

The Danger of a Single War: Anti-Corruption Crusade of President Muhammadu Buhari in the Court of Public Opinion

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Abstract

The study examined public perception of anti-corruption crusade of President Muhammadu Buhari. The study was anchored on the self-perception theory propounded by Daryl Bem in 1972. Survey method was used for the study. The population of this study focused on respondents from South-South states of the country, which was projected in 2017 to be 39, 615 228. Using Australian Calculator, the researchers arrived at a sample size of 385. The sampling procedures that was used in this study were cluster, non-proportionate and purposive sampling techniques. Questionnaire was used as instrument of data collection. Findings revealed that over 80% of the respondents were aware of the anti-corruption war of President Buhari. It was also revealed that 60% of the respondents in South-South states were knowledgeable about the anti-corruption crusade of President Buhari. Findings further revealed that 55.7% of the respondents in South-South states were of the perception that the anti-corruption crusade of President Buhari is not satisfactory. It is recommended that government should be more objective, open minded, transparent and proactive in the anti-corruption crusade as a way of winning the sympathy of the people.

Keywords: .Anti-corruption .EFCC .Perception .Selective judgement

Introduction

When David Cameron, the British Prime Minister, in his discussion with the Queen of England on Tuesday May 10th, 2016, described Nigeria and Afghanistan as the fantastically corrupt countries of the world (CNN, 2016). It came as a surprise to many Nigerians. The statement became worrisome because Transparency International has already ranked Nigeria as the 36th corrupt country in the world, meaning that there were about 35 corrupt countries ahead of Nigeria (TVC News Nigeria, 2016). To worsen the whole scenario, President Muhammadu Buhari stated that he needs no apology from the British Prime Minister. Rather, he is interested in collecting looted funds from the British Government (TVC News Nigeria, 2016). These mixed opinion and perception of the people call for serious attention, the reason being that ever since the administration of President Buhari took over power, it has focused all its strength in the fight against corruption.

There are indices to show that corruption has become an endemic issue in Nigeria, which has virtually paralysed the social, political and economic life of the nation. A look at the index of corruption in the country will reveal the seriousness of the matter. In 2011, Nigeria was ranked 143rd most corrupt country out of 183 countries. In 2012, Nigeria was rated 139th out of 178 countries and in 2013, Nigeria was placed at the 144th position out of 177 countries. In the last report, Nigeria was rated 130 out of 174 countries (Otinuga, 2016). Little wonder the crusade against it remains the scorecard with which Nigerians and the international community measure the performance of any administration.

It is however a cheering news that the present administration under the leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari has launched a renewed campaign against corruption. Since the election and inauguration of President Buhari, he has made it clear that the fight against corruption will be the priority of his government. Secondly, the Buhari administration has set up a Presidential Committee on anti-corruption headed by renowned legal icon, Professor Itse Sagay. The mandate of the committee include among other things, to formulate a strategy and co-ordinate the anti-corruption war of the administration ensuring that all sectors of the Nigerian society are involved in the fight (Otunuga, 2016).

Several regimes, especially under this democratic dispensation, have made efforts to fight corruption, but it has remained widespread. In most cases, the way and manner the crusade is carried out becomes a thing of concern for the general public. Some see the crusade as a "select and strike approach", "fight against opposition members" and/or "a welcome development". These diverse opinions have remained issues in the anti-graft crusade. Hence, the researcher examined public perception of the anti-corruption crusade of President Muhammadu Buhari's administration which started in May 2015.

Statement of the Problem

Not minding the fact that successive governments in power have tried to curb the issue of corruption, the menace still remains in the system. The regime of President Muhammadu Buhari came with the slogan fighting corruption. However, the approach has been questioned by the general public, leading to diverse opinion and perception about the anti-graft crusade. Could it be that something is wrong with the approach or that the public is not properly informed or carried along? Hence, the need to examine peoples' perception of anti-corruption crusade of President Muhammadu Buhari.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the extent of public awareness of the anti-corruption crusade of President Muhammadu Buhari?
2. What is the level of public knowledge about the anti-corruption campaign?
3. What are the sources of public knowledge about the anti-graft crusade?
4. What is the perception of the public about the anti-corruption crusade?

Research Hypothesis

H₀: The level of knowledge of the anti-corruption campaign is not dependent on the respondent's level of awareness of the anti-corruption campaign of President Muhammadu Buhari.

Literature Review

Nigeria and the Anti-Corruption Crusade

Corruption has many faces and meanings. It could also be the same wine in different bottles. The word corruption sounds light on our tongues, but it has bedeviled and truncated our beloved Nigeria. Over the years, this torment has found solace in our minds and our country Nigeria. As a result, so many patriots and servicemen have suffered a great defeat in the hands of corruption (Gin, 2016).

Corruption is undoubtedly one of the greatest challenges in Nigeria. It is a challenge that is not only leading to impoverishment and loss of lives, but also threatening the stability of the country. The fight against corruption in the public sector came to limelight in 1966 when the military identified corruption by politicians as one of the reasons for taking over from the then civilian government. Since then successive governments have been waging war against the menace (Otunuga, 2016).

Before the present administration, preceding administrations in Nigeria had successively instituted legal instruments, measures and policies designed to combat corruption in the country. According to Enweremadu (2012), during the administration of former President Olusegun Obasanjo in May 29, 1999, corruption campaign was pursued through different methods and directed at achieving a number of objectives, three of which are most perceptible.

The first was to bring about a sharp drop in the incidence of corruption, through the speedy arrest and prosecution of corrupt public officials. This was to be achieved through the establishment of new anti-corruption agencies, the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), inaugurated in 2000 and 2003 respectively. Previous experience has shown that such institutions, which have produced relative successes in some countries, were not easily adaptable to Africa – never mind to Nigeria specifically, where the necessary administrative capacity (adequate funds, quality manpower, strong laws, and efficient judicial systems) and strong political support are often lacking, and prevailing political logic tends to favour the abuse of office and misappropriation of public resources.

The second objective was to reduce or remove incentives for corruption among public officials, via a comprehensive reform of the public sector (including the judiciary). Specifically, the reforms aimed at the following: eliminating monopoly, by privatisation and deregulation; reducing discretion, by the streamlining of functions and reinforcement of controls; and removing administrative opacity, by the increasing of transparency and accountability, particularly in public revenue collection and expenditure.

The third objective was to redress some of the worst consequences of past corruption on the economy and improve the financial health of the nation. This goal was to be achieved through the identification of some of the offshore bank accounts and assets – landed properties, companies, shares, and so on – owned by corrupt Nigerians and ensure they were duly confiscated and the proceeds repatriated. These remedial measures did not achieve the desired results to prohibit and prescribe punishment for corrupt practices. The Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act 2000 was the first to be passed into law by the Obasanjo Presidency, while the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) were inaugurated on the 29th of September 2000. There is also, the Economic and Financial Crimes (Uniamikogbo, 2007).

Unfortunately, certain factors have continued to undermine the effectiveness and integrity of the anti-corruption crusade. One of these is the use of the anti-graft agencies to witch hunt perceived oppositions to government in power. This was the case between 1999 and 2007. Also, the agencies were underfunded, thereby making it rather difficult for them to effectively prosecute those accused of graft. These factors were more pronounced during the tenure of the immediate past administration. Above all, interference from the powers that be in the corridors of power as well as the issue of immunity clause hampered the operation of the agencies significantly. This was because, for example, the immunity clause made it impossible for ICPC and EFCC to take on serving governors even when the agencies have evidence against them (Otunuga, 2016).

When President Buhari took over the mantle of leadership on May 29, 2015, he vowed to combat corruption in Nigeria no matter whose ox is gored. He started the anti-corruption campaign by arresting Col. Dasuki (rtd), the then National Security Adviser of President Jonathan. Dasuki's accomplices that are of the opposition party, People's Democratic Party (PDP) and those in the military were arrested and charged to court by Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) over the massive scam in weapons and defence procurements that led to the misuse of three trillion naira defence budget since 2011, under the guise of fighting the notorious Boko Haram menace.

The fight against corruption and impunity by President Buhari's administration has also attracted the goodwill of the international community. At the meeting of the G7, President Buhari pleaded with the leaders of global capitalism to collaborate with Nigeria

in fighting terrorism and in fixing her comatose economy while it requested the Obama administration to assist in the repatriation of about 150 billion dollars allegedly looted from the public treasury in the last decade (Otonuga, 2016).

However, some critics of Buhari's anti-corruption war have accused him of not being sincere and holistic in the fight against corruption as virtually all the people and corporate organizations investigated are all of the opposition party -PDP, and his perceived enemies. These people are of the opinion that the President has no moral prestige to fight corruption. Cases like Buhari as Minister of Petroleum, Buhari as a petroleum TET fund chairman, Buhari's certificate forgery, President Buhari harbouring corrupt Ministers in his cabinet were cited to buttress their point (Elemanya & Onya, 2016).

The essence of paying the police and the citizenry intensely for their services is not due to the tremendous wealth a country has, but because of the realization of the destructive potentials of corruption to any society. Developed countries in the world live up to their expectation because they know too well that fighting corruption amidst poverty is a farce, and will not elicit the support and compliance of the people. As a matter of fact, human nature being what it is, an anti-crusade cannot succeed under conditions of impoverishment. Unemployment will readily be construed as oppression and tyranny despite the fact that it is being implemented for the good of the society and people (Gin, 2016).

For far too long, Nigeria had been under the griping claws of corruption and, consequently, the prevailing political situation in the country had constituted an unpleasant jam jar and reached a proportion that Nigerians were beginning to lose hope in the country's political leadership. Corruption has long been the bane of socio-economic cum infrastructural development in Nigeria. It can also be rightly said that corruption is so pervasive in Nigeria because of a culture of poor wages, absence of effective policy that softens the effect of poverty, weak government institutions and absence of key anti-corruption legislations (Ishiaku, 2015).

The Nigerian government has much thinking and acting to do, on its own part. If its proposed anti-corruption crusade will succeed. Most at times, some argue that Nigeria multi-ethnicity will not let an anti-corruption crusade thrive. This line of thought holds water only to the extent that government either consciously or by omission, as in the past, continues to perpetuate ethnic sentiments through its actions. To surmount the ethnic problem, government may not need to do more than give every section and nationality in Nigeria a sense of belonging in the nation-state. Ethnic sentiments are fueled by inequity in the sharing of the national wealth. Thus, jobs, political appointments, budgetary allocations, in fact, everything that comes from the center to the states and to the states and regions. In the midst of plenty, nobody remembers tribe. People will only support the crusade for a better Nigeria, a corruption-free Nigeria if they believe in Nigeria. (Gin, 2016).

Agenda for Buhari Anti-corruption Crusade

When the last administration of President Goodluck Jonathan came up with the economic jargon of re-basement which catapulted the Nigerian economy to the leading economy in Africa, we forgot to ask if corruption was also factored in as an economic index before they arrived at the alarming statistics that overnight changed the course of the economic prosperity. In the estimation of Nigerians, the Jonathan government was very guilty of corruption and the statement by the erstwhile president that his administration did not believe that jailing people would end corruption did not also help matters (Ishiaku, 2015). However, the new administration of President Muhammadu Buhari needs to understand that modern corruption has gone scientific, requiring scientific and institutional approaches in curbing it; there are many angles or dimensions to corruption. There are "political or government corruption", "electoral corruption", "legislated corruption", "economic or financial corruption" and "civil corruption". In all, it is shocking and

alarming that those shouting “anti corruption” in Nigeria’s public offices as presently constituted are either do not understand its fundamental meaning or have chosen to use it to deceive and mislead Nigerians for the purpose of achieving cheap popularity and obtaining mechanical legitimacy (Ishiaku, 2015).

Freedom from corruption or fight against corruption connotes impeccability of character, sound morality and cleanest mindset. It is therefore important that the Buhari government should avoid corrupting its anti-corruption agencies and go to equity with clean hands. That is to say that President Muhammadu Buhari must live by firm example by not only being clean, but also seen to be clean. It is no doubt cheering news that the new administration of President Muhammadu Buhari has launched a renewed campaign against corruption. It is also cheering news that, there appears to be a kind of attitudinal reset in every government institution on the seriousness of the anti-corruption crusade (Ishiaku, 2015).

Empirical Review

In a study by Rotimi, E. and Obasaju, B. (2013) titled analysis of corruption and economic growth in Nigeria reviewed the causes and effects of corruption, without leaving out the dynamics of corruption. Also, the study looked at the relationship between corruption and the Nigerian economic growth. The researchers used the ordinary least squares (OLS) to determine the relationship between corruption and economy growth. The study applied the granger causality method to measure the causal relationship that exists between corruption and the gross domestic product (GDP). The study revealed that corruption impairs and impacts economic growth. The researchers therefore recommended that Public anti-corruption initiatives and Public education campaign/programmes should be strengthened and motivated in to address the cause of corruption rather than its effects.

In another related study carried out by Enor, Chime and Ekpo (2016) titled *The Irony of Nigeria’s Fight against Corruption: An Appraisal of President Muhammadu Buhari’s first eight months in office*, which sought to appraise Nigeria’s strategy in the fight against corruption under President Muhammadu Buhari’s first eight months in office. The researchers used the interview and library research method in collecting data. The researchers concluded that Muhammadu Buhari envisaging the persistent escalation of corruption traits in public offices won the 2015 presidential election pools owing to his firm anti-corruption stands and inclinations to fight it to a standstill. However, he, in his first eight months just like every other Nigerian leader has failed to tackle the issue of corruption but its manifestation. The researchers therefore recommended that corruption can be reduced to its barest minimum if modalities are put in place to prevent and deter the manifestations of corruption rather than fight it.

Another study carried out by Ugoani, J. (2016) titled *political will and anticorruption crusade management in Nigeria* which sought to explore the relevance of political will in anticorruption crusade management in Nigeria, using exploratory research design. The researchers recommended that there should be a demonstration of credible intent by political leaders, stakeholders groups to attack perceived causes or effects of corruption at a systemic level.

Elemanya V. and Onya R. (2016) titled *analysis of President Buhari’s anti-Corruption Policy: a reality or an illusion?* Analysed Buhari’s anti corruption policy. The researchers found out that Buhari’s fight against corruption should be holistic and transparent and recommended that the Nigerian populace and indeed the electorates that voted for change of Buhari’s government must assist the government and challenge it if need be, to fight corruption as promised, during his electioneering campaign and his inaugural speech.

In a study conducted by Sheriff Folarin in 2014 titled “*Corruption, Politics and Governance in Nigeria*”, which sought to examine how corruption affects the political

climate of the country, identified some of the weaknesses of the anti-corruption crusade, with the devastating effects on nation-building. The study concluded that "the dangerous consequences of corruption for the nation make it imperative that the anti-corruption war should be intense and backed by new and systematic strategies" (Folarin, 2014:22). The researcher recommended that "anti-corruption agencies should no longer be under the control of the executive arm of government, rather they should be independent of political corruption. Such agencies should rather be controlled and answerable to the judiciary, particularly the Supreme Court, which is often independent of the Presidency or Executive. Also, the anti-corruption agencies should be headed by a judge of the Supreme Court who has a track record of forthrightness and fearlessness" (Folarin, 2014:22).

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Self-perception theory propounded by Daryl Bem in 1972. It is enshrined in the idea that the perception of the people about a particular issue influences their attitude and behaviour. It applies the concept of sensory perception to politics or political activities, just as sensory perception relates to how humans perceive and process sensory stimuli through their five senses (Onyebuchi, 2013).

The major thrust of this theory relates to "how individuals form opinions about issues and the merchandise they offer through the behaviour they display" (Blank, 2012,p.1). Similarly, Flamand (2011) noted that perception theory is any attempt to understand how people's perception of issues influences their behaviour. Those who study perception try to understand why people make the decisions they do, and how to influence these decisions. Usually, perception theory is used by marketers when designing a campaign for a product or brand" (Onyebuchi, 2013).

This theory is related to the study under review because it helps explain how people form their opinion about issues and how such opinions affect their behaviour as experienced in the fight against corruption.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design for this study is the survey research design. Hence, the survey method enabled the researchers to generate data regarding the opinion of the people on the anti-corruption crusade of President Muhammadu Buhari.

Population of the Study

The population of this study focused on respondents from South-South states of the country. The population figure of the people in South-South, Nigeria, according to the 2006 population census, is 21, 014, 655 (NPC, 2006). However, the projected population figure was used. The figure for the projected population is 39, 615 228.

Sample Size

To determine the sample size of this study, therefore, the Australian Calculator was used. With a confidence interval of 0.05 and a proportion or estimate of variance (confidence level) of .5, the population of 39, 615 228 produced a basic sample size is 385.

Sampling Techniques

The sampling procedure that was used in this study is the cluster, non proportionate and purposive sampling techniques which allow for the subdivision of south-south zone into states that make up the region, and selection of respondents based on the need of the study. For this reason, two local governments were selected from the state capitals of each of the states that make up south-south geo-political zone. In all, the local governments used for this study were twelve (12). The sample size of 385 was non-

proportionately divided by the twelve (12) local governments ($385 \div 12 = 32$), meaning that 32 copies of the questionnaire were given to each of the twelve local governments. Respondents from these local governments were purposively selected for the study.

Data Presentation and Analysis

In this chapter, data collected from the field were presented and analysed. The analyses were based on the returned and usable 336 copies of the questionnaire which amounted to 87% return rate and a loss of 13%. The data were presented in tables, frequencies and numbers.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: What is the extent of public awareness of the anti-corruption crusade of President Muhammadu Buhari?

The finding of this study in relation to research question one indicates that 81% of the respondents in South-South states were aware of the anti-corruption crusade championed by the administration of President Buhari. This is to say that the awareness of the anti-corruption drive is spread across the length and breadth of South-South geo-political zone. This finding as presented reveals that 81% of the respondents were, to a large extent, aware of the anti-corruption crusade of the President at a respondent quotient of 271. This is in contrast with the 6.7% of the respondents who had low awareness of the fight against corruption; although, 12% of the respondents are moderately aware of the anti-graft war in the country.

Research Question Two: What is the level of public knowledge about the anti-corruption campaign?

Data collected and analysed in respect to the knowledge level of the people on the anti-corruption crusade revealed that 60% of the respondents in South-South states were knowledgeable about the anti-corruption crusade of President Buhari. This indicates an above average knowledge level of the respondents. As presented in table 2 of the study, 153 respondents indicating 45.5% of the population have high knowledge of the anti-corruption crusade of the President. When this percentage is added to those with very high (49, 14.5%) knowledge of the campaign, it will amount to 60% of the respondents with reasonable knowledge of the crusade.

Research Question Three: What are the sources of public knowledge about the anti-graft crusade?

The findings of this study reveal major sources of information on anti-corruption crusade. However, it indicated that messages from the electronic media (178, 53%) served as the major sources of information on the anti-corruption crusade of President Buhari. This was followed by interaction with friends and neighbour at 18.8%. The data presented in table 3 show that the electronic media and neighbours/friends which amounted to 53% and 18.8% respectively were the most important sources of information on the anti-graft crusade of Mr. President.

Research Question Four: What is the perception of the public about the anti-corruption crusade?

In response to research question four, it was revealed that 55.7% of the respondents in South-South, Nigeria were of the perception that the anti-corruption crusade of President Buhari is not satisfactory, meaning that they appear not to be happy with the way the crusade is been carried out. Data presented show that 187 respondents amounting to 55.7% were not satisfied with the anti-corruption crusade of President Buhari. This is

against the 43.5% of the respondents who said they were satisfied with the anti-corruption crusade. This satisfaction falls within the category of very satisfactory and satisfactory.

The finding of this study is closely related to that of Sheriff Folarin in 2014 titled "Corruption, Politics and Governance in Nigeria", which expressed strong dissatisfaction with the execution of the anti-corruption crusade. Sherriff identified some of the weaknesses of the anti-corruption crusade, with the devastating effects on nation-building and concluded that "the dangerous consequences of corruption for the nation make it imperative that the anti-corruption war should be intense and backed by new and systematic strategies" (Folarin, 2014, p.22).

The perception theory also contributes to our understanding of how people build their opinion and how that opinion influences behaviour. It points to the fact that perception theory is any attempt to understand how people's perception of issues influences their behaviour (Flamand, 2011). This goes a long way to expose the length at which most Nigerian seemed not to be happy with the execution of the anti-corruption war.

Summary of Findings

This section summarizes the research findings presented and analyzed according to the questions that guided the study.

Research question one which sought to find out the extent to which the public were aware of the anti-corruption crusade of President Muhammadu Buhari, revealed that over 80% of the respondents were aware of the anti-corruption war of President Buhari.

Research question two, on the other hand, looks at the level of knowledge of the people about the anti-corruption crusade. Here, it was revealed that 60% of the respondents in South-South states were knowledgeable about the anti-corruption crusade of President Buhari.

Research question three examined that the sources of their knowledge of the anti-graft crusade. The findings revealed that messages from the electronic media (178, 53%) served as the major sources of information on the anti-corruption crusade of President Buhari.

Research question four sought to ascertain the perception of the people about the anti-corruption crusade. The findings indicated that 55.7% of the respondents in South-South states were of the perception that the anti-corruption crusade of President Buhari is not satisfactory.

Conclusions

From the findings of the study, it is safe to conclude that the awareness on the anti-corruption crusade of Mr. President has gained grounds in South-South, Nigeria. This, no doubt, is the reason for the impressive 60% knowledge of the crusade among the people. For which 55.5% of the respondents are not satisfied with the corruption drive so far. This raises a big question on the drive itself and the way it is being approached.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the researchers made the following recommendations:

The public needs to predispose themselves to the acquisition of knowledge on the anticorruption drive of President Buhari. This is because 60% knowledge might not be enough to appreciate the effort of this administration in fighting corruption.

On the aspect of the sources of information, it is recommended that people should use their new media gadgets to source for more information regarding the anti-corruption drive. This will no doubt improve the knowledge of the people on the approach and strategies taken to curb corruption in the country.

Finally, it is recommended that government should be more objective, open minded, transparent and proactive in the anti-corruption crusade as a way of winning the sympathy of the people. Also institutions and channels for prosecuting cases should be allowed to work. This will help the government in gaining public trust in their zero corruption campaign.

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