

Anyigba
JOURNAL

OF

CONTEMPORARY

SOCIAL RESEARCH

Vol. 4, No. 1

Oct. 2019



A Publication of the Faculty of Social Sciences
Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria

JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL RESEARCH

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Journal of Contemporary Social Research
Kogi State University, Anyigba

ISSN:2276-6480

Published by Faculty of Social Sciences
Kogi State University
Anyigba-Kogi State
fassjournal@yahoo.com
Kogi State, Nigeria

Printed by Pastoral Publishers and Prints
A subsidiary of Pastoral Publishers and Prints
Lagos, Nigeria.
Ph: 09093882555
Email: ppubpress@gmail.com

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PERCEIVED CHANGING NORMS, OCCUPATIONAL STATUS AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS CORRUPT PRACTICES IN SELECTED LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES KWARA STATE.

Aina M. Joseph

Department of Sociology Kogi State University, Anyigba.

Email Address: ainamonday246@gmail.com

Fagbamila D.Olumide

Department of sociology, University Ilorin. Kwara state

Email Address: olufagba@gmail.com

&

Adojo Emmanuel Abaode

Department of Sociology, Kogi State University, Anyigba

E-mail Address: abode.peace@gmail.com

Abstract

Corruption is seen as a social problem that has permeated into every society the world over. Though its intensity and gravity vary from one country to the other, hardly is there a country that is free from corrupt practices. The upsurge in the perpetration of the act in Africa especially in Nigeria has become worrisome. This is because virtually every institution in the country has been adversely affected including law enforcement agencies which ought to serve as checks to ameliorate the problem. Unfortunately, they are at the forefront in the perpetration of the criminal act. One of the reasons for the continuing manifestation of such corrupt acts was as a result of changing social norms in terms of statutory rules and regulations guiding these law enforcement agencies. This study thus investigated changing social norms, occupational status and attitude towards corrupt behaviour among selected law enforcement agencies in Kwara State such as Nigeria Police Force, Federal Road Safety Corps and Nigeria Immigration service. The study explored mixed research design such that both quantitative and qualitative data were used in the study. The study elicited data from respondents using questionnaire and in-depth interview. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select one hundred and sixty three respondents. T-test was used to test the study hypotheses. The results showed that significant difference exist between social norms as a whole and attitude towards corrupt behaviour among employees of law enforcement agencies ($T\text{-cal} = 3.76$; $df=161$; $P<1.96$). Also, significant difference exists between gender and attitude towards corrupt behaviour among employees of law enforcement agencies employees ($T\text{-cal} = 3.68$; $df=161$; $P<1.96$). However, no significant difference exists between occupational status and attitude towards corrupt behavior among law enforcement agencies in Kwara State. ($T\text{-cal} = .070$; $df=161$ $P<1.96$). The implication of these findings is to inform Law enforcement agencies in Nigeria and the global society on how law and order can be maintained in the society as well as curbing the menace of corrupt practices among them.

Keyword: Changing Norms, Occupational Status, Corruption, Attitudes towards Corruption and Law Enforcement Agencies

Introduction

The problem of corruption has remained one of the trending issues which have plagued the structure of the Nigerian society over time. The intensity of gravity of this menace manifests in virtually every part of the Nigerian society, particularly among the top public office holders in the country, even in the developed countries of the world such as US, England, Sweden, China etc, Corruption exists. For example, in US, in 2002, six police officers in Alabama were convicted of extortion and soliciting bribes from individuals detained by the police department in exchange for not pursuing criminal charges against them (DOJ REPORT, 2002). More so, in

UK, nearly 50 metropolitan police officers were suspended for corruption commission (IPCC) report on corruption received 1,487 complaints between 2008 and 2011 (IPCC REPORT, 2012). In Ukraine, bribery and cronyism have eaten deep into every sector of its economy. \$11 billion was being siphoned yearly through the abuse of public procurement tenders in the country (Aderinto, 2000). Sadly, even among the grassroot populace, this phenomenon has been regarded as a norm which remains inevitable in our day-to-day existence and interactions as members of Nigerian society.

In Nigeria, corruption has eaten deep into the fabrics of the society, hardly is there any part of Nigerian society where corruption does not exist. In the sector, the bureaucratic corruption perpetrated in most corporate organisations is on the increase every day. Worth emphasizing is the new trend of bribery, such that unemployed graduates need to pay for a slot before they can secure employment letters due to unemployment crisis lingering in the country at present. Among the political office holders, money laundering, financial misappropriation and embezzlement are seen as norm without being checked.

Unfortunately, our security agencies are not exempted from this menace of corruption. Ladapo (2013) asserted that corruption in the Nigeria Police Force is one of the most visible manifestation of corruption in the country such that it characterizes the behaviour of an average police man. It also manifests in other law enforcement agencies in form of bribery, extortion, kickbacks, favouritism among others. It is worth noting that such manifestations of corrupt gesture among law enforcement agencies have impacted negatively on the entire nation. This is because law enforcement agencies are saddled with responsibilities which include maintaining law and order, ensure adequate security, protection of lives and properties, regulation of movements across border, checking illegal goods and commodities among others. However, due to their involvement in corrupt practices, it has led to rising wave of insecurity in the country, high incidence of crime perpetration in the neighborhood such as burglary, armed robbery, kidnapping, theft, cybercrime etc. Other negative consequences include smuggling of contra band goods which may be harmful to the citizenry, high prevalence of drug use and other substance abuse among others.

Though, the current administration has shown concern and attention, attempt has been made to combat and put an end to the problem. Each successive administration in Nigeria has adopted different measures to address the problem, yet, it keeps thriving and permeating our society everyday. This may be attributed to several factors some of which will be examined in this study.

From the foregoing, social norm and occupational status are explored to determine if they can influence attitude towards corrupt behaviour. Based on this, the study will address the following research questions.

- i Does changing social norm among the law enforcement agencies influence their attitude towards corrupt behaviour?
 - ii Does occupational status among the law enforcement agencies influence their attitude towards corrupt behaviour?
 - iii Does gender of law enforcement agencies employees influence their attitude towards corrupt behaviour?
- This study is set to examine the following objectives.
- i To examine the influence of changing social norm among law enforcement agencies on their attitude towards corrupt behaviour.
 - ii To investigate the influence of occupational status among the law enforcement agencies on their attitude towards corrupt behaviour.
 - iii To determine the influence of gender among law enforcement agencies on their attitude towards corrupt behaviour.

Review of Related Literature

The World Bank (2009) defines corruption as "the abuse of public power for private benefit". The Transparency International (TI) defined it as "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain". The Independent Corrupt Practice Commission (ICPC Act, 2000), defines corrupt acts to include "bribery, fraud and other related offences". By inference therefore, corruption involves the misuse of authority or position conferred on someone for his own selfish interest and benefits and moreso, at the detriment of the populace.

Fasokun (2010) defines corruption as a behaviour which exploits human person, disdainfully uses men and women for selfish interests. The person who exhibits such a behaviour gains at the detriment of the other party. Corruption is a problem of routine deviation from established standards and norms of public officials and parties they interact with. Kassahu (2011) asserts that corruption is a price, reward and gift or favour bestowed with or promised with the view to perverting justices. He contends that in whatever way corruption is defined it entails acts which are perceived to be against public interest or violate certain legal or moral laws and principles and some of these are directly or indirectly harmful to the society.

Amundesen (2010) outlined some types of corruption prevalent in the Nigerian society which are bribery, embezzlement, extortion, fraud straddling, favouritism and nepotism. Bribery is the payment (in money or kind) that is given or taken in a corrupt relationship. Paying or receiving a bribe is corruption *per se*, and

should be understood as the essence of corruption. Embezzlement is a theft of resources by people who are put to administer it; it is when disloyal employees steal from their employers. Straddling posits the process by which some power-holders systematically use their political office to enter into, secure and expand their private business interests. Fraud is an economic crime that involves some kind of trickery, swindle or deceit. It involves a manipulation or distortion of information, facts and expertise, by public officials positioned between politicians and citizens, who seeks to draw a private profit. (Eskeland and Thiele 1999; Fjeldstad 1999). Extortion refers to money and other resources extracted by the use of coercion, violence or the threats to use force. Favouritism is the natural human proclivity to favour friends, family and anybody close and trusted. Nepotism is a special form of favouritism, in which an office holder (ruler) prefers his proper kinfolk and family members (wife, brothers and sisters, children, nephews, cousins, in-laws etc.).

A broad definition of perceived or subjective norm is "the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behaviour" in question (Ajzen, 1991). But subjective norm is usually defined more precisely, as an individual's perception or "opinion about what important others believe the individual should do" (Finlay, Trafimow, & Moroi, 1999) i.e., perform or not perform the behavior in a specific situation. This perception or opinion has been labeled as that individual's normative belief, which is often then multiplied by motivation to comply with this belief (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1972). Subjective norms as represented by normative beliefs are located within, but not identical to, the broader construct of social norms. "While a social norm is usually meant to refer to a rather broad range of permissible, but not necessarily required behaviors, normative belief refers to a specific behavioral act the performance of which is expected or desired under the given circumstances" (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1972). Social norms have been explicated by level and type. Lapinski and Rimal (2005) differentiate levels of collective norms to include those of a person's social network and those of an entire society.

Subjective norms operate at the individual level as an individual's perception of collective norms. The commonly used subjective norms measures included above are at the low collective norm level of important others, and even at a lower level of specified referents within important others. If not measured as perceived at an individual, psychological level, collective norms

should be measured through observational measures that include media environment and structural characteristics of the social system (Lapinski & Rimal, 2005). A social norm is the accepted behavior that an individual is expected to conform to in a particular group, community, or culture. These norms often serve a useful purpose and create the foundation of correct behaviors.

In other words, social norms allow you to expect the events that will occur in a particular setting. This allows you to prepare yourself for a situation and reduces the amount of stress that you would feel leading up to a situation that you felt uncertain of what was expected. Social norms are most noticeable when they are not followed. They remain stable because most people are taught to follow them and agree to do so willingly. Even if a person doesn't feel like following a social norm, he or she may do it because of the social pressure that is placed on him or her to conform.

Other types of social norms identified in this study are injunctive and descriptive norms. Injunctive norms refer to people's beliefs about what ought to be done in a situation, and descriptive norms refer to beliefs about what is actually done by most others in one's social group (Lapinski & Rimal, 2005). This is true of law enforcement agencies in Nigeria in which there are specific laid down regulations which are expected to be strictly adhered to. However, the prevalence of corrupt practices among these agencies has made most of these regulations altered, thus bringing about re-modified ways of doing things which are not in tandem with laid down practices. Thus, the ideal and constituted ways of doing things depict injunctive norm while the re-modified way of carrying out the activities depict descriptive norms.

Occupational status is a fundamental measure of social standing that reflects the distribution of power, privilege, and prestige associated with positions in the occupational hierarchy. Occupational status appears to indicate a reliable and powerful characteristic of persons or households by dint of its temporal stability and substantial correlation with other social and economic variables. Some economists have suggested that occupational status may be a better indicator of long-term or permanent income than is income at a single point in time (Goldberger 1989; Zimmerman 1992). However, unlike permanent income, occupational status can be measured well at a single point in time, and occupational education, rather than income, appears to account for the

persistence of occupational standing (Hauser and Warren, 1996).

The literature remains somewhat inconclusive on the correlation between social norms and corruption. One of the most well-known studies that provide evidence of a link between social norms that tolerate corruption ("corruption norms") and the prevalence of corruption is the one by Fisman and Miguel (2006) who evaluated the parking tickets given to diplomats stationed in New York City, and found that diplomats from highly corrupt countries tend to commit parking violations more often. However, other studies demonstrated that the correlation is not clear, or that other factors, such as weak governance, may be stronger determinants of corrupt behavior. As social norms can play an important role in influencing behaviour, they can also potentially play an important role in shaping anti-corruption campaigns.

Attempt to further explain factor that contribute to attitude towards corrupt behaviour have led to factors such as gender. Dollar et al (2001) and Swamy et al found that lower levels of corruption were associated with greater percentage of women in the parliament. furthermore, they established that lower corruption level characterized women holding senior cadre position in public administration. However, Sung (2003) found no significant relationship between gender and corruption and this may be caused by variables such as the rule of law, freedom of the press and level of democracy. This is further buttressed by Chirilu (2013) who found that in autocracies and where corruption is endemic, women get involved in corrupt practices as much as a men do, but in democracies, women disapprove in corrupt practices more than men and are less likely to engage in it.

According to social learning theory, behaviour is influenced by standards of legal and illegal behaviour, peers, and positive or negative reinforcement. Bernard, Snipes, and Gerould (2010) characterized social learning theory as acknowledgement that learning involves an interplay of environmental, behavioural, and cognitive influences. Travits (2010) found that for citizens and public officials, the decision whether to engage in corruption is mostly affected by individuals' definitions of corruption and personal perceptions of how widespread corruption is.

In summary, the social learning theory posits that the super structure is responsible for corruption among law enforcement agencies. That is the structure gave room for the persistence practice of corruption, which has made corruption become a culture in the agencies. Most employees in the agencies are influenced by peer pressure where officers that are highly ranked engage in corrupt practices without being apprehended for their actions. With this, the lower ranked officers also engage in same act owing to the fact that there are no sanctions meted out to the higher ranked officer that perpetrated same corrupt act as they do so, this encourages them to continue in the act and by extension corrupt practice tend to become the culture in the institution deviating from the norms and moral value that have been set by the structure.

This study tries to test the following hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between occupational status and attitude towards corrupt behavior among employees of law enforcement agencies in kwara state.
2. There is no significant difference gender and attitude towards corrupt behavior among the employees of law enforcement agencies in kwara state.
3. There is no significant difference between social norms and attitude towards corrupt behavior among employees of law enforcement agencies in kwara state.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Ilorin, Kwara state capital. Nigeria Police Force, Federal Road Safety Corps, and Nigeria Immigration Service employees were selected for the research. A total of one hundred and sixty-three employees participated in the research with one hundred and twenty (120) males and forty-three (43) females while the largest serving respondents had put in twenty-five years in service and least length of service had spent one (1) year. Primary source, Questionnaire and In-depth interview (IDI) were used to elicit data, out of the distributed questionnaire one hundred and sixty-one were found useful for data processing which was analyzed through T-test for independent measure. The in-depth interview was also analyzed through content analysis. Three hypothesis were tested in the study.

Table 1: A summary table of the independent t-test showing the influence of occupational status on attitude towards corrupt behaviour among law enforcement agencies employees in Kwara State.

Occupational Status	N	Mean	SD	DF	T-Cal	Critical Value
Senior Cadre	60	49.72	6.31	161	.70	1.96
Junior Cadre	103	49.79	5.34			

Researcher's Fieldwork (2018)

The first hypothesis as presented in Table 1 tested for occupational status and attitude towards corrupt behavior revealed that occupational status does not have significant influence on attitude towards corrupt behaviour at 70. This, thus implies both junior and senior cadre officers are vulnerable to corrupt behaviour. The senior cadre officers have a mean value of 49.72 while junior cadre officers have a mean value of 49.79. The study reveal that both senior and junior cadre officers tend to both in corrupt practices. This is also supported by the IDL.

"Whether junior or senior, everybody is prone to corrupt practices here. I am a junior officer and I don't have access to huge money but my boss does"

What can be inferred from the above result is that both cadres are prone to corrupt behaviours but the gravity varies. For instance, most junior officers in the Nigeria Police Force who man the road and even on the counter in their station are prone to collecting bribes from people while senior cadre officers who head a unit or the station engage in embezzlement or misappropriation of funds meant for running and maintenance of the police station.

Another respondent has this to say *"most of the money we collect here we remit larger percentage to our boss when we get back to office, that is why I told you that both junior and senior officer are corrupt."*

Hypothesis II

Table 2: A summary table of the independent t-test showing the influence of gender on attitude towards corrupt behaviour among law enforcement agencies employees in Kwara State.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	DF	T-Cal	Critical Value
Male	120	46.15	8.53	161	3.68	1.96
Female	43	43.12	7.86			

Researcher's Fieldwork (2018)

The second hypothesis as presented in Table 2 which tested for gender and attitude towards corrupt behaviour revealed that there is a significant difference between gender and attitude towards corrupt behaviour at 3.68. That is, calculated t-value of 3.68 was greater than t-value of 1.96. Therefore, significant difference exists at 0.05 alpha level. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. This implies that female employees of law enforcement agencies are less likely to engage in corrupt behaviour compared to their male counter parts. This finding agreed with the view of Dollar et al (2001), Swanny et al (2001) who established that lower corruption level characterized women in senior cadre position.

Table 3: A summary table of the independent t-test showing the influence of social norm on attitude towards corrupt behaviour among law enforcement agencies employees in Kwara State.

Norm	N	Mean	SD	DF	T-Cal	Critical Value
Injunctive	38	44.36	7.91	161	3.76	1.96
Descriptive	125	47.14	8.72			

Researcher's Fieldwork (2018)

The third hypothesis as presented in Table 3 which tested for social norm and attitude towards corrupt behaviour revealed that there is a significant difference between social norm and attitude towards corrupt behaviour at 3.76. This implies that the calculated t-value of 3.68 was greater than t-value of 1.96. Therefore, significant difference exists at 0.05 alpha level. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. This implies that female employees of law enforcement agencies are less likely to engage in corrupt behavior compare to their male counter parts. This finding agreed with the view of

Dollar et al (2001), Swammy et al (2001) who established that lower corruption level characterized women in senior cadre position. This research findings were corroborated by the IDI. "Here in our office, processing of passport should not exceed N10, 750 but you may likely spend longer hours and days but because we know most applicants do not want to be delayed, we charge N28,000 so as to fast track the process for them.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study reveals that occupational status of the employees of law enforcement agencies does not influence their attitude towards corrupt behaviour while both gender and social norms influence attitude towards corrupt behaviour. It

is thus imperative for government to probe into the daily operations and obligations of employees of these agencies especially for all cadres so as to checkmate their activities and prevent them from corrupt practices.

More so there must be training and retraining among the employees of law enforcement agencies to remind them of the norms guiding their job and encourage them to be steadfast and objective in discharging their duties and obligations.

Lastly, government should equally increase the motivational packages of these employees in term of their salaries and other incentives that will discourage them from indulging in corrupt practices.

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