



Nature, Causes and Organisation of Bureaucratic Corruption in Key Informal Market Sectors of Post-Millennium Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

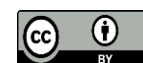
Bureaucratic corruption stands rooted firmly among the major debilitating obstacles constraining progress and positive transformation in emerging markets. This was confirmed by investigating its nature, causes and organization in Zimbabwe's two key informal market sectors, namely the Street-based Vegetable and Fruit Vendors (*Mavhenda/Abathengisi*), and the Street-wise Bureau de Change (*Chenji-mani/Osiphatheleni*) sectors that sprouted in the country's towns and cities after the turn of the new millennium. By analyzing qualitative data drawn chiefly from in-depth interviews with conveniently and purposively sampled twelve participants generated out of a population of eighteen in each of the three case studies undertaken in three separate cities/towns in the country, this study unveiled a prodigious view of the dynamic trends that bureaucratic corruption has tended to adopt in post-millennium Zimbabwe, and particularly also in contexts that involve protracted interfacing between these fledgling informal markets and key public entities, namely, law-enforcement and municipal agencies. The study's findings demonstrated that corruption involving public officials and operators of these sprawling markets was prevalent, that rather than conflicting, the former and the latter collaborated, and that the former strived to cushion own strained corporate rewarding systems, while the latter used the vice to guarantee own market protection. The study refreshes attention on the sticky subject of corruption and furnishes academics, researchers and policy-makers with a panoramic view of its extent in contemporary Zimbabwe. Authorities are urged to urgently intervene by addressing the interests of both parties in the corrupt relationship before the vice incinerates the gains of national progress enshrined in the country's highly subscribed innovation and industrialization agenda.

Key Terms: Bureaucratic Corruption, Informal Markets, Motivation, Crime, Deviance

INTRODUCTION

The two informal market sectors that became prevalent in Zimbabwe during the first two decades of the new millennium,

namely the Street-based Vegetable and Fruit Vendors (*Mavhenda / Abathengisi*), and the Street-wise Bureau de Change (*Chenji-mani/Osiphatheleni*) sectors, have proved beyond doubt to be indispensable social and



economic safety nets for their beleaguered operators facing livelihood challenges in the circumstances of a writhing economy. Indeed, hordes of urban dwellers in the southern African nation that became crammed in the crevices of an exceedingly harsh economic environment of that era would hardly have survived had these safety nets not evolved. However, it may be argued that the capacity of these sectors to effectively nourish the lives of their operators in a manner that contributes positively to the national quest for a modern, innovative, industrialized and upper-middle income economy, as enshrined in the country's Vision 2030 policy blueprint, has been profoundly strangled by the choking grip of bureaucratic corruption which this study found prevalent in their operations. A phenomenal and cardinal definition of corruption, as propounded by the World Bank's Anticorruption Fact Sheet of February 19, 2020, depicts the unethical practice as "the abuse of public office for private gain". In that regard and as a matter of fact, this research exercise was primarily motivated by the curiosity that was fermented by the extensive media reports on the prevalence and extent of corruption in the Zimbabwean society, particularly that which involved the civil service. For instance, the Zimbabwe Herald of May 14, 2016, the NewsDay of February 18, 2016, and the Editorial Comment of the Zimbabwean Herald of June 6, 2016, among others, carried stunning reports revealing an upward spiralling trend of cases of corruption in the country. The choice to target these two key informal market sectors for this study stemmed primarily from the assumption that

the two offered unlimited opportunities for extensive interface between their operators and the public officials hailing from state agencies that were mandated to control or regulate their activities. Hence, a microscopic analysis of such a critical state *versus* citizen-consumer interface was hoped to yield a rich body of virgin knowledge on the vice, its nature, prevalence and organization.

Another stimulus spurring this inquiry was the realization that at the time, there was no sufficient evidence of the existence of antecedent inquiries on the impact of bureaucratic corruption in these two specific informal market sectors. Given the depiction in the aforesaid media reports of corruption as a persistent threat shrouding almost every vein of business and social interaction in the Zimbabwean society, it became pertinent that this inquiry could unveil new strategies of uprooting it. Worse still, as the unethical practice already appeared to have long gained "acceptance" (Nyoni, 2017, p. 285), the meticulous investigation of the day-to-day operations of these two critical sectors in three separate towns, namely Masvingo, Gweru and Zvishavane, could contribute immensely to the evolution of new strategies useful for arresting the scourge.

The outcomes of this study are, therefore, expected to not only inform but reshape public policy and refresh interest among academics and researchers on the trends of public sector corruption and the urgency required to combat it. This paper is organized in three components. The first entails reviews of existing literature on the subject of bureaucratic corruption, and the

study's theoretical framework. Statement of the problem, research questions and the research methodology follow in the second component, while the third discusses the study's findings. These are arranged in three categories, namely (i) the nature, (ii) the causes and (iii), the organization of bureaucratic corruption as it impacts these two specific informal market sectors of contemporary Zimbabwe.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An ephemeral review of literature from a selected number of leading scholarly material, both classical (old but difficult to ignore as their views have continued to be relevant on shaping modern perceptions in understanding the challenge of corruption) and more recent publications, revealed that the unethical practice is not only an age-old problem in Zimbabwe, but has similarly remained a principal stalling force to the development discourse of many countries around the world. Indeed, as Nyoni (2017, p. 285) avers, "The probability of finding a country where there is no corruption is synonymous with the probability of experiencing a "cold day in Hell". As for Zimbabwe, Mundopa (2021, p. 1) reports that the country "scored 24 points out of 100 and ranked 157 out of 180 countries in Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index". Olowu (1988, p. 215) observes that "a considerable portion of the literature on corruption in the Third World has been on Africa." Uguru and Ibeogu (2014), Mbaku (2016) and Olabiyi (2022) are notable examples of scholars touching on the nature, causes and effects of corruption in Africa in general and also

managing to appendage their work with suggested solutions to the scourge.

It may be alluded that generally speaking, the consensus, in both the classical works - for example Dwivedi (1967), Olowu (1988), Makumbe (1994) and the contemporary studies – notably Mbaku (2016), Nyoni (2017), Mundopa (2021), has tended to regard the unethical practice precisely as a malfunction of the public service. Much of their literature appeared to treat the term 'bureaucrats' summarily as referring to all officials, staff or employees of government at all its levels, namely central, local authority, parastatal or its contracted-out outfits that are mandated to provide public goods and services, to support, control, supervise or sanction any stated behaviors or actions of citizens. Hence, in that respect, 'bureaucratic corruption' in this inquiry is understood as connoting inappropriate acts of public officials who, in their interface with the citizen-consumers in the application of a genuine or purported law, ultimately obtain, secure or accrue from them personal gain, benefits or privileges, material or non-material, as ransom for 'favours' or 'lenience' duly extended. According to Dwivedi (1967, p. 45) corruption encompasses "nepotism, favouritism, bribery, graft, patronage, and other unfair means adopted by government employees and the public alike to extract some socially and legally prohibited favours." For Ayee (2002, p. 7), it also embodies "extortion, influence-peddling, fraud, speed-money and embezzlement." Dwivedi (1967, p. 245) avers that bureaucratic corruption usually occurred during, in the guise of, or under the cover of, executing a lawful duty. Makumbe

(1994, p. 46) claims that the vice involved “use (or abuse) of public office for personal gains at the expense of the public good, and in violation of established principles, regulations and ethical considerations.” According to Makumbe (1994), foul play, bribery, fraud, embezzlement or outright theft blamed on those in custody of state resources or its legal instruments or on those linked to them constituted bureaucratic corruption. Other literature observes acts of awarding self or one’s connections any socio-economic advantage, for instance, during staffing (Dwivedi, 1967), diverting resources to unintended targets, derailing national goals in favor of personal interest or those of one’s acquaintances (Mulinge & Lesetedi, 2002), flouting of tender regulations in favour of self or one’s connections (Dwivedi, 1967), and receiving kick-backs from government contracts (Ayee, 2002, p. 14), as unequivocal acts of public sector corruption.

Ayee (2002, p. 6) views bureaucratic corruption as “the most formidable challenge to the public service in Africa”, and decries that it “not only eroded the public service’s established principles such as merit, neutrality, equality, accountability and representativeness but also its legitimacy or public confidence.” As for Bala and Daniel (2013, p. 1), the abominable vice was a deviance that defiled “commonly held norms, values and expectations of a society.” Congruent to this, Makumbe (1994) claims that in Zimbabwe, bureaucratic corruption was linked to deprivations suffered by Africans during colonial rule and their anxiety to recover from them, frustrations caused by the Lancaster House Constitution which protected the interests of former

settlers and international capital at the expense of the indigenous populace, economic hardships, rising costs of living, shortage of basic necessities, deteriorating social amenities, shortcomings of the Westminster model of public administration whose accounting and reporting procedures were inappropriate for a vast post-independent bureaucracy, too much interface between bureaucrats and the general public due to excessive government intervention and participation in the economy, lack of public sector reforms to make the vast bureaucracy effective and efficient, negative effects of the International Monetary Fund’s induced structural adjustment program of the 1990s, the absence of well trained, supervised and accountable officials in the government bureaucracy, as well as the lack of effective prosecution of those implicated in cases of corruption.

Chiweshe (2015) blames bureaucratic corruption in Zimbabwe on what he termed ‘asymmetrical power’, while for others it was a product of lack of political will to combat it and the institutional incapacity to deal with it (Moyo, 2014). Literature review was also revealing on the effects of corruption in Zimbabwe. Ndoma (2021) contends that it “increases the cost of doing business for enterprises, skews economic growth and development, cost is transferred to consumers via higher prices or lower quality of goods and services, earnings from the proceeds of corruption are often committed to non-productive activities, encourages leakages of resources from the national fiscus.” Yet, despite the general sentiment among the citizens of Zimbabwe that depicted corruption as criminal and deviant

behaviour, some literature appeared to glorify it, though still maintaining that it was a necessary evil. Nyoni (2017, p. 285) in the article *The Curse of Corruption in Zimbabwe*, point out that, “With the Zimbabwean economy in the doldrums corruption has become an accepted and almost expected way of doing business especially in the public sector. If a civil servant still goes to work today it is not because of salary but the opportunities to enhance his or her paltry income with corrupt acts using the organization’s resources.”

However, apart from reflecting the prevalence and extent of corruption, other more recent literature highlighted the efforts that have been instituted to curtail corruption within the Zimbabwean society. For instance, Mundopa (2021, p. 1) shows that in response to corruption pervading the country, the government, through the Constitution of Zimbabwe (No. 20) Act 2013, established the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) and the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), with primary mandates to rein in the unethical practice. However, despite some sterling achievements, these institutions have witnessed mounting pressure as cases of corruption have continued to surge. In the article “Walls Collapsing for the Corrupt”, published in the Zimbabwe Herald of 3 November 2020, the government was reported to have established a special anti-corruption unit, anti-corruption courts countrywide, and the Zimbabwe Anti-corruption Commission, as war on graft escalated. According to Mundopa (2021), “Specialised anti-corruption courts were created as a division of the High Court in Harare and Bulawayo in 2018 to speed up the

hearing of corruption cases.” By December 2020, the anti-corruption courts, which, as Mundopa (2021) notes, were created under section 46A of the High Court Act [chapter 7:06], and had been established mainly at the magistrate level in the country’s ten provinces. This move seemed to provide immediate solutions to the prevailing situation as further affirmed in Mundopa (2021), that “during 2020 the anti-corruption courts at High Court and Magistrates Court levels had clearance rates of 79% and 89% respectively, despite delays due to constitutional complaints filed by defendants.”

However, despite these strides, some literature showed evidence that their impact still remained very low as the general public remained unoptimistic about their effectiveness in dealing with the scourge. For instance, Mutondoro and Gweshe (2015, p. 10) note that most people never dared to report corruption to the Zimbabwe Anti-corruption Commission or any other agencies,

“as you get to expose yourself as a whistle-blower and you are not guaranteed protection or that corrective action will be taken; that they would not report a corruption incident largely because of fear of being victimised after reporting; and that at times reporting corruption or crime in general is cumbersome as half the time the police would be bothering you as a witness to report to their office and offer some statements which costs money and time.”

Finally, it may also be stated that on the average, news articles on public sector corruption that this study was also able to glean from a rough sample of the country's main newspapers, namely the Herald of 14 May 2016, the Herald of 6 June 2016, the NewsDay of 18 February 2016, the Herald of 3 November 2020, Newsday of 13 April 2020, Newsday of 17 February 2022, and The Standard of 11 July 2021 – all reflected a negative public impression against the scourge and the tempo and tone of the sentiments echoed created the impression that bureaucratic corruption was not only unwanted but was also regarded as a sure curse of a nation and a priority area for national retrospection for Zimbabweans.

In light of the impression cast by the literature review, it was possible to conclude this section by proffering the following four major assumptions: (i) that the deviant and unethical practice was a phenomenon that embodied the actions of public officials that were entrusted with authority to oversee the execution of government's intentions, (ii) that in the process of executing such public policy, these officials deliberately and intentionally deviated from those stipulated intentions and began to exploit opportunities that were inherent in their duties in order to derive personal benefits, (iii) that bureaucratic corruption was anti-progress in nature and had a serious toll on the gains of national development, (iv) and that despite the growing levels of its impact in the Zimbabwean scenario, the nature, causes and organization of corruption within specific informal market sectors such as the Street-based Vegetable and Fruit Vendors (*Mavhenda / Abathengisi*), and the Street-

wise Bureau de Change (*Chenjimanani/Osiphatheleni*) sectors had remained virtually unstudied, hence as far as this researcher was informed or concerned, particularly from the point of view of the foregoing literature review, this study appeared to be the first of its kind to seek this critical aspect of knowledge. Thus, the need for fresh data to further reveal or explain critical variables that were not already identified or covered by antecedent research became imperative in reshaping the body of knowledge on bureaucratic corruption in the public service landscape in Zimbabwe.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In addition to conceding to facts and pertinent issues raised in the reviewed literature, this study's theoretical framework was premised largely on four fundamental stilts, namely: (i) Max Weber's Bureaucracy theory, which is a managerial framework that informs the organizational structure for the civil service in Zimbabwe and which according to Olowu (1988) is much aspired by the civil service in Africa but also whose principles it finds elusive. Weber's theory linked up with this study in that it helped the inquiry to understand the nature and scope of both the Zimbabwean bureaucracy and of corruption as a dysfunction of bureaucracy itself. (ii) Maslow's theory of employee motivation: This theory helped to explain why a motivated or unmotivated workforce tended to shun corruption or be seduced by it respectively. (iii) The theories of crime and deviance: These were deemed critical in the formulation of public impression towards corruption and the criteria for determining whether it may be criminalized or not. (iv)

The perspectives on good corporate governance: These also buttressed the theoretical framework guiding this study by providing a ‘yard-stick of measurement’ between ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ public agency conduct.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The chief problem in this study was stated as lack of empirically proven knowledge of the causes, nature and organization of bureaucratic corruption in the Street-based Vegetable and Fruit Vendors (*Mavhenda/Abathengisi*), and the Street-wise Bureau de Change (*Chenjmani/Osiphatheleni*) sectors in Zimbabwe. The study assumed that the absence of such vital knowledge could be one of the major constraints debilitating national efforts targeted at curbing the unethical and ruinous scourge and its impact in national development processes. Hence, providing a solid solution to this problem by way of identifying critical variables not established in the antecedent body of knowledge was deemed a form of noble national service in the advancement development.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the nature of bureaucratic corruption in the selected two key informal market sectors?
2. What are the causes of bureaucratic corruption in these two key informal market sectors?
3. How is bureaucratic corruption organized in the chosen two key informal market sectors?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The claims postulated here are based on elaborate analyses of qualitative data that were gathered from intensive interviews with a total of 36 out of 54 participants that were purposively and conveniently sampled to take part in the three case studies undertaken in Zimbabwe’s Masvingo, Gweru and Zvishavane metropolitan centres. A total of 6 out of 9 participants from the street-based vegetable and fruit vendors sector and 6 out of 9 participants from the street-wise bureau de change sector were interviewed in depth in each of the three case studies. A purposive and convenient sample was chosen for the simple reason that it was not easy to get to know the total number of all operators working in the three towns studied. It was also not possible to come up with a truly random sample showing a true cross-section of all participants in these sectors. It was, therefore, decided to work with a total sample size of 18 conveniently and purposively selected operators in each of the three case studies. It was also further designed that any 6 out of 9 street vegetable vendor and any 6 out of 9 streetwise bureau de change participants showing keenness to participate or cooperate with the researcher would be interviewed.

It may be stated without reservation, therefore, that all the participants thus interviewed were *bona fide* operators of the two informal market sectors that were under investigation. Such a restrictive selection was deliberately designed to ensure that the data obtained constituted the daily realities of the operators themselves, rather than of distant observers. Public officials were largely circumvented as it was felt that they would chicken out or could spill the study’s

operations. The sample size could have been stretched upward a little had the resources permitted, and also owing to the sensitiveness of the subject matter in question, had the research population been largely keen and unreserved to participate. The assumption was that large samples would provide a relaxed field from which to mine the data required. Nevertheless, instead of spreading the inquiry too thinly over a vast field of operation, the sample size used for this study proved to be way manageable in the face of the prevailing resource-logged situation and, therefore, enabled the inquiry to be thorough, effective and efficient. Data analysis was done in relation to the research themes that were derived from the research questions underpinning the study. These were: (i) the nature, scope and structure of the vice, (ii) factors stimulating it, and, (iii) strategies used to conduct it.

Executed during a period spanning over three years starting in 2016, the study collected data relevant in determining the nature, causes and organization of bureaucratic corruption in two key informal market sectors of post-millennium Zimbabwe, namely street-vending and street-wise forex dealing. The study also enjoyed a firm reliance on the researcher's own personal observations and experiences as an 'operator' in each of the two informal market sectors. This participatory research component involving the researcher was primarily motivated by the fact that the high sensitivity of the data being sought, as well as its sources, had proved to be a subject of much controversy and was, therefore, in most cases thoroughly concealed, a phenomenon that Makumbe (1994, p. 46) had also

previously identified to be a core factor in public sector corruption. Personal experience was, therefore, an imperative tool for mining more authentic and reliable data and this effectively narrowed the cleavages between the questions of data validity and the accuracy of the actual findings in answering critical research questions that were at hand and that were crucial for the outcome of this study.

Issues of ethical considerations, such as required by international standards of social science research practices, were strictly observed. All the participants had the purpose of the research project fully explained to them and their consent was both solicited for frankly and rendered freely. However, there were notable limitations associated with the issue of ethical considerations. For instance, due to the sensitive nature of the subject in question and the type of data being mined, the participants, most of whom requested not to be identified by their names, were generally sceptic, especially at first encounter and were, therefore, initially reluctant to open up for fear of possible victimization or repercussions. Their confidence was far less easy to obtain, as the researcher was evidently misunderstood and misconceived as a sneaky member of the Zimbabwe Anti-corruption Commission intending to apprehend suspected offenders in the guise of research. There was also the problem of the 'Hawthorne effect', as the participants' behavior became evidently conditioned once they knew they were being studied. These challenges seriously undermined the validity and the authenticity of some of the data obtained. However, the problem was

mitigated by extensive data triangulation on the basis of its multiple sources which included interviews, personal observations and the researcher's own participation as an 'operator' in the informal market sectors' long supply and value chains.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Nature of Bureaucratic Corruption in the Two Informal Market Sectors

The study found that the bureaucrats that were mostly involved in the interface between the civil service and the two informal markets herein studied hailed mainly from two major public agencies, namely the law enforcement agency and the municipal authority. This was confirmed by the narratives given by all the participants in each of the three case studies undertaken. This was not surprising, as the primary mandate of these two public institutions was to control, regulate supervise, monitor, block or retard the operations or behaviors of these two informal markets. 'Bureaucratic corruption', therefore, implied all forms of inappropriate acts perpetrated by the officials of these public institutions during their interaction with operators of the three informal markets. These acts were inappropriate, deviant and corrupt in the sense that they applied vice on the operators of the two informal markets to accrue personal gain, benefits or privileges, mostly cash, as a ransom offered for 'lenient' or 'favorable' application of genuine or purported law, rules or regulations that either 'prohibited' or 'banned' certain behaviors, actions or operations of the two informal markets herein studied. These acts appeared to be an aspect of criminology, or that which

is "primarily interested in acts constituted as crimes and the subsequent social responses to these criminal acts" (Brazil & Whittingham 2019, p. 1).

This study found such acts to be rampant in the realm of the interface existing between the two major public agencies: the law enforcement and municipal agencies operating in the three towns/cities herein studied and the hordes of operators conducting business in the Street-based Vegetable and Fruit Vendors (*Mavhenda/Abathengisi*), and the Street-wise Bureau de Change (*Chenjmani/Osiphatheleni*) informal markets. The majority of these acts or shady practices usually assumed the form of petty corruption which principally involved bribes, extortion and 'protection fees' which were often intelligibly codified into a unique underground nomenclature that was only understood by the actors of the 'guild' or by persons who were familiar with the practice. For instance, these were referred to as 'rations', 'ransoms', 'do it fast' or even '*chegumi*' (tithe). This research also observed that those operators that were 'up-to-date' with their 'accounts' were spared during evictions and were not bothered when their 'recalcitrant' counterparts were dispersed or 'apprehended' for operating 'illegally'.

It seemed that the structural foundation of the whole process that led to bureaucrats demanding or receiving these 'payments' lay in the absence or lack of clarity - among operators - of the legal instruments governing or regulating the existence or operations of informal markets

in the country. For instance, twenty six of the operators of the two informal markets professed ignorance about what exactly the law said concerning whether informal markets were legal or really forbidden. Rather, they simply assumed that their operations were illegal. Even the explanations given by the bureaucrats involved in these informal markets appeared to be ambiguous and sometimes elusive with regard to the real position of the law on informal markets. However, it was apparent that both public agencies involved were guided by legal instruments that sought to protect the public space against risks of health and sanitation hazards, compromised public safety, obstructed public thoroughfares and unorthodox cash-flow manipulations, which were a likely negative effect of the two informal markets. It seemed, therefore, that the bureaucrats simply took advantage of such lack of clarity on legality issues on the part of informal business operators to augment their ability to corner them and make them crave for the 'favours' and 'protection' of the bureaucrats to safeguard their operations. Hence, the operators would rather quite readily 'pay' the dues demanded than refuse – given that they were aware this was foul play.

In fact, empirical evidence unveiled in this study revealed that the diabolical practice was often, though not always, initiated and fueled by the operators of business in these informal markets as much as it was also abetted by the bureaucrats themselves. Indeed, in many scenarios, the bureaucrats appeared to be dragged into corruption by the operators of business in these sectors just as much as they were also pressed into it by

other factors. For instance, the business operators in these two sectors almost always pushed the bureaucrats into corruption each time they strove to block new-comers from penetrating 'their' markets, to outwit their competitors and business rivals, to by-pass perceived legal 'obstructions' which were either genuine or purported by the bureaucrats, or to obtain favors or privileges that they otherwise would not enjoy from the formal market system if they followed formal channels of practice. The bureaucrats, who sometimes never really had demanded it, were often enticed, induced or seduced by dangles or flashes of '*do it for me or speed it up for me*' fees. They being for-ever-more in dire 'famine' of cash, and being too feeble to decline, the bureaucrats stooped low enough and accepted.

Hence, in these scenarios, it was clear to note that although the reprehensible practice was often branded 'bureaucratic corruption' due to the popular assumption which almost always blamed bureaucrats for initiating it, it emerged, from the study, that the practice was also quite as much a citizens' graft as it was bureaucratic. Exonerating the public who were also the principal actors in these two critical sectors was, therefore, in itself an analytical defect which citizens almost always readily seized or embraced to enable themselves to grandstand as victims when in fact they too were perpetrators. Thus, blaming the bureaucrats alone for being irresponsible during their corruption-logged interactions with the actors or operators in these two informal market sectors only served to sustain the unruly behaviour of some unscrupulous citizens whose propensity for corruption inevitably turned

them into initiators and core beneficiaries, rather than mere victims of bureaucratic corruption as the world, or at least as most of the unassuming thinking in Zimbabwe, tended to portray.

Furthermore, this study found that the discourse of the corruption processes was jealously guarded by both the bureaucrats and the operators of the informal markets herein studied. It had to be thoroughly concealed no matter what, and the responsibility for concealing it lay with both the bureaucrats and the operators of the two informal market sectors themselves, for both tended to benefit tremendously from it, as already revealed. Both gained handsomely from sustaining the unscrupulous practice. This study suggested that this was probably one of the main reasons why the Zimbabwe anti-corruption or any other corruption busting agencies were failing to make inroads in their fight against the scourge.

Apart from these observations, this study also found that the propensity to indulge in corrupt extravagancies did not appear to favour or disfavour anybody, both among the bureaucrats and the operators of business in these two informal market sectors. The scourge did not discriminate against rank, position at work, race, ethnicity, skin color, social status, or political affiliation. Its lure seemed irresistible to anybody who strove to circumvent genuine or legal practices perceived as obstructions in the quest to attain their desired goals. Indulgence in corruption, therefore, appeared as a condition deeply rooted in innate human behaviours which only manifested themselves when triggered by conducive factors in the internal and external

environment of business or social interaction. For instance, corruption did not start when individuals became government workers or when individuals ventured into business in these two informal market sectors; it only found opportunity of expression during social relationships involving individuals awarded stewardship-caretaker responsibility over certain resources in both the public or private realm and those seeking to derive gain from such resources.

Causes of Bureaucratic Corruption in the Two Informal Market Sectors

This study revealed that bureaucratic corruption in the Street-based Vegetable and Fruit Vendors (*Mavhenda/Abathengisi*) and the Street-wise Bureau de Change (*Chenjmani/Osiphatheleni*) sectors sprouted inside the conundrum that cascaded from the diminishing capacity of Zimbabwe's formal market sectors to meet the burgeoning socio-economic demands of citizens in a wilting economy, as witnessed after year 2000. This study found that at that time going forward, these two informal market sectors sprouted and became dominant suppliers of critical goods and services which the formal market sector had become unable to provide or satisfy sufficiently or efficiently. For instance, the study found that the collapse of the formal bureau de changes and the decline in household incomes during this critical period due to investment capital flight, inflation and a streak of corporate closures and the strain in service delivery resultant from Western-induced economic sanctions streaming from the squabbles ensuing over the course of the country's agrarian reform, vastly dealt a huge, irredeemable dent in the

economy that stimulated demand for informal supply chains and employment alternatives. The study further found that this dire situation was compounded by the attendant livelihood vulnerabilities spawned by the surge in rural-to-urban migration in the first decade of the new millennium. The study noted that ultimately, droves of jobless youths flooded the streets of these towns and cities to seek survival strategies. Hence, while some entered the street-based vegetable and fruit market, others formed the street-based forex sector in order to balance the costs of survival, education and health insurance for their dependents. Clearly, these sectors became socio-economic safety nets and an indispensable lifebuoy for the beleaguered citizens in an unfavourable economic environment.

Given this background, this study found that it may be concluded that as far as the informal business operators were concerned, a major cause of bureaucratic corruption in these sectors was their deep-rooted desire to guarantee security for their supply chain networks, as lack of it was tantamount to throwing out the oxygen tubes from the hospital's intensive care unit. It, thus, meant that when the state agencies sought to apply controls on their operations, even as may be necessary to restrain them on concerns of crime, pollution, sanitation or health hazard, the operators always perceived all such administrative actions as mere obstructions deserving to be resisted by either dodging their enforcers or by relying on the power of 'rations', 'ransoms', 'operation' or 'protection' fees. It also emerged that this baneful practice in the two informal market sectors was found to ooze from the arteries of

the country's 'unrepentant' mercantile laws which operators accused of discriminating against up-coming indigenous entrepreneurs in favor of long-established enterprises. Such laws seemed to be an enduring residue of the colonial legal system which inherently frustrated or marginalized indigenous entrepreneurs seeking to initiate investment in the formal market sectors. For instance, this study found one elderly vegetable and fruit vendor who sold her goodies right on the entrance of a big supermarket in one city having this to say: "I come here because I know this is where customers are found." She added that "customers prefer big enterprises, which are strategically located at the heart of the city, as these locations offer more convenience to shoppers than locations situated on the fringes of town where the local bureaucrats are trying to force me and my colleagues to operate from." She pointed out that she always made sure that her own goods were cheaper than those sold inside the supermarket so that customers would prefer hers. As for her, these actions did not harm anybody's business, as she believed that it was unfair for the large supermarket to complain as it had already made much wealth over the years, and in fact since the time she was a toddler, and now she was in her seventies. She reiterated that it was unfair for the authorities to be biased by keeping on benefiting one large enterprise while beginner entrepreneurs like herself were marginalized, hence she believed that the only means to sustain her business was to rely on bribes.

Meanwhile a couple of Street Vegetable and Fruit Vendors (*Mavhenda/Abathengisi*) in another city

lamented the red-tape and the hassles that were involved in acquiring hawkers' operation licenses from the local municipal bureaucracy. They revealed that it was not only time-consuming but also costly in terms of bribes demanded by a litany of 'middlemen' connected to the bureaucrats who processed them. They noted that where the license ever came out, one was sure to get authority to trade on non-lucrative sites which were located on the fringes of town where business was not good enough compared to more customer-patronized and, therefore, lucrative sites located in the central business district, and which were 'reserved' for operators 'connected' to the bureaucrats.

A lone vegetable and fruit vendor selling his goods from a makeshift stall raised on a wooden box at the corner of another city street also echoed similar sentiments, but reiterated that he did not need to register his business at all, at least as long as the municipal bureaucrats still practiced red-tape and accepted bribes. He noted that in most cases, applicants for operating licenses were sidelined on political grounds, as only those who were connected to powerful state or municipal bureaucrats, for instance as proven members or supporters of eminent political parties or factions in the municipal bureaucracy, got preferential advantage. Such applicants almost always got operating licenses both expeditiously and on very profitable sites such as those found in the central business district or its environs, while the politically unconnected were stranded and relegated to the only open option of spreading their stocks on street pavements. This study also found that unfavourable public policy attitude towards informal

business initiatives was also bemoaned by *Street-wise* Bureau de Change dealers.

For instance, some forex dealers who operated at the corner of a popular fast-food outlet in one city bemoaned that although they were aware of the procedures needed to formalize their operations, forex laws in the country appeared to both segregate and marginalize indigenous dealers in favor of long-established institutions such as commercial banks which were in fact not only predominantly foreign-owned, but also formidable to compete with. They also decried what they perceived as a litany of administrative knots and loops, which they blamed for deterring them from attempting to secure licenses to formalize their operations. These hurdles ranged from a sheer inability to properly interpret the language and legal obligations of the contracts to be entered into during registration, the way the formal system itself worked, to suspicions that the central bank might suddenly one day grab their funds after luring them into registering. Operating informally on street corners by bribing the bureaucrats was, thus, considered cheaper and hassle-free.

This study also found another mammoth cause of bureaucratic corruption in these two informal market sectors as being the sheer absence of a specific, clear and non-fleeting legislative position that legally formalized or out-lawed the operations of these two informal market sectors. It found that lack of such a solid and consistent legal framework and instrument for charging and prosecuting apprehended offenders made the entire situation heinous. As noted earlier, this study found that no such clear-cut legal

position appeared to exist at national and local authority levels. Where these were purported to exist, for example in municipal bureaucracies, they appeared vague while their enforcement was both feeble, negligible and not direct or definite. One senior law enforcement agent concurred that for this reason, it was not easy to press meaningful charges on the operators of these two informal market sectors. The study found this as the probable explanation on no *Street-wise* forex dealers or *Mavhenda/Abathengisi* ever appeared in a court of law to answer to charges concerning their creed or trade. For instance, this study found that whenever they were rounded up and could not escape, the apprehended informal forex dealers almost always got charged for the petty offence known as “blocking the pavement” and not for dealing in forex. Similarly, rounded-up street vendors only got away with a light, negligible and/or rarely finable charge of pollution, public health, safety, and sanitation concerns. Hence, the ‘offenders’ only regarded these ‘arrests’ as nothing but a waste of precious time that disrupted their business operations and which bribes could easily offset.

This study also found that bureaucratic corruption in these two informal sectors appeared to ooze from the ineptitude of the loss control system of the respective state agencies which lacked effective monitoring or supervision to guarantee accountability and transparency in the behaviors of their officials during their daily interface with the operators of these sectors. It was found that apparently unscrupulous bureaucrats played this loophole to their advantage and, thus, perpetrated acts of

corruption willy-nilly. There was also rampant evidence showing that the bureaucrats who indulged in corruption during their interaction with the operators of the Street-based Vegetable and Fruit Vendors (*Mavhenda/Abathengisi*) and the Street-wise Bureau de Change (*Chenjmani/Osiphatheleni*) sectors were pushed into these acts by the ineffective and desiccated decent work practices that appeared to have increasingly become pervasive in the country’s civil service. This study observed that the corrupt bureaucrats harbored compromised attitudes towards their work and their corporates’ rewarding regimes and, therefore, looked into the realm of their interaction with operators of these two informal market sectors for opportunities to make ends meet. Precisely, these officials were starved of motivation, or “enthusiasm to reach organizational goals ... by satisfying individual employee’s needs or demands” (Haque et al., 2014.62).

Organization of Bureaucratic Corruption in the Two Informal Market Sectors

This study revealed that bureaucratic corruption in these two sectors was almost always highly sophisticated and thoroughly concealed. It rarely assumed an institutional form. It was found that most of the unethical bureaucrats indulging in corruption in these sectors often preferred to operate as individuals or in the company of their close associates, obviously for security concerns. Their operations were concealed, ad hoc in nature, but often sporadic and, therefore, the operators of the two informal market sectors found them generally easy to offset on spot with bribes. However, this study found that

where the practice adopted an organized form and became institutional, it often involved structured or unstructured syndicates operating in the manner of a mafia or an informal organization within the law enforcement agency or municipal bureaucracy's institutional framework. Where this was the case, the dishonest practice was also well-concealed and coordinated. Often undetected by the executives, their networks ran deep and were wide-spread. The corrupt officials readily protected and defended each other when threatened by restraint. Cogent data obtained in this study showed that where powerful bureaucrats were part of such corrupt syndicates, things became really complicated. In such instances, the well networked and coordinated syndicates were ever alert, and systematically sniffed out the direction of state-commissioned corruption busters and were, thus, able to readily frustrate or scuttle their investigations before they exposed their networks. Ultimately, zealous and other undesirable elements in such bureaucracies who poked their noses into the operations of such syndicates faced serious risks of either being marginalized, off-loaded to the peripheries, or eventually shown the exit door once an opportunity out of their favour ripened in the course of their careers.

This study also found that sometimes the operations of these two informal market sectors got inevitably 'out of hand' in relation to other national policy deliverables, and when such circumstances prevailed, the government usually issued an ad hoc decree that clamped them down but often temporarily and pending some

regularizations. During such occasions, street vendors' stocks and forex dealers' float funds got confiscated while operators who attempted to be antagonistic got arrested. This study observed that once this happened, it was usually not easy to recover them, despite the fact that government usually obliged the local bureaucrats to return them to their proprietors once the regularization process was completed. The reason was that the shady syndicates of the unscrupulous bureaucrats in these law enforcement and municipal bureaucracies attempted to complicate the disbursement process through tortuous red-tape that was designed to create fertile ground for bribes. Thus, on top of, besides or alongside the official fines regime where these were applicable, most previous victims in such scenarios testified having buckled to bribes in order to expedite recovery of their stocks, float money or even to secure their release by the local bureaucrats who, sadly, never accrued the staggering proceeds to the state coffers.

Furthermore, this study found that where the operators of these two informal market sectors were reluctant to extend bribes, the errant bureaucrats often wantonly applied threats or intimidation; they raised or manipulated legal charges against them. In some cases, they arm-twisted their victims who, being often ignorant of the implications of the legal system in such scenarios, only had to resort to redeeming themselves with the required bribes instead of wasting time seeking legal protection or facing the purported legal reprisals in court. The study observed that the unethical bureaucrats found it crucial to always ensure that the informal business was legally disempowered and

made to perpetually believe that its operations were illegal and, therefore, that their sustainability was delicately hinged on the bureaucrats' discretion, leniency and/or even on their benevolence. Once enough of this false message or impression was rammed into the ears and minds of the informal market operators, it became easy for the obdurate bureaucrats to keep them feeling insecure and on edge on a daily basis. This way, the informal operators were always reminded that a surprise raid could come on them at any moment! If the raid did come or did not come, they became forever grateful to the 'benevolence' of the bureaucrats and, as could be imagined, 'forever grateful' effectively translated into a perpetual precipitation of 'thank-you' packages for the bureaucrats. However, this study does not claim that all officials in the bureaucracies herein studied were corrupt. A great deal of them were, in fact, not corrupt and were, to all intents and purposes, honest and this visibly augured well for effort-acquittals angled at defusing corruption.

CONCLUSION

This study was able to establish a net of four cardinal conclusions, namely: (i) that the prevalence and pervasiveness of bureaucratic corruption in the two informal market sectors herein studied is undeniable, (ii) that the vice was used by both the unprincipled bureaucrats and the informal business as a mechanism by which they mutually cooperated to safeguard each other's stakes: of fleecing ransoms and of sustaining own operations respectively, (iii) that indeed the unethical vice undermined professionalism, credibility and the morality

of the state agencies involved, and (iv) that if not curbed, bureaucratic corruption could indeed asphyxiate the country's quest for national economic recovery, innovation and industrialization in both the immediate and long terms. Given these scenarios, this study recommended that the authorities need to urgently intervene specifically in order to address the challenges that are faced by both the bureaucrats and the operators of these two informal market sectors. In particular, there is need to improve the conditions of service and reward regime system of the bureaucrats as a way to dilute their appetite for bribes. The country's policy apparatus should, perhaps, also start considering the informal and therefore unorthodox businesses not as criminal but as an important seed-bed of the country's potential for future economic growth. Rather than incubating a legal system that scatters it, public policy should water the sector to grow its potential for innovation, industrialization and national economic growth.

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