Research Paper .

THE INFLUENCE OF PERCEIVED INJUSTICE AND AGE ON CORRUPTION PROCLIVITY OF SELECTED WORKERS IN LAGOS STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract
Corruption is a global problem which has defied several interventions; it usually results when there is an opportunistic coincidence of motivation to act corruptly with actual occasions to so do (Treisman, 2007). This becomes heightened when employees perceive that they are being unfairly treated in their workplaces. Anchoring on Pinder and Harlos' (2001) organizational injustice (interactional and systemic injustice) the study investigates the influence of perceived injustice on corruption proclivity. The study was carried out on 1011 workers (Male = 541; Female = 429; 41= not specified); 423 old (40 years and above), 518 young workers (below 40 years) and 70 participants who did not specify their ages. Data was collected using the Perceived Injustice Scale developed by Hodson, Creighton, Jamison, Reible and Welsh (1994) and the Attitude Towards Corruption Scale. Results showed that Perceived injustice and age influenced workers' corruption proclivity. The results were discussed and recommendations made.

Keywords: perceived injustice; age; corruption proclivity; workers.

Introduction
Corruption is a global problem which is not localised to any particular region of the world and has defied several solutions aimed at curbing it in times past. As a global challenge, corruption presents severe economic and socio-political consequences which cut across developed and developing economies, whether directly or indirectly (World Bank, 2019; Johnston, 2010; Ogungbamila & Ojogo, 2020). An estimated 2 trillion dollars is lost to corruption annually, the world over, while African nations reportedly lose up to 25 percent of their annual GDP to corruption (Lawder, 2016). All forms of corruption take place at the instance of individuals, while such exhibitors of corrupt acts usually do so when opportunities present themselves to act in such manner (Okezie, 2012). Incidences of corruption do not take place in isolation but within specific contexts which include economic, political socio-cultural and especially organisational settings (Rabl, 2011; Julian & Bonavia, 2020).

Independent investigations, on the causes of corruption in developing nations, especially Nigeria, have suggested poverty as the major cause (Folarin, 2014). Other suggested causes of corruption include colonialism, ethnicity, and ostentatious lifestyle, overdependence on non-renewable natural resources, among others (Lawder, 2016). Awasthi (2015) identified five broad casual categories which he tagged: economic, political, administrative, social and legal causes. Furthermore, scholars such as Connor and Fischer (2012; Treisman, 2007) posited that perpetration of corrupt acts takes place when there is an opportunistic coincidence of individual motivation to commit the act with an occasion for actual misappropriation of public fund. Opportunistic coincidence for the perpetration of corruption becomes

very well pronounced when employees perceive that they are being unfairly treated in their workplaces. Corruption proclivity which is also described as corrupt tendency, refers to the disposition to indulge in unethical and disreputable behaviours while sacrificing public good for private benefit (Ogungbamila & Ojogo, 2020; Kauffmann, 1997). One of the motivators of corrupt behaviours which may have been grossly overlooked is the feeling of being unfairly treated especially when according to Siegrist, (2002) after personal evaluation they have perceive *negative imbalance* in their effort-reward ratio.

Corruption proclivity which is also known as corruption propensity according to Agbo and Iwundu (2016) is defined as: "the degree to which an individual is likely to engage in corruption compared to other persons irrespective of whether the individual had engaged in corruption or not." Corruption proclivity in this study is measured with the attitude towards corruption Corruption according to Agbo and Iwundu (2016) is a form of criminal behaviour whose measurement and conceptualization have gone beyond the objective method since the perpetration also includes intent, cognitive and executorial proclivities that make them not just a form of criminal behaviour, but a planned one at that. Thus, evaluating corruption proclivity through an attitude measure must cover the three components of attitudes as stipulated by Ajzen and Fishbein (2001) viz: Cognitive, Affective and Behavioural components. The attitude towards corruption scale used to measure the attitude of participants towards corruption in this study was designed by the first author and covers all three components of attitude measurement.

Perceived injustice according to Hodson, Creighton, Jamison, Reible and Welsh (1994, as cited in

Fields, 2013) *"is the extent to which employees perceived their employers to treat them unfairly."* In contrast however, Skarlicki and Folger, (1997, as cited in Ogungbamila, 2018) defined perceived justice as the:

> *"extent to which employees felt that the procedure for distributing workplace resources and outcomes as well as the quality of interpersonal treatment received from the organization and other organization members met some acceptable rules of justice and fairness"*

The above definition construes perceived justice which is the opposite of injustice as when an employee understands that certain principles of justice have been adhered to in allocating resources and outcomes in the workplace. Thus, Perceived injustice in this study is defined as the experience of being unjustly and uncourteously treated, after an effort-reward appraisal by the employee in question, particularly, in comparison to significant others within the same space.

Perceived organizational injustice may be a catalyst for positive disposition towards corruption possibly as a way of getting personal retribution against the offenders (Ogungbamila & Ojogo, 2020). Pinder and Harlos (2001) in their research into how employees respond to perceived injustice within the space of a work organisation noted that silence was one of such critical responses. Silence, according to them was a usual response particularly when the victim of injustice envisages a boomerang after they lodge (usually formal) complaints (Morrison & Milliken, 2000, as cited in Pinder & Harlos, 2001). According to them, while certain employees who have experienced injustice within the workplace may choose to give voice (report to those who can take action), many others prefer to be silent. Silence however, does not remove the hurt of injustice as the victim of organizational injustice may still see a need to get revenge in the future. One of the many ways in which such employees seek retribution is by rationalizing acts of corruption as a form of retribution, an act which has been described by Ogungbamila and Ojogo (2020) as retaliatory intentions.

Pinder and Harlos (2001) identified two types of organizational injustice viz: interactional injustice as well as systemic injustice. According to them, Interactional injustice which itself has four identifiable dimensions, comes to the fore in an organisation, especially between a subordinate and their superiors to whom they are responsible when such subordinates imply unfair, poor and questionable treatment. The four dimensions of interactional injustice include: surveillance, intimidation, degradation and manipulation.

Systemic injustice on the other hand refers to perceived mistreatment in the broader organisation. Pinder and Harlos (2001) defined systemic injustice as:

> the perception of unfairness involving the larger organizational context within which work

relationships are enacted (that is interactional), and where allocation decisions are made (that is, distributive) and/or implemented, (that is procedural) the last two injustices are procedural and distributive injustices.

In organisations where an employee has perceived injustice, the personal decision to pursue justice may be a motivator for engaging in corrupt acts (Ogungbamila & Ojogo, 2020). A research conducted by Ojedokun (2010) on how the imbalance between effort and the rewards of 225 police officers was significantly positively linked to the tendency to engage in unethical behaviour. Furthermore, the intention of employees to engage in retaliatory behaviours increased when perceived injustice within the organisation increased and the more trust employees expressed in the organisation, the lesser the retaliatory attitudes expressed.

Results of a study conducted by Goergen, Pauli, Cerutti and Perin (2018) to investigate the influence of perceived injustice on the retaliatory intentions among 163 selected employees in Brazil showed that the more employees see themselves as being fairly and justly treated by their organization, the less likely they were to engage in retaliatory behaviours against the organization. On the contrary however, whenever employees perceived injustice in the ways they were treated by their organisations, such were able to rationalize and make excuses for corrupt behaviours within the context of their organisations (Dupuy & Neset, 2018). Ogungbamila and Ojogo (2020) clearly posited that in the eventuality that employees perceive that they are being fairly and justly treated within their organisations, such are less likely to engage in corrupt acts. One of the major ways employees in an organisation evaluate their level of being fairly or justly treated is by comparing themselves to other employees, whether on the same level (or rank) or persons to whom they have reasons to compare themselves.

Age is another variable that is being suggested in the current study to influence corruption proclivity. Age can be defined as the number of years that a person has lived or a thing has existed (Obi, Nwankwo, Agun, Aboh & Sydney-Agbor, 2013). Researchers have attempted to investigate the influence of age on corrupt tendencies. For example, results of a study by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) submitted that age as a factor did not significantly predict or explain crime. Furthermore, some studies have observed that socio-personal variables such as educational qualification, age, gender and job differences do not appear to have strong connections with corrupt tendencies (Ogungbamila, 2017; Ogungbamila & Udegbe, 2014). However, it should be noted that the age of workers may play an important role in determining their corruption proclivity, given that most workers regardless of their establishments or places of work would usually start their Careers at younger ages and continue to grow in their careers; while there have been studies linking corruption proclivity to the

Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were tested in this study, these are highlighted below:
1. Perceived injustice will significantly influence workers' attitude towards corruption.
2. Young workers (below 40 years) will report significantly positive attitude towards corruption compared to their older counterparts (aged 40 and above).

Method

Participants

As indicated in table 1, a total of 1,011 workers selected from government agencies, organised private sector and some private businesses took part in the study (Male = 541; Female = 429; 41= didn't specify gender). Participants indicated their educational qualifications and 504 participants constituting 53% of the participants had Higher National Diplomas or a Bachelor's Degree as qualification; 202 participants constituting 21% of the participants had National Certificate in Education or Ordinary National Diploma as their qualifications, while 254 participants, which constituted 26% of the total participants had the School Leaving Certificate as their highest qualification. Of the entire participants, 423 workers were 40 years and above (42% and SD = 23), while 518 participants were below 40 years (51%; SD = 26.1); 70 participants (7%) did not specify their ages.

Measures

Sociodemographic information

Participants were asked to indicate their age, Sex, and highest educational qualifications.

Attitude Towards Corruption Scale (ATCS)

Corruption proclivity in this study was measured using the Attitude Towards Corruption Scale which was developed and standardised by the researcher. The 28-item scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .91. The scale which has four sub-scales namely Fraud, Nepotism, Embezzlement and Bribery yielded Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients of: .83, .83, .73 and .72 for each subscale respectively. The scale yielded a concurrent validity score of 0.33 with Hathaway & Mckinley's/ (1967) Psychopathic Deviate Scale.

Perceived Injustice Scale

Hodson, Creighton, Jamison, Reible and Welsh (1994) developed the Perceived Injustice Scale. The Scale describes the extent to which employees perceive their employer treats them unfairly; presenting four questions for evaluation of injustice within their workplaces. The Perceived Injustice Scale showed a reliability coefficient of .07. The scale showed via multivariate regression significant positive relation to workplace participation, working in a physically demanding job and working in a larger organization. Furthermore, the scale also showed negative relationship with being married, being in a higher socio-economic status and having more solidarity.

Procedure

The research tools were administered to workers through research assistants in 11 Local Authorities, after obtaining the informed consent of participants. Tools included the Attitude Towards Corruption Scale, Perceived Injustice Scale and a section on the demographic variables of participants. A total of 1,308 questionnaires were given out while 1,011 questionnaires were returned, giving a 77% response rate.

Results

Table 1: Showing Means and Standard Deviation

Demographic characteristics	Categories	Mean	SD	N	%
Sex	Male	53.70	23.340	541	56%
	Female	55.37	27.064	429	44%
Age	Young *(Age < 40 years)*	57.78	26.045	518	55%
	Old *(Age≥ 40 years)*	49.57	22.934	423	45%
Educational level	Low (O/Level)	62.87	28.793	254	26%
	Avg (NCE & OND)	56.65	26.462	202	21%
	High (HND, B.Sc. & above)	50.47	22.744	504	53%

In order to investigate the influence of perceived injustice on attitude towards corruption, an independent t-test comparison of mean attitude toward corruption was computed and the results presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Independent t-test of mean difference in Attitude Towards Corruption by Perceived Injustice

Perceived Injustice		N	Mean	SD	t	df	P
ATC	High (≥ 10)	476	60.71	28.371	6.88	1009	P < .05*
	Low (< 10)	535	49.87	21.611			

P < .05*; n = 1011; df = 1009; significant (one-tailed)

Result of independent samples t-test was computed as presented in the t-table shown in table 2, with means and Standard deviations of the result. The result showed that t is significant $t(1009) = 6.88$, $p < .05$. This indicates that participants who perceived injustice ($M = 60.71$, $SD = 28.37$) had significantly higher scores indicating more positive attitude towards corruption than participants who did not perceive injustice ($M = 49.87$, $SD = 21.61$). Hypothesis 1 is therefore supported.

To investigate age differences in attitude towards corruption, an independent t-test was carried out comparing mean attitude towards corruption as presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3: Independent t-test of mean difference in Attitude Towards Corruption by Age

Age		Independent samples test				
ATC	N	Mean	SD	t	df	P
Young (< 40 years)	519	57.82	26.032	5.164	940	P < .05*
Old (≥ 40 years)	423	49.57	22.934			

P < .05*; n = 942; df = 940; significant (one-tailed)

Results from Table 3 showed that t is significant $t(940) = 5.164$, $p < .05$. This indicates that young workers (below age 40) had a significantly higher mean score on attitude towards corruption ($M = 57.82$, $SD = 26.032$) than Older workers ($M = 49.57$, $SD = .47$). Given the observed result from table 3, hypothesis 2 is therefore confirmed. By implication, younger workers show higher proclivity to corrupt behaviour, compared to older workers.

Discussion

This study found that perceived injustice influenced the attitude of workers towards corruption, as workers who perceived high injustice showed more positive attitude towards corruption than those who do not perceive injustice. The findings can be explained by the suggestions of Kennedy, Homant and Homant (2004), as well as Aquino, Tripp and Bies (2006), who emphasised that whenever people perceive injustice, they are motivated to exhibit behaviours that are targeted at bridging the justice gap. Furthermore, the finding agrees with that of Ogungbamila's (2018) study which emphasized workplace neutralization before employees' perceived injustice can adequately engender corrupt acts. The natural human response when unfairness is perceived in the workplace is to fight back and take revenge through acts of corruption (Aquino, Ashforth and Joshi, 2006). This response becomes unavoidable especially in systems where there are no legal ways to formally lodge complaint against injustice. Findings of the current study also agree with those of Ogungbamila and Udegbe (2014) who concluded that an increase in perceived injustice was associated with a corresponding increase in the intent for corruption. Individuals who have seen themselves as unjustly and unfairly treated by their organisations and employers may seize any opportunity to engage in corruption, to get back at the unfair system. The study also agrees with the findings of another study conducted by Ogungbamila and Ojogo (2020) which showed a significant positive correlation between perceived organisational injustice and the tendency of employees to engage in corrupt behaviour. While it is expected of organisations to operate internal mechanisms for addressing injustice and provide succour to already dissatisfied employees through addressing the injustice suffered, some organisations often end up vilifying such complainants with numerous backlashes (Harlos & Pinder, 2000).

Such situations as these unfortunately engender the culture of silence in organisations, a culture which has often been described by Nigerians as the culture of: *"suffering in silence"*. Such silent suffering usually act as trigger for engaging in corrupt acts whenever the opportunity presents itself. It is therefore very important to address the problem of workplace injustice as failure to do this will inadvertently encourage the proliferation of counterproductive work behavior (Spector, Fox, Penney, Bruursema, Goh & Kessler, 2006 as cited in Ogungbamila & Ojogo, 2020). According to Ojedokun (2010), corruption is one of the many potential responses put up by employees to obtain retribution against their organisations whenever they perceive injustice. For workers who feel unfairly treated by their employers and organisations, corruption probably provides the needed opportunity to get their "pound of flesh" from the seemingly unappreciated or insensitive employer or organisation (Ogungbamila & Udegbe, 2014).

The study also found out that Young workers (Below age 40) reported significantly positive attitude towards corruption compared to their older counterparts (40 years and above). This finding agrees with those of Torgler and Valev (2014) who found that justifiability of corruption as a variable, was much lower for persons whose age ranges were from 30 – 65 years when compared with a referent age group of below 30. Torgler and Valev further noted that the effect of age grew even stronger and significantly so, when the age group increases.

This observed age difference in the attitude towards corruption may not be unconnected to the fact that younger workers are likely to have more financial burdens, higher job prospects as well as turnover intentions. Moreover, younger workers are more likely to be tech savvy and as a result, deploy their technological skills to perpetrate corrupt acts. A study by Morris and Venkatesh (2000) compared older workers and their younger counterparts in technology usage decisions and found that younger workers were more strongly influenced by attitude toward using technology, while older workers were more influenced by subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. Consequent upon this, the ability to engage with and manipulate technology may be a trigger for corrupt behaviour, especially through the use of technology. Findings from this study are however opposed to the position of Rehmke (2016) who stated that the older political office holders get, the more likely they are to become naturally corrupt. Rehmke also observed that it would benefit democracies to ensure to vote out political leaders out of office as they age to prevent corruption. The study also disagrees with finding from a study by Obi, et al. (2013) which concluded that age was not a significant determinant of the attitude towards crime among adolescents.

Conclusion

This study focused on the influence of perceived injustice and age in predicting attitude towards corruption of selected workers in Lagos State Nigeria. The results have

shown that perceived injustice of workers significantly influenced corruption proclivity and thus increased the likelihood of their engaging in corrupt acts. The study also showed that age significantly influenced attitude towards corruption; as younger workers (below the age of 40) showed higher corruption proclivity than older workers (above age 40).

It is therefore recommended that organisations and employers of labour carry out periodic assessment of their employees' level of perceived injustice and ensure to adequately address injustice. This will not only help to prevent corrupt behaviours exhibited as a form of retaliatory action by employees, but also encourage employee commitment and improved work performance in the organisations.

It is also recommended that organisations develop policy frameworks to discourage and punish corrupt acts; encourage honesty and expose their employees to these policies through orientations and sensitizations. Furthermore, organisations should develop internal mentoring and capacity building programs where younger workers in organisations or establishments would be linked with reputable, older and senior workers for mentorship and workplace coaching to model the culture of probity and prevent counterproductive work behaviours while also imbibing important Organisational Citizenship Behaviours.

Suggestions for future research

Furthermore, an investigation into the link between the ability to use and manipulate modern technological tools and corruption proclivity is an area suggested for future research.

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