System(s)
HRIS	Human Resource Information System
HRMIS	Human Resource Management Information System
E-Procurement	Electronic Procurement (Digitized Public Procurement System)
FGD/FGDs	Focus Group Discussion(s)
SOP/SOPs	Standard Operating Procedure(s)
HR	Human Resource(s) (e.g., HR and Productivity Officers)
DOI	Digital Object Identifier (Used in the References to Identify Digital Publications)

Author Contributions

Benjamin Saka Myers is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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