The Impact of Corruption on Public Service Delivery System in Taraba State

Amos Asongo Jev,
John Moses Maikomo
Department of Political Science and International Relations,
Taraba State University, Jalingo, Taraba State

Danladi Hussaini
&
Mary Tswarum Mijinyawa
Department of Public Administration,
Taraba State University, Jalingo, Taraba State.

Abstract

States with widespread corruption continue to bear the brunt of the consequences of this worldwide phenomena of underdevelopment and poor service delivery. In view of the destructive impact of corruption, the paper examined the phenomenon of Corruption on public service delivery in Taraba state. The study which was anchored on Collective action theory uses mixed method to generate data for analysis. The study discovered that corruption has affected public service delivery system in Taraba state and has plunged the state into poverty as could be seen by the report of NBS 2021. It was also revealed that corruption has brought about the decrepit health care service, lack of payment of salaries and other welfare benefits of workers in the state that has affected socio-economic development and the consequences are seen in the degradation of infrastructure and the erosion of public trust, etc. The study therefore, recommended among other things that an effective anti-corruption strategy must produce effective punishments as well as greater political openness and accountability in order to guarantee that the state's resources are utilised. To bring about long-

term reform in service delivery, citizens should be active in the monitoring and assessment of programs and projects aimed towards their well-being. Subsequent reforms should be implemented.

Keywords: Corruption, Public service delivery, Transparency, Accountability

Introduction

Globally, essential service delivery is the sole responsibility of government and its agencies. These essential services include: security, healthcare, education, infrastructure, water, land administration and management and other essential services. The government departments are fundamentally established to provide these public goods and services efficiently and effectively, (Mahmu, 2010). To this end, an efficient and effective public service delivery system is *sine qua non* to the sustainable economic growth, reduce poverty and create employment opportunities for the teeming population of the country.

One of the greatest problem of Nigerian public service is the prevailing incidence of corruption. Corruption therefore has become pervasive, and a cancerous phenomenon bedeviling the Nigerian public sector. Several negative dimension of corruption such as misappropriation, bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and money laundering, among several others is found among public officials, and has permeated the fabric of the society. Any attempt to understand the tragedy of development and the challenges to democracy in most developing countries (Nigeria inclusive), must come to grips with the problem of corruption and stupendous wastage of scarce resources (Abdul, 2012). This is not to suggest that corruption and prodigality are peculiar to the developing countries. Certainly, corruption is neither culture specific nor system bound. However, the severity and its devastating impact vary from one system to the other. The impact is undoubtedly more severe and devastating in the developing world with weak

economic base, fragile political institutions and inadequate control mechanisms (Familomi, 2015).

Anassi (2019) in a study: *Corruption in Africa. The Nigerian experience* found out that services delivered in majority of the local authorities in Nigeria are extremely poor and this has been blamed on corruption. Where corruption has been entrenched, public officials withhold or delay services provision necessitating payment of bribe to speed up the process, (Shleifer & Vishny, 2017). When a public official demands a bribe, the cost of the government services is pushed upward, leading to marginalization of those members of the public who cannot afford the services hence, limiting the supply.

Corruption has therefore reached an unprecedented level in Nigeria which Taraba State is not an exception. It has pervaded every facet of the nation and has even metamorphosed into a way of life for most Nigerians. The Nigerian civil service has the potential to transform the collective challenge of Nigeria as a nation if its immense energies are properly harnessed; but the situation seems different after its radical reform between 1960 and 1976; during which period, the civil servants were in control of government's political process due to the emergence of military rulers in political administration prevailing in the African continent then, coupled with their lack of experience of political leadership in governance. Some scholars (Adamu, 2017) blame the institutionalization of corruption in Nigeria on military rule. Ideally, in a democratic Nigerian states like Taraba, the Public Service consists of the civil service, parastatals and agencies with structure that is systematically patterned to serve as a lasting instrument through which the government drives, regulates and manages all aspects of the society.

However, Taraba State Civil Service has performed below the expectations of the public as a result of corruption in the service. Thus, corruption has become a cog in the wheel of efficient and effective service delivery (Adamu, 2017). Corruption has eaten so

deep that corrupt practices are even encouraged in most businesses (private or public) nowadays. The Civil Service is filled with stories of wrong practices such as stories of ghost workers on the pay roll of Ministries, Extra ministerial Departments and Parastatals, frauds, embezzlements and award of contracts without recourse to due process mechanisms (Adegoroye, 2016).

A cursory look at the Taraba State Civil Service further indicates poor service delivery which manifests in corrupt practices such as distortion of official records, forgery of official documents like collection of taxes with fake receipts in which such revenue is not paid into the public treasury but pocketed by the individual official, falsification of their official age, the insistence by public servants for monetary and material gratification from their client before carrying out their official responsibilities for which they are being paid. Furthermore, civil service recruitments and promotions do not often go to the best qualified persons but to "political clients", who keep their jobs not by being efficient but by "maintaining their loyalty. Therefore, this study is aimed at assessing the effect of corruption on public service delivery in Taraba State with focus on the Taraba State Civil Service (1991-2021).

Conceptual Clarifications
Corruption

Corruption is a social problem found in various "degrees and forms in all but the most primitive societies". Staats (1972 cited in Iyandan, 2012). Ekiyor (2015) in his broad view of corruption defined it as the unlawful use of official power or influence by an official of the government either to enrich himself or further his course or any other person at the expense of the public, in contravention of his oath of office or contrary to the conventions or laws that are in force. It is very unfortunate that this menace knows not any time nor period; it happens anytime or period of any nation's history. According to Gould and Kolb (2014) in support of

the above contend that corruption is not a characteristic of a one period in political history nor of any one country, it is endemic in both authoritarian and party systems of government.

Furthermore, as an evidence that the history of corruption is as old as the world, Scott (1972) cited in Iyanda (2012) is of the view that corruption 'must be understood as a regular, repetitive and integral part of the operation of most political system'. Another view about corruption is that it is intentional. This view was heralded by Brooks (2020) who believed that a corrupt official knows his duties, "but it is neglected or mis-performed for reasons narrower than those which the state intends. He went further to say that the difference between a corrupt official and inefficient one is that "the corrupt official must know the better and choose the worse (but) the inefficient official does not know any better". He further maintained that "in either case the external circumstances may appear to be closely similar, and the immediate results may be equally harmful".

In addition to this, Rotimi et al (2017) avers that corruption includes bribery, smuggling, fraud, illegal payments, money laundering, drug trafficking, falsification of documents and records, window dressing, false declaration, evasion, under-payment, deceit, forgery, concealment, aiding and abetting of any kind to the detriment of another person, community, society or nation. It infers that corruption does not exist in isolation without causing a negative effect in the government. Raab and Gertrude (2013), posit that corruption falls into the category of social problem because it makes a substantial number of people to be displeased as well as threaten the peace of the society.

The World Bank cited in Okoduwa (2016), sees corruption as: The abuse of public office for private gains. Public office is abused for private gain when an official accepts, solicits or extorts a bribe. It is also abused when private agents actively offer bribes to circumvent public policies and process 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 revenue. Owing to the above definitions, within the context of this study corruption is operationalised to mean the act of diverting public fund or the abuse of public offices by public office holders for private gain.

Public Service

The definition of any term depends on the way it is used and understood in practice, and so the process of understanding what a "public service" is must begin with an examination of its use. According to Esien (2014), it seems possible to say that the term "public services" is typically applied to; Activities of government in the public domain, such as policing and public health. It also includes activities done for the benefit of the public, like public service broadcasting or rubbish collection; and 'social services', like medical care, housing, education and social care.

A public service is any service intended to address specific needs pertaining to the aggregate members of a community (Bello, 2012). Public services are available to people within a government jurisdiction as provided directly through public sector agencies or via public financing to private businesses or voluntary organizations or even as provided by family households, though terminology may differ depending on context (Chepkilot, 2015). Other public services are undertaken on behalf of a government's residents or in the interest of its citizens. The term is associated with a social consensus (usually expressed through democratic elections) that certain services should be available to all, regardless of income, physical ability or mental acuity. Examples of such services include the fire brigade, police, air force, and paramedics (Chepkilot,2015).

Therefore, this study considers a public service as a service which is provided by government to people living within its jurisdiction, either directly (through the public sector) or by financing private provision of services

Public Service Delivery

Public service delivery is an area where government can win the heart of its citizens and ultimately establish good governance in a society. Services can take both the form of tangibility and intangibility, (Kayode et al., 2013). Johns (2019), argued that services are viewed mostly as intangible and the output of the same is an activity. In this study, the research also holds service delivery as an intangible concept. This is because public service delivery establishes a triangular relationship between the policy makers (principal), service providers (agents) and the people, (Carison et al., 2015). The range of public services delivered to the citizens varies from country to country but ideally include education, health, water, sanitation, road, electricity, communication, police etc.

Edvardsson (2018), conceptualized service delivery from a customer's perspective as the total perception that is involved with that, though Johns (2019) has viewed it not only from customers' perspective but also providers. In the marketing literatures, service delivery has been linked with quality as assessed by a customer (Eshgi et al., 2018). Of course, quality can never be a monopoly of one area and in fact it is the most sought after in any service delivery to the customers/consumers/citizens.

From the time man accepted the concept of organization of state which necessitated the need for social contract, division of labour and function emerged, (Mbachu, 2018). Since then, Public Administration has been building a bridge of management between the state and the public by ensuring prompt response to tax payers' needs. Public Administration shoulders the responsibility of executing policies and programmes whose target is to deliver important welfare services that can enhance the standard of living of the public. The term 'public' simply means the citizens of a particular polity at a particular time, (Jones, 2010).

The concept of public service evokes the thought of government's involvement in service delivery devoid of profit

maximization. Public service delivery is akin to public administration which is rightly said as; designed to satisfy public will through the implementation of public policies, enforcement of public laws and realization of public welfare, (Ogunna, 2016). Public services are those services provided by governments (local, municipal, on a larger-scale) to the public. The need for services that no individual can or will pay for, but that benefit all by their presence, is one justification for taxation, (Answers, 2016). The importance of public service delivery cannot be overemphasized because; it forms the fundamental structure for nationbuilding; it makes the state visible to its citizens, often forming the principal tangible link between government and their people. Public services carry and diffuse the values of the new nations and contribute to the bonding between the state and citizens, (Walle, & Scott, 2019).

It is therefore very important to figure out the most effective and efficient means of carrying out the responsibility. This is to ensure cost effective, quality and timely delivery strategy so as to meet the present and future needs of the public. This explains the reason a nation is in search of the appropriate technologies and how to apply such to achieve the tripod responsibility of providing the services on time (Walle, & Scott, 2019).

The channel of public service delivery must be sustained if the beneficiaries are to get the best of such services. Besides, one of the most effective ways of sustaining the channel and process of public service delivery is by making the project a government-citizens venture, (Ogunna, 2016). The involvement of the citizens or public in a project or service delivery responsibility that favours them will likely make it more forceful and effective insofar as the government is overly committed to the actualization of such project. The delivery of service to the public involves multiple arrangements; first, the production of such services and finally, the actual transmittal of such services to the clientele, which could happen directly by government or its agents (Ogunna, 2016). In some public service provision and delivery, government could liaise with

a private firm to provide services to the public while sitting as the regulator. For example, Nigeria is hugely enjoying the services of mobile telephone companies (MTN, GLO, Etisalat etc) not directly provided by government, but are being regulated by the government of Nigeria to ensure that quality and sustained service delivery to Nigeria is not compromised, (Ogunna, 2016).

Service here implies tangible and intangible goods and services provided by the government in order to improve the well-being of the citizenry. Carlson et al. (2015), conceptualized service delivery as the relationship between policy makers, service providers and poor people. According to them, it encompasses services and their supporting systems that are typically regarded as a state responsibility. These include social services (primary education and basic health services), infrastructure (water, sanitation, roads and bridges) and services that promote personal security (justice, police etc).

In Nigeria, government constitutes the major service provider through the Public Service. The Public Service refers to all organizations that exist as part of government machinery for implementing policy decisions and delivering services that are of value to the citizens. It is a mandatory institution of the state under the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, (Dike, 2010).   The Nigerian Public Service includes the Civil 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, (Dike, 2010).

For this study, public service is defined as the provision of those services which are mainly, or completely, funded by taxation. As such, they can differ markedly from commercial private sector services in a number of ways.

Theoretical Framework

The collective action theory was first published by Mancur Olson in 1965. More recently, collective action theory emerged as an alternative explanation for why systemic corruption persists despite laws making it illegal, and why corruption resists various other anti-corruption efforts in some countries. The collective action theory goes beyond traditional principal-agent relationships and emphasizes the importance of factors such as trust and how individuals perceive the behaviour of others. Persson, Rothstein and Teorell (2013) regard systemic corruption as a collective problem, because people rationalize their own behaviour based on the perceptions of what others will do in the same situation.

According to the theory, when corruption becomes a social norm, everyone starts seeing it simply as the way to get things done. People are aware of the negative consequences of widespread corruption, but they engage in corrupt actions as they believe that "it doesn't make sense to be the only honest person in a corrupt system. In such an environment, anti-corruption measures based on the principal-agent model will not be effective, as there are no "principled principals" who will enforce anti-corruption norms

The theory assumes that, an institutional or organizational culture of corruption leads to the normalization of corrupt practices at a societal as well as individual level, and is regarded as impunity for violating or ignoring formal anti-corruption rules, (Appolloni and Nshombo, 2014). The theory holds that to combat corruption in these circumstances, there is a need for collective and coordinated approaches, such as reform coalitions or proactive alliances of like-minded organizations. These approaches are often called "collective action" initiatives.

The critiques of the theory were of the view that despite being a very well-reviewed and highly praised theory, it does have its weaknesses. One of the main weaknesses of the theory is that the solution offered by Olson to overcome corruption is to offer private incentives. Olson fails to address the fact that private incentives have costs attached to them too. The rational individual will again try to avoid paying the costs. Furthermore, empirical evidence is also present which shows private incentives make little difference in solving corruption problem. Another weakness could be that Olson concludes that if the aim of an organization is to provide collective goods then the size of the organization should be small because large groups cannot provide collective goods. The only factor he has considered when coming up with his results is the number of people in the group. There are surely other factors that play an important role such as the composition of members.

Despite the identified weaknesses the theory is said to be highly relevant to the current study as its utility can be deployed to explain the nature of corruption in Nigeria and Taraba state as well as people's belief and perception towards corruption. According to the theory, when corruption becomes a social norm, everyone starts seeing it simply as the way to get things done as it is been demonstrated amongst people the civil service in Taraba State. The theory equally holds that people are aware of the negative consequences of widespread corruption, but they engage in corrupt actions as they believe that it doesn't make sense to be the only honest person in a corrupt system. In Nigeria therefore, people see corruption as a 'new normal' and this has adverse effect on service delivery. Based on this argument, the study still finds the utility of the Collective Action Theory relevant despite its criticisms and hence its adoption for the study.

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey research design. Where both primary and secondary data were collected through

interviews as well as secondary data which where sourced from published books, Journals etc. Descriptive analysis is deployed using simple percentage statistical table to analyse respondent's views as demonstrated below.

Table 1: Causes of Corruption among Staff of the Taraba State Civil Service

	Items	Respondents	Percentages	Ranking
1.	Poverty as the cause of Corruption	185	49.9%	1st
2.	Cultural foundations as the cause of Corruption	168	45.5%	2nd
3.	Inability of government to sanction acts of corruption among civil servants in Taraba Sate	157	42.5%	3rd
4.	Weak Institutions of Government to tackle cases of corruption	153	41.5%	4th
5.	Lack of exemplary leadership	151	40.9%	5th

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 presents the results on the causes of Corruption among civil servants/ public servants in Taraba State. According to the result, respondents were of the view that poverty was the major cause of corruption which affects public service delivery in the state 185 (49.9%) (1st position). Relatedly, 168(45.5%) of the respondents identified cultural foundations as the causes of corruption in the state. The third was the inability of government to sanction corruption in Taraba State 157 (42.5%) of the respondents attested to this. Weak Institutions of Government is the 4th cause of corruption as put forward by the respondents 153 (41.5%). The

fifth cause of Corruption in Taraba State is lack of exemplary leadership that is the cause of corruption in Taraba State.

Many theories have been advanced on the causes of corruption in Nigerian public service and Taraba State. From the stand point of this paper, the causes of corruption among staff of Taraba state civil service revolve round poverty, greed, opportunity, unemployment and the general perception of corruption in the country particularly the body language of the leaders. There are no generally acceptable causes of corruption as some writers see it as the consequence of bad governance. Yet, some other writers place premium on the ethical and moral standpoints. On the basis of this, corruption is seen as the consequence of the cultural and weak social values held by the people of a society. On the whole, the explanation of the causes of corruption in Taraba state public service is not far from the above mentioned dynamics. This position is in line with the collective action theory adopted for the study, as nobody sees anything wrong with corruption. The factors that encouraged corruption include amongst other:

Poverty: According to the latest poverty report by the National Bureau of Statistics, (NBS), about 112 million Nigerians (representing 67.1 per cent) of the country's total population of 167million (Vanguard, October 18, 2020) are in extreme poor condition. Therefore, people believe that corruption is heightened by the pervasive and chronic poverty, high level of material deprivation and other structural inequalities. In the second quarter of 2020, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS; 2020) reported that about 82.9 million people (40.1 percent) were classified as poor. In other words, on average four out of 10 individuals in Nigeria have real per capita expenditures below 137,430 naira ($352) per year. A further breakdown shows about 52 percent of people in rural areas live in poverty, compared with 18 percent in urban parts of the country. According to the report, Sokoto and Taraba are the poorest states in the country with 87.7% each followed by Jigawa and Ebonyi states with 87.0 and 78.9 respectively. The indices of

measuring poverty by the NBS are based on access to education, health and basic services, employment, assets, and income (NBS, 2021).

Considering this rising cases of poverty, Shamija, (2006) Rengshik, (2018) asserts that, corruption is a mechanism adopted by Nigerians to cope with or avert poverty, particularly in the urban centers where the high cost of living may be an inducement for corruption. In a situation where there is inadequate wages and nonpayment of salaries in most cases of workers, corruption provides a means of augmenting one's legitimate income and this can be said to explained the situation in Taraba State. To justify the above, Ayua (2001) notes that, there is a low and declining civil service salary and promotion that is not based on performance, dysfunctional government budgets and delays in the release of budgets funds, including pay. He asserts that under such conditions and circumstances officials deliberately refuse to act or delay action in order to coerce some payments out of citizens or firms (Omenka, 2013; Rengshik, 2018).

Cultural Foundations: Bedford (2001) in an attempt to contextualize Nigerian public service corruption identifies tribal loyalties as the foundation of corruption. Therefore, our culture seems to fuel some corrupt practices. The sharing of bribes and favours has become the order of the day; there is hardly the motivation to become honest. This has become a subculture where corruption is accepted to be the normal course of life with the obvious risk of it becoming institutionalized. The traditional culture has internationalized the concept of "big man" marked by ostentations wealth and numerous clients, retainers, and hangers-on. The concept of "big man" here refers to a person with several dependants that he must provide for them, own houses and fleet of cars appropriate to his status. This explains why many Nigerians and indeed Tarabans indulged in corrupt practices.

Inability of government to sanction corruption: Shamija (2006) observed that, the seeming reluctance of government to sanction corruption creates the impression of support. Media reports show that government is found of setting investigation panels and commissions of inquiries whose investigations or findings and recommendations are never made public nor implemented. For instance, the efforts by EFCC and ICPC in fighting corruption has not yielded expected fruitful results. In Taraba State, respondent quoted Justice Mrs Adebukola Banjoko who sentenced Rev. Jolly Nyame the former governor between 1999-2007 in May 2018. Mrs Banjoko narrated the testimonies of Mr Nyame's commissioner of finance, Abubakar Tutari who spearheaded the many cases of administrative breaches in the transfer of the funds to Saman Global. Citing a memo which formed the basis of the fraudulent transactions, Mrs Banjoko questioned the motive behind Mr Nyame's 'ratification' of the said memo, despite the former governor's claim that he knew nothing about the fraudulent transaction. This explained the issue of corruption in Taraba State and made it a collective action till date in MDAs thereby hindering effective service delivery as well as slows down development.

Weak Institutions of Government: Another breeding ground for corruption in Nigerian public service is the weak institution of government. Corrupt tendencies are further enhanced when governmental institutions are weak. For example, a tax imposes confiscation rates may fuel bribe-taking behaviour, as tax payers will prefer to bribe and pay less tax. This brings to mind the administration of the pension scheme in Nigeria which has been characterized by embezzlement and outright misappropriation of funds (This Day, March 27, 2007). While in Taraba State a respondent assert thus: the revenue collection officers have two different receipts-that of government and their personal receipt when collecting revenue from citizens. They ensure that they use theirs before issuing the one that will be directly return to government for remittance. Remittance is not same with the

amount they generated and this affect public service delivery in the State, because revenue needed to provide social service goes to private pockets.

Lack of exemplary leadership: This is a central cause of corruption in Nigerian public service. Lack of exemplary leadership is a problem that has lingered since Nigeria's independence. Both civilian and military leaders have had selfish motives for their decisions and policies instead of serving the interest of the people. As Achebe (1983) expressed: "The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership". The Nigerian problem and indeed Taraba is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility of personal exemplary leadership which are the hall mark of true leadership."

Effect of Corruption on Public Service Delivery in Taraba State

The Public Service constitutes the major service provider in Nigeria and indeed Taraba State. It is the machinery charged with the responsibility of implementing government policies and programmes geared towards providing essential services for the people. The demands of globalisation, MDGs, among other international agenda has placed the Public Service in a more pressing position to provide/render these services more effectively and efficiently. However, corruption in Nigeria has continued to be a major impediment hindering the Public Service ability to provide these services, (Salisu, 2020).

> According to a Respondent: (interview, December 10th 2022)
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> Corruption has been the major impediment in public service delivery in Taraba State as could be seen during the reign of Nyame and presently under Arch. Darius Ishaku. A respondent quoted Justice Mrs Adebukola Banjoko who sentenced Rev. Jolly Nyame the former governor between 1999-2007 in May 2018. Mrs Banjoko narrated the testimonies of Mr Nyame's commissioner of finance, Abubakar Tutari who spearheaded the many cases of administrative breaches in the transfer of the funds to Saman

> Global. Citing a memo which formed the basis of the fraudulent transactions, Mrs Banjoko questioned the motive behind Mr Nyame's 'ratification' of the said memo, despite the former governor's claim that he knew nothing about the fraudulent transaction. This explained the issue of corruption in Taraba State till date in MDAs especially the bureau for local government and chieftaincy affairs where due to corruption in that Bureau the Permanent Secretary of the ministry was invited in recent time by the EFCC for interrogation. This and many others are a hindrance to effective service delivery which slows down development. (interview with respondents, December, 10th 2022)

Corruption in Nigeria is more endemic in the Nigerian Public Service with its attendant implication on effective service delivery. Adegoroye (2016; P.268) asserted that;

> Our beloved nation has been virtually on the brink of collapse. At least, the past one and a half decades have been characterised by calamitous retrogression in almost every conceivable sphere of life. Nigerians have, indeed, passed through harrowing times and watched their standards of living plummet drastically, just as their human rights are steadily eroded. Life became almost short, brutish and nasty. Those were surely the most difficult days for Nigeria. Since the end of the civil war in 1970 there are many things crying for attention. Our battered national economy is certainly one of them. The grim condition of many of our citizens is worsened by the deterioration of the Public Services system, where access to pipe borne water and affordable healthcare have become a pipe dream and the supply of electricity remain epileptic and unreliable in an era in which globalisation has made such services ubiquitous and cheap.

The above assertion shows the scenario of the failure of the Nigerian Public Service in providing essential services to the citizenry, which is a result of corruption and outright profligacy.

The assertion has been confirm by the response of respondents who posited that Taraba State's infrastructure is in bad condition. This is confirmed by interviewees' perceptions of Taraba state's weak infrastructure. Taraba state has a large number of local government areas (LGAs) that do not have power. Access to other

LGAs, such as Yorro, Kurmi, Karim Lamido, and Sardauna, is very problematic due to poor road conditions. The reasons for the poor road network in the rural communities is not unrelated to effect of corruption in Public service delivery in the State.

Transparency International (TI) has consistently rated the country high in terms of corruption. The survey by Transparency International was designed to highlight the magnitude of corruption and its effects on democracy, development, and good governance. The yardstick used to measure the malaise in the project included severity, size and financial/social cost of corruption. According to the Nigeria Corruption Index, these institutions of government received the most bribes from those to whom they are providing services. It further asserts that corruption is one of the factors that drives the average Nigerian to the depth of despair because the experience of having to offer bribes (whether in cash or in kind), in order to access basic social services or what rightly belongs to one has serious psychological implication for many Nigerians. Transparency International in 2021, ranked Nigeria as the Fifth most corrupt nation in the world.

Ranis (2018) notes that "government in developing areas have become the goal setter or change agent for society; producer and distributor of goods and services; regulator of the political and economic behaviour of the people". But corruption has hindered the ability of the government to carry out these developmental roles and particularly the provision of effective service to her citizens.

The relationship between corruption and service delivery is captured by Obasanjo in Shehu (2019, p.193) in his inaugural speech thus:

> The impact of official corruption is so rampant and has earned Nigeria a very bad image at home and abroad. Besides, it has distorted and caused a setback for development efforts in the nation. Our infrastructures NEPA, NITEL, Roads, railways, education, housing and other social services were allowed to decay and collapse. All these have brought a situation of chaos and despair. This is the challenge for us.

Despite previous reforms especially the anti-corruption initiatives of the Obasanjo's regime, (1999-2007) and others put in place to reform the Public Service, not much results have been achieved. The populace has continued to suffer neglect and lack of access to essential social services that would enhance their well-being. To corroborate this further, Adegoroye (2016), had criticised former reforms for not being specifically linked to ensuring service delivery improvements and nothing much has changed, if not worse now.

Furthermore, a Report by US-based group, Global Financial Integrity (GFI) indicates that Nigeria might have lost 130 billion dollars from 2000 to 2008 due to illicit financial flows. The Report showed that Nigeria has the 10th highest measured illicit outflows in the developing countries/world, an average of 150 billion dollars per year. The Report also showed the annual outflows for each country and breaks outflows down into two categories of drivers: trade mispricing and "others" which includes "kick-backs, bribes, embezzlement and other forms of official corruption". Other countries in the top 10 list are Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Venezuela, and Qatar. What makes the case of Nigeria unique is that the reasons for the illicit outflows are mainly attributed to corruption and corrupt act i.e. kickbacks, bribes, embezzlement, and other forms of official corruption as indicated in "other" categories of drivers (Global Financial Integrity, 2013).

The concomitant effect of corruption in the Public Service is the lack or inadequate provision of services that would enhance the standard of living of Nigerians. The deteriorating standard of living of majority of Nigerians is an evidence of the lack of basic necessities of life i.e. food, shelter and clothing and low access to essential services like health, education, power, water, transportation etc. Abubakar (2017) also espouses the view that corruption retards significant growth social and economic development by making impotent the very institutions and human resources that are designed to help them grow.

In Taraba State, a respondent posit thus: (Interview with respondents, December, 10ᵗʰ 2022).

After the plane crash of Danbaba Danfulani Suntai who because of his leadership style of close monitoring of MDAs, minimised corruption within the state and ensured optimum public service delivery during his tenure as a governor of Taraba State, Garba Umar (UTC) and Sani Abubakar Danladi both of whom took over from him on acting capacity and currently Arch. Darius Dickson Ishaku do not show courage to fight corruption as case of poor governance has increased in the last ten years of governance. They loot government treasury without conviction. Corruption in the public service remains the biggest barrier to ending extreme poverty and stands in the way of progress in the development of all areas mentioned here; preventing funds reaching healthcare and education, limiting individual's abilities to access jobs and social benefits, corroding systems of law and stopping aid working effectively in the poorest parts of the state.

The implications of bad leadership and corruption in the public service are enormous. It has had political, economic and social implications in the developmental process in Nigeria and at best explained the worse situation in Taraba State where poverty and underdevelopment is at high tops. In the opinion of Aiyede (2006) "corruption poses a serious development challenge". Ijewereme and Dunmade (2014) noted that corruption has largely retarded the quest for sustainable growth and development in Nigeria. It is a cancer that attacks the vital structures and systems and engender progressive functioning of the Nigeria society (Ogbeidi, 2012)

Field data in Taraba State corroborate with the above position. Corruption is a clog in the development and progress of any nation because it results in high cost of project, widespread poverty, poor quality service delivery, poor access to public goods. All these undermines the concept of development and put Taraba State in a state of underdevelopment. It has also been revealed that apart from TETFUND intervention in Infrastructural development in

the State Institution, the state government has defaulted in its obligation to developed the state Institution in the past seven years of Arch. Darius Ishaku administration. Even salaries and other welfare benefits of workers have not been paid for several months. Corruption erodes the effective functioning of institutions thereby retarding growth and socio-economic development of the people and society generally (Ukondo, 2022).

An interview discussion on the issue of whether there is accountability on the part of the government reveals thus: there is no accountability by the government of Taraba State to the public in terms of government activities. They further compared the current dualisation of jalingo road and the construction of flyover project by Taraba State government with that of Yola, Adamawa State where the Adamawa State government started long after Taraba State commenced the project but after that of Yola has been commissioned over a year ago Taraba State project has not yet been completed and the cost of the project is also a subject of concern. This is in consonance with Onuorah and Appah (2012), Omodero and Okafor (2016) who revealed that the level of accountability is very poor in the public service delivery system in Nigeria and especially in Taraba state because the attributes of accessibility, comprehensiveness, relevance, quality, reliability and timely disclosure of economic, social and political information about government activities are completely non-available or partially available for the citizens to assess the performance of public officers mostly the political office holders. Hence, there is no service delivery within specified costs, quality and time schedule in Taraba State. This supports Onuorah and Appah (2012) view that there is poor and untimely service delivery by public office holders.

Corruption has many consequences and its repercussions are felt in all sectors. The consequences include: increase in the cost of production, deters both local and foreign investment, poverty, insecurity, unemployment, production of inferior goods, underdevelopment of infrastructure and stagnation of the

economy, (Svensson, 2015). Corruption in the public sector leads to loss of: integrity, citizen trust, capacity to be effective and efficient in the delivery of goods and services, compliance with regulation and competent employees, (Quah, 2017). In addition, corruption leads to inefficiency, poor performance and poor quality of services, (Lawal, 2017).

Corruption has a disproportionate impact on the livelihood of the poor. Corruption acts as obstacle to the credibility of democratic system; weakens ordinary people's confidence in government and subverts the rule of law and other tenets of democracy. It encourages inefficiency and waste. It is an undeniable fact that in a corrupt political system where bribes and kickbacks reign supreme, contractors and suppliers always prefer to offer bribe as against efficiency and high productivity. In other words, they prefer to do hasty job against good delivery of work. Service delivery do not work as expected, roads are bad, infrastructures and institutions are in a deteriorating condition. Today, religious and ethnic origin determines what you get in the Nigerian system as all the institutions have been tainted by trials and settled bribes, (Gumede, 2011).

Similarly, corruption aggravates the budget deficit. In fact, ever since corruption has reached unimaginable level in Nigeria, the story has been budget padding during annual budget debate at the National Assembly. Countless of ghost workers are alleged to be on government payroll. The ghost workers could be fake, retired or dead persons whose names continue to appear on the payroll for fraudulent officials to claim their wages at the end of the month. Taxes are evaded or not remitted in full to government coffers, (Gumede, 2011).

Field study conducted by Taraba Integrity and Accountability Group Jalingo (TIAGJ) revealed massive corruption and looting of Taraba State fund at unimaginable level under the present government. The group reiterated its call for the anti-graft agency to look into the books of the state government. It alleged that the

accounts of the Taraba government house, in Jalingo, and those of the Office of the Secretary to the State Government are channels through which billions of naira in cash have been siphoned from 2015 to 2021 (TIAGJ, 2021).

Conclusion

It is apparent that, the high percentage of corruption in the public sector has serious implications for effective service delivery. This is because the Public Service is the primary implementer of government policies and programs aimed at delivering basic services that have impact on the general well-being of the citizens. Unfortunately, in most states of the federation and Taraba state, a reflective of the manifestations of corruption in almost all aspect of governance remain the albatross in public service delivery, citizens who are supposed to benefits from these services are instead subjected to various sorts of scorn and irritation.

This could be seen in the state of underdevelopment in the past years of governance in Taraba state from the analysis above. Corruption corner's scarce public funds into private pockets and erodes the social and moral fabric of the society. There is a symbiotic link between public service corruption and poor service delivery. In other to break this cycle however, the study recommended among other things;

Government should instill a strong political will to combat corruption in the public sector and, if necessary, punish criminals regardless of who is involved.

Citizens should be active in the monitoring and assessment of programs and projects aimed towards their well-being. Beneficiaries must insist on receiving high-quality services from the government and/or other service providers. Subsequent reforms should be implemented.

Accountability and transparency have to be guaranteed and the people have to be involved in issues that affect their lives and immediate environment. Transparency and accountability in

governance will help to increase the level of public service delivery system and enhance socio-economic wellbeing of the citizens through access to resources and reduction in the poverty level in the state.

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