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# Does 'Perceived' Socio-Economic Benefits of Bribery Persist Bribery Practices?

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***Abstract:*** ***The main purpose of this study was to examine whether people's perceptions of socio-economic benefits they attached to bribery practices persist the practices in Abuja, Nigeria. The focus of prior studies has been on negative perception of bribery practices in the world. This study relies on the economic process theory as a theoretical framework. A multi-stage sampling method was used to identify the respondents in the study area. The study employed survey questionnaire to collect the data. A total of 1000 questionnaire were distributed, out of which 836 valid responses were collected. The valid responses were analyzed using multiple regression method. The findings of the study indicated that people's perceptions on socio-economic benefits of bribery practices significantly persist the practices in Nigeria. The study recommends that an intensive campaign should be carried out by the government and the civil society organizations to change people's perception of bribery practices in Nigeria.***

***Keywords: Benefit, Bribery, Perception, People, Persist, Socio-Economic.***

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout human history bribery practices have continued to feature as one of the most pervasive and prevalent economic crime committed in all societies across the globe. More so, bribery practices have assumed permanency in day-to-day human interactions. For instance, history has shown that renown ancient nation states such as the Chinese, Egyptian and the Greek among others have struggled with persistence of bribery practices in spite of different measures and strategies enacted. In these nation states, there were evidences of bribery cases and punishments handed to the offenders. These evidences include the "14 BCE Hamhab enacted by Pharoah of Egypt and the 17 BCE Code of Hammurabi decreed by king of Babylon" among others (Mishra, 2006). However, the enacted of measures and strategies has not deter

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people from engaging in the acts of bribery practices from the 14th century through to 19th century and thereafter (Biswas, A., & Tortajada, 2018).
In today's world, even though developed countries have fair share of bribery practices at all levels of their national, the practices are more common and visible in developing countries. For instance, bribery transactions have made it impossible to bring the vast majority of the citizens of the developing countries out of shackles of poverty in that people mostly ordinary are on daily basis subjected to offering bribes when assessing matters they are legally entitled to such as education, health, tax clearance, international passports, bus and train tickets, custom clearance among others to public officials (Transparency International (TI), 2017; World Bank, 2017). TI (2020) reported that bribery cases were reported even during the COVID-19 plague. The Economist (2015) reports that bribery practices are "The only thing that works" in Nigeria. The report reveals that with bribery one can get whatever he/she wants-legal or illegal and gets away with it in Nigeria. Abuja, which is the area of this study is a city characterised by intense bribery practices in people's day to day economic, social and political activities. A study steered by the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2017) ranked Abuja as a second city with the highest rate of bribery cases in Nigeria. Similarly, empirical studies have shown that over 90% of individuals and businesses who had contact with public officials experienced bribery practices in Abuja, Nigeria (Elekwachi, 2019; Ogunlana, 2019). This paper was set out to examine the relationship between people's perceived socio-economic benefits derived from bribery practices and the persistence of the practices in Abuja, Nigeria.

## 2. RELATED WORKS

According to TI (2018) bribery occurs when advantages are offered, promised, given, accepted or solicited as an inducement for any action that is illegal and a breach of trust. Accordingly, bribery can be in the form of cash rewards, favours, gifts, donations, tax cuts, speedy services among others.
In the Nigerian context, The Constitution of Nigeria, (1990) (as amended) described bribery practices as "the giving or promising to give of property or benefits on account of any act, omission, favour or disfavour of a public official in carrying out his/her duties or any governmental affairs".

In terms of types of bribery practices, Shahabuddin (2002) separated bribery into two types: lubricants and whitemails. In this regard, lubricants are bribery practices committed by lowly placed public officials in performing their official functions. Whitemails are bribery practices committed by the top echelon politicians and public servants

For Skaskiw (2010) bribery can be divided into four types: (i) offer or favour to influence a person to spend his/her money in a way (bribes to individuals); (ii) offer or favour to influence an employee to spend his/her employers' money in a way (bribes to employees); (iii) offer or favour to a firm to influence its purchase of certain types of items (bribes to businesses) and (iv) offer to a government official to influence him/her to take a certain decision (bribes to public officials). Skaskiw (2010) argues that type i and ii should not be regarded as bribes in

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that there are in the forms of commissions, entitlements, discounts, and rebates among others while type iii and iv are bribery practices.

The TI (2019) categorized bribery into active and passive. Active bribery occurs when an individual offers a bribe to an official of a government or private institution. On the other hand, passive bribery occurs when an official of a government or private institution demands a bribe from an individual.

Few studies were conducted to examine socio-economic benefits associated with bribery practices in different societies. Theories and studies that supports what is known as "grease the wheels" hypothesis posit that bribery practices sometimes served as 'trouble saving devise' which can lead to increased efficiency, investment, productivity, profit and consequently accelerated economic growth and development particularly in developing economies (Leff, 1964; Leys, 1965).

In the same vein, Kim, Weng and Lee (2018) believed that bribery practices in a transition economy makes local (domestic) markets more clement to domestic investors thereby discouraging them to invest abroad. Krammer (2019) also asserts that in emerging economies bribery practices promotes innovations in that new products can be introduced more easily by dealing with difficulties associated with bureaucratic obstacles in these economies. Similarly, Trinh (2019) found that bribery practices can speed up innovation as the practices may facilitate cumbersome processes involved in obtaining officials documents (like licences, business permits among others) required to start an enterprise in emerging and developing countries.

At the level of individuals Rose-Ackerman (2010) argues that in principal bribery transactions are beneficial as the practices may sometimes overcome occurrences of inhumane, unjust or inefficient conditions. For instance, an individual may use bribery to escape an autocratic government or a tyrant ruler. Hunt and Laszlo (2012) posit that people who offer bribes to either public or private officials gets better services, whereas those who refuse to offer bribes gets poor services from the officials. Similarly, Nel (2020) asserts that when ordinary people offer bribes to avoid regressive tax; this may mean increases in the income share of the ordinary people when compared to other income groups, implying reduction of inequality in income distribution.

However, in terms of negative impacts of bribery practices also referred to as "sand the wheels' hypothesis there is large and a growing body of literature on the negative impacts of acts bribery on economies of nations, firms and individuals. It was argued that bribery is detrimental to the socio-economic well-being of the poor. Abbink, Dasgupta, Gangadharan, and Jain (2014) maintained that bribery practices tend to reduce social welfare in that it increases prices of goods and services provided by the government when ordinary people were forced to offer bribes in accessing theses goods and services. Furthermore, bribery serves as a regressive tax that prevents ordinary people from enjoying essential services provided by government institutions.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This section contains the methods used in conducting the study. It includes the sources used in the sampling procedures, source of data, instrument used, constructs and items used and the method of analysis adopted.

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This research paper used multi-stage sampling as the sampling technique for data collection. According to Dudovskiy (2018) multi-stage sampling "is a sampling technique in which the sampling is carried out in several stages such that the sample size gets reduced at each stage. In multi-stage sampling, large clusters of the population are divided into smaller clusters (a small group of people or things that are very close to one another) into several stages in order to make primary data collection more manageable".

Multi-stage sampling was employed because of the heterogeneity (the samples are from different ethnic, religious, states and regions among others) of the targeted population in the study area (Momoh, Opaluwah & Albeera, 2018). Furthermore, Nigerians from all parts of the country have migrated and settled in Abuja as government workers, private sector employees and entrepreneurs among others (Mberu & Pongou, 2010). Thus, the method is expected to reflect the full diversity of the population of the study by allowing the accumulation of large samples.

In this study four stages were used in carrying out the sampling. In the first stage, the city of Abuja was divided into six districts (clusters). The second stage involves the selection of two clusters out of the six districts. The third stage involves the selection of three area councils each from the two clusters selected. This paper uses the six selected areas as its sampling frame. Finally, the last stage was the administering of 1000 questionnaires.

The questionnaires were administered to middle and junior cadre workers in the organized public and private sector as well as self-employed individuals in Abuja, Nigeria. The questions involved all the variables of interest; 'perceived' socio-economic benefits of bribery practices used in measuring the continued occurrences of bribery practices in Nigeria. Six research assistants were recruited and trained in administering the questionnaire. The questions were adopted from similar surveys such as Afrobarometer round 7 the quality of democracy and good governance in Nigeria (2018), TI Global Corruption Barometer (2017), UNODC & NBS (2017), World Values Survey (WVS) (2010-2014) among others for reliability and validity.

The constructs for this study are the subject matters which were measured using the survey questionnaires adopted. The first construct which is the dependent variable is the persistence of bribery activities representing the targets population's views about how common, steadiness and perpetuity of bribery activities are in Nigeria among others in which ten items were coded (PBR1 –PBR10). In terms of the independent variable '(Perceived' socio-economic benefits of bribery practice) seven items were coded (BNF1-BNF7). The coded items are revealed in Table 1.

Table 1 Constructs and Items.

| Constructs | Labels | Items |
|---|---|---|
| Persistence of Bribery Practices | PBR_1 | WSD |
| | PBR_2 | PMT |
| | PBR_3 | CON |
| | PBR_4 | SCO |
| | PBR_5 | MDO |
| | PBR_6 | GVO |
| | PBR_7 | POC |

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | PBR_8 | COO |
| | PBR_9 | JOS |
| | PBR_10 | PRO |
| 'Perceived' Socio-economic Benefits of Bribery | BNF_1 | BPG |
| | BNF_2 | BSW |
| | BNF_3 | BCB |
| | BNF_4 | BAR |
| | BNF_5 | BDI |
| | BNF_6 | BFI |
| | BNF_7 | BEP |

**Note:** Bribery is widespread (PBR1); Bribery has become permanent (PBR2); Bribery has continued to occur (PBR3); Bribery is frequently offered to school officials (PBR4); Bribery is frequently offered to medical officials (PBR5); Bribery is frequently offered to government officials (PBR6); Bribery is frequently offered to police officers (PBR7); Bribery is frequently offered to court officials (PBR8); Bribery is frequently offered in seeking for a job (PBR9); Bribery is the most important problem facing Nigeria (PBR10); Bribery enables people to assess public goods easily in Nigeria (BNF1); Bribery increases the social welfare of people in Nigeria (BNF2); Bribery reduces the cost of doing business in Nigeria (BNF3); Bribery ensures efficient allocation of resources in Nigeria (BNF4); Bribery encourages domestic investment in Nigeria (BNF5); Bribery encourages foreign investment in Nigeria (BNF6); and Demand for bribes by government officials when employing workers allows many people to be recruited in Nigeria (BNF7).

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For empirical analysis, this paper employed multiple linear regression method. The multiple linear regression method is a type of analysis employed to symbolize the association between a dependent variable and two or more independent variables (Wooldridge, 2015). Seven independent variables are used to measure the dependent variable.
Symbolically, the linear regression model is expressed below:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots \beta_k X_k + \varepsilon \qquad [i]$$

**Where:**
**Y = the dependent variable**
**$\beta_0$ = the constant or intercept representing the predicted value of Y for sample with scores of all X's = 0**
**$X_1, X_2, X_3$ ……,$X_k$, = the independent variables**
**$\beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ ……, $\beta_k$ = the parameters associated with the independent variables to be estimated**
**$\varepsilon$ = the error term or disturbance representing other factors than the explanatory variables that may affect the dependent variable.**

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The coefficient of the regression (β) displays in what way the dependent variable varies when an independent variable vary by one unit, holding other independent variables constant in the model.
Applying equation [i] equation [ii] can be obtained below:

$$PBR_i = \beta_{0i} + \beta_1 BPG_i + \beta_2 BSW_i + \beta_3 BCB_i + \beta_4 BAR_i + \beta_5 BDI_i + \beta_6 BFI_i + \beta_7 BEP_i + \varepsilon_i \quad [ii]$$

Where:
$PBR_i$ = *Persistence of Bribery Practices*
$\beta_1 BPG_i$ = *Bribery enables people to assess public goods easily in Nigeria (BNF1)*
$\beta_2 BSW_i$ = *Bribery increases the social welfare of people in Nigeria (BNF2)*
$\beta_3 BCB_i$ = *Bribery reduces the cost of doing business in Nigeria (BNF3)*
$\beta_4 BAR_i$ = *Bribery ensures efficient allocation of resources in Nigeria (BNF4)*
$\beta_5 BDI_i$ = *Bribery encourages domestic investment in Nigeria (BNF5)*
$\beta_6 BFI_i$ = *Bribery encourages foreign investment in Nigeria (BNF6)*
$\beta_7 BEP_i$ = *Demand for bribes by government officials when employing workers allows many people to be recruited in Nigeria (BNF7).*

The results of the estimated coefficients of the effects of the 'independent variables on the dependent variable in Abuja, Nigeria are depicted in table 2. The table depicts the unstandardised coefficients (β), statistical significance (p-values of the constant and independent variables) and t-statistics.

Table 2 Multiple regression model coefficients

| **Variables** | **Unstandardised Coefficeints** | | **t** | **Sig** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **B** | **Std. Error** | | **(p-value)** |
| Constant | 2.030 | .133 | 15.258 | .000*** |
| BPG | .064 | .025 | 2.531 | .012* |
| BSW | .063 | .030 | 2.107 | .035* |
| BCB | .082 | .030 | 2.760 | .006*** |
| BAR | .129 | .036 | 3.584 | .000*** |
| BDI | .031 | .029 | 1.077 | .143 |
| BFI | .038 | .026 | 1.465 | .143 |
| BEP | .048 | .027 | 1.770 | .077* |

**Note:** Persistence of bribery practices (PBR) is the dependent variable. Bribery enables people to assess public goods easily in Nigeria (BPG); Bribery increases the social welfare of people in Nigeria (BSW); Bribery reduces the cost of doing business in Nigeria (BCB); Bribery ensures efficient allocation of resources in Nigeria (BAR); Bribery encourages domestic investment in Nigeria (BDI); Bribery encourages foreign investment in Nigeria (BFI); and Demand for bribes by government officials when employing workers allows many people to be recruited in Nigeria (BEP). The unstandardised coefficient (B) shows how PBR varies with an independent variable when other independent variables are held constant. Standard error (Std error). T-statistics (t) is B divided by Std. Error. Significance level (p-value) *** represents statistical significance at 1%, ** and * represents statistical significance at 10%.

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The test of statistical significance was conducted to ascertain whether the regression model fits the data. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to conduct the test. The ANOVA shows that if an outcome is statistically significant then the data fits the model and vice versa The result of the ANOVA test is depicted in table 3.

Table 3 ANOVA Test

| Model | Sum of Square | DF | Mean Square | F | Sig (p-value) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Regression | 98.593 | 7 | 14.085 | 26.843 | 0.000*** |
| Residual | 432.883 | 825 | 0.525 | | |
| Sum | 531.476 | 832 | | | |

**Source:** Author's computation
**Note:** Residual is the difference between observed value of the result of the dependent variable and projected value. Degree or extent of freedom (DF) involves the parts of data used in assessing the model. The sum of DF indicates the number of ANOVA observations in the model. The Sums of the squares deals with the number of differences in the data attributed to each variable (dependent and independent) in the model. The mean square is related to sums of squares. It is obtained by dividing sums of squares by DF. The F-statistics or F-ratio (F) shows whether the model can fit better in this paper's data or not when compared to a model without the independent variables. The P-value (Sig) *** indicates statistical significance based on 1%. Dependent variable: Persistence of Bribery Practices, Independent: (Constant), Bribery enables people to assess public goods easily in Nigeria (BPG); Bribery increases the social welfare of people in Nigeria (BSW); Bribery reduces the cost of doing business in Nigeria (BCB); Bribery ensures efficient allocation of resources in Nigeria (BAR); Bribery encourages domestic investment in Nigeria (BDI); Bribery encourages foreign investment in Nigeria (BFI); and Demand for bribes by government officials when employing workers allows many people to be recruited in Nigeria (BEP).

In Table 3 above, it can be seen that the regression model is overall statistically significant. This is because the table shows that the value of the F is 26.843, this corresponds with the p-value of 0.000. This outcome is an indication that the independent variables statistically significantly predict the depend variable. Thus, the model fits the data used in this paper.

In terms of the relationship BPG and PBR, table 2 depicts that the value of BPG is positive (unstardardised coefficient 0.064). This shows that BPG influences the dependent variable in Abuja, Nigeria. In the same vein, the 0.064 shows that the respondents agreeing on BPG to determine the dependent variable increases by 6.4% keeping other independent variables in the model constant. The relationship between PBR and BPG is positive in the model. The value of the p further shows BPG is statistically significant (0.012). The of BPG result is in line with the finding of a study that found that individuals who offer bribes are usually included in assessing public goods provided by the government (Fang., Perc., & Xu 2020).

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Similarly, table 2 above depicts that the value of BSW is positive (unstandardised coefficient 0.063). This means that the respondent's perception on the BSW to determine PBR increases by 6.3% on the assumption that the other independent variables used in the model are kept constant. The coefficient (0.063) reveals that there is positive relationship between BSW and PBR. This outcome supports the findings of several studies. For instance, Nel (2020) found that in countries with poor institutional qualities, acts of bribery can increase poor peoples' relative share of income by at least 40%, Similarly, Guerra & Zhuravleva (2021) found that bribing a corrupt government official is a means of enhancing the overall welfare of individuals in countries prone to bribery practices.
In case of the relationship between BCB and the dependent variable, table2 also shows that BCB's unstandardised coefficient of 0.082 is positive, this is an indication that the respondents agreed that BCB influences the dependent variable. In the same vein, 0.082 show that the respondent's probability of agreeing on the influence of BCB on the dependent variable increases by 8.2% keeping all other independent variables in the model constant. Accordingly, the result suggests that the relationship between BCB and the dependent variable is positive. Similarly, statistical of BCB is achieved at the p-value of 0.006. This outcome is in contrast to the findings of some studies who found that cost of doing business is negatively related to act of bribery practices ((see Graham & Stroup, 2016; Kim, Rees & Sila, 2020).

A look at Table 2 reveals that the BAR's unstandardised coefficient (0.129) is positive. The 0.129 recorded is an indication that a one unit increase in BAR, keeping the other independent variables constant, the chance of a participant in this study to agree on the occurrence of the dependent variable increases by 2.9%. it is also worthy to note that BAR is statistically a significant variable in predicting the dependent in the study area and the most influencing variable in the model. This outcome agrees with the result of research conducted by Dikmen and Çiçek (2023) who found that allocation of resources via government procurement processes has been responsible for unprecedented bribery practices especially in developing countries.

Contrary to BAR, table 2 above shows that BDI's p-value (0.143) is statistically insignificant. This implies that the BAR variable weakly influences perception on the dependent in Nigeria. Table further illustrates that BDI's unstandardised coefficient (0.031) is positive. This indicates that holding other independent variables constant, agreeing on the influence of BDI on the dependent variable increases by 3.1%. This result confirms the findings of a number of studies who reveals that bribery practices discourage domestic investment in countries where the practices are pervasive and prevalent (see Houqe, Zahir-ul-Hassan, Idrus & van Zijl, 2020; Wang, Zhao & Chen, 2020).

Similarly, table 2 shows that BFI's unstandardised coefficient (0.038) is positive; but statistically insignificant (0.143). The value indicates that the likelihood of agreeing on the influence of BFI on dependent variable increases by 3.8% when the other explanatory variables in the model are kept constant. The statistically insignificant outcome of BFI is an indication that the variable has little influence in perceiving the dependent variable in Nigeria. The result of the computation for BFI validates the studies of Yi, Teng & Meng (2018) and Teichmann

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(2019) who found that the inflow of foreign investment has remained low in countries with rate of bribery practices and other economic and financial crimes.

Finally, table 2 also captures the BEP's. computed unstardardised coefficient. The table depicts that BEP also had a positive coefficient (-0.048); implying there is a positive relationship between BEP and perception on the dependent variable in Abuja, Nigeria. Furthermore, table 2 shows that when other independent variables in the model are kept constant, perception on the influence of BEP on the dependent variable increases by 4.8%. Similarly, BEP is statistically significant (0.077) at 10% implying that BEP strongly influences the dependent variable. This outcome agrees with the finding of Weaver (2020) who found that some job seekers offer bribes when seeking for employment opportunities particularly in developing countries.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This paper attempted to examine whether socio-economic benefits people attached to bribery practices is responsible for the continuous occurrences of the practices in Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling method was employed to identify the targeted population in the study area. A multiple regression method was used to analyze the data generated from 836 valid responses in SPSS version 2.5. Furthermore, the method was used to empirically validate the outcomes of the estimated results in this paper. Five items used to measure 'perceived' socio-economic benefits of bribery practices statistically influence persistence of bribery practices in the study area.

In accordance with outcome of this paper, it is recommended that there should be a re-evaluation of national policies aimed at sensitizing Nigerians to change their attitudes towards bribery practices. This will require mass education and awareness campaigns against the practices.

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