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PERCEIVED EFFECT OF BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION AT THE GRASSROOTS: THE CASE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES IN SOUTHERN TARABA, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

There are observed variations in the distribution of social infrastructural facilities in rural Nigeria. This study examined the perceived effect of bribery and corruption on the provision of social infrastructural facilities in rural areas of Taraba State, Nigeria. Data for the study were collected mainly from primary sources. A total of 375 respondents from three Local Government Areas (LGAs) were used for the study. Research findings revealed that public funds were misapplied while demanding and receiving gratifications ranked first among the types of bribery and corruption identified in the study area. Overall, the finding of the study holds some implications for agricultural and rural development as the result of the Pearson product Moment Correlation led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, suggesting a significant relationship of 0.0098 or 98 percent between bribery and corruption and the provision of social infrastructural facilities that can enhance rural livelihoods.

Keywords: Perceived effect, corrupt practices, rural infrastructure, public funds.

INTRODUCTION

The development of rural areas has for long continued to attract the attention of successive governments in Nigeria. Yet, Ehimiri, *et al.*, (2012) have observed that the rural areas are still the most vulnerable to poverty with greater proportion of their population moving out to urban areas on an annual basis. However, Olajide and Udoh, (2012) averred that poor infrastructural development in rural areas has continued to encourage the process of rural-urban migration with attendant adverse effects on rural development in the country.

Historically, the economy of Nigeria was directly or indirectly dependent on agricultural produce prior to the discovery of oil, but Musa, (2013) argued that Nigeria's achievements in agricultural and rural development in the 1970s later witnessed a decline because the country shifted attention from agriculture to oil. Meanwhile, bribery and corruption has been implicated in the setbacks observed in Nigeria since the discovery of oil (Lawi, 2015) and this can continue to pose serious threat to agricultural and rural development efforts if allowed to go unchecked.

Chuka, (2012) stated that bribery and corruption is the giving and receiving of something of value (e.g. money, sex, gifts, etc) whether demanded or not, to influence the receiver's action favourably toward the giver. Bribery and corruption are not victimless crimes. They hit the poorest people hardest and undermine economic development. No country is immune from corruption. It flourishes where pay is low and where management controls are weak. Kenny, (2006) argued that estimates regarding the cost of corruption in infrastructural development indicates that 5 to 20 percent of construction costs are being lost to bribe payments. . Consequently, over the years, Nigeria has seen her wealth being siphoned with little to show in living conditions of

the average human beings, especially those living in the rural areas.

It is in the light of the foregoing, this study was formulated to assess the perception of civil servants on the effect of bribery and corruption on the provision of social infrastructural facilities at the grassroots, using local government councils in southern Taraba as a case study. The choice of the study area was premised on the fact that no previous study of this nature is known, to the best of the authors' knowledge, to have been conducted in the study area. Similarly, it focused on civil servants in the local government councils because they are employed by government, and government is saddled with the responsibility of providing social infrastructure for the comfort of rural and urban people alike. The study therefore seeks to achieve the following specific objectives:

- i. To describe the personal characteristics of the respondents
- ii. To identify the types of bribery and corruption prevalent in the Local Government Areas
- iii. To examine the perceived effect of bribery and corruption on the provision of social infrastructure

Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between bribery and corruption and the provision of social infrastructure.

METHODOLOGY

The research area was Taraba south senatorial district, Nigeria located at the southern part of Taraba State. It is made up of five Local Government Areas (LGAs) namely; Wukari, Takum, Donga, Ibi and Ussa plus a development area called Yangtu. The study area lies approximately between latitudes 5°86'N and 7°30'N and longitudes 9°24'E and 10°45'E. It is bordered on the west by Plateau state, south west by Benue state and south east by Cross River state.



Multi-stage sampling was adopted in this study. In the first stage, three out of the five LGAs in the study area were randomly selected. This was followed by the selection of departments. Since there were six departments in each LGA, all the six were selected. In the final state, respondents were chosen at random in proportion to population of employees in each LGA. Although four hundred questionnaires were administered for data collection, only three hundred and seventy five were used for the study. Data collected were analyzed using percentage, rating scale and the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 4.1revealed that respondents between 20-30 years were 14.7%, 31-40 years were 33.1%, 41-50 years were 34.9%, while 51 years and above were 17.3%. This result shows an active and agile work force. Similarly the result for gender indicates that 59.2% of the respondents were males, while 40.8% were females. This shows that males are more in government employment in Taraba South Senatorial district than females. This could be attributed to the reluctance of government to employ female workers as a result of the yearly maternity leave and excuses to attend to family issues giving rise to low productivity.

The result for marital status revealed that 26.1% respondents were single, 61.9% were married, 4% were either divorced or separated from spouse, and 8% were single parents as a result of deceased spouse. This result shows that over 70% of the respondents have family responsibilities which involve finances and if there is no proper remuneration, they can cut corners to take care of their family.

On the other hand, the result on educational level revealed that 8% respondents were holders of SSCE/TC II Certificates, 49.1% were holders of OND/NCE Certificates, 40.8% were those with B.Sc./B.A/HND certificates, and 2.1% have M.Sc./PhD certificates. This shows that most of the respondents have an understanding of the questionnaire items and gave appropriate responses.

The result on grade level indicated that 6.9% respondents fell in the category of 01-05 grade levels, 51.5% were of the category 06-10 grade levels, 32.3% were in the 11-15 grade level category, while 9.3% fell under the grade level 16 and above. The middle cadre (06-10) has the highest number indicating high productivity.

Lastly, the result of the years of service revealed that5.3% respondents had less than 1 year experience in service, 11.5% had spent between 1-6 years in service, 52.8% had between 7-12 years working experience and 30.4% had spent 12 years and above in service. This result shows that there

were more experienced workers who know the nitty-gritty of government work in the local government areas studied.

Table1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
20-30	55	14.67
31-40	124	33.07
41-50	131	34.93
51 and above	65	17.33
Gender		
Male	222	59.2
Female	153	40.8
Marital Status		
Single	98	26.13
Married	232	61.87
Divorced/Separated	15	4.00
Spouse Deceased	30	8.00
Educational Level		
SSCE/TC II	33	8.00
OND/NCE/CERT.	184	49.07
B.Sc./B.A/HND	153	40.80
M.Sc./PhD	5	2.13
Grade Level		
01-05	26	6.93
06-10	193	51.47
11-15	121	32.27
16 and above	35	9.33
Years of Service		
Below 1 year	20	5.33
1-6 years	43	11.47
7-12	198	52.80
12 years and above	114	30.40
Total	375	100

Source: Field Survey, 2014.

Table 2 reveals that 74.1% respondents agreed that receiving gratification is high in their departments while 59.7% indicated that demanding and receiving tokens was deeply rooted in their departments. Similarly, 57.1% agreed that staff demand brown envelopes(money put in an envelope, usually brown to avoid suspicion, given to a government official to seek for favour) in order to do their paid official duties while 61.6% agreed that misapplication of public resources occur in the civil service. This finding shows that different types of corrupt practices are prevalent among local government employees with receiving of gratification being topmost.



Table 2: Types of bribery and corruption prevalent in local government councils

Types	Frequenc y	Percentag e	Rank
Receiving gratification	278	74.1	1 st
Misapplication of public resources	231	61.1	2 nd
Demanding tokens	224	59.7	3 rd
Demanding brown envelopes	214	57.0	4 th

Source: Field survey, 2014

Table 3 reveals that 74.1% respondents agreed that receiving gratification is high in their departments while 25.9% disagreed to that assertion;59.7% agreed that demanding and receiving tokens was deeply rooted in their departments while 40.3% said no to that;57.1%

agreed that staff demand brown envelopes in exchange of their paid official duties while 42.9% disagreed with that;61.6% agreed that misapplication of public resources occurred in the civil service while 38.4% disagreed with the notion;66.7% agreed that proceeds from tokens received helped to augment shortfalls in their salaries while 33.3% said no; and 60.5% agreed that poverty was a factor responsible for bribery and corruption while 39.5% disagreed.

The above result shows that bribery and corruption was high in the various departments, and this can result in sub-standard or abandoned projects which will in turn have adverse effects on the citizenry. This finding closely agrees with Chuka (2012) who argued that corruption diverts expenditure away from health, the maintenance of infrastructure and provision of public services.

Table 3 Perceived effect of bribery and corruption on the provision of social infrastructure

Do these variables affect the provision of social infrastructure?	SA	A	D	SD
Receiving gratification	100	178	70	27
Demanding/receiving tokens	80	144	99	52
Demand for brown envelopes	82	132	100	61
Misapplication of public funds	80	151	90	54
Tokens replaces shortfalls in salaries	99	151	69	56
Poverty responsible for bribery	64	163	116	32

Source: Field Survey, 2014

The result in Table 4 indicates that the calculated r-value of 0.870* is greater than the critical r-value of 0.098 at 0.05 level of significance and 373 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. The conclusion then is that there is a significant relationship between bribery and corruption and provision of social infrastructure in the study area. This finding is in close agreement with Effim (2012) who argued that when money meant for the provision of infrastructural facilities are stolen by those responsible for managing the funds, it therefore mean that the lives of the majority especially the poor are at risk.

Table 4: Relationship between bribery and corruption and the provision of social infrastructure

Variables	N = 375					
	\bar{X}	SD	Σx	Σx^2	Σxy	r
Bribery and corruption	15.365	4.725	5762	96886		
Provision of social infrastructure	15.93	3.69	1574	100266	97470	0.870*
P < 0.05	df = 373					Critical r = 0.098

Source: Field survey, 2014

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings, it can be concluded that significant relationship exist between bribery and corruption and social infrastructural provision in the study area. The study also found out that public funds were not usually used for the purposes they were meant to serve. This could be attributed to the low level of social infrastructure noticed in the study area. Similarly, of the different types of bribery and corruption that prevailed in the study area, receiving gratification in order to perform official duties ranked first. It is therefore recommended that local government employees be adequately enlightened on the dangers of bribery and corruption. Specifically, the position of the law should be made known to them through seminars and workshops with a view to discourage the practice. There should also be proper monitoring and evaluation of staff to ensure compliance with civil service rules. Furthermore routine internal and external auditing should be undertaken to ensure that funds are used for the intended purposes.

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