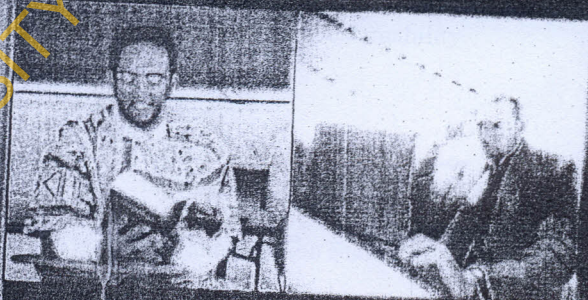


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# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PSYCHO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS AND PERCEPTION OF CORRUPTION BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT CIVIL SERVANTS IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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## Abstract

Even though global corruption is assuming a worrisome dimension in Nigeria. This study investigated the relationship between psychological and demographic factors in predicting the perception of corruption. The cross-sectional correlational study included 600 civil servants; 320 males and 280 females following multi-stage sampling. A 67-item questionnaire was used for data collection. Data analysis included Pearson Product Moment Correlation and regression. Results showed that there was significant positive relationship between fraudulent intent ( $r = 0.671$ ,  $P < .05$ ), personality ( $r = 0.631$ ,  $P < .05$ ), fear of crime ( $r = 0.491$ ,  $P < .05$ ), need for achievement ( $r = 0.486$ ,  $P < .05$ ); and perception of corruption. There was significant relationship between age of the respondents ( $r = 0.385$ ,  $P < .05$ ) and perception of corruption. There was no significant relationship between level of education ( $r = 0.049$ ,  $P > .05$ ), socio-economic status ( $r = 0.041$ ,  $P > .05$ ), length of service ( $r = 0.020$ ,  $P > .05$ ), and perception of corruption. This highlights the importance of fraudulent intent, personality and age as factors critical to the understanding of an individual's perception of corruption, suggesting the need for national re-orientation and mobilization to re-awaken positive cognitive appraisal and response to corruption.

**Key words:** Psycho-demographic, factors, perception, corruption, Nigeria

## Background

The issue of corruption over the last few years has attracted renewed interest, both among academics and policymakers (Mauro, 1995, Kaufman & Shang-Jin, 1999). Corruption has become one of the most widely debated and contentious issues in local and international contexts. It is a phenomenon in which ethical, cultural, and regulatory issues

intersect (Mauro, 1996, Raymond & Gatti, 2002). Despite the global worry about corruption, very little scientific inquiry has been focused on how concerned groups perceive corruption, let alone the psycho-demographic factors related to it.

There are a number of reasons why this topic has come under fresh scrutiny: Corruption impacts the life of common men negatively than elites in many societies. Additionally, good governance is increasingly desired by most societies. The quality of any government is often rated with respect to corruption levels; and corruption scandals have toppled governments in both major industrial countries and developing countries (Mauro, 1996).

Since the end of the cold war, donor countries now place less emphasis on political considerations in allocating foreign aid among developing countries with greater attention toward assuring that aid funds have not only reached the poor but efficiently utilised. However, with the persistence of slow economic growth, malfunctioning institutions, and worsening poverty in many countries, there is heightened worry that available resources are diverted in favour of the elites and advantaged few in many societies (Mauro, 1996).

A study has characterized some main forms or manifestations of corruption (Amundsen, 1999). They are; bribery, embezzlement, and fraud. Eskeland and Thiele (1999) and Fjeldstad (1999) also identified extortion, and favouritism as variants of corruption. All forms of these corrupt practices may be found in Nigeria with varying degree of severity (Transparency International, 2002).

University of Massachusetts researchers estimated that from 1970 to 1996, capital flight from 30 sub-Saharan countries totaled \$187bn, exceeding those nations' external debts (Treisman, 2000a). In Nigeria, for example, more than \$400 billion was stolen from the treasury by Nigeria's leaders between 1960 and 1999 (Transparency International, 2002). Until now, Nigeria ranked 10<sup>th</sup> of the world's most corrupt nations. In 2006, of the 163 countries surveyed, Nigeria ranked 142 on the list of countries with least records of corruption (Lambsdorff, 2007). A 2008 survey involving 180 of the world's 193 countries ranked Nigeria 121 on the list of world's least corrupt nations (Transparency International, 2008). Despite Nigeria's enormous oil wealth, Nigeria's socio-economic indicators are alarmingly low, with more than half of the population living on less than US\$1 a day-(G-Nexid 2009).

The problem of corruption and financial crime in Nigeria is gradually becoming cancerous, pervasive and toxic. This could be explicated in a study report recently released by the Intergovernmental Action Group Against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA), an agency of ECOWAS. The report said



Nigeria, by the actions of ten former governors scored 87.3 per cent, the highest in Africa on the scale of bribery to government officials. Though, the body did not name the governors, it noted, however, that the sum was all stolen in three years. A breakdown of the report showed that: in Corruption-Money Laundering Nexus, Nigeria scored 87.3 per cent in Bribery of government officials, followed by Ghana (56.7 per cent) Cote d'ivoire (55 per cent), Liberia (44.4 per cent) and Benin Republic (40 per cent). Also, Nigeria scored 23.6 per cent in bribing foreign officials, followed by Guinea Bissau (16.7 per cent, Cote d'ivoire (14 per cent) and Ghana (6.7 per cent). Nigeria maintained its leading position, scoring 86.6 per cent in embezzlement, misappropriation or other diversions of property by government officials, trailed by Sierra-Leone (82.4 per cent), Guinea Bissau (66.7 per cent), Ghana (56.7 per cent) and Benin Republic (52.0 per cent) (Ajibade, 2010).

Under illegal transfer or taking of money abroad, Nigeria scored 57.0 per cent) Liberia (45.5 per cent), Guinea Bissau (36.1 per cent), and Sierra Leone (35.3 per cent). In contracts inflation, Nigeria has 86.1 per cent, Sierra-Leone (82.4 per cent) Guinea Bissau (55.56 per cent), Ghana (56.7 per cent), Liberia (45.5 per cent) and Benin Republic (28.0 per cent) (Ajibade, 2010).

Osun state in Nigeria, is the focus of this study because of persistent allegations of corrupt practices by the government, ranging from election fraud, bribery of judicial officials to monumental financial scandals. For example, lawmakers in Osun state were shocked in 2008 when they were individually credited through their respective banks to the tune of 5 million naira, i.e. about US\$350,000 from the executive arm of the state government without soliciting for it. These are part of funds meant for capital projects for the citizenry (Osun Defender, 2008). The perception of corruption by government officials at the grass-root is unclear.

The state government has done well between 2003 and 2010 by adhering to the campaign slogan of zero-tolerance for burrowing. In public administration, borrowing may not be a crime provided that the fund borrowed is used for concrete projects that will be of benefit to the people. To buttress this, the government in power before 2003 bequeathed about N6bn surplus cash in the treasury without a single loan facility. However, with less than a year to the end of the eight-year tenure, the outgoing government wrote to the state legislature for permission to seek an N18.3bn loan. This has been described as a criminal contempt of the people of the state by the opposition party; while the press secretary to the state government was quoted as saying "the insinuation that the government is planning

to leave a debt profile is wrong because government is a continuum" (Odesola, 2010). The government's decision to access foreign loans has been perceived differently by different office holders and civil servants.

An individual's perception of something is his or her impression or understanding of the concept, based on observation, knowledge or thought (Encarta Dictionary, 2008). When officials entrusted with state resources deliberately or inadvertently turn blind eye to corrupt practices in their domain, it raises the ethico-legal questions (Transparency International, 2002). Because of variations in dispositional and situational differences in individuals, perception of what is considered to be corrupt would likely be different. Knack and Keefer (1997) postulated that individuals perceive corruption to be very high if they found economic gain on their work activities most especially in government. Knowledge of such differences is important because they can have an impact on the perpetuation of corrupt practices. If people do not recognise an activity being witnessed, or in which they are participating as "corrupt", they are not likely to react to it negatively, nor would they perceive the need for behavioural change (Independent Commission Against Corruption, 1994).

Although Warr, (1994), Swamy, Stephen, Young, & Omar, (2001) and Treisman, (2000b) earlier revealed the possibility of a variety of factors to predict perception of corruption. Most previous research efforts have focused on the legal, political and economic aspects of crime in many parts of the world. As a result, knowledge of the psychological and demographic factors predicting perception of corruption from the perspectives of stakeholders remains poorly understood.

The purpose of this study is therefore to investigate civil servants' perception of corruption in the conduct of government business, and the relationship between personality factors, fraudulent intent, need for achievement, and fear of crime (psychological factors); as well as length of service, gender, age and socio-economic status (demographic factors) in predicting the perception of corruption from the perspective of local government officials.

### **Design**

This cross-sectional correlational study took place in Osun state, one of the 36 states in Nigeria. Osun State is located in the South-Western part of Nigeria. It covers an area of approximately 14,875 square kilometers, and lies between longitude 04 00E and latitude 05 55". Nigeria is Africa's most populous country with an estimated population of 145 million. It is the world's 11<sup>th</sup>

largest producer of oil, which accounted for the 98% of Nigeria's total export for 2007.

### **Participants and sample**

Local government officials in all the 3 senatorial zones in Osun state, Nigeria participated. This became necessary because most corrupt practices in public service are directly or indirectly facilitated by civil servants and government agents (Rose-Ackerman, 1978, and Myrdal, 1968).

Six hundred participants were selected following multi-stage sampling. The 3 senatorial zones of the state were clustered. The list of local government areas in each local government was obtained, from which 2 local governments were randomly selected through balloting, yielding 6 local governments. One hundred and twenty civil servants in the local government were selected accidentally, following on autonomous desire to participate in the study.

One hundred and twenty questionnaires were distributed in each zone making a total number of 720 questionnaires. Participants' ages ranged between 18 and 60 years with mean of 38.21 years ( $SD=6.87$ ). The sample comprised 320 males (53.3%) and 280 females (46.7%). 140 (23.3%) participants had secondary school certificate, while 326 (54.3%) participants had National Certificate of Education or Ordinary National Diploma; 112 (18.7%) participants had Bachelor of Science degree/Higher National Diploma, and 22 (3.7%) participants had various postgraduate degrees.

### **Instrument**

A 67-item structured questionnaire was used to gather information for this study. The questionnaire was divided into 6 sections: Section A with 7 items tapped information about demographic data of the participants including: age, sex, marital status, length of service, and educational background.

The 21-item Section B, tapped information regarding respondents' perception of corruption. This instrument was developed by the researcher following a focus group discussion added to items gathered from literature on the subject. The instrument had a Likert-type response format ranging between strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1) with higher scores indicating higher perception or awareness of corruption. Items gathered were subjected to face and content validity. Psychometric analysis of the items included: (a) item analysis, (b) confirmatory principal component analysis (PCA), and (c) internal consistency analysis using Cronbach's alpha. A minimum correlation of .30 was set for

inclusion in the scale. An examination of the inter-item correlation showed no redundant items. Correlations ranged from .03 to .06. The standardised Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .82. Also, a Guttman Split half coefficient of 0.73, equal length Spearman Brown of 0.73 and unequal length of 0.73 were recorded. The 21 items were subjected to PCA with iterations, mean substitution of missing values, varimax rotation, and Kaiser normalisation. Application of Kaiser's criterion of using all unrotated factors with eigen values  $>1.0$  resulted in 3 components accounting for 42 % of variance. The norms established were  $N=600$ ,  $X=72.24$ ,  $SD=12.03$ . The higher the score on the scale, the greater the understanding, knowledge, or thought about corruption.

Section C was designed to assess personality. It contained the 10-item abridged Big-5 Personality Inventory developed by Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann (2003). The response format ranged from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The scale developers reported internal consistency alpha of 0.86, however, a coefficient of 0.80 was established during this study.

Section D yielded information on respondents' fear of crime. The scale was developed by Duch and Roberts (1982) with 4 items. It also has a 5-point response format ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). High scores on the scale indicated a high level of fear of crime, and vice-versa. The author reported an alpha-coefficient of 0.72 while in this study a reliability of 0.68 was obtained.

Section E measured respondents' fraudulent intent. The scale was developed by Alarape (2004). It consisted of 16 items with a response format ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). High scores on the scale indicated a high level of fraudulent intent and vice-versa. The author reported an alpha-coefficient of 0.88. A revalidation of the instrument yielded a reliability of 0.86. Section F was the 9-item Need for achievement Scale. The instrument was developed by Edward (1958). The response format was Likert-type, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). High scores on the scale indicated a high level of need for achievement and vice-versa. The author reported an alpha-coefficient of 0.78, while a reliability of 0.83 was obtained in this study.

#### **Procedure**

The study was preceded by a pilot study in a separate local government in a neighbouring state (Akinyele, in Oyo State). Following the submission and review of protocol, permission to

conduct the study was obtained from the Department of Psychology, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. Letters of introduction were dispatched to the secretaries of the selected local government area. With the help of two research assistants, each of the selected local governments were visited one after the other during which members of staff were accidentally approached and intimated with the purpose of the survey and request for their permission to participate. Only literate employees who gave informed and autonomous consent to participate were selected. Completion of the questionnaire took an average of 30 minutes. Of the total 720 questionnaires distributed, only 600 were correctly filled and fit for analysis, representing 86% response rate. Returned questionnaires were coded, entered into excel software and later transferred into the SPSS computer software for statistical analysis. Data gathered from this study were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), regression analysis, and t-test for independent samples.

## Results

Data gathered from this study were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), regression analysis, and t-test for independent samples. All calculations were done at 0.05 level of confidence. The results are presented in Tables below:

**Table 1: Mean, Standard deviation and Inter-correlations among the variables and perception of corruption**

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Perception of corruption	72.24	12.03	1.000				
Personality	34.48	7.29	.631*	1.000			
Fraudulent intent	56.46	11.31	.671*	.127	1.00		
Need for achievement	31.08	7.31	.486*	.230	.204	1.000	
Fear of crime	14.91	3.41	.491*	.168	.288	.223	1.000

\* means significant, and N.S. means not significant

Table 1 shows that there was significant positive relationship between fraudulent intent ( $r = 0.671$ ,  $P < .05$ ), personality ( $r = 0.631$ ,  $P < .05$ ), fear of crime ( $r = 0.491$ ,  $P < .05$ )

need for achievement ( $r = 0.486, P < .05$ ), and perception of corruption.

**Table 2: Multiple regression summary table showing independent and joint effect of psychological factors on perception of corruption**

Joint Effect			Independent effects						
R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	P	
.725	.526	.523	Personality	.528	.065	.320	8.171	<.05	
			Fraudulent intent	.443	.045	.416	9.921	<.05	
			Need for achievement	.075	.060	.046	1.255	>.05	
			Fear of crime	.159	.130	.045	1.226	>.05	

Table 2 shows that there was joint effect of the psychological factors on perception of corruption:  $R = 0.725, P < .05$ . The variables jointly accounted for 52.3% ( $Adj. R^2 = 0.523$ ) variance in the perception of corruption. In terms of the independent effect of the psychological factors, fraudulent intent was the most potent contributor to perception of corruption ( $\beta = 0.416, t = 9.921, P < .05$ ) while fear of crime was the least ( $\beta = 0.046, t = 1.225, P < .05$ ). However, there was no significant independent effect of need for achievement ( $\beta = .046, t = 1.255, P > .05$ ), and fear of crime ( $\beta = .045, t = 1.226, P > .05$ ) on perception of corruption.

**Table 3: Showing means, standard deviation and inter-correlations among demographic variables and perception of corruption**

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Perception of corruption	72.24	12.03	1.000				
Length of service	8.97	3.64	.020n.s	1.000			
Age of the respondents	40.13	7.34	.385*	.006	1.000		
Level of education	2.03	0.75	.049n.s	.044	.000	1.000	
Socio-economic status	5.67	1.45	-.041n.s	.059	-.050	-.001	1.000

\* means significant, and n.s. means not significant

Table 3 shows that there was significant relationship between age of the respondents ( $r = 0.385, P < .05$ ) and perception of corruption. There was no significant relationship between level of education ( $r = 0.049, P > .05$ ), socio-economic status ( $r = 0.041, P > .05$ ), length of service ( $r = 0.020, P > .05$ ), and perception of corruption.

**Table 4**

**Multiple regression summary table showing independent and joint effect of demographic factors on perception of corruption**

Joint Effect			Independent effects						
R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	P	
.396	.157	.149	Sex of the respondents	-1.109	.912	-.046	-1.216	>.05	
			Length of service	.0463	.125	.014	.370	>.05	
			Age of the participants	.634	.092	.387	10.251	<.05	
			Highest level of education	.784	.603	.049	1.489	>.05	
			Socio-economic status	.469	.315	.056	1.489	>.05	

Table 4 shows that there was joint effect of the demographic factors on perception of corruption;  $R = 0.396$ ,  $P < .05$ . The variables jointly accounted for 14.9% ( $Adj. R^2 = 0.149$ ) variance in the perception of corruption by local government staff. In terms of the independent effect of each of the variables on perception of corruption among the local government staff, age of the participants was the most potent contributor to perception of corruption ( $\beta = 0.387$ ,  $t = 10.251$ ,  $P < .05$ ). Other demographic factors did not have independent effect on perception of corruption.

**Discussion**

This study revealed that there was significant positive relationship between fraudulent intent, personality, fear of crime, need for achievement, and perception of corruption. Psychological factors jointly accounted for 52.3% variance in the perception of corruption, but fraudulent intent was the most potent contributor to perception of corruption while fear of crime was the least. This is in agreement with the position of Warr, (1994), Swamy et al., (1999) and Treisman, (2000b). It implies that for instance when an individual's fraudulent intent and need for achievement are high, there is a higher likelihood that the individual's perception of crime will be high. However, there was no significant independent effect of need for achievement, and fear of crime on perception of corruption.

Concerning the relationship between fraudulent intent and perception of corruption, if individuals are exposed to high level of fraudulent practices, they tend to perceive corruption negatively. However, individuals have negative attitudes towards corruption if they are not exposed to fraudulent activities. Empirical studies tend to confirm this view. Mauró (1995, 1998) finds that higher levels of corruption are associated with fraudulent intent and that more corrupted governments tend to spend more in sectors where

it is easier to practice fraudulent activities. Also in line with this finding, Knack and Keefer (1997) postulated that individuals perceive corruption to be very high if they found economic gain on their work activities most especially in government.

Age was also found to have a significant positive relationship with perception of corruption. An increasing age is therefore expected to translate into higher perception of corruption. This could be as a result of the impact of development, maturation and learning experiences which are expected to enlarge an individual's horizon and complexity, equipping him with greater information and abilities to maneuver through complex tasks, including, in this case, immoral practices such as corruption. This might have accounted for the increasing number of elderly statesmen currently facing corruption charges in Nigeria; because they failed to perceive corruption as pathological and antisocial for reasons known to them despite their old age.

Evidences from this study found no significant relationship between level of education, socio-economic status, length of service, and perception of corruption. Despite this, when demographic factors are considered in combination, such factors could yield significant joint influence on the perception of corruption among groups, such as the population considered in this study.

Contrary to the results in this study, a casual observer would expect that individuals with differences in socio-economic status and levels of education would perceive corruption differently based on differences in knowledge, values and needs. Considering the context, this might have been due to the erosion of the middle class, worsened by the global economic recession and endemic poverty in the study setting. Additionally, there could be other socio-demographic factors that are more closely related to perception of corruption apart from the factors investigated in this study. This implies that irrespective of demographic differences in individual perception of corruption, participants in this study showed very little variation, providing the reason for the insignificance of the demographic variables investigated.

The finding in this study that demographic variables including; gender, length of service, and socio-economic status had no relationship with perception of corruption suggest that irrespective of an individual's ranking on these variables, it may not predict his/her perception of corruption. This could be why Nigeria ranks 180 of the world's 193 least corrupt nations in 2007 (Transparency International, 2008) without any public outcry.



Some may entirely deny it, explaining why individuals with high fraudulent intent and need for achievement also recorded high scores in perception of corruption, raising doubts about the perception of corruption and perpetuation of corrupt practices in various segments of the society. Thus, in a society like Nigeria corrupt public officials could still be treated as celebrities even when anti-corruption agencies have established prima facie cases against them.

### **Conclusion**

In sum, the findings from this study highlight the importance of fraudulent intent, personality and age as factors critical to the understanding of an individual's perception of corruption. This sheds some light in the knowledge quest for factors underlying corruption and other criminal behaviours in public governance. It is therefore imperative to empower both the private and public sectors and security service agencies to screen members of the society for the psycho-demographic variables found significant in this study before permitting them for enlistment in legitimate services. Both governmental and civil societies need to educate the entire populace in perceiving corruption as a potential national time bomb. Renewed, sincere, and sustainable efforts in national re-orientation and mobilization are suggested to re-awaken positive cognitive appraisal and response to corruption to discourage corruption among government officials and the general public.

An individual's perception of a concept could influence his attitude, behaviour, and practices. Therefore, any deliberate effort to test public office holders and civil servants for fraudulent intent, personality and age would be a major mechanism towards understanding people's perception of corruption and a possible predictor of their attitude towards corruption. Without this, certain fallouts should be expected in the entire sphere of the Nigerian society; lack of transparency, endemic poverty, and worsening of the corruption index.

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