

IMPACT OF REMUNERATION ON CORRUPT PRACTICES IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE IN NIGERIA.

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Abstract

Corruption undermines a country's regulatory framework and the efficiency of its public institutions, as the pursuit of immediate individual profits distorts public decision-making. This paper attempts to examine remuneration as a panacea to curb corruption in public service delivery. The paper identified that poor remuneration could lead to a violation of the operating rules of administration in the public service, which severely undermines the state statutory responsibility to its citizens and thus promote lack of effective and efficient public services delivery. The paper concludes that there is an inverse relationship between remuneration and corruption in public service in Nigeria. Data for this study was sourced through content analysis.

Keywords –Remuneration, Corruption, Public, Services.

Introduction

Governments all over the world aim towards improving the livelihood and wellbeing of their labour force with remuneration and allowances as a motivation for improved efficiency. Remuneration is seen as money paid for work or service. However, in a situation whereby remuneration paid to the workers cannot keep pace with inflationary trends, corruption tends to set in. Corruption connotes the abuse or perversion of public power for private benefit of the perpetrator. In Nigeria, the inability for government to pay adequate remunerations to its workers is responsible for the level of corruption among workers in the public service. As a result, the public servants find it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to survive on their monthly pay in the face of changes in market conditions and high rates of inflation. The outcome of poor remuneration, in recent times, manifest in top public officers been accused of embezzling gratuities and pensions of senior colleagues who had retired from service and other corrupt practices for their improved standard of living. Furthermore, poor remunerations has promoted ghost workers syndrome in the civil service due to weak

management and poor oversight on the government pay roll. This has contributed seriously to the present high rate of corruption. Moreover, the weak incentive structure in the civil service has further contributed to poor service delivery by many government functionaries. Also, poor remuneration has contributed to the diminishing productivity that is influenced by high level of corruption such as bribery, pilferage of organization's production materials, and misuse of government property amongst others.

For example, in order to mitigate corruption in the public service President Buhari administration took certain actions to ameliorate the problem associated with the implementation of national minimum wage. A decentralized collective bargaining was designed to achieve a realistic remuneration policy and a crisis free industrial relation practice in the civil services of the federation. This was in reaction to previous approaches which failed to ensure a crisis's free salary administration process in the public service in Nigeria. However, the actions by the Buhari's administration has not adequately addressed the problems associated with collective bargaining in the country's public service. As such, the crises associated with salary determination process and industrial relation practices in the public service in Nigeria have not abated.

This has made remuneration determination process intensively problematic and controversial within the nation's political economy.

In spite of the above problems associated with salary administration in Nigeria, the federal government has been making concerted efforts to improve remuneration to avert the steady increase of corruption in the public service. Some of the efforts include the setting up of committees mandated to carry out staff screening and verification exercises as well as to reform the pay structure in the public service. However, these efforts have not been able to yield fruitful results as corruption still persists within the public service. This may be as a result of the wide disparities in the remuneration existing between public servants and the workers in the private sector. The objective of this study therefore, is to assess the impact of remuneration as the panacea to curb corruption in the public service in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification Remuneration

Bertelli, (2002) defines remuneration as financial or non- financial inducement received by an employee as a result of the performance of his or her duties. Inducements received are divided into direct and indirect remuneration. Direct remuneration is the amount of money received by an employee for a job well done which consists of fixed and variable remuneration. Indirect remuneration, on the other hand are provided by the organization for employees on the performance achieved with the aim to provide comfort and security to them, such as life insurance, health insurance, car, vacation, among others.. Bialas (2015), is of the

view that remuneration is usually implemented to motivate employees so that they can render better quality and more productive services. It also ensure that employees are dissuaded to move to other organizations or not easily moved to other companies, establish a service-oriented behavior, and avoid corruption. Remuneration can be in the form of money or salary, fixed allowances, variable allowances, incentives and other facilities. Remuneration is the total consideration received by the employees in return for the services he or she has done. Maicibi (2005) defined remuneration as pay or reward given to individuals for work done. He further identified the indicators of remuneration to include: basic salary, wages, health schemes, pension schemes, transport allowances, overtime allowances and responsibility allowances. Remuneration can also be referred to as monetary or financial benefits in form of salaries, wages, bonuses, incentives, allowances and benefits that is accrued and given to an employee or group of employees by the employer (firm) as a result for services rendered by the employee(s) and commitment to the organization as reward for employment.

Types of Remuneration

Salary: Braton & Gold, (2003) is of the view that basic salary is a fixed periodical payment for non-manual employees usually expressed in annual terms, paid per month with generally no additions for productivity. Salary could be seen as a fixed amount paid to the employees at regular intervals for their performance and productivity whereas wages are the hourly- based payment given to the labor for the amount of work done in a day.

Wages: Wage refers to payment to manual workers, always calculated on hourly or piece rates. Surbhi (2000), posits that the waged person is said to be doing "blue collar labour job" which implies that an individual is engaged in the unskilled or semi-skilled job and is drawing wages on a daily basis. One of the aim of a person as an employee of a company is to earn income in the form of wages or compensation to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and housing. Every company in determining the amount of wages paid to the employee must ensure feasibility of the wages to meet the needs of their life (Kanzunnudin, 2007).

Agburu (2012) argued for the importance of salaries and wages in Nigeria, stating that wages should not only be adequate but they must also show some element of equity. This is particularly true from the point of the employees. Anything short of a fair and equitable wage or reward can attract the wrath of employees in an economy such as Nigeria. For many Nigerian employees, wages or salaries are highly critical issues because without them in sufficient quantities, life becomes extremely precarious for the worker and members of his/her family.

Bonuses: Heathfield (2016) defines bonuses as compensation over and above the amount of pay specified as a base salary or hourly rate of pay. The base amount

of compensation is specified in the employee offer letter, in the employee personnel file, or in a contract. Employers can distribute bonus pay randomly as the company can afford, or the amount of the bonus pay can be specified by contract. Investopedia (2016) defined bonus as an additional compensation given to an employee above his/her normal wage. A bonus can be used as a reward for achieving specific goals set by the company, or for dedication to the company. To Bardot, (2014) a bonus is a payment which is backward-looking and usually discretionary or at least not expected from the employee(s). A decision is made to pay it to one, a group or all employees, based on criteria decided by management to reward past achievements, such as reaching a specific profit or some important milestones for the organization, or in a totally discretionary manner. Romanoff (2008) defined bonus as a single payment made at the end of the performance period typically a year to reward extraordinary effort or achievement.

Incentives: Incentive is a tangible or intangible reward that is designed to motivate a person or group to behave in a certain way. He further stressed that incentives differ from bonuses in that incentives define both what needs to be accomplished and what the employee will receive in return for accomplishing it. The purpose of the incentive scheme is to influence workers behaviour to work towards some specific goals. As a result, incentives have greater behavioral and motivational impact.

Corruption

According to Balasa (2001) corruption is seen as a “daunting obstacle to sustainable development”, a constraint on education, health care and poverty alleviation, and a great impediment to the Millennium Development Goal of reducing by half the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015 and the sustainable development goals. The World Bank defines corruption as the abuse of public office for private gains. Public office is abused through dubious seeking activities for private gains. When a public officer accepts, solicits, or extorts a bribe before services are rendered that is corruption. Public office 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 (Basu, 1992). A public official is corrupt if he accepts money for doing something that he is under duty to do or that he is under duty not to do. Corruption is a betrayal of trust resulting directly or indirectly from the subordination of public goals to those of the individual.

In an elaborate analysis, C.B.N (2006) defined corruption into seven distinct types: autogenic, defensive, extortive, investive, nepotistic, supportive, and transactive. Autogenic corruption is self-generating and typically involves only the perpetrator. A good example would be what happens in cases of insider trading. A person learns of

some vital information that may influence stocks in a company and either quickly buys or gets rid of large amounts of stocks before the consequences arising from this information come to pass. Defensive corruption involves situations where a person needing a critical service is compelled to bribe in order to prevent unpleasant consequences being inflicted on his interests. Lipset and Lenz (2000) defining corruption in the above line maintained that it is an effort to secure wealth or power through illegal means for private gains at public expense.

Types of corruption

Administrative Corruption: This form of corruption focuses on the practices and motivations of corruption among public servants. This includes Bribery, receipt of illegal proceeds (extortion, kickbacks).

Economic Corruption; This includes theft and privatization of public resources and funds. Illegal appropriation (forgery, falsification, embezzlement, misappropriation of money, property). Abuse of state funds, waste. Nepotism, favoritism (appointment to the posts of relatives and friends). Promotion of personal interests. Collusion (granting preferences to individuals, conflict of interests). Taking gifts to speed up problem-solving. Protection and covering up events.

Political corruption; This includes abuse of power (intimidation or torture). Manipulation of regulation (falsification of elections, decision-making in favor of one group or person). Electoral violations (buying votes, rigging election results). Extortion (civil servants illegally set a fee for services or artificially create a deficit). Clientelism and patronage (politicians provide material services in exchange for citizen support). Illegal contributions to election campaigns (transfer of gifts to influence the content of the policy).

Public Service

Public service, often referred to as core service, consisting of line ministries and extra-ministerial agencies; the public bureaucracy or the enlarged Public Service made up of service of the State and National Assembly, the Judiciary, the Armed Forces, the Police and other security agencies, paramilitary services (i.e. Customs, Immigration, Prisons Services, Civil-Defence Corps etc); parastatals and agencies i.e. regulatory agencies, educational institutions, research institutions, social services, commercially oriented agencies etc. It is also used to refer to Public Servant who are direct employees of those ministries, extra-ministerial agencies, parastatals, corporations and institutions.

Factors that determine Remuneration in the Public Service in Nigeria

National Economy: A national economy refers to the economy of an entire country and includes financial resources and management as well as the value of all goods and services manufactured within a nation. This provides financial resources for the

remuneration for public service. According to the report published on National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), in the third quarter of 2016, the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contracted by -2.24% (year-on-year) in real terms. The poor state of the economy is responsible for the low level of remuneration and corruption in Nigerian civil service.

Effective Institutional Framework: Effective institutional framework facilitates remuneration in the Nigeria public service. The National Salaries, Incomes and Wages Commission (NSIWC) was established by Act 99 of 1993 to deal with issues relating to remuneration, salaries and wages of Nigerian workers. The Commission provided technical assistance to the Draft White Paper Committee on the reports of the Salaries, Wages and Emolument Relativity Panel and Presidential Committee on Consolidation of Emolument in Public Service to enhance productivity. The NSIWC has interacted fully with other government parastatals to ensure that their remuneration requirements are met through the optimization of Nigeria public service. They have also been able to promote and facilitate the interface between government and the workers as well as harmonization of workers remuneration in the Nigeria Public Service.

Salary structure: Salary structure is an important component of effective compensation programs and help ensure that pay levels for groups of jobs are competitive externally and equitable internally. This is the reason; successive Public service reforms in Nigeria had one common objective to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the Public Servants. Clearly, there is a need to make the salary structure of the civil service more competitive in order to correct the image of the Public Servants. There have been several successive attempts to increase the public sector minimum wage in Nigeria. For example the military regime of General Abdulsalami Abubakar in 1998 increased the minimum wage dramatically from US\$1.20 to US\$41.77 per month (using a parallel market rate of 83.8 Naira to a \$1). Similarly, in May 2000 President Olusegun Obasanjo raised the public sector minimum monthly wage to US\$53.91 (at the parallel market rate of N102.02 = \$1.00), that is by about 30 per cent in nominal terms. President Goodluck Jonathan similarly increased the national minimum wage to N18,000.00k in 2010. This is applicable to date. However, not only did the minimum wages remuneration continued to be poor, induced corruption, its erosion by inflation has placed remuneration of staff sometimes beyond the budgets of state governments.

Recruitment Procedure: Recruitment procedure refers to the process of finding and hiring the best qualified candidates from within or outside of an organization for a job opening in a timely and cost effective manner. The recruitment procedure in Nigeria public service includes analyzing the requirement of a job, attracting employees to that job, screening and selecting applicants, hiring and integrating the new employee to the organization. The Federal Civil Service which was regarded as being highly

principled in the 1970s and early 80s are currently being plagued by a number of issues.

Apart from the indolent nature of some of the civil servants, corruption has also been discovered to have eaten deep into the structure of the service. Presently, the government cannot confidently claim to know the exact population of those in the public service. No thanks to the many ghost workers that receive salaries at the end of every month. The fraudulent practices of recruitment ends up affecting the productivity of the public service since the competence of any labour force is determined by the calibre of employees recruited.

Nexus between Remuneration and Corruption

Remuneration involves payment or compensation including fringe benefits, bonuses, incentives and salaries received for employment or services rendered. On the other hand, corruption involves the abuse of public office for personal benefits. It is in terms of this effects of remuneration on corruption that its relationship is established. This implies that poor remuneration contributes to corruption. Equally, improved remuneration would lead to employee satisfaction which would in turn lead to reduction in corruption. Hence, there is an inverse relationship between remuneration and corruption as such adequate remuneration is a panacea to curb corruption in public service.

Impact of Remuneration on Corruption in Public Service in Nigeria

Reduce the Possibilities of Corruption; One way to reduce corruption is to reduce the benefits and costs that are under the control of civil servants at all levels of the administrative hierarchy. Transparency of rules and the introduction of competition within the administration are also other means of reducing corruption in the Public Service in Nigeria.

Reducing the role of the State in the Economy: In general, any reform that will open up the economy to competition will reduce temptations for corruption. As a result, the easing of foreign trade restrictions, the removal of barriers to private market entry and the privatization of state-owned enterprises in a manner that exposes them to competition are all measures that will help combat corruption.

Opportunities for corruption can be curbed by ensuring that the tax, public expenditure, and institutional regimes are simpler and do not confer discretionary powers. Some risk is sometimes tolerable when the benefits of a discretionary program management policy outweigh the cost of corruption. Subjecting Administrations to Competitive Pressures: Some programs cannot be reformed or deleted. They must then be managed more honestly. To this end, competitive pressures can be created within the public sphere to weaken the bargaining power of each public servant. This situation can be avoided by setting up overlapping and competing

levels of administration to undermine the strong position of public servants.

Increasing the Credibility of Law Enforcement Institutions: The sustainability of development generally involves the establishment of mechanisms that make the state and its servants responsible for their actions.

Independence and Efficiency of Justice: A viable legal system that enforces the law without favoritism or arbitrariness is a condition for controlling corruption. To make a serious commitment to reform, a country must have effective inspection and prosecution bodies, as well as a judicial system that is not itself corrupt. Judicial reform requires more than just a change of staff.

Reforming the Civil Service: Public Service is responsible for policy development, Providing services or administering contracts. Competent and motivated staffs are the backbone of an effective public service. In general, the measure taken to constitute a public service of this quality focuses almost exclusively on remuneration. Recruitment and promotion based on merit and the development of esprit de corps and the system of supervision and sanction are also important for an efficient public service. This makes it possible, on the one hand, to limit corruption and political patronage and to attract and retain competent people. Recruitment and promotion based on merit on the other hand, helps to encourage identification with the objectives of the organization and reduce the cost of monitoring and develop internal cooperation and loyalty. The adoption of a meritocratic system in the civil service attracts high-level staff; this enhances the prestige of public functionaries and contributes in a large measure to the motivation of public servants.

How Remuneration can curb Corruption in Public Service in Nigeria

Adequate Remuneration; The existence of a meritorious recruitment and promotion system gives public functionaries a prestige that enhances the effectiveness of employers in the sector. But if wages remain much lower than those of the private sector, prestige is not enough to fill the gap.

Strengthen Surveillance and Sanction Mechanisms; A credible surveillance system that can detect corrupt officials and force them to leave the public service is the most obvious. If public jobs are well paid, a corrupt official will have a lot to lose if he is discovered, tried and forced to seek a lower paid job in the private sector. The same deterrent effect can be achieved other than through high salaries, by offering benefits, such as retirement pensions, which can only be earned at the end of a flawless career.

Accountability and Transparency. This connotes the timely, reliable, clear and relevant public reporting on its status, mandate, strategy, activities, financial management, operations and performance of government activities. This enable the Nigerian public servants to adhere to procedures and actions that ensure legal obligations with

regard to their audit mandate. According to Abubakar, (2018) without accountability and transparency, open competition cannot prevail, corrupt dealings can proliferate, and other failings in the Nigerian public service may be covered up, thereby weakening the system. Thus, accountability and transparency would make significant contribution to remuneration in curbing corruption for enhanced public officers service delivery in Nigeria.

Improvement of workers welfare: This is crucial to remuneration in curbing corruption in the public service. It involves catering for the social, health, physical and psychological needs of workers. It also includes happiness, safety and security of family, a guaranteed minimum income to avoid living in poverty and having the capabilities to ensure that the workers enjoy good life. A high level of welfare for workers would motivate the morale of workers against corruption. Therefore, welfare of workers is an important consideration in remuneration for curbing corruption in Nigeria civil service.

A living minimum wage: A minimum wage is the lowest hourly, daily or monthly remuneration that employers may legally pay to workers. Equivalently, it is the lowest wage at which workers may sell their labor. The main discouraging factor aside from unimpressive working conditions is the payment of low income to employees. In Nigeria, salaries and wages are below sustenance level and most of the workers in the country cannot take care of their basic needs from their emolument. This development tends to de-motivate the public employees from putting in their best in the course of producing goods and services. It is essential to say that the low income paid to public servants is considered as the minimum wage that an average employee is paid for their productivity activities. To increase productivity minimum wage should focus on labor management relations, social and psychological conditions of works, and adequate wage incentives given to workers. Therefore, minimum wage has a significant contribution to remuneration in curbing corruption for enhanced public service in Nigeria.

National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) holds some projections for remuneration to curb corruption in Nigeria public service. The NACS identify and close existing gaps in the anti-corruption initiatives currently in place. It emphasizes the institutionalization of results-based systems and structures, as well as appropriate incentives for increasing and sustaining citizen's participation in the fight against corruption. The ethical reform value of the anti- corruption crusade can only be realized through adoption and ownership by all stakeholders, leading to the effective implementation, management and enforcement of the provisions and recommendations of the strategic plan. The strategy places emphasis on cross-government approach in executing the fight against corruption in Nigeria.

Restructuring of the Economy; The current administration of President Buhari is currently taking steps to discourage dependence on importation of foreign goods. The major step taken is the implementation of the ban of Bureau De Change and ban on some items considered inimical to Nigeria economy. These have resulted in the growth of production and consumption of local goods. Successful restructuring of the economy would enhance remuneration and eliminate corruption in the public service.

The expansion of information and communication technology infrastructure would create an effective and efficient data base on remuneration, performance and reward to workers. The expansion will provide access to ICT facilities as a result of enlarge infrastructural coverage in the internet availability will enhance the fight against corruption in the public service. The strategy will enable the FGN to develop a common central database to monitor remuneration and curb corruption in the public service.

Conclusion

This paper discussed remuneration as a panacea to curb corruption in Nigeria public service. Some issues were found to be related to remuneration and corruption. These include institutional framework, salary structure, recruitment procedure and monitoring/evaluation. Some areas of remuneration as a panacea to curb corruption in Nigeria civil service include accountability and transparency, improvement of workers welfare, minimum wage. Corruption erode citizens' trust in public institutions and political processes, undermine the social trust and legitimacy of public institutions, and ultimately have a corrosive impact on service delivery by public servants. Remuneration has a significant and inverse relationship with corruption. Poor remuneration lead to a violation of the operating rules of the public administration, which severely undermines the efficiency and effectiveness of government officials.

Recommendations

To curb the menace of corruption by public servants, and its corresponding effect on service delivery, the research advocates the followings:

- i. To curb the surge of corruption in public service the government should determine its own priorities on the war against corruption through reorientations mentality to a better value system.
- ii. There is the need for enlightenment in discouraging excessive materialism and the culture of 'get rich quick', provision of employment opportunities for the teeming youths and incorporation of human rights and skill acquisition into anti-corruption strategies.

- iii. The government should initiate mechanism that will transform dramatically the culture and legacy through addressing the root causes of corruption and effectively implementing the legal mechanisms already in place.
- iv. The government and leaders should demonstrate the willingness to track and punish corrupt officials and citizens as well as create a conducive economic climate that would raise the standard of living of the citizenry.
- v. Programs such as social welfare network should be instituted among the non-working class in order to reduce the worry about basic survival in the face of growing insecurity and seeking for jobs.
- vi. Finally, there is the need for the provision of adequate resources for anti-corruption agencies and non-interference of government on the mandate given to the anti-corruption agencies so as to make them effective.

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