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Governance Factors and Mismanagement of Public Project Funds in Ondo State, Nigeria

¹Adedeji, D. B, ²Lawal, A. F and ³Simon, O. O

^{1&2}Department of Project Management, Federal University of Technology, Akure. Ondo State. Nigeria; ³Department of Economics, Federal University of Technology, Akure. Ondo State. Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This paper evaluates the governance factors that contribute to the mismanagement of public project funds in Nigeria. Governance factors are variables that influence the effective usage of project fund to achieve project delivery while Public projects relate to works done by the government to satisfy public interests. The target population for this study were the public sectors in Ondo State which comprises the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) with the total number of seventy-four (74) establishments in the state. Primary and secondary data were collected. Multiple regression analysis was used to analyse the effects of corruption, rule of law, bureaucracy and accountability as proxies for governance factors on public project delivery. Findings reveals that Public projects' execution is fettered with different types of corrupt practices such as bribery, favour to favour, nepotism, percentage sharing and contract inflation in the study area, weaknesses and lapses were observed in bureaucracy, accountability and due process. Therefore, the study suggest among others, that there should be a political will to redress corruption dilemma, tightens accountability, due process and bureaucratic control in project environment.

Keywords: Evaluation, Governance factors, MDAs, Mismanagement, Public project funds

*Correspondence to Author:

Dr. A. F. Lawal

Dept of Project Management Technology. Federal University of Technology. FUTA. Akure. Ondo State. Nigeria.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Public projects relate to works done by the government to satisfy public interests. They usually include road construction and repairs, public building construction, schools as well as public parks. These developmental projects require a huge amount of finance that needs to be well managed and accounted for, in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the project. Globally, pure public projects have garnered a reputation for being poorly managed, leading to cost and time overruns as well as long-term technical problems (Hobson, 1999). Also, Nwachucku and Emoh (2011) confirm that financing construction projects is a great challenge in developing countries, and has left most of the infrastructure in an undesirable state

Public Financial Management (PFM) is an important tool that helps the public sector to take care of every financial issue in a systematic, efficient, and transparent and legitimate way (Graham, 2011). It can be conceptually referred to as the managerial activity that is concerned with the planning and controlling of a nation's financial resources. PFM is the hub that affects the way the spending of a nation, both on capital and recurrent expenditure (Ogunjiuba and Okafor, 2013). A lot of efforts have been made on the part of governments of various nations (both state and local) at one point in time or the other, to satisfy the burgeoning needs of the society through the execution of various projects. The outcome of these projects most times, has not been encouraging in meeting the actual needs of the society, due to mismanagement of funds allocated for such projects (Obadan, 2012). Mismanagement is not limited to corruption alone; there are many other governance factors that contribute to mismanagement of public project fund thereby distorting the purpose of the project. However, Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA, 2010) opines that public financial management is absolutely

needed to improve the quality of public service outcomes. Thus, the need for managing the finance of public projects to promote efficient and effective performance, value for money, good service delivery and ultimately, economic development cannot be overemphasized.

In Nigeria sourcing for project funds has never been a problem to government at all levels and Ondo State in particular in time past, but the effective management of the available funds to achieve the desired objectives always constitutes insurmountable problems. Consequently, there are lots of poor quality of projects delivered, cost overruns and inflation on projects, continuous monumental waste of resources, and partial or complete abandonment of such projects and loss of lives, among others. Although, the success of any project implementation process in the construction industry in both public and private sectors depends largely on the project managers, conceptualization of staff, appointments and control, strict monitoring of the cost, materials, quality and environmental constraints. Nevertheless, these capabilities are not enough; the effective management of finance and good accountability on the part of the initiators of such projects, as well as the executors of the projects, most especially in the public sectors are very important for effective public project delivery. Lack of sound financial management, bureaucracy and lack of rule of law on how infrastructural projects should be handled could also cause mismanagement of public project fund and setback to the development of infrastructure in any nation. Thus, there is need for the application of sound public financial management that will aid governance factors in the development of public infrastructure.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Issues on Governance System

Projects are the cutting edge of development all over the world, and for any nation or state to

develop, there is the need for the efficient execution of public projects. Black (2013) defines public project as any project that is funded by a government, and is meant to be owned and operated by that government for the benefit of the society. These include projects such as road construction and repairs, public buildings, schools, and even public parks. The World Bank cited in Adler (1987) describes public projects as a set of interrelated expenditure, actions, and policies designed to achieve a country's specific objectives for economic and social development.. Again, public projects are considered to be 'engines of growth and glued to economic development' as opined by Rao (2003). Hence, for any nation or state to progress economically, there is the need for the provision of public infrastructure.

Public Financial Management (PFM) refers to the procedures, established by law or regulation, for the management of public money through the budget process, which includes formulation, execution, reporting and analysis (Potter and Diamond, 1999). Similarly, Mear and Flynn (2011) assert that globally, what people are being held to account for is changing, politicians and the public want to know how well resources have been spent, whether it has been used efficiently and whether it has achieved the purposes for which it was allocated. Accordingly, Ogujiuba and Okafor (2013) opine that Nigeria has, over the years been scored low by the Corruption Perception Index of the Transparency Initiative, based on the weak and poor manner in which public policies are implemented. Budgets are in most cases, not properly executed and contracts are often times awarded in a manner that violates Procurement Acts, while public funds are misappropriated there is an increasing level of abandoned capital projects across the country. Mear and Flynn (2011) posit that services are increasingly contracted out to commercial companies, to NGOs or to communities, rather than being provided directly by public employees due to

poor management and lack of accountability to the public. Most of the challenges that our country is facing today in the area of public project delivery is as a result of lack of proper accountability. Accountability is all about being answerable to those who have invested their trust, faith, and resources to you. Ola and Effiong (1999) Okechukwu (2007) refer to it as the ability to furnish satisfactory analyses and explanation of one's actions in the process of discharging one's responsibilities at all levels, whether technical, administrative, political, financial, or otherwise. However, Omopariola (2002) opines that there is the unserious attitude of the Nigerian public administration to probity, accountability and transparency.

The government of President Olusegun Obasanjo believed that without probity in public life, the ultimate aim of providing for the happiness and welfare of the citizenry will be an illusion. It is in the light of the above that the government embarked on a number of public sector reform programmes aimed at blocking leakages of all sorts in public sector service delivery. The official instrument designed to achieve this much desired honesty, transparency and accountability in the conduct of government business especially in the award of contracts and procurement in the ministries, parastatals and departments in Nigeria, is the introduction of the Due Process Policy. Due Process is a mechanism that certifies for public funding, only those projects that have passed the test of proper implementation packaging and that adhere stringently to the international competitive bid approach in the award process (Obasanjo, 2003).

Corruption is a major factor that wars against Public Financial Management and PPA in Nigeria construction and infrastructure projects are consistently rated as the most corrupt worldwide. (Asobie, 1991; Oyedele, 2013 and Egbu, 2015). Corruption generally refers to the abuse of public office for private benefits. In accounting terms, it has been described as any

form of irregularity or distortion in financial records for any purpose. Corruption has been the primary reason behind the country difficulties in developing fast (ICPC, 2006). However, Ibietan (2013) affirms that the Nigerian penal (code) system or sanctions for weighty crimes such as corruption are weak and serve no deterrence to actual and potential offenders. Furthermore, Lipsky (2010) opines that public officials are given bureaucratic discretion which is the ability to decide how policies should be implemented, but if this power is abused, it can lead to corruption. The public bureaucracy has a significant role to play in the administration of government; it ensures that the delivery of goods and services are evenly distributed to ensure equity. However, a corrupt bureaucracy can lead to a decrease in the quality of goods and services being provided by the government (Okotoni, 2001).

2.2 Theoretical issues on Governance System

Relevant authors on institutional theory such as (Kraft's Public Policy, 2007), (Scott, 2004), Scott (1995), DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and Meyer and Rowan (1977) assert that, for an organisations to survive, it must conform to the rules and belief systems prevailing in the environment, because institutional isomorphism, both structural and procedural, will earn the organisation legitimacy. A country's institutions - both formal and informal, have a decisive influence on budgetary outcomes at three levels which are aggregate fiscal discipline, allocation of resources and efficient and effective use of resources in the implementation of strategic priorities. However, if the institutional arrangements (the rules of the game), both formal and informal are not supportive or demanding of good performance, the results will not be sustainable on the ground. Mills (2012) referred to corruption as evidence of institutional failure and this had been gathered from several studies that poor

institutional governance has been the bane of proper management.

Principal-Agent Theory

It has already been argued that a chain of principal-agent relationships characterizes PEM systems, which in turn raises the potential for agency problems. In the words of Tanzi (2000), "between their creation and their final implementation, fiscal decisions go through many stages at which mistakes, indifference, passive resistance, implicit opposition, and various forms of principal-agent problems may distort the final outcome. This study tends to examine some of the agency problems that can jeopardise the actual performance of the task, that is, project outcome, and as well affect economic development. It tends to evaluate the various asymmetric information and interest divergence factors termed as exogenous and nitrogenous financial factors

2.3 Empirical survey on Governance System

Okekeocha (2013) points out that one of the causes of corruption in Nigeria is the lack of strong government agencies to enforce laws and rules as sternly as they need to. This creates an opportunity for public officials to embezzle funds without fear of repercussion or punishment. The study concluded that Nigeria is degenerating into a society without a discernible legalistic framework for law enforcement agencies or judicial system. In addition, Onuorah and Appiah (2012) on "accountability and public sector financial management in Nigeria" examine the management of public funds in terms of how public office holders give accountability report of their stewardship. Data on total federal government revenue and expenditure, state governments' revenue and expenditure were collected from Statistical bulletin from the Central Bank of Nigeria from 1961-2008. The results were analysed using ordinary least square (multiple regressions) and findings reveal that the level of accountability is very

poor in Nigeria because the disclosure of economic, social and political information about government activities are completely non-available or partially available for the citizens to assess the performance of public officers mostly the political office holders.

Also, Adejuwon (2014) on the dilemma of accountability and good governance for improved public service delivery in Nigeria used historical and descriptive research methods and content analysis of previous researchers. The study revealed that the institutional framework put in place by successive government to checkmate corruption only thrived luxuriantly. Similarly, Jacob (2010) on Procurement law in Nigeria: Challenge for attainment of its objectives asserts that the enactment of PPA is a great opportunity for Nigeria to develop as a nation but findings reveal that, the greatest challenge to the Act is the reluctance on the part of the government to embrace in totality the full implementation of the Act. Since 2007, the government has failed to do the first thing that the Act prescribes to be done, to lay a strong foundation for its implementation. This was also corroborated by Omolehinwa and Naiyeju (2015) that the provision of the law requiring the establishment of National Council on Public Procurement (NCP) has not been complied with.

3.0 Methodology

This research design is based on an empirical survey using structured questionnaires to elicit information from the respondents on the perception of clients, consultants, contractors, accountants, financial managers and the public. The target population for this study were the public sectors in Ondo State which comprises the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) with the total number of seventy-four (74) establishments in the state. Primary and secondary data were collected. Principal component analysis was used to analyse the effects of bribery, favour to favour, rule of law,

bureaucracy and accountability on public project outcome.

$$Y = b_0 + b_1F_1 + b_2F_2 + b_3F_3 + b_4F_4 + b_5F_5 + b_6F_6 + \mu$$

Where F_1 = Corruption F_2 = Bureaucracy F_3 = Rule of law F_4 = Accountability F_5 = Sharing

Y = Project outcome β_0 = intercept β_j = coefficient vectors of parameters to be estimated

μ = error term

In the model the dependent variable is coded as Y (project outcome), while independent variables were coded as: bribery (frebribe), favour to favour (fff), rule of law (lrule), bureaucracy (bureac) and accountability (accvalu).

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Factoring Methods for grouping the most Significant Variables

In the explorative factor analysis (EFA), five common factors were extracted. To decide how many factors needed to represent the variables, percentages of total variances explained by each factor were estimated (Eigen values). To ascertain the appropriateness (sampling adequacy) of the data, two appropriate tests including the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were used. KMO ranges from 0 to 1; the closer the measure to 1 the better. For Bartlett's test, a significant result of less than 0.05 is desirable, which is an indication that the matrix is not an identity matrix (i.e. that the variables do relate to one another enough to run a meaningful EFA). From table 4.1. KMO statistics is 0.772, which is nearer to 1.0 than 0.5 and it is very close to the meritorious benchmark showing that the data is adequate and well-suited for factor analysis. Bartlett's test also is highly significant with favourable value of 1077.87 and significant value well below the threshold (< 0.05). It then seems justified to conduct a factor analysis based on the data set.

Table 4.1. KMO and Bartlett's Test for Validity of Data

| | | |
|--|--------------------|----------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. | | .772 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 1077.866 |
| | Df | 136 |
| | Sig. | .000 |

Source: Field Survey, 2015

4.2. Communalities for Correlation of Variables

Communality is the extent to which an item correlates with all other items. This is shown in table 4.2. Higher communalities are better, as

a very low value (between 0 and 0.4) may struggle to load significantly on any factor. The result shows that no variable has a value below 0.4 threshold indicating that all of them fit appropriately for the analysis.

Table 4.2: Communalities for Correlation of Variables

| Code | Initial | Extraction |
|--|--|------------|
| ADUPRO | Due process adherence | .741 |
| LADUPRO | Due process adherence level | .705 |
| TRDUPRO | Due process transparency | .600 |
| OBFS | Feasibility study observance | .523 |
| AFMG | Financial management guideline adherence | .532 |
| RRME | Regular reporting measures | .647 |
| OIEXPA | Independent expert advice | .593 |
| ACCVALU | Accountability value | .559 |
| SMACC | Accountability measuring instrument | .813 |
| LACCVALU | Accountability level | .808 |
| OCBRIBE | Bribery occurrence | .761 |
| FREBRIBE | Bribery frequency | .839 |
| SCBRIBE | Bribery scale | .705 |
| FFF | Favour-to-favour | .598 |
| IPERSHARE | Sharing incidence | .679 |
| LPERSHARE | Sharing level | .659 |
| FNEPO | Nepotism frequency | .485 |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. | | |

Source: Field survey (2015)

4.3. Factor Structures to Determine Eigen Values

Principal component analysis (PCA) was used for the extraction in Table 4.3; variables are expressed in standardized form with a mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1. Variance indicates the dispersion of scores around the mean and is basically the average error between the mean and the observation made (Fields & Bisschof, 2014). For the purpose of further analysis, the factors above the dotted lines are extracted while the ones below it are ignored and discarded. This is based on Kaiser's criterion which, as a statistical measure, placed the minimum threshold value

at 1.0. It is clear from the results that the most important factor is related to bribery index, and it accounts for about one-quarter (25%) of the variance explained. The second factor related to bureaucracy index accounts for about 21%, the third related to accountability index accounts for about 8%, the fourth related to favouritism accounts for about 7%, and the fifth related to due process factors accounts for about 6%. When combined, the five factors account for more than half (66.7%) of the variance. A cumulative variance in excess of 60% signifies a "good fit" (Field, 2007; Hafiz & Shaari, 2013; Fields & Bisschof, 2014).

Table 4.3: Factors and their Relative Importance

| Component | Initial Eigen values | | |
|-----------|----------------------|---------------|--------------|
| | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
| 1 | 4.245 | 24.968 | 24.968 |
| 2 | 3.523 | 20.725 | 45.693 |
| 3 | 1.283 | 7.545 | 53.239 |
| 4 | 1.195 | 7.031 | 60.270 |
| 5 | 1.002 | 5.896 | 66.166 |
| 6 | .954 | 5.613 | 71.778 |
| 7 | .786 | 4.625 | 76.403 |
| 8 | .688 | 4.047 | 80.450 |
| 9 | .535 | 3.147 | 83.597 |
| 10 | .514 | 3.026 | 86.623 |
| 11 | .455 | 2.676 | 89.299 |
| 12 | .425 | 2.499 | 91.799 |
| 13 | .402 | 2.364 | 94.162 |
| 14 | .341 | 2.005 | 96.167 |
| 15 | .259 | 1.526 | 97.693 |
| 16 | .217 | 1.278 | 98.971 |
| 17 | .175 | 1.029 | 100.000 |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Field survey (2015)

4.3.6.3 Rotation Type for Factor Loadings

Rotation causes factor loadings to be more clearly differentiated, which often facilitates interpretation of the results. To make for easy interpretation of the extracted factors, the

Orthogonal Varimax factor rotation method with Kaiser Standardization was adopted in the PCA, as suggested in some recent studies (Adeyeye *et al*, 2012; Adeyeye & Oloyede, 2014). Convergence was achieved after five (5) iterations.

Table 4.4. Rotated Component Matrix

| | Component | | | | |
|---|---------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| FREBRIBE | .867 | | | | |
| OCBRIBE | .836 | | | | |
| SCBRIBE | .806 | | | | |
| OIEXPA | | .762 | | | |
| RRME | | .716 | | | |
| OBFS | | .656 | | | |
| AFMGT | | .652 | | | |
| SMACC | | | .852 | | |
| LACCVALU | | | .836 | | |
| ACCVALU | | | .708 | | |
| IPERSHARE | | | | .795 | |
| LPERSHARE | | | | .783 | |
| FFF | | | | .652 | |
| FNEPO | | | | .559 | |
| ADUPRO | | | | | .817 |
| LADUPO | | | | | .754 |
| TRDUPRO | | | | | .712 |
| Name given to factor | Bribery Index | Bureaucracy Index | Accountability Index | Favouritism Index | Due Process Index |
| Percent variance explained (%) | 24.97 | 20.73 | 7.55 | 7.03 | 5.90 |
| Cumulative variance contribution rate (%) | 24.97 | 45.70 | 53.25 | 60.28 | 66.18 |
| Cronbach's alpha | 0.838 | 0.731 | 0.80 | 0.735 | 0.774 |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. | | | | | |
| Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. | | | | | |
| a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations. | | | | | |

Based on the result in Table 4.4, the governance factors that contribute to mismanagement of public project funds in the study area, were extracted based on their internal consistency, reliability and the variables were arranged in order of the strength of their respective item factor loadings on each factor.

Factor 1-Bribery Index: This factor explains about one-quarter (25%) of the variance, and contains three elements that point to the profound effect of bribery and corruption on mismanagement of public project funds. The consequence of FREBRIBE, OCBRIBE and SCBRIBE on the levels of mismanagement of public funds cannot be overemphasised. Cronbach's alpha of 0.836 is a highly satisfactory reliability coefficient.

Factor 2-Bureaucracy Index: This is the second most important factor enhancing mismanagement of public project funds in Ondo State. It explains a favourable variance of about 21%. The higher these variables are ignored and neglected, the higher the propensity to mismanage available public funds. Cronbach's alpha is 0.731, and it shows a satisfactory reliability coefficient.

Factor 3-Accountability Index: This point specifically to the impact of accountability on mismanagement of public funds, it explains 7.55% of the variance. Where accountability level and value are ebbing low and diminishing, there will be higher propensity for mismanagement of public funds. Cronbach's alpha is 0.735 and it shows a satisfactory reliability coefficient.

Factor 4-Favouritism: This factor explains about 7% of the variance and contains four variables that point to the effect of sharing incidence (IPERSHARE), sharing level (LPERSHARE), favour-to-favour (FFF) and nepotism frequency (FNEPO) in explaining mismanagement of public project funds. In situations where contracts are awarded to family members, cronies and on tribal lines, it may be difficult to checkmate the contractor

where they fail to execute the terms of the contract. Cronbach's alpha is 0.735 and it shows a satisfactory reliability coefficient.

Factor 5 - Due Process Index: This factor explains about 6% of the variance; it points to the importance of adherence to due process in explaining the level of mismanagement of public funds. Where due process is not strictly followed, especially in contract award and the like, mismanagement of public project funds will be pronounced. Cronbach's alpha is 0.774 and it shows a highly satisfactory reliability coefficient. Neglect of all these factors contributed to the mismanagement of public projects in their order in the state.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to evaluate the governance factors that contribute to the mismanagement of public projects fund in Nigeria and to determine how these factors can be influence to promote effective and efficient project delivery and economic development. The reviewed literature provided some useful insight into the governance of management of public project funds, reveal that poor institutional governance has been the bane of proper management and corruption has been described as evidence of institutional failure. In agreement with the literature our findings revealed that Public projects' execution is fettered with different types of corrupt practices such as bribery, favour to favour, nepotism, percentage sharing and contract inflation in the study area, and weaknesses and lapses were observed in bureaucracy, accountability and due process. To this end it can be inferred that even though corruption seems to be the most significant governance factor that affect public project fund and delivery, yet the neglect of accountability, bureaucracy and due process heighten the occurrence of corruption. Thus there is the need to tighten other governance variables to reduce corruption.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on these findings, the study recommends:

1. Establishment of NCPP(both at the Federal and State levels) that will take the awarding of contracts from the hands of politicians to a body that will ensure tender and non-biased selection of contractors, consideration of experience and knowledge of the project, and demonstrate fairness and objectivity in the award of contracts, must be of high priority. This will reduce the problem of corruption, favour to favour and nepotism to the barest minimum, thus, promote accountability.
2. Feedback mechanism on every amount committed to projects should be put in place from time to time, to prevent unauthorized diversion of project funds and to ensure that all the money disbursed are accounted for after the completion of a project.
3. The issue of accountability in the public financial management system in the state is very germane. The proper implementation of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) should be encouraged. Ministries, Departments and Agencies should begin to use the accrual basis of accounting, as this would make public managers accountable for recording and safeguarding of public assets, for managing public cash flows, and for disclosing and discharging public liabilities.
4. Strict compliance to every institutional arrangement on public project infrastructure to improve management of project fund
5. Establishment of strong penal code system to enforce laws and rules as sternly as they need for adequate punishment for offenders on corruption and related matter

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