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PROFILING CORRUPTION PERCEPTION IN NIGERIA: ROLE OF RELIGION AND GENDER

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates attitude towards corruption and the role of gender, religion, education and age using a Nigerian survey data. It also seeks to establish how attitudes towards corruption relates to some other reported ethical measures such as Islamic work ethics, money ethic and corruption perception. Over 3800 questionnaires were administered with 1833 or about 48% response rate. Results revealed no significant gender differences in corruption but women reported being more religious. Also Christians rated the incidence of corruption as higher than Muslims although the sample size skews significantly in favour of the former. Older and more educated people also rated corruption incidence higher.

INTRODUCTION

To claim that corruption is African is to quip about a serious universal issue that is pervasive and endemic afflicting all parts of the world in different forms and varying degrees. Corruption is a predicament that has afflicted many societies at one time or the other in the course of their history and that still bother them to some degree presently. In western economies where corruption no longer appears to play a major role, no one would claim that it has been totally defeated (Merz, 2004). What is, perhaps, true is that corruption is pronounced in Africa, perhaps more acknowledged in Africa and expected more in Africa and the rest of the developing world. However, it is perpetuated by people of all countries perhaps more in Africa, with the connivance of Africans, and hence Africa has an unfavourable reputation for corruption. Hope (2000) claims the pandemic has reached cancerous proportions and become a matter of global concern in sub-Saharan Africa. It has permeated virtually all institutions, both public and private, governmental and non governmental, and has become a way of life and a principal method for the accumulation of private property afflicting all groups and people from all levels of life including professionals (Mulinge & Lesetedi, 2002).

Some writers (e.g. Osoba, 1996; Mulinge & Lesetedi, 1998) have argued that corruption is a by-product of traits of fraudulent antisocial behaviour derived from British, French and other colonial rulers. Mulinge & Lesetedi (1998) further explained that, among others, the introduction of monetary economy, the use of divide and rule technique, the faulty and inappropriate constitutions, and the centralisation of power entrenched in many African countries accounted for laying the foundation for corruption. They, however, conceded that corruption in Africa cannot entirely be attributed to colonialism. After all, self-determination since the late 1950s allowed African leaders the opportunity to choose what was good for their people. In some African countries a decent level of good governance with relatively transparent and non-systemic corruption has been provided and this is widely acknowledged, for example in the case of Botswana but in many others such as Nigeria and Kenya this does not seem to be the case (Mulinge & Lesetedi, 2002; Gbadamosi, 2006a).

Corruption is one of the most written about concept in academia. The literature on the subject is intimidating as all aspects of this social ill have been well documented, its nature, extent, causes, measurement, and consequences among others. Interestingly, it is a subject that has cut across nearly all disciplines. It has been the domain of political science, economics, philosophy, history, sociology, anthropology, psychology, management, and law among others. Political scientist often discusses political corruption (as it relates to good governance and development) while economists often discuss economic corruption (as it relates to cost of corruption and development) and between the two disciplines the output has been most dominant. In the behavioural sciences, much less of the behavioural dimension of corruption has been reported in the empirical literature. This paper will focus on the behavioural dimension of corruption using sample from Nigeria. How do people generally understand and perceive corruption in behavioural terms?

Defining Corruption: A variety of corruption definition available in the literature has been well captured (for example, Jain, 2001; Svensson, 2005; Sampford et al, 2006) and will not be dwelt on in this paper. Nevertheless, we find the definition of Osoba (1996) instructive and adopted it for our purpose: ... *a form of antisocial behaviour by an individual or social group which confers unjust or fraudulent benefits on its perpetrators, is inconsistent with the established legal norms and prevailing moral ethos of the land and is likely to subvert or diminish the capacity of the legitimate authorities to provide fully for the material and spiritual well-being of all members of society in a just and equitable manner (p. 372).* It is the cumulative of this socially undesirable behaviour that we refer to as corruption and it is people's attitude to such behaviour that is the interest of this paper.

Recently, Linder and Linder (2008) distinguished between corruption leading to personal enrichment and a second type aimed at increasing the competitive ability of the company. They further argued that corruption in some cases is not lack of honesty; rather depending on competition, market conditions and considerations it can be a requirement for surviving in the market. A similar question that research into corruption seeks to know is whether certain behaviour that people manifest is morally wrong (which is the domain of ethics, philosophy and morality); whether such behaviour is economically expensive (covered by economists, business and financial analysts); and whether it is legal (covered by lawyers). In this paper we refer to corruption as something 'negative' / 'bad' and thus seek to understand its behavioural manifestation better. In a global sense, we attempt to capture the attitude of people towards corruption. Attitude towards corruption may play a critical role in the persistence of corruption and thus understanding and being able to measure it may provide useful addition to the retinue of knowledge already in the public domain.

Gender, Age & Corruption

Some studies have shown that women tend to be less corrupt than men (Dollar, Fishman & Gatti, 2001; Swamy, Knack, Lee & Azfar, 2001; Torgler & Valev, 2004). Swamy et al (2001) found that women are less involved in bribery, and are less likely to condone bribe taking. Using cross-country data, a larger proportion of women than men believe that illegal or dishonest behaviour are never justifiable and that corruption is less severe where women hold a larger share of parliamentary seats and senior positions in government and comprise a larger share of the labour force (Swamy et al, 2001). Similarly, Collier (2000) in his corruption reduction argument noted that in fighting against corruption Africa need learn the value of decentralised government and the need to include more women in the political process from other societies.

Noting the seeming neglect of the relationship between age and corruption in the economics literature, Torgler and Valev (2004), using the World Value Survey data, found that the variable 'justifiability of corruption' is significantly lower for the age group 30 to 65+ than for the reference group below 30. They noted that the age effect becomes stronger for each higher age group and is substantial in magnitude. Recent findings of Alatas, Cameron, Chaudhri, Erkal and Gangadharan (2006) seem more interesting. They found that while women in Australia are less tolerant of corruption than men, there are no significant gender differences in attitude towards corruption in India, Indonesia and Singapore. This suggests that the gender differences found in the previous studies (e.g. Swamy et al, 2001) may not be nearly as universal as stated and the relationship between gender and corruption may be more culture-specific. These evidence, taken together, provides some support for the idea that, at least in the short or medium term, increased presence of women in public life will reduce levels of corruption (Swamy et al, 2001) and more elderly people in political and public administration positions will likely reduce the incidence of corruption (Torgler & Valev, 2004). However, these evidence remains inconclusive, at least outside of Western countries, hence the need to engage in more comparative international studies especially in Africa and other developing countries. Our study contributes to bridging this gap.

Corruption in Nigeria

Corruption in Africa is well documented including its causes, symptoms, and consequences (see for example, Collier, 2000; Hope, 2000; Mulinge & Lesetedi, 2002). Collier (2000) argued that corruption persists in Africa because it becomes acceptable; because it becomes safe; and because people expect it to continue and these are the most difficult forces to tackle. Moral norms, risks of punishment and inherited reputations all tend to perpetuate honesty in honest societies and corruption in corrupt societies (Collier, 2002). Poor pay has been indicated as another major reason for public sector corruption in Africa (see for example Van Rijckeghem & Weder, 2001; Mulinge & Lesetedi, 2002). Empirical evidence in this respect is however inconclusive. In cross-country studies, Rauch and Evans (2000) and Treisman (2000) find no robust evidence that higher wages deter

corruption, while Van Rijckeghem and Weder (2001) find that it does. Svensson (2005) thus argued that while the systematic evidence on the relationship between pay and corruption may be ambiguous, most findings generally provide convincing evidence that paying higher wages can deter corruption under certain circumstances. Nevertheless, the argument that higher wages may reduce corruption ignores the other problems related to the general level of underdevelopment in many of these countries. These problems increase the financial outlay requirement of citizens in many respects including: poor infrastructure, poor or absent pension scheme, poor public schools and hospitals, and absence of other basic utilities such as electricity, water, telecommunication etc.

There is no dearth of writing on corruption in Nigeria as the country has notoriety for this vice with most authors agreeing that it will be difficult for the country to develop if corruption within the system continues at its present level. A Google search with the two words “corruption” and “Nigeria” generated 2,030,000 hits and a Google scholar search reduced it to 46,000 hits (March 2009). In Nigeria, corruption manifests itself in a variety of ways and in all sectors from the social, political and bureaucratic to the educational and cultural. A man’s source of wealth is of no concern to his neighbours, the public or the government. In Nigeria (and some African countries), this decay in socially acceptable behaviour is palpable. The behaviour that used to be completely unacceptable – a taboo of sort – some four decades ago, modified to become tolerated or sometimes ignored two decades ago and recently over the last decade have actually become celebrated and applauded. Using four scales that measures corruption across countries, Svensson (2005) reported Nigeria as the only country to appear in the bottom 10 percent of the most corrupt countries on all four lists. Perhaps if we start our investigation from a country visibly high in corruption perception we may learn some lessons as future studies replicate the investigation in other African countries.

Hypotheses: The primary objective of the study is to investigate attitude towards corruption and corruption perception in Nigeria. Specifically, the study attempts to test three hypotheses:

1. There is no relationship between corruption perception, on the one hand, and religion, gender, education, and age on the other
2. There is no relationship between attitude towards corruption, on the one hand, and religion, gender, education, experience and age on the other
3. There is no relationship between attitude towards corruption, corruption perception, Islamic work ethics, and money ethics

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sampling and Respondents’ Characteristics

The study is a cross-sectional design and data was collected from employees from the private and public sector in Lagos, Nigeria. About 3,800 questionnaires were administered in Lagos (which is the commercial hub of Nigeria) to randomly selected employees in several organisations. A total of 1842 were returned with 1833 being usable representing 48.24 percent response rate, 9 questionnaires were omitted from analysis for various types of incompleteness.

Over 62 percent respondents were males, with majority of them between 21 and 40 years old (about 78%), about 50 percent were married and most worked either in the private sector (45.9%) or were self employed (15%). About 67 percent had more than a high school qualification with about 41 percent possessing university degrees and 60 percent have worked for more than 5 years. Over 74 percent were Christians and about 24 percent being Muslims, only 26 (1.5%) did not indicate their religion. About 99 percent of respondents were Nigerian citizens, the remaining 1 percent either did not answer the questions or they were citizens of neighbouring countries.

Measuring Instrument and Reliability

Attitude towards corruption: was measured using a 20-item scale on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’ developed for the purpose of this study. Face validity was established using a cross-section of African academics and it was also pilot tested with a small group of Africans at a management development workshop to clean up ambiguity and other related issues. Cronbach alpha obtained for this sample is .62. Some examples of the items include: (1) Corruption can never be eliminated in this country and (2) Prayers can help reduce and remove corruption.

Work ethics (Islamic): was measured using a 17-item measure of Ali (1988) cited in Yousef (2000) on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. The Cronbach alpha obtained in this sample is .78. Some example of the items include: (1) Life has no meaning without work and (2) Creative work is a source of happiness and accomplishment.

Money ethic scale (MES): was measured with the six-item measure of Tang *et al.* (2002). The Cronbach alpha for this scale in our sample is .62 which is slightly lower than the reported .68 in an earlier African sample (Gbadamosi & Joubert, 2005). The scale has however been examined in many different countries in Asia, Europe and the USA (Tang *et al.* 2002). Some example items are: (1) Money is the root of all evil and (2) Money is a symbol of success.

Corruption perception: a 5-item measure on a five-point scale from ‘always’ to ‘never’ was used for this purpose (Gbadamosi, 2006b). It measures aspects of corruption perception and some items are included in Table 1. The Cronbach alpha obtained for this scale is .64.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Table 1 reports result on the corruption perception measures. This finding indicate that bribes and tips are (at least) sometimes required to get things done (up to 83%) and that organisations (at least) sometimes have to pay bribes and tips to get things done (up to 80%). It is also discouraging that it is difficult to get help elsewhere when faced with a potentially corrupt situation; with about 33 percent reporting there is ‘rarely’ help to there is ‘never’ help. Similar poor results were reported for the same measures in both Swaziland and Botswana, with the percentage required for tips and bribes being up to 79 percent in Swaziland (Gbadamosi & Joubert, 2005) and up to 69 percent in Botswana (Gbadamosi, 2006b). With respect to whether help can be obtained elsewhere those reporting ‘rarely’ to ‘never’ in the two countries is closer to the findings in Nigeria (31% in Swaziland and 24% in Botswana).

Table 1: Corruption perception

Item statements (This is the case in this country):	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1 Individuals pay bribes and tips to get things done.	253 [14.6%]	315 [18.2%]	879 [50.7%]	173 [10.0%]	115 [6.6%]
2 Organisations pay bribes and tips to get things done.	161 [9.3%]	279 [16.1%]	821 [47.5%]	311 [18.0%]	157 [9.1%]
3 If a public official acts against rules, help can be obtained elsewhere.	159 [9.4%]	218 [12.8%]	756 [44.5%]	423 [24.9%]	144 [8.5%]

Using a single item respondents were asked to rate corruption in the country using the options high, medium and low: ‘how would you rate the incidence of bribery and corruption in the country?’ A total of 1439 (84.5%) rated corruption as high, 233 (13.7%) rated it as moderate and a mere 30 (1.8%) rated it as low. There is no doubt that Nigerians are highly critical of their own country, recognise the problem and do not pretend it does not exist. How does this rating compare along the lines of respondents’ religion, gender, education and age? Crosstabulation results show no significant differences between men and women on the rating of the incidence of bribery and corruption. However, Christians rated the incidence as higher than Muslims (chi square 25.726, d.f. = 4, $p < 0.000$); the more educated respondents rated corruption incidence higher (chi square 29.932, d.f. = 10, $p < 0.001$). The older respondents rated it as higher than the younger ones (chi square 48.960, d.f. = 10, $p < 0.000$) with respondents under 20 years being generally more tolerant of corruption and this finding supports Torgler and Valev (2004).

The 20-item attitude towards corruption scale was subjected to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and details of the result are reported in another paper (Gbadamosi and Bello, 2009). Prior to this the suitability of data for factor analysis was assessed. The correlation matrix revealed coefficients of 0.3 and above; the KMO value was good (0.74) and the Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity reached statistical significance ($p < .000$), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. The result reveals further that the scale is a multidimensional measure loading on 4 factors and showing very strong internal consistency among the factors. The percentage of total

variance of all 20 items explained by the four factors is about 40%. In all the factor analysis shows some evidence of construct validity and with a reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of 0.62 the scale is good.

Further analysis of data – crosstabulation – was performed. Selected items of the attitude towards corruption scale items against religion, education, gender and age are reported hereafter. On whether 'corruption can never be eliminated in the country', significantly more women than men hold this view ($p < 0.30$) and respondents with lower education ($p < .000$) also supports this view. There are no significant differences in religion or age for this item. *Can a good and committed government reduce corruption?* There were no significant differences in the religious affiliation and gender for this item. However, significantly more educated ($p < .014$) and younger respondents ($p < .017$) agree with this statement. There are no significant gender differences in opinion on 'the use of an effective anti-graft agency to eliminate corruption', but significantly more Christians ($p < .012$), more educated ($p < .000$) and younger respondents ($p < .012$) are in agreement with this statement. Results on whether 'lack of sanctions for corrupt practices is likely to increase corruption' showed significant differences for all comparison groups. Significantly more Christians than Muslims ($p < .000$), more men than women ($p < .002$), more educated people ($p < .000$) and younger people ($p < .000$) agree with this statement. We have selected to present another three items that can be deemed religious statements. Results on whether 'prayers can help reduce and remove corruption' revealed that no significant differences as it relates to education and ages of respondents. However, significantly more Christians than Muslims agree (.000), and significantly more women than men ($p < .024$) agree with this view. The result for the item 'I am a very religious person' showed significant differences for all groups. Even though there are significantly more Christians than Muslims in this sample but it is rather interesting that significantly more Muslims agree ($p < .003$) with this statement. Also significantly more women than men ($p < .000$); less educated people ($p < .000$); and younger people ($p < .004$) agree with this view. Finally, investigating the opinion of respondents on the corruption label that seems to stick with Nigeria internationally with the item 'the level of corruption in this country is exaggerated by the international community'. There were no significant gender differences on this item, but significantly more Muslim than Christians ($p < .003$), older ($p < .003$) and less educated people ($p < .000$) support this statement.

The descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among the study variables are presented in Table 2. Attitude towards corruption was significantly and positively correlated with both the money ethic scale ($r = .286$, $p < 0.01$) and Islamic work ethics ($r = .384$, $p < 0.01$), which is not unexpected as all three scales measure some form of ethical conduct which gives construct validity support to the attitude towards corruption scale. We also found a significant correlation between the money ethic scale and Islamic work ethic ($r = .266$, $p < 0.01$). There was, however, no significant correlation between corruption perception and any other variable in addition to being inversely correlated with attitude towards corruption. This is perhaps an indication that it measures something different from the other variables. Another plausible reason for the corruption perception scale standing out is that responses were anchored on a different kind of scale from the other measures (see table 1).

Table 2: Mean, standard deviation and intercorrelations of study variables

Study variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1 Attitude towards corruption	3.48	.41	(0.62)	-.033	.286 ^a	.384 ^a
2 Corruption perception	2.97	.66		(0.64)	.040	.008
3 Money ethic	3.43	.72			(0.62)	.266 ^a
4 Work ethics (Islamic)	3.96	.48				(0.78)

Notes: N = 1833; $p < 0.01$ level ^a(2-tailed); Cronbach's Alpha (α) in parentheses and bold

In order to investigate whether there are significant gender differences in attitude towards corruption, corruption perception, money ethic and Islamic work ethic independent t-test were also conducted. The result of t-test indicates that there were no significant gender differences on attitude towards corruption (see Table 3). Contrasting Swamy et al (2001) which reports gender differences in a Western sample, the present findings supports Alantas et al (2006) who found no gender differences in India, Indonesia and Singapore, but only in Australia. Similarly there were no significant gender differences on corruption perception and Islamic work ethic. For money ethic however, women score significantly higher than men [$t(1757) = -2.091$, $p < .037$].

To test if religious differences affect attitude towards corruption, corruption perception, money ethic and Islamic work ethic, independent t-test was also conducted. The result of t-test (see Table 4) indicates significant religious differences for attitude towards corruption, money ethic and Islamic work ethic. Christians scored significantly higher than Muslims on the attitude towards corruption scale and more interesting on the Islamic work ethic scale. Muslims however scored significantly higher on the money ethic scale.

Table 3: T-test of study variables by gender with means and standard deviation

S/N	Study Variables	Male		Female		Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		t	d.f.	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F	Sig.			
1	Attitude towards corruption	3.49	.40	3.45	.42	1.060	.303	1.73	1592	.084
2	Corruption perception	2.97	.67	2.97	.66	.032	.858	-.12	1670	.900
3	Money ethic	3.40	.73	3.48	.49	.084	.772	-2.09	1757	.037
4	Work ethics (Islamic)	3.96	.48	3.97	.72	.031	.860	-.19	1452	.852

N = 1833, Male = 1115, Female = 673

Table 4: T-test of study variables by religion with means and standard deviation

S/N	Study Variables	Christian		Muslim		Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F	Sig.			
1	Attitude towards corruption	3.50	.39	3.43	.43	3.400	.065	2.86	1522	.004
2	Corruption perception	2.95	.67	3.01	.65	.270	.603	-1.55	1589	.121
3	Money ethic	3.40	.74	3.54	.66	8.724	.003	-3.57	757.646	.000
4	Work ethics (Islamic)	3.99	.47	3.92	.47	.002	.963	2.34	1379	.020

N = 1833, Christians = 1307, Muslims = 419

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study provides useful information about attitude towards corruption and corruption perception from an aspect of relatively unexplored respondents' profile: religion, gender, education and age using African data. In many African nations, relative to the West, citizens are generally very religious, gender inequality high, level of education low and age a very important distinguishing factor among people. All of these are especially true for Nigeria. The literature, however, offers very little information in these respects, yet such information remains important to understand better these aspects of corruption as a socially undesirable behaviour. The present findings on corruption perception suggest that in at least four out of five times people are likely to pay tips and bribes to get things done as individuals or as an organisation. This statistics is close to that earlier obtained from Swaziland and Botswana. What is more worrying is that the machinery in place for citizens to seek redress is ineffective. It appears that the recurring appearance of Nigeria at the bottom of CPI list can easily be more attributable to the absence of an effective corruption combating strategy. Moreover, Nigerians rate the incidence of corruption in their country as very high, over 84 percent. Such rating further reinforces the CPI of Transparency International (TI) and is perhaps also reinforced by it.

It would be useful to engage the respondents in future studies perhaps using focus groups or in-depth interview to establish their awareness of TI ratings and thereafter establish to what extent this awareness may affect their personal rating. The findings further reveal that Christians rated the incidence of corruption as higher than Muslims although the sample size skews significantly in favour of the former, a situation which might have been different if data collection was spread nationally. Older and more educated people also rated corruption incidence higher. It is discouraging that respondents under 20 years are generally more tolerant of corruption. The results also reveal that respondents generally agree that a good and committed government can reduce corruption; an effective anti-graft agency can help combat corruption and that the absence of effective sanctions serve to increase corruption in Nigeria although there were variations in religion, gender, education and age.

Nigerians generally profess religion and it is almost a 'taboo' of some sort to proclaim to be a non-believer. It is, therefore, not a surprise that over 74 percent of the respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement

'prayers can help reduce and remove corruption'. Interestingly, women more than men and Christians more than Muslims hold this view. The view of respondents was divided (40% disagreeing and 45% agreeing) on whether the international community exaggerates the level of corruption in the country, but Muslims more than Christians support this view.

The managerial and policy implications of these results could be very interesting and challenging. First, effectively combating corruption is perhaps a major key to winning the anti-graft 'war' in Nigeria as it may perhaps be for most of Africa. While so much attention has been devoted to the incidence of corruption itself and some to its reduction, these results suggest much more need to be done in providing a people generated corruption reduction strategies and identifying which are workable strategies. Secondly, concerted effort needs to also be directed at the re-orientation of the younger age group, for whom these results appears are more tolerant of corruption. Thirdly, a combination of both an effective anti-corruption agency and effective sanctions for offenders might prove valuable in the anti-graft effort. Finally, more effort at corruption prevention as opposed to the over-concentration on its control could prove more effective in a country like Nigeria. It is disappointing that these results mostly confirms extant literature in most respects but encouraging that it fills some gap on what needs to be known about the role of religion, gender, age and education on attitude towards corruption.

As with all studies, the limitations of this research include the use of a self-report instrument. Social desirability effect is a major potential limitation here as respondents may answer questions according to their perception of social desirability. However, given the complete anonymity guaranteed in the research process it is hoped that the effect, if at all, would be minimal.

CONCLUSION

This paper attempted to examine corruption perception and attitude towards corruption in an African context using behavioural indicators rather than from an economic or political science perspective. It investigates the role of religion, gender, education and age in an African society (Nigeria) where all these are important. It also commences the process of developing instruments which, when fully validated, may offer fresh insights into our understanding of corrupt practices as an unethical, immoral and socially undesirable behaviour. There is little doubt that corruption is difficult to study empirically, because of its very nature: rarely does it leave a trail, often no witnesses, disclosure is at the pleasure of the actors involved, and making it public knowledge is considered negative. There will therefore always be something that can and, perhaps, should have been done differently when critiquing a corruption paper. Nevertheless, this paper establishes no significant gender differences in corruption and that both younger people and less educated people are more tolerant of corruption. It is a truism that corruption is nether a new nor under researched area of academic investigation, yet very few studies have focused on demographic profile of respondents in corruption studies. This study contributes to filling this gap.

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