

INFLUENCE OF JOB STATUS AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT ON EMPLOYEE PERCEPTION OF AN ORGANIZATION'S INTEGRITY SYSTEM

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Abstract

The problems of corruption poses a serious challenge to human development, especially in developing economies such as Nigeria, where inefficiencies and retarded economic growth have been attributed to lack of transparency and accountability in public institutions and government agencies. The introduction of Integrity System in Nigerian bureaucratic organization generated both negative and positive reactions among Nigerians and foreigners. This study therefore examined the perception of workers on the introduction of Integrity System in Nigerian public service. The participants for the study were 500 employees of the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Transport, Abuja. The participants responded to Perception of Integrity System Questionnaire that elicited information on several perceptions that employees hold concerning Integrity System in the Ministry. The results showed that the employees have favourable perception of the Integrity System: $X^2 = 17.68$, $df = 1$, $p < .01$. The results also showed that job status had significant influence on perception of the Integrity System in the Ministry, with the senior workers supporting the introduction of the integrity system more than the junior workers: $X^2 = 86.87$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$. Educational level was also found to be significantly related with support for Integrity System in the Ministry: $r = .41$, $p < .001$. These findings were discussed based on Nigeria's socio-economic realities and suggestions were made for further studies.

Introduction

Absence of organizational efficiency and economic growth are among the consequences of systematic corruption, an aspect of which is bureaucratic corruption. Bureaucratic corruption in Nigeria and indeed Africa has been linked to the failure of the post-colonial state to meet the short and long term interests of the people (Ake, 1993; Ekeh, 1975). Joseph (1987) reasoned that bureaucratic corruption is rife in Nigeria because public sector bureaucrats mainly use their offices as a means of meeting parochial interests. The negative effects of bureaucratic corruption on the

socio-economic life of a nation could be overwhelming. With particular reference to Nigeria, Rose-Ackerman (1996a) captured the damaging costs of systemic corruption in Nigeria in terms of organizational inefficiency and loss of economic growth such that in 1984, after ten years of oil boom, the per capita income of the average Nigerian was no higher than in 1974. During the 1980s, the Nigerian economy declined at a rate of 0.4 percent annually and in 1990 Nigeria was the seventeenth poorest country in the world with per capita income lower than that of India or Kenya. Foreign direct investment is relatively high compared to other developing countries, but is heavily concentrated in the oil industry. By contrast, Indonesia another country with large petroleum reserves is believed to have been attracting foreign direct investment in wide variety of sectors. According to Chukwu (2001) bureaucratic corruption in Nigeria put good governance, democracy, and peace and security at great jeopardy.

Major concomitants of the colossal inefficiencies and losses in economic growth are believed by many to be the apparent lack of transparency and accountability in Nigerian public organizations and bureaucracy. Bureaucratic and official corruption not only constitute offence against lawful authority in private and public organizations or bureaucracies but also abound with ample evidence in Nigeria, where it has achieved the status of “more or less a norm” in public bureaucracy that are regarded as “the havens of bureaucratic corruption” (Uwakwe, 2002). Thus, not surprisingly, when Transparency International released its Corruption Perception Index towards the end of 1999, and some months into Nigeria’s current attempt at democratic governance, Nigeria appeared in it as the second most corrupt nation in the world.

However, after the passage of two anti-corruption bills by the Nigerian National Assembly as well as the establishment of relevant anti-corruption agencies, some public organizations would make efforts towards reduction of corrupt practices in their organizations. One of such public sector organizations was the Ministry of Transport. The Ministry of Transport tried to do this by introducing Integrity System into its operations. In introducing the Integrity System, the Ministry invoked legal authority and justification from Section 6(c) of the Nigerian Anti-Corruption Act. Therefore, a public sector anti-corruption unit called Transparency Monitoring Unit (TMU) was first set up under the office of the Minister for Transport, followed by other complementary mechanisms like the Zero Tolerance Policy on corruption and unaccountability (ZETO) (Arukwe, 2003).

About six months from the signing of the first anti-corruption bill into law on June 13, 2000 by the President of Nigeria, Transparency International was so impressed with the Nigerian Transport Ministry’s Integrity System operation that its Executive Director paid the Ministry a visit. In a December, 27, 2000 letter addressed to the Ministry, the Executive Director of Transparency International stated that, Transparency International was very much impressed by the dedicated and professional way in which the Nigerian Ministry of Transport was going about building professional ethics in the Ministry and was certain that given much diligence the Ministry will reach its desired objective to the betterment of the lives of all

Nigerians (Maduekwe, 2001). There were also encouraging responses from Nigerians.

This study therefore aimed at examining employees' perception of the Integrity System in Nigerian bureaucratic organization with special reference to Ministry of Transport, Abuja. For the purposes of this study, integrity system refers to any fairly encompassing and systematic effort to reduce or deter corruption in a social system or organization, and as such may involve an assortment of anti-corruption strategies as well as strategies designed to manage conflict of interests and serve as checks to unethical behaviours. The essence of integrity system has been the introduction of more ethical and efficient behaviour in work and public life. It therefore applies to public offices, the bureaucracy, the economic institution; it indeed applies to entire polities as with the cases of the introduction of national integrity systems in countries in South America, Asia and Africa, such as Panama, Singapore, Tanzania, Malawi, amongst others. Transparency International (TI), an organization attacking the destructive social and economic effects of corruption (O'Hara-Foster, Mutiso, & Stiglmyer, 1998) has since inception in 1993 been pioneering Integrity System internationally. Integrity System is however relatively new in Nigerian bureaucracy. The success or failure of the system will to a large extent depend on workers' attitude towards it. Nigerian workers and citizens appear to have lost confidence in Nigerian public organizations. The undue delays, red tape, distortion of allocation, waste and cross agency complementarities introduced by government officials and bureaucrats (Langseth, Staphenhurst, & Pope, 1997) have led to mass dissatisfaction. Under such conditions it is especially likely for citizens not to view the state as legitimate or deserving of respect and trust (Dia, 1996). Perception of workers towards the Integrity System therefore deserves critical examination.

Literature Review

The promotion of Integrity System as response to systemic corruption generally was ignored until when in addition to the regular responses applied in the public institutions, and public and private sector bureaucracy it was added as a significant issue (Staphenhurst, & Langseth, 1997). Corruption is said to depend on three factors, namely: the overall level of resources at stake, the risk inherent in corruption deals, and relative bargaining power of the briber and the person being bribed (Rose-Ackerman, 1996b). Likewise as corruption takes place where there is a meeting of opportunity and inclination, the strategies to contain it should address both elements. Opportunities and inclination can be reduced through systematic reform and deterrent mechanism respectively. Such mechanisms, when designed as part of an overall effort to reduce corruption in a social system comprise Integrity System. Integrity system in organization therefore represents among other things, a public accountability scheme established as kind of organization development strategy in response to public and private sector corruption with the ultimate aim of making corruption a high risk and low-return undertaking. So, to understand Integrity System better may require a thorough understanding of organizational systems.

A prominent approach to the understanding of organizational systems is the systems approach. The systems approach is said to be one of the major conceptual schemes available to scholars of organizations (Silverman, 1970). The systems approach stresses the way in which the actions of the parts are structured by the system's need for stability and goal-consensus, and emphasizes the process of integration and adaption (Parsons, 1951). Also, in several disciplines, the systems theory similarly emphasizes studying interrelations of the parts of a whole (the system) more than studying components in isolation from their position in an organization (vogt, 1993). In an organizational analysis, the more important representations of the systems approach are said to be structural functionalism, organizational psychology and socio-technical system (Silverman, 1970).

It may be useful here to observe with Silverman (1970) that any theory of organizations must specify the nature of their relationships with the wider society. Also, that since similar processes may arise both in organizations and in other social institutions, then the theories of organization and those of society are inseparable; hence, the need for organizational researchers to pay attention to the theoretical orientations available from the study of society.

The system perspective is a theoretical orientation available in the foregoing sense to scholars of organization and it has some assumptions. The main assumptions underlying the view of organizations as a system are: that organizations are composed of a set of interdependent parts; that organizations have needs for survival; and that organizations as a system, behave and take actions. As a set of interdependent parts, each part of an organization contributes and receives something from the whole. The process through which the parts are related should be the main areas of study. In this process, both resources and problems are exchanged. Organizations as social systems are also governed by series of needs which they must satisfy if they are to survive. It would appear that it is only more satisfactory to view an organization as a system with needs and to examine the extent to which it uses its resources for optimum needs satisfaction (Etzioni, 1960). Furthermore, systems theorists believe that it is useful to follow the common sense practice of attributing actions to organizations themselves as well as to members of the organization. It is obvious that if systems have needs, then they may also be required to take action to satisfy those needs. This implies that the success of Integrity System in organizations to a large extent will be dependent of the goals of the organization as a whole as well as on the contributions of members of the organization.

We can also borrow from the social action approach of Weber to illustrate Integrity Systems in organizations. Max Wber (1864-1920) saw the whole development of contemporary societies in terms of move towards rational social action. To him a social action is an action carried out by an individual to which the person attached a meaning; action, which according to Weber takes account of the behaviour of others and is therefore oriented in its course (Weber 1947). Thus an action that a person does not think about cannot be a social action. Furthermore, if an action does not take account of the existence and possible reactions of others, it is not social. Weber went on to suggest how social could be explained. Before the course of

a social action could be found, it was necessary to understand the meaning attached to it by the actor. Hence, Weber distinguished two types of understanding. First, he referred to direct observational understanding. However, this is not to Weber, a sufficient level of understanding to begin to explain social action. The second type of understanding is explanatory understanding. In this case, one must try to understand the meaning of an act in terms of the motives that have given rise to it (Weber, 1947).

Also, Weber's views on the relationship between institutions and social action can be illustrated by his work on bureaucracy (Weber, 1947; 1948). Although Weber was aware of, and indeed concerned about the power of bureaucracies in restricting human freedom, he nevertheless saw them as composed of individuals carrying out rational social actions. He therefore believed that bureaucracies consisted of individuals carrying out rational social actions that are designed to achieve the goals of bureaucracies. Weber's model of bureaucracy derives from his analysis of three types of authority: Charismatic, traditional and bureaucratic or legal-rational. Of the three types, he recognized the bureaucratic as the most interesting because of its efficiency. In bureaucracy, people are given authority because of technical competence based on rationality. Rationality is based on demonstrable competence in a specialized area that would be contributory to the actualization of organizational goals (Weber, 1947).

For Weber, the modern organization differs from previous organizations because of the basis of the authority that it employs and legitimates. Because of the inherent logic of bureaucratic structure, Weber believes that it is superior to any other form in precision, in stability, in the calculability of results for the heads of the organization and for those acting in relation to it. According to Weber, bureaucratic organizational operations are governed by a system of abstract rules and procedure. The bureaucrat conducts his or her business in impersonal manner; the bureaucrat is employed by the organization on the basis of his technical qualifications and expertise, and is usually protected against arbitrary dismissal (Blau, 1956). In addition, Weber considered that the bureaucracy from a technical point of view could attain the highest degree of efficiency possible. This is because bureaucracy offers optimum possibility for carrying through the principle of specializing administrative functions according to purely objective consideration (Weber, 1948). This high level of efficiency may not necessarily be obtained in every bureaucracy and this has led to several criticisms of Weber's view.

On the theoretical front, Merton (1949) challenges the functional model presented by Weber with his own model of organizational dysfunction. It is Merton's contention that Weber did not recognize that there are limits to which the organization can go in striving for efficiency and rationality. In line with this, Dunkerley (1972) maintained that reliability, efficiency, expertise and precision all have their limits. For Merton (1949), constant emphasis on discipline gives rise to goal displacement and goal displacement leads to the individual within the organization being unable to adjust or creatively modify the prescribed system of action and this in turn also leads to a degree of formalism and ritualism. Thus the issue of red tape becomes clearer. Merton maintained that the defining characteristics

of bureaucracy could lead, in certain circumstances, to both inefficiency and dysfunctioning. Although the characteristics of the organization can present a dysfunctional model, these dysfunctions together with the positive functions of the organization can help the organization to survive in a hostile environment. Blau (1956) went further to suggest several strategies by which organization can adjust when it is suffering from dysfunctioning parts: employment security, internalized standard of workmanship, cohesive workgroups, split managerial authority, and evaluation on the basis of clearly specified results. The introduction of Integrity System could therefore be seen as a response to inherent dysfunctions in today's bureaucracies.

Although Integrity system is a relatively new concept in the organizational sciences, empirical studies on it already abound. An American Management Association (AMA) survey of corporate CEOs to determine the state of organization integrity in corporate America revealed that ethics and integrity are listed among their companies' core corporate values. Of the 175 executives who responded, 86% indicated that their companies specifically write or state their Integrity System values, including them in employee handbooks (71%), in company brochure (67%), on the organizations' Web site (50%), or on wall posters (41%). About one-third of the respondents, however said that their companies public statements sometimes conflicted with internal messages and realities, and 36 percent said that their organizations always would do what is legal but not always what could be perceived as ethical (AMA, 2002). Other studies especially within the last three decades (e.g. Berenbeim, 1991; Dell, 2002; Master, 2002; Perry, Bennett & Edwards 1990) also demonstrated that organizations had been increasingly adopting Integrity Systems and other ethical-oriented programmes in their organizations with strong positive support on the part of employees. *It is therefore hypothesized that employees in bureaucratic organization will have favourable attitude towards the introduction of Integrity System in their organization.*

Other trends in research on Integrity System in organization also emerged within the period. It was for example found that larger organizations are more likely to institutionalize Integrity System policies and programmes than smaller organizations (Petrick, 1998). The researcher found that majority of the organizations are perceived to be operating at a conventional level of moral development; and human resource professionals who have institutionalized a full range of Integrity System-related programmes are more likely to perceive a higher level of moral development. Petrick also found that significant percentage of human resource functions across industries in the United States are dedicated to Integrity System activities.

Other studies also demonstrated that the values and behaviour of those in management positions in an organization influences the organizations' adoption and operation of Integrity System (Weaver, Trevino & Cochran, 1999a; 1999b). Trevino, Weaver and Brown (2000) discovered that senior executives have significantly more positive perception of an organizations' Integrity System when compared to rank and file employees. In the present study it is hypothesized that *the higher the rank of*

employees the more favourable their perception of organization's Integrity System. In line with the second hypothesis it is also hypothesized that there will be a significant relationship between level of education and support for Integrity System.

METHOD

Participants

Five hundred employees randomly drawn from the Federal Ministry of Transport, Abuja, Nigeria participated in the study. The justification for the selection of this organization for the study is that it the first public organizations in Nigeria that would make efforts towards reduction of corrupt practices in their organizations by introducing Integrity System into its operations. In introducing the Integrity System, the Ministry invoked legal authority and justification from Section 6(c) of the Nigerian Anti-Corruption Act. Thus, a public sector anti-corruption unit called Transparency Monitoring Unit (TMU) was first set up under the office of the Minister for Transport, followed by other complementary mechanisms like the Zero Tolerance Policy on corruption and unaccountability (Arukwe, 2003). Out of the 500 participants that made up the study sample, 281 were males (56% of the sample), while 219 were females (44% of the sample). The age range of the participants was between 18 and 60 years. With regards to educational level, the participants included workers with First School Leaving Certificates, and also those with secondary school certificate and equivalent, National Certificate of Education (NCE) and ordinary National Diploma (OND), Higher National Diploma (HND), and university degrees. With regard to job status, 211 were senior staff, while 289 were junior staff. When the participants were classified according to religion, 344 were founds to be Christians, while 154 were Moslems.

Instrument

The major instrument for data collection was questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised of two sections. The first section elicited demographic information such as gender, age, educational level, job status, and religion. The second section elicited information on Perception of Integrity System in the Federal Ministry of Transport. The Perception of Integrity System Questionnaire is a 16-item scale that covered several perceptions that workers could have about the newly introduced Integrity System in the Transport Ministry. For face and content validity of the scale, the initial items were shown to six experts (Lecturers) in the Department of Psychology and Department of Sociology/Anthropology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The items that the experts agreed to measure perception of Integrity System were retained, while other items were either modified or discarded. The scale has a reliability coefficient (Cronbach Alpha) of 89.

Procedure

The copies of questionnaire were distributed to 500 randomly selected employees at the Federal Ministry of Transport, Abuja. The questionnaire was distributed to the workers during their official work hours. They were given some

time to complete the questionnaire and those that were not collected immediately were collected at a later time that was agreed between the researcher and the participants.

Results

The responses of the participants were analyzed with Chi-square (X^2) statistic and Spearman rho correlation.

Table 1: A Chi-square Table Showing the Overall Workers’ Perception of Integrity System.

Positive Perception	Negative Perception	Total
297	203	500

$X^2 = 17.68, df = 1, p < .01.$

The results of the chi-square analysis showed that employees of the Transport Ministry have strong positive support for the Integrity System in the Ministry ($X^2 = 17.68, df = 1, p < .01$). This confirms the first hypothesis of the study that employees in bureaucratic organization will have favourable attitude towards the introduction of Integrity System in their organization.

Table 2: A Chi-square 2 x 2 contingency Table Showing the Influence of Job Status on Perception of Integrity System

	Positive Support	Negative support	Total
Senior Staff	179	37	216
Junior Staff	118	166	284
Total	297	203	500

$X^2 = 86.87, df = 1, p < .01.$

The results as presented in Table 2 showed that job status has significant influence on perception of Integrity System in organization ($X^2 = 86.87, df = 1, p < .01$). The result showed that senior members of staff had stronger support for the Integrity System than junior members of staff. This finding confirms the hypothesis that the higher the rank of employees the more favourable their perception of organization’s Integrity System.

Table 3: Results of Spearman’s Correlation Co-efficient (rho) Statistic for the Relationship between Employees’ Level of education and Level of support for Organizations Integrity System.

	Level of Education	Level of support
Level of Education	1.00	.41*
Level of Support	.41*	1.00

* Correlation is significant at .01.

The result of the Spearman's rho correlation analysis showed that level of education is positively related to support of Integrity System ($r=.41$, $p<.01$). The research hypothesis that there will be a significant relationship between level of education and support for Integrity System was therefore confirmed.

Discussion

The results indicate that employees have strong support for Integrity System in the organization. The findings of the present study confirmed the research hypothesis that employees in bureaucratic organizations would have favourable attitude towards the introduction of Integrity System in their organization. This present result is line with previous findings (e.g. Dell, 2002; Master, 2002) that found that Integrity System is gaining popularity among bureaucratic organizations and there have been strong support on the part of organizational members.

In Nigeria, this may be expected. The high level of corruption in the country, especially bureaucratic corruption (Uwakwe, 2002) has affected every aspect of the polity. Most workers are beginning to realize the negative effect of corruption on the nation as well as on them as individuals. It is probable that any attempt at effectively addressing corruption within bureaucratic organizations will be supported by majority of the employees in such organizations just as any attempts made at the society-wide level to address the issue of corruption is likely to be supported by majority of Nigerians if they are carried along and they perceive the process to be fair and transparent. This of course may be good news for the country's effort towards elimination or at least reduction of corrupt practices in government and public institutions. However, this support may as well be some kind of a Hawthorne effect operating here on the mere account of the organization (Transport Ministry, Abuja) embarking on a much publicized Integrity System to salvage its image and shore up organizational integrity, thereby making the organization subject of scientific research. This overwhelming support by the workers may be as a result of the fact that the Integrity System has been relatively newly introduced. Sustainability of the support is therefore vital for the success of the programme.

It was also found that when the workers were categorized according to their level or status in the organization, there was a significant difference in their perception of the organization's Integrity System. The result of X^2 analysis showed that senior members of staff, including those in middle and top management, had more favourable support for the Integrity System than junior members of staff. This finding corroborates earlier findings of Weaver, Trevino and Cochran, (1999a) and that of Trevino, Weaver and Brown, (2000), who found that those in management positions seem to have more favourable attitude toward Integrity System and other ethical-related issues in an organization than other members of the organization. This has also implications for the success of the Integrity System in the organization. Although every member of the organization is expected to be actively involved in the operation of the Integrity System, it is obvious, just like many other management strategies, that key drivers of the Integrity System will be those in middle and top

management positions. Their favourable attitude and positive disposition may give force to the Integrity System and chances of success would also increase.

With regard to level of education of the employees, it was found that support of Integrity System increased as level of education increases. On the basis of this finding, the third research hypothesis that there will be significant relationship between level of education and support for Integrity System was confirmed. The implication of this finding is that workers with high level of education seem to understand the process and possibly the implications of Integrity System in the Organization and therefore supported the system more than workers with low level of education. This among other things has implications for the educational requirements of those that may be recruited into Nigerian public service in future if the momentum of the integrity System in Nigerian bureaucracy is to be sustained. In addition, it has implication for on-the-job human resources development of those currently in the civil service especially with regard to improvement in educational attainment.

One important recommendation deriving from this study is that there is the urgent need to introduce well-designed Integrity System in all sections of the Nigerian bureaucratic system; and the entire Nigerian economy, by extension. With a little political will on the part of the executive arm of the present Nigerian government, the kind of political will that saw the passing into Act the Anti-Corruption Bill of 2000, an act of the National Assembly could easily make it mandatory for every segment of Nigerian bureaucracy to set up functional Integrity Systems. With favourable attitude of workers towards integrity system, it is probable that they will successfully implement the programmes in their organizations. Also, the issue of disparity in perception and support of organizational Integrity System along the lines of rank and length of years of education as found in the present study, could be addressed by automatically building into subsequent Integrity System in Nigerian bureaucratic organizations, an element/factor of continuing education/reeducation on not only the aims, objectives and strategies of the integrity Systems but the various aspects of its dynamics as well. This could be readily achieved through frequent seminars and in-house workshops/training, where experts in organizational development and Integrity System could be brought in to help prepare organization staff for the requirements of the integrity systems that may be introduced or adopted by the organizations.

Finally, it is recommended that more experimentation and research are similarly required to maximize the gains of the knowledge derived from the present study. Further studies should be directed towards evaluation of the success of Integrity System in private and public organizations. A comparative study of operation and success of Integrity System in private and public organizations could also provide opportunities for learning and fine-tuning strategies for effective implementation of Integrity System. Governmental bureaucracy, the community of Integrity System experts, organizational researchers, the burgeoning Nigerian private bureaucracy and the Nigerian economy in general would be the ultimate beneficiaries from such sustained experimentations and researches. The success of integrity system in Nigerian organizations will surely reduce corruption and other unethical practices

in both government-owned and private organizations and may actually provide opportunities for accelerated social and economic development of Nigeria.

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