

Administrative Corruption And Service Delivery In Dunukofia Local Government Council, Anambra State, Nigeria.

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Abstract: *This paper examined the impact of Administrative corruption on the service delivery of Dunukofia Local Government Council, Anambra State, Nigeria. Little attention has been given to corruption even in spite of the much needed development that has over the years eluded the local communities in Dunukofia local government. Against this background, the work focused on one research question. Qualitative research approach was employed. The theoretical framework adopted for the study is the Social Learning Theory propounded by Bandura (1963). The setting of Dunukofia was encapsulated in the study. The research found out that: the quality of services delivered in Dunukofia is poor. Based on the finding, the researcher recommended that: The government and the stakeholders of the ministry should ensure that these corrupt officials are monitored and brought to book whenever they deviate from the established method so as to serve as a deterrent to others.*

Keywords: Administrative corruption, service delivery, local government, development, Council, Nigeria.

Introduction

Local Government generally, has long been recognized as a veritable instrument for the development of the local communities. This is because as a tier of government nearest to the grassroots, it is in a better position to know and addresses the problems of its residents. Indeed, the objectives of the government according to the 1976 "Guidelines for local government Reform" in Nigeria is to make appropriate services and development activities responsive to local wishes and initiative by devolving or delegating them to local representatives bodies; to facilitate the exercise of democratic self government close to the grassroots of our society, and to encourage initiative and leadership potential; and mobilization of human and material resources through the involvement of members of the Public in their development.

Regrettably, the realizations of these objectives have been constrained by various factors including corruption. Waziri (2007), emphasized that the disconnect between the local government and the people at the grassroots was happening at a time huge volume of Public funds were allocated to local government council. According to her, the old argument that services cannot be delivered to the grassroots because of shortage of funds does not hold water anymore, in the face of so much subvention from the center.

El-Rufai (2012), posited that, in the year 2011, the 774 Local Governments and the 6 Area Councils (LGAs) in Nigeria received almost N1trillion (about \$7billion) from the Federation Account, which is equivalent to the entire annual budgets of Burkina Faso, Rwanda, Burundi and Togo combined. These transfers were to enable them carry out their functions, which include the administration of primary education and primary health care, construction of markets and boreholes, and rural development in general. Most Nigerians would agree that there is little or nothing to show for this huge transfer of cash to the LGAs. Many scholars point accusing finger on corruption for the failure of the local government to deliver services. They argue that the fundamental problem of contemporary Nigeria is corruption. It has thrived, progressed, and flourished unabated. Corruption has been institutionalised to the point of accepting it as part of the system. The average Nigerian is not ordinarily corrupt, he has been attracted to engage in bribery and corruption by a society built on a lousy foundation of political, economic and in fact a social system that depends on corruption for survival.

Several public infrastructures are either moribund or vandalized in Anambra state. For instance, Anambra state water cooperation ceased to function since the inception of the present democratic dispensation in the country. Many public schools in the state are no longer viable as they used to be. Even the state-owned hospitals are not spared of this rot. This state of affairs is much more endemic at the local government level. The deteriorating standard of living of majority of rural dwellers is evidence to the absence of good governance.

The much needed development has continued to elude the local communities across the Nation. It has been rural poverty instead of rural development. The prevalence and pervasiveness of poverty and absence of service delivery has been still associated with lack of fund to that tier of government as the fund has until recently been controlled by the state government. However, little attention has been given to the role of corruption.

It is in view of the foregoing that this study is undertaken to investigate the effects of corruption on service delivery in Dunukofia Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Research Question

The study is guided by the following research question;

- What is the quality of services delivered in Dunukofia Local Government Area?

Methodology

The study adopts the retrospective literature analysis of qualitative research approach, which draws extensively on existing literature and secondary sources in explaining and exploring the phenomenon of corruption.

The study draws extensively on several secondary sources of data including magazines, newspapers, scholarly books, journal articles and reports to analyse and explain the problem of corruption in Nigeria, in order to make the relevant conclusions and recommendations.

This research adopts the narrative analysis technique to analyse data. This technique refers to the style of presenting data analysis in the form of a story, explaining data in the terminology and concepts of the subjects under study in order to capture the rich, concrete detail of the data obtained.

Conceptual Explications

Corruption

Attempts at defining concepts in social and management sciences have not been easy in view of the behavioural inclination of these disciples. The concept of corruption is not an exception of this. Various Scholars see it from different perspectives depending on their orientation.

Corruption is ubiquitous. It is a very serious problem which has existed in the human society for a very long-time. It is a problem which confronts both developed and developing economies of the world. Corruption occurs in varying degrees in different countries and with overwhelming consequences on political and socio-economic development (Otite, 1986, Ike, 2000 and Ajie & Wokekoro, 2012). Some countries define corruption in the broadest form while others legislated on the narrow definition of the term.

The World Bank cited in Raimi, Suara and Fadipe (2013) defines corruption as: The abuse of public office for private gains; public office is abused for private gain when an official accepts, solicits, or extorts a bribe. It is also abused when private agents actively offer bribes to circumvent public policies and processes for competitive advantage and profit. Public office can also be abused for personal benefit even if no bribery occurs, through patronage and nepotism, the theft of state assets or the diversion of state resources. This definition implies that corruption is not only the exclusive preserve of personnel in the public domain. It involves also private entrepreneurs or persons who fail to abide by the rules governing the conduct of institutionalized process. Furthermore, Khan cited in Lawal and Tobi (2006) argued that corruption is an act which deviates from the formal rules of conduct governing the actions of someone in a position of public authority because of private motives such as wealth, power or status. Khan sees corruption from the point of view of people who mismanage public positions for personal gains. Corruption encourages the distortion of government expenditure. This often results in diversion of public investment on large scale projects, rather than on the provision of necessary public services such as health, roads, housing and education (Ogbeidi cited in Ilechukwu, (2014). This situation makes it inevitable for the limited but valuable fund earmarked for development to disappear into private pockets.

Ilechukwu (2014) argued that: Corruption also undermines efficiency as time and money are wasted through corrupt activities at the expense of productive activities and which altogether discourages prospective investors. Corruption undermines human and capital development in any society or nation. Perhaps the most tragic effect of corruption on Nigeria has been the failure of the country to attain its economic potentials. Corruption generates economic distortion in the public sector by devastating public investment into capital projects where bribes and kickbacks are more painful. It slows down the pace of economic development through manipulation of funds for projects; it destroys or weakens efficiency and effectiveness of public service, it detracts government from giving priority to the areas of income and social inequality, poverty, malnutrition and other areas of need. The net impact of corruption on society is negative.

Administrative Corruption in Nigeria

There are different degrees of corruption but this analysis focuses on corruption in the public sector. Administrative corruption occurs in the public administration or the implementation end of politics. This kind of corruption is known as “low level” and “street level” corruption. This is the type of corruption that citizens encounter in their daily lives. They are confronted by it in places like the hospitals, schools, local licensing offices, police, taxing offices and various other public agencies (Dike, 2002). Bureaucrats have rules and regulations that they are supposed to follow which promotes uniformity and achieves equity. Street-level bureaucrats perform their duties by making decision based on individuals cases brought before them. They are given Administrative discretion which is the ability to decide how policies should be implemented but if this power is abused, it can lead to corruption (Lipsky, 2010).

An efficient and neutral public bureaucracy is essential in a domestic system because it leads to an efficient and effective public bureaucracy, the public bureaucracy has a significant role to play in the administration of government; it ensures that the delivery of goods and services are evenly distributed to ensure equity. A corrupt bureaucracy can lead to a decrease in the quality of goods and services being provided by the government.

Agboola (2009) agreed that administrative corruption is the use of powers by government officials for illegitimate private gain. An

illegal act by an office holder constitutes political corruption only if the act is directly related to their official duties, is done under colour of law or involves trading in influence. Forms of corruption vary, but include bribery, extortion, cronyism, nepotism, parochialism, patronage, influence peddling, graft and embezzlement. Corruption may facilitate criminal enterprise such as drug trafficking, money laundering, and human trafficking, though is not restricted to these activities

He explained further that the activities that constitute illegal corruption differ depending on the country or jurisdiction. For instance, some political funding practices that are legal in one place may be illegal in another. In some cases, government officials have broad or ill-defined powers, which make it difficult to distinguish between legal and illegal actions. Worldwide, bribery alone is estimated to involve over 1 trillion US dollars annually. A state of unrestrained Administrative corruption is known as a kleptocracy, literally meaning "rule by thieves". Some forms of corruption – now called "institutional corruption" are distinguished from bribery and other kinds of obvious personal gain. A similar problem of corruption arises in any institution that depends on financial support from people who have interests that may conflict with the primary purpose of the institution.

Omoleke (2003) sees administrative corruption from his perspective as also at its height. Some forms of Administrative corruption are bribery, graft, patronage, nepotism and influence peddling. There is a lot of misuse of inside knowledge, for example, through acceptance of business employment after retirement of resignation, favouring relatives and friends in awarding contracts or arranging loans and subsidies, and accepting gifts from improper sources which is tagged as "Ghost workers". Bureaucrats misuse the official and confidential information for private purpose. Such activities may produce many effects on a society in the form of mistrust in government and its employees, distortion of programme achievements, wastage of public resources, encouragement of black market operation and eventual national instability.

Service Delivery

Kayode, Adagba, & Anyio (2013) describe service delivery as the provision of both tangible and intangible goods and services by the government, aimed at enhancing the overall well-being of citizens. Citing Carlson (2005), they further explain that service delivery involves a dynamic interaction between policymakers, service providers, and the underprivileged. It includes services and the systems supporting them typically under the purview of government responsibility such as primary education, basic healthcare, water supply, sanitation, roads, and bridges.

In a broader business context, service delivery refers to the interaction between a service provider and a client, where a service ranging from information to specific tasks is offered. The effectiveness of this interaction determines whether the client gains or loses value. High-quality service delivery leads to improved client satisfaction and value. According to Kim (2013), a service delivery framework consists of the principles, policies, standards, and guidelines that govern the design, deployment, and maintenance of services, ensuring a consistent user experience within a particular business environment.

In Nigeria, the term "service delivery" commonly denotes the allocation of essential public resources such as electricity, clean water, sanitation, housing, and land. However, these services are often poorly maintained or inconsistently delivered by the government, resulting in significant hardship for many communities. This has led to a rise in "service delivery protests"—public demonstrations demanding improved access to basic services. The term has become a catch-all used by the media to describe various protest actions (Arora, 2003).

Bello-Imam and Roberts, as cited in Agba, Akwara and Idu (2013), support this interpretation by defining service delivery as the provision of essential services aimed at reducing human suffering and ultimately improving citizens' quality of life.

Corruption in Nigeria

The principal concepts of ethical culture in any society require that public officials should be accountable to the public while performing their job duties. These two concepts are important and critical in nation-building and formation of the national character of a country. It is also essential because it helps scholars to better understand the dynamics of corruption in a country and can help reduce some of the problems of public sector Corruption (Omotoye, 2011).

Corruption has adversely affected Nigeria's economy. There seems to be strong relationship between corruption and economic development of any country and this requires a critical investigation so as to provide appropriate understanding of the problem. The effect of corruption in Anambra state cannot be overemphasized. The state is blessed with both human and natural resources. In spite of this, there seems to be little or no serious developmental activities going on in it. This is most probably a product of corruption. Corruption is deeply rooted in Nigeria and its manifestation is reflected in the nation's scores in Corruption Perception Index (CIP) published annually by the highly rated Transparency International (TI).

Aluko (2005) stressed that Nigeria was the fifth most corrupt country in 1998. Similarly, that Nigeria was ranked the second most corrupt country in the world in 1999. The country's ranking became worst in 2000 when Nigeria was ranked the most corrupt country in the world. In 2001, 2002 and 2003, Nigeria was ranked the second most corrupt country out of the surveyed countries. From 2005 to 2007, Nigeria ranked the eight, twenty second, and thirty second most corrupt among the surveyed countries respectively. By 2008, Nigeria significantly improved her rating and ranked 121 out of 180 countries.

Corruption is worse in countries where institutions, such as the legislature and the judiciary are weak, where rule of law and

adherence to formal rules are not rigorously observed, where political patronage is the standard practice, where the independence and professionalism of the public sector has been eroded and where civil society lacks the means to bring public pressure to bear on governance (Lawal, 2007). Obviously, in the case of developing countries like Nigeria, limited resources that are initially allocated for industries, hospitals, road construction, schools and other infrastructure are either out rightly siphoned, embezzled, misappropriated, or otherwise severely depleted through kickbacks and over invoicing by government officials. The situation has become so bad to the extent that as far back as 1993, keeping an average Nigerian from being corrupt is like keeping a goat from eating yam (Achebe, 1988).

Administrative Corruption in Nigeria

The public bureaucracy in Nigeria is plagued with a number of problems that have hindered its effective role in the country (Okotoni, 2001). One problem encountered by the public sector is the politicization of jobs in the sectors in Nigeria are highly political. Some positions in the public sector during the military era have some political influence, offices like the permanent secretary and the head of services were given to political military officers. Although there is nothing wrong with civil servants having an interest in politics. It can sometimes undermine the decisions made by their office. Public perception on such a decision will be highly criticized as being unprofessional and unfair because of their political party affiliation (Okotoni, 2001).

Administrative corruption goes beyond obtaining pecuniary benefits. It includes cronyism, favouritism, nepotism and associated ills that warrant merit to be slaughtered on the altar of mediocrity in recruitment, promotion and motivation of employees as necessary planks upon which personnel administration rests and offer cardinal explanation for low productivity, inefficiency and poor service delivery in the public. Judicial corruption implies perversion of justice, compromising attitudinal disposition of law enforcement agents/agencies, sundry ills and avoidable human errors in the administration of justice. Moral corruption entails committing morally reprehensible acts deliberately and on a sustained basis.

In adducing reasons or explanations for corruption and other unethical conducts in Nigeria, Ikejiani-Clark (2001A, 130-133), reported that “the complexities of modernity and the fact of cultural transmission have resulted in unsettled value system”. These unsettled value systems must be explained in the context of interface of Nigerian cultural values with those of the capitalist west, economic interaction and inherited capitalist economic systems and values which infused western behavioural patterns/values into the Nigerian culture, others are: lack of commitment to public cause, generalized poverty of Nigeria infrastructural deficit or nonexistence social, political interference characterized by spoils system in administration and political practice.

Service Delivery in the Local Government

Government exists primarily to provide services that will make life worth living. It is the general agreement of most scholars and professionals that the public sectors in Nigeria have not justified the reasons for their being through the delivery of cutting edge service to the general public. This is glare in the assertion of ex-president Obasanjo in 2003 in Agba, Akwara and Idu (2013)

The local government is essentially created as a viable political and administrative organ for the transformation of all communities and for delivery of essential services to the citizens. Local government plays a central role in enabling the achievement of development at the grassroot level. Governments should therefore continuously seek new and better ways to build service institutions that have the capacity to champion and advance the course of development. Local government must create an appropriate and conducive environment for the people at the local level through efficient and effective service delivery. It is responsible for the creation of an appropriate and conducive environment in which all sectors of the economy can perform optimally, and it is this catalytic role of local government that propelled governments all over the world to search continuously for better ways to deliver their services (Aluko, 2011). By law, local governments are mandated to provide the following public goods and services: establishment and maintenance of roads within the towns of the district, including sidewalks, street lights, and street drainage system, construction of water reservoirs in towns and villages, construction and management of primary schools. Other essential functions include the construction and management of centres for the care of the mother and the child, physical planning of the settlements of the districts and registration of the immovable property, solid waste collection and disposal, food and livestock markets, slaughterhouses, management of self help projects, registration and maintenance of civil register, and issuing business licenses, among others. A key purpose of local government is to promote the well-being and quality of life of citizens and communities through effective and accountable representation and efficient performance of functions and delivery of services. Local authorities have certain advantages over more centralised organisations.

The constitution assigns service delivery responsibilities to the three tiers of government with the states and local governments playing the most significant role in the delivery of basic services such as education, health, housing, water, and waste disposal services. Local government’s commitment to the principles of quality customer service have been illustrated in recent years through a variety of practical developments, such as extending opening hours of operation, improving facilities, providing more accessible services, e-government initiatives, and published service standards, in many cases through public customer charters and customer service actions plans.

Administrative Corruption and Service Delivery in Local Government

To talk of absence of effective service delivery in local government is to talk of the presence of corruption in the local government system in Nigeria. Local governments have become vineyard of corruption where council political officers sit to share the statutory allocation from the federation account. Instead of being used for public good, the allocations are diverted to personal use. Indeed,

since the advent of local government in Nigeria in the 1950s, Odion-Akhaine (2009), noted that the social problem of corruption has dogged it. To be sure, local government is no longer local government but local corruption. It has thrived, progressed, and flourished unabated in Nigeria. Corruption has taken the central stage in most local governments. This tendency is obviously a national malady. Most internally generated revenues do not go to the local government account. It is viewed by patrons of ruling parties and their clients as political reward for 'faithfully enabling the party to win or remain in office'. The sources of these revenues are regarded as "Cash Point" for daily reimbursement of 'operators'. At the end of the day, the local governments are worst off financially.

Little wonder, they now depend on the federal and state governments for funds to at least, pay the monthly salaries and wages of their workers. It may not be off the mark to suggest that what most local governments do in recent times is merely source for money to pay their workers salaries and wages. All other developmental projects and programmes are put on hold 'until the financial condition of the council improves', the local authorities would refrain. Corruption has been institutionalized to the point of accepting it as part of our system. Albeit, corruption is ubiquitous; it is found all over the world, but the degree of its manifestation varies from system to system. At the grassroots level, corruption has been canonically accommodated, entertained, and celebrated within the system. In the local government setting, corruption is misnomer labelled and euphemistically referred to as "EGUNJE" (a slogan which means "illegal offer" in Nigeria). Kolawole (2006) laments this situation when he opines that "in spite of the establishment of the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Offences Commission (ICPC), corruption still thrives in our society." In his analysis, Kolawole was of the view that the lack of funds was no more a constraint on local government performance, but a mismanagement and misappropriation of the funds accruable to it.

Theoretical Framework

Social learning theory was adopted as a suitable theory for the study which is a social psychological theory. It was propounded by Bandura in 1963. The theory which states that learning is a cognitive process that takes place in a social context and can occur purely through observation or direct instruction (Bandura, 1963). Albert Bandura propounded this theory. He studied learning processes that occurred in interpersonal contexts and were not adequately explained by theories of operant conditioning or existing models of social learning. His theory added a social element, arguing that people can learn new information and behaviours by watching other people. Known as observational learning (or modelling), this type of learning can be used to explain a wide variety of behaviours. In addition to the observation of behaviour, learning also occurs through the observation of rewards and punishments, a process known as vicarious reinforcement.

The theory expands on traditional behavioural theories, in which behaviour is governed solely by reinforcements, by placing emphasis on the important roles of various internal processes in the individual. People learn through observing others' behaviour, attitudes, and outcomes of those behaviours. Most human behaviours are learned observationally through modelling. From observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action. There are three core concepts at the heart of social learning theory. First is the idea that people can learn through observation. Next is the idea that internal mental states are an essential part of this process. Finally, this theory recognizes that just because something has been learned, it does not mean that it will result in a change in behaviour.

Application of the Theory

Observational learning theory can be used to explain the prevalence of corruption in Nigeria. People see one form of corruption or the other on daily basis in Nigeria. In both public and private organizations, employees are daily stared in the face with the realities of 'kick backs' from contracts awarded. We often see public servants who, by every standard, live above their salaries, own expensive cars, live in palatable mansions of their own and send their wards to highly expensive schools within and outside the country. These individuals are revered and worshipped as the high and mighty. Most importantly because humans are essentially pleasure seeking, we tend to learn and internalize behaviours of people who live in affluence and opulence and they invariably serve as our models. This phenomenon is most apparent where even persons that have been indicted of corrupt practices are celebrated rather than punished.

This therefore made many Nigerians to develop tendency to corruption because those who enriched themselves through corrupt tendencies were not prosecuted. Even those who were unfortunate to be caught and prosecuted were eventually acquitted. This is by every standard a catalyst for people to emulate the corrupt practices of others who were able to misappropriate public funds.

It is necessary to state that corruption thrives in Nigeria because those who corruptly enriched themselves were almost worshipped for doing so. As people continue to observe that highly placed people especially politicians acquire their wealth/affluence through one corrupt means or the other without being punished, they are forced to do even worse because it appears to be the norm. The Social Learning theory is therefore very useful in explaining why corruption has continued to exist in Nigeria. The theory argues that when an action is reinforced, it is likely to be repeated again. It appears that corruption is rewarded in Nigeria in spite of government's anti corruption campaign against it. This therefore made it difficult for most people to conduct their affairs without being corrupt. This could explain why many people in Nigeria will be willing to involve in one form of corrupt practice or the other. The theory was adopted because it explains the social-psychological factor responsible for prevalence of corruption in Nigeria which has unprecedented negative implications on the economic development of the country in general and Dunukofia in particular.

Observational learning theory has been able to show a clear relationship between corruption and Service Delivery from the perspective that if the local government officers emulate the corrupt behaviours of the officials in the states and federal government who are most times not punished for their actions, but are praised and revered, the same corrupt behavior when replicated, will impede service delivery at the grass-root level.

Discussion of Finding

The quality of services delivered in Dunukofia Local Government Area is poor. This finding raises critical concerns about governance, resource management, and institutional effectiveness at the local level. This result aligns with broader patterns observed in many rural or semi-urban regions of Nigeria, where inadequate infrastructure, underfunded public institutions, and weak accountability mechanisms continue to hinder effective service delivery.

One of the primary issues contributing to poor service quality is the apparent disconnect between policymakers and service providers. In many instances, policies formulated at higher levels of government fail to translate into actionable or impactful programs at the grassroots. This may stem from a lack of capacity among local administrators, poor inter-agency coordination, or insufficient community engagement in decision-making processes.

Moreover, systemic issues such as corruption, misallocation of funds, and political interference often exacerbate the situation. When resources meant for public services like healthcare, education, and sanitation are diverted or poorly managed, the end result is substandard service delivery. In Dunukofia LGA, residents may experience frequent breakdowns in healthcare systems, inadequate teaching materials and staff in schools, and erratic provision of water and electricity hallmarks of a failing local service delivery system.

The absence of effective monitoring and evaluation frameworks is another factor that likely contributes to the poor quality of services. Without robust mechanisms for tracking performance, gathering citizen feedback, and enforcing accountability, there is little incentive for service providers to maintain standards or innovate.

It is also important to consider socio-economic and demographic factors. High levels of poverty and low educational attainment among the populace can reduce the capacity of citizens to demand better services or hold public officials accountable. Additionally, cultural dynamics and patronage politics can affect how services are distributed and who benefits from them.

Ultimately, this finding calls for urgent reform. Enhancing transparency, strengthening local governance institutions, building capacity among service providers, and increasing community participation are critical steps toward improving service quality in Dunukofia LGA. Importantly, any intervention must be context-specific and inclusive, ensuring that the voices of marginalized groups are heard and their needs prioritized.

Conclusion

Corruption is on the increase in Nigeria's local government and these were the manifestation of bad leadership at the state level and has transcended to the local government. This has affected and therefore reduced the status of the councils to mere servant and appendages of the state government. Mere visit of some of these local governments shows that little or nothing is happening in terms of developmental projects, public servants are not accountable to the people, democratic values are eroded, human, manpower and capacity building suffers, delay in payment of salaries and allowances, over burden of the councils with primary school education and insecurity become the order of the day.

Recommendation

Based on the summary of finding, this recommendation has been given below:

- The government and the stakeholders of the ministry should ensure that these corrupt officials are monitored and brought to book whenever they deviate from the established method so as to serve as a deterrent to others.

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