



Structural Violence in Public Service: A Study of the Impact of Corruption on Employees' Attitude to Work in Public Organizations

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Abstract

The consequences of corruption can be devastating to any organization or nation where the menace is pervasive. This study focusses on assessing corruption as structural violence in public organization and its impact on employees' attitudinal change and service delivery. The study adopts quantitative method, and collects primary data using questionnaires. With the use of random sampling, 363 respondents were drawn as sample from the study population, and administered questionnaires to. 352 questionnaires were eventually recovered and made available for analysis using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The consequences of corruption were explored in the study. It identified brain drain, poor infrastructural facilities, poor socio-economic development and poor service delivery among other conditions of human insecurity. The result of the study shows that corruption has negative influence or impact on employees' attitude to work, as it among others, weakens the morale of employees and impede efficient and effective service delivery in public organization.

Keywords: Structural Violence, Corruption, Public Organisations, Employees, Attitude, Work

Introduction

Public sector plays key role in the life of any nation. Unfortunately, in many countries, corruption has largely, like a virus, infected the public service, thereby reducing the quality of services delivery in the public sector. In their quest to check, reduce or eradicate corruption, a number of anticorruption policies have been formulated and also under implementation in many countries. However, how well the implementation of the anticorruption policies with a view to meeting the expectation of the citizenry especially in relation to attitudinal change among employees and service delivery in public organisations, is among others, an area of attention and interest for this study.

Therefore, this paper assesses the impact of structural violence of corruption on employees' attitude to work and service delivery in public organizations in Nigeria.

Structural violence

Johan Galtung introduced the concept of structural violence in his 1969 article titled "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. He defined "structural violence" as any restriction of human potential brought about by political and economic processes (Galtung, 1969). Farmer (1996) defined it as a type of violence that is used "as a matter of course" through the creation and imposition of socioeconomic structures and related institutional behaviors. It refers to any constraint on human potential due to economic and political structures (Henry, 2016). According to Galtung (1969), structural violence explains why social institutions and systems of social organization hurt underprivileged communities. Farmer (2004, p. 307) further argued that the study of the social oppression machine was to be informed by the idea of structural violence. Structural violence occurs when necessities for a society's survival, such as access to healthcare and medication, education, and sufficient amounts of food and water, are concentrated and reserved only for the upper classes and those in power (Clempton, 2012).

Structural violence is an ongoing state of violence that is ingrained in a society's social, political, and economic systems. According to Henry (2016), structural violence finds its genesis in the social, political, and economic institutions and structures, and generally leads to comparatively similar amounts of death and harm to individuals as direct violence. It is also referred to as indirect violence because there is not a specific target and it is disguised. It provides a chance to properly evaluate how various forms of marginalization, such as racism, sexism, ableism, ageism, homophobia, and/or poverty, contribute to the creation of fundamentally unequal lived experiences. The diverse and frequently



interconnected processes that produce and maintain inequality on various levels, both for individuals and communities, are explained by structural violence (Farmer, 2009). In his work, Galtung (1969) explores the concepts of exploitation and oppression, highlighting their interconnectedness within profitable, social, and political orders. He emphasizes that these concepts are distinct yet closely linked, contributing to imbalances and injustices within societies.

The mechanisms and manifestations of structural violence, including marginalization, penetration, segmentation, marginalization, and fragmentation, have been discussed by Johan Galtung (Galtung, 1969; Galtung, 1990; Galtung, 1996). The consequences for the marginalized can be severe, including starvation, illness, and persistent poverty. These consequences are mostly the result of corruption in social systems. It widens the gap between “the have” and “the have not”, as common resources are siphoned by few individuals in organizations and the society at large.

Galtung's definition of violence (1969) expands the understanding of violence beyond physical harm. He characterizes violence as an avoidable impairment of essential conditions and life, encompassing not only purposeful injury and physical detriment but also suppression, disaffection, and other forms of harm. Unequal access to education, frequently along racial and socioeconomic lines, feeds systemic violence (Morse, 2007).

Corruption have been perceived as economic development or political governance as well as peacebuilding issue of critical concern. Stauffer (2011) argues that corruption is a form of structural violence and therefore connected to the notion and goals of peacebuilding. He further argued that, from a systems perspective, corruption has many driving factors and characteristic elements that place it in the category of oppressive, structural violence. Additionally, he added that corruption, like endemic violence may be better understood as a public health issue. And that it is a socio-political and economic disease whose destructive legacies and aftermaths are pandemic in proportions and nature. According to Henry (2016), corruption is a form of structural violence, and therefore must be addressed in the effort to promote the ‘good life in a green economy.’

To a larger extent, corruption is partly responsible for the increasing gap of inequality and poverty in many society and the global system at large. It fans the embers of all manners of human insecurity, which alongside inequality and poverty define structural violence. Stauffer (2011) describe it as ‘unwanted child’ of our dominant global economic system – one that promotes unregulated capital accumulation, profit, greed, self-preservation and the commodification of human labor.

Corruption

Corruption as a concept is complex and its definition has many perspectives. Corruption entails the abuse of power for personal benefits. As stated by Transparency International (2006, p.14), “corruption cannot and must not be thought of as a separate issue which occurs only in public areas such as political party financing or public contracting. On the contrary it can affect virtually all aspects of public life, even the purity of art”. The term corruption, which can simply be defined as the abuse of office for private gain, has indeed spans across the social fabrics of the Nigerian society and the world at large with varying degrees. Ijewereme (2015, p.1) defined it as the misuse of entrusted power or a dishonest use of one’s office or position for personal gain. Transparency International (2009) describes corruption as the “abuse of entrusted public position for personal gain”, while the International Monetary Fund (2005) views it as the “abuse of public office for private benefit”. There is quite clearly no one universally accepted definition of corruption (Sapru, 2013, p.505). Basically, as stated by Sapru (2013, p.505), corruption involves subordination of public interest to private gains involving a violation of the norms of duty and welfare.

According to Salisu (2006) it is "an arrangement that involves an exchange between two parties (the demander and the supplier) which one has an influence on the allocation of resources either immediately or in the future; and also involves the use or abuse of public or collective responsibility for private ends". The International Monetary Fund (IMF) explained that corruption is an abuse of office or trust for private benefit: and is a temptation indulged in by not only public officials but also by those in positions of trust and authority in private enterprise or non-profit organizations. IMF also classified corruption into bureaucratic or political, cost reduction or benefit enhancing, briber or bribe initiated, coercive or collusive, centralized or decentralized, predictable or arbitrary (IMF, 2017). United Nations (2012) defined corruption as the “abuse of power for private gain”. The Transparency International



defines corruption as involving “behavior on the part of officials in the public sector, whether politicians or civil servants, in which they improperly and unlawfully enrich themselves or those close to them, by the misuse of the public power entrusted to them”.

Corruption is also defined from the view of its physical character of the act that relates with two apparent elements, i.e. deviant behavior and personal gain. Deviant behavior describes corruption as an unethical behavior of the act (Nwabuzor, 2005), while personal gain is described as the misuse of authority for personal or private gain (Beugre’ 2010). An overview of the ICPC Act (2004), states that corruption includes bribery, fraud and other related offences. No doubt, the scope of corruption is elastic and includes: use of one’s office for pecuniary advantages, gratification, influence peddling, insincerity in advice with the aim of gaining advantage, less than a full day’s work for a full day’s pay, tardiness and slovenliness etc.

Corruption is unethical, it is immoral, it jeopardizes, and it is uncalled for. It is an unlawful and dishonest act which destroys existing structures and way of life. It is a practice that weakens democracy. Corruption corrupts. According to Irene (2020), it pays no gain, but rather brings about underdevelopment, stagnancy and retrogression, and as such a reason for a critical study on the anticorruption effort to eliminate corruption in Nigerians fourth republic. Corruption is not being practiced by spirits. It is carried out by individuals in virtually all ramifications. It won’t be surprising to note that even the anticorruption agencies are themselves corrupt because they are individuals too. Everyone generally has this selfish nature, selfishness is a huge tendency in man, and only a disciplined man can win the war against self. Corruption manifests itself in selfishness. The thought of myself has really placed Nigerians in a mess. Lack of discipline by this sect that controls the lever of power has also denied Nigeria a lot of benefits and achievements.

Corruption is powerful and destructive. It destroys societal values. Thinking in the same way, Underkuffler (2005, p.13) stated that corruption is powerful, insidious and destructive of human lives and institutions. It is also possible to say that human troubles are deeply rooted in corruption. The is therefore an urgent need to re-write the history of corporate fraud and financial malfeasance ranging from theft, false accounting, bribery and corruption, deception, collusion, and taking advantage of deficiencies in the system (Social-Economic Rights & Accountability Project, 2017, p.19).

Classification of corruption

Corruption has been classified as private and public corruption. Private corruption describes private individuals who are involved in unethical practices or acts. It extends to individuals who are in private sectors who are engaged in corrupt practices. These individuals may be colluding with those in public organisations, who only operate within private organisations. According to Osakede, Ijimakinwa, Adesanya, Ojo & Ojikutu (2015). It basically involves individuals outside government. It manifest as every day bribery to obtain a desirable objectives, breaking of traffic rule, piracy plagiarism, alterations of school grades, and illegal inflation of petroleum pump prices by dealers, sexual gratification for higher grades or promotion among others.

Public corruption on the other hand, involves public office holders. It is also known as official, grand or institutional corruption. The various kinds of public corruption are political, bureaucratic, military and other forms of institutional corruption. Political corruption is mainly the kind of corruption within political cycles including the three arms of government such as the executive, legislature and judiciary. It is a kind of corruption that also involves the state, and it is usually the highest level of corruption. Bureaucratic corruption is the kind of corruption involving the technocrats, the civil service and the public servants such as personnel in ministries, departments and agencies among others who are responsible for implementing government policies. Military corruption occurs among the military hierarchy, and was prominent in the era of military rule in Nigeria. The Abacha loot is one of the popular examples in the Nigerian experience (Folarin, 2014). The other forms of institutional corruption are the one found in the media, entertainment industries and the labour movement (Osakede et al. 2015) among others. The 'brown envelope' syndrome is popularly associated with the media, while sexual gratification or money for role in films or movies is widely linked to the entertainment industries, and "sorting labour leaders through the flattening of their account" (Folarin, 2014) to compromise planned industrial action is connected to the labour movement.



Petty corruption is another type of corruption. Petty corruption is the “everyday abuse of entrusted power by low- and mid-level public officials in their interaction with ordinary citizens, who often are trying to access basic goods or services in places like hospitals, schools, police departments and other agencies” (Transparency International, 2009b). Bribery and favouritism are popular examples in this category of corruption. It also embraces and involves what World Bank (2010, p.2) describes as ‘quiet corruption’. These are forms of petty corruption and malpractices of frontline providers (such as teachers, health service providers and public officials) that are “difficult to observe and quantify (...), do not involve monetary exchange (...), but whose impact on service delivery and regulation has adverse long-term effects on households”. According to Department for International Development (2015), it is primarily through corruption that the provision of basic services is disrupted in the developing world, thereby affecting the poor and vulnerable the most.

A short overview presented by Prof. T. Osipitan according to City-Lawyer (2018), identified three classes, which are: collusive corruption, extortionary and anticipatory corruption. Prof. Osipitan described collusive described as a planned cooperation of the giver and receiver, while extortionary corruption involves forced extraction of bribes and other favors from vulnerable victims by those in authority, and anticipatory corruption occurs when bribe or gift is offered in anticipation of favor from the recipient of the gift to the giver of the gift (City-Lawyer (2018), Other classification of corruption in the literature is private and public corruption. Private corruption usually involves individuals outside government who engage in unethical acts.

In Nigeria, private corruption “manifest as everyday bribery to obtain desired objective, breaking of traffic laws, piracy, plagiarism, alteration of school grades, illegal inflation of petroleum pump price by dealers, sexual gratification for higher grade or promotion” (Osakede, Ijimakinwa, Adesanya, Ojo, Ojikutu & Abubakar (2015, p.81) etc. Public or grand or institutional corruption on the other hand involves public office holders who exploit their positions to take from the commonwealth (Osakede et al. 2015, p.18). The various types are political corruption, bureaucratic corruption, Military corruption, and that associated with the media and entertainment industries often describe as ‘brown envelope.

Corruption: Experience from the public sector in Nigeria

The genesis of official corruption in Nigeria can be traced to the colonial era. In the period of colonialism, the resources of African were exploited by the colonial masters to feed their industries and developed their countries. Systems were put in place to promote influence peddling as a way of circumventing official policies and regulations in their favour. The colonial masters can thus be referred to as the precursor of official corruption in the country. Also, a study by Ogunyemi (2014, p.1) which focused on the requirement of Nigerian laws against corruption and the actual reporting of corruption cases made by the Director of Audit from 1950 to 1960 revealed that “many of the proven cases of fraud were however not sanctioned as required by law and that this laid the foundation for a culture of impunity in the management of public resources in the immediate post-independence period”. Since taking its root in the country, it has remained a major problem that has contributed to making good governance and economic productivity a mirage. It is a monster that has attracted the attention of policymakers, watchdog groups and scholars (Adesina, 2016, p.1).

The Nigerian public sector has its own share of corruption accusations haven been widely infected with corruption. The public sector describes the sector within the economy owned and controlled by the government. Public enterprises or corporations are organizations that emerged as a result of government acting in the capacity of an entrepreneur (Obikeze & Anthony, 2004, p.248). They are established as corporate body and as part of government apparatus for entrepreneurial-like objectives. Their establishment date back to colonial era when government created them for the purpose of providing essential services such as water, electricity and railway. According to Adamolekun, 2002, p.33), they were designed as instrument of state economic intervention. The civil service is designed as government specialized organ for implementing public or government policies. The civil service is part of the public service, and it “performs a number of different tasks which include the analysis of policy issues, the formulation of policy under political direction, the implementation of resources, the regulation of outside bodies and so on” (Lawson, 1998). Given its prime role as instrument for implementing government policies and programme, the public service is “expected to be competent and effectively devoid of corruption practices” (Obialor & Ozuzu, 2017, p.1).



Alas, rather than meeting the said expectation, the Nigerian public service appeared to have been deeply enmeshed in corruption within the larger Nigerian system. According to Lawson (1998, p.1), the “public officials working in the public service has in recent years been subject to much criticism” including that relating to corruption. The criticism has come from different sources (Lawson, 1998, p.1), just as a number of scholars have argued that corruption is huge within the Nigerian public sector. It is a widely held opinion that favoritism, nepotism, extortion and coercion largely characterized the Nigerian public service. Corruption is a clog in the wheel of public service performance. Sustainable development largely depends among other things on incorruptible attitude of the people in service and the society at large. Obialor & Ugochukwu (2017, p.1) corroborated this by connecting sustainable development to effective public service. Nigeria ranked “144 in the 2018 corruption index of Transparency International” (TI Report, 2018). The widespread systemic corruption, low level of transparency and accountability that largely dot the Nigerian space made the country a poorly functioning state. According to (Sapru, 2013, p.504) “widespread corruption is a reflection of a poorly functioning state, and a poorly functioning state can undermine economic and social development”.

The nature and manifestation of corruption in Nigeria assumes different dimensions and ways ranges from bribery and kickbacks to favoritism, tribalism and nepotism, fraud, budgeting corruption, lack of accountability, electoral fraud, double standard, Ghost-workers phenomenon, embezzlement and employment racketeering, procurement scam (Ijewereme, 2015, p.1; Obialor & Ozuzu, 2017, p.1). All these manifestations of corruption have largely negatively impacted on the prosperity of the Nigerian public service and the sustainable development of Nigeria at large.

Political leaders in Nigeria are at the forefront of political corruption in the country. Obialor & Ugochukwu (2017, p.1) pointed out that top government functionaries are the main perpetrators of official crime over many years in Nigeria. Salisu (2019) also corroborated this position. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2017, p.1) “the vast majority of bribery episodes in Nigeria are initiated either directly or indirectly by public officials (85.3 percent) and almost 70 percent of bribes are paid before a service is rendered”. The perception of the extent of corruption among public officials varies from one organization to another. The recent survey conducted by SERAP revealed that the officers of the Nigerian Police Force are perceived to be most corrupt (SERAP Survey Report, 2018). Bribery is perceived to be prevalent among members of the Nigerian Police Force.

There are consequences of corruption for a country and its people. According to Chatam House Report (2017), “corruption fosters more corruption, perpetuating and entrenching social injustice”. As stated also by Sapru (2013, p.505), the implications of corruption are far reaching, and there is no disagreement that it is a complex, multi-faceted social phenomenon, with various manifestations. Corruption has multiple negative effects including affecting the image of a country. In the Nigerian experience, it has been such that in 2016, David Cameron, the former Prime Minister of Britain, in a conversation with the Queen Elizabeth II during the anti-corruption summit in the United Kingdom said, “we have got some leaders of some fantastically corrupt countries coming to Britain...Nigeria and Afghanistan, possibly the two most corrupt countries in the world” (Vanguard, May 10, 2016, p.1). This comment is a sad commentary on the image and leadership of Nigeria.

Method

The study adopts quantitative method. The two sources of data for the study were primary and secondary sources. For the primary source which represents the raw data, questionnaire was the research instrument used. Respondents’ responses through the questionnaires served as sources of primary data for the study. Questionnaires were administered to collect primary data from respondents in four purposively selected public organisations for this study. The Library and the internet were useful sources of secondary data. Relevant literature materials such as books, journals, newspapers served as sources of secondary data for the study.

Random sampling technique was adopted for the study. Haven taken the population of study to be four thousand (4000), the researcher employed the formulae propounded by Taro Yamane (1973) to determine the sample size. The formulae and calculation are shown below: $n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$

The calculation resulted in 364 sample for the study. Therefore, the questionnaire distributed to respondents that represent the whole population was 364. However, only 352 questionnaires were recovered from respondents.



Statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was deployed in data analysis for the study. For easy presentation and analysis, the researcher made use of simple percentage and chi-square (X^2) method for analysis the data collected for the study. This was done to determine the strength and weakness of the relationship of various variable measured. Chi-square test determines whether there is dependency between variables or not.

Result

The data collected for this study were analysed based on the hypotheses stated. The research questionnaires were administered to three hundred and sixty-four but only three hundred and fifty two were recovered. The analysis was carried out using (SPSS) Statistical Package. Descriptive statistics of frequency count, percentages multiple regression and chi-square were used to analyse the data to verify the hypotheses.

Section: Social demographic characteristics of respondents

Table: Sex of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	188	53.3	53.3
female	164	46.7	100.
Total	352	100	

From the table above, 53.3 percent of the respondents were male while 46.7 are female. This represents a fair gender balance of the sampled population.

Table: Age of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
21-30 yrs	98	27.5	27.8
31-40 yrs	114	31.9	60.2
41-50yrs	85	23.8	84.4
51-60yrs	55	15.4	100.
Total	352	98.6	

From the table above, 31-40 years age bracket with 31.9 percent represents the highest age of respondents, followed by 21-30 years age bracket with 27.5 percent, and then by age bracket 41-50 with 23.8. The lowest was 51-60 years age bracket with 15.4 percent. So, bulk of the respondents belongs to the active age group.

Table: Length of service in years

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1-10 years	108	30.3	30.7
11-20 years	147	41.2	72.4
21-30 years	65	18.2	90.9
31 years and above	32	9.0	100.
Total	352	100	

From the table above, Employees who have spent 11-20 years in service constitute the highest respondents with 41.2 percent. This was followed by those who have spent 1-10 years with 30.3 percent, and then by those who have spent 21-30 years with 18.2 percent. The least numbers of respondents were those who have spent 31 years and above with 9.0 percent.

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between corruption and employees attitude to work in public organisation



Table: Contingency Table

Corruption is in all segment of Nigeria public sector * Employees attitude to work in government agencies Cross tabulation						
			Employees negative attitude to work in government agencies			Total
			undecided	Disagree	strongly disagree	
Corruption is in all segment of Nigeria public sector	strongly agree	Count	25	46	75	146
		Expected Count	20.7	68.0	57.2	146.0
	Agree	Count	14	74	48	136
		Expected Count	19.3	63.4	53.3	136.0
	Undecided	Count	11	19	0	30
		Expected Count	4.3	14.0	11.8	30.0
	Disagree	Count	0	13	7	20
		Expected Count	2.8	9.3	7.8	20.0
	strongly disagree	Count	0	12	8	20
		Expected Count	2.8	9.3	7.8	20.0
	Total	Count	50	164	138	352
		Expected Count	50.0	164.0	138.0	352.0

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	49.521 ^a	8	.000
Likelihood Ratio	63.745	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.754	1	.185
N of Valid Cases	352		

a. 3 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.84.

The table above shows that X^{2cal} (49.52) is greater than X^{2tab} (34.27) at 5% level of significance ($X^{2tab} = 34.27$ v = 8, $\alpha = 0.05$). Hence, the alternate hypothesis is accepted while the null hypothesis is rejected. That is, there is relationship between corruption and employees negative attitude to work in public organizations. This negatively affects service delivery.

Discussion of the Results

As seen in the study, a relationship exist between corruption and employees negative attitude to work. This means that corruption influences an average employee attitude in a negative manner in relation to his or her work. In many public organisations, a culture of impunity has been accepted given the high prevalence of corrupt practices in such organizations. The employees internalize the culture of impunity which influences their behavior and eventually their attitude to work.

The hypothesis test in the study reveals that there is relationship between corruption and employees negative attitude to work in public organization. This shows that corruption corrupts employees' attitude to work. It corrodes whatever moral they had before joining the public service as they get influenced and drown in the ocean of corruption. The study added that that corruption has negative impact on the sustainable development of Nigeria, and blamed the slow progress in public sectors, on corruption.

The study shows that corruption –which entails the abuse of office for private benefits has remained a key obstacle to sustainable development of the country. Its problem in government and in administration is a major concern in public management and administration. As regards impact assessment, it is clear from the study that corruption has negative impact of employees' attitude to work in government agencies and ministries.

Conclusion

The study identifies different causes of corruption in Nigeria. Greed, quick-rich syndrome, decadence in societal values and norms including low commitment to government works (i.e. work in public organizations) among others were identified as main causes of corruption in Nigeria. The nature and forms in which corruption manifests include bribery, kickback, fraud, scam contract, nepotism, favoritism among others have been identified in the study. The consequences of corruption were explored in the study. It identified brain drain, poor infrastructural facilities, poor socio-economic development and poor service delivery among others. It reveals that corruption negatively affects employees' attitude to work in public organizations. Thereby, negatively affecting government



businesses and services to the masses. Engaging all stakeholders in the society in the fight against corruption could be one way to address the problem of corruption.

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