



Corruption and Service delivery in Nigeria's Civil Service. A study of Akwa Ibom state Ministry of Finance

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of selected corrupt practices on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. The study specifically examined the effects of payment of unofficial gratification on the timeliness and accessibility of service delivery; favoritism in recruitment, promotion and allocation of official opportunities on the efficiency and quality of service delivery; and unauthorized use of government resources on the efficiency and quality of service delivery. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study comprised 312 eligible employees, from which a sample of 175 respondents was drawn using the Krejcie and Morgan table. The study adopted a stratified sampling technique, while data were collected through a structured questionnaire. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and chi-square analysis at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that payment of unofficial gratification significantly affected the timeliness and accessibility of service delivery, with a calculated chi-square value of 654.17, which was greater than the critical value of 7.815. The study also found that favoritism in recruitment, promotion and allocation of official opportunities significantly affected the efficiency and quality of service delivery. Furthermore, unauthorized use of government resources significantly affected the efficiency and quality of service delivery, with a calculated chi-square value of 662.49, which exceeded the critical value of 7.815. Consequently, the three null hypotheses were rejected. The study concluded that the selected corrupt practices had significant negative implications for effective service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. The study recommended stronger monitoring and accountability mechanisms to reduce unofficial gratification, strict adherence to merit-based recruitment and promotion, and improved internal control systems to prevent the unauthorized use of government resources.

Keywords: Corruption; Unofficial Gratification; Favouritism; Unauthorised Use of Government Resources; Service Delivery; Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Introduction

The civil service is a vital institution of government because it provides the administrative machinery through which public policies are implemented and translated into programmes and services for citizens. Its effectiveness depends largely on the integrity, professionalism, efficiency and accountability of public officials. In Nigeria, however, the capacity of the civil service to perform these responsibilities has continued to be challenged by corruption and other institutional weaknesses. Corruption may take various forms, including bribery or payment of unofficial gratification, embezzlement, misappropriation of public resources, nepotism, favouritism and abuse of official positions. Ijewereme (2015) identifies bribery, embezzlement, misappropriation, nepotism and related practices as important manifestations of corruption in the Nigerian public sector, while Asaju, Adagba and Anyio (2013) regard corruption as a major impediment to effective public service delivery.

The concern with corruption is not limited to the unlawful acquisition of public resources; its broader consequence is the weakening of the administrative processes through which citizens receive government services. When public officials demand unofficial payments, give preferential treatment to particular individuals, or use government resources for unauthorised purposes, established administrative procedures may be distorted. Such practices can result in delays, unequal access to services, inefficient use of public resources and declining quality of service delivery. Abdulwaheed and Ohida (2022) found that corruption adversely affected the provision of fundamental public services, while Rasul and Rogger (2018), based on evidence from 4,700 government projects managed by 63 Nigerian civil-service organisations, established that bureaucratic management practices significantly influenced public-service performance. Similarly, Deininger and Mpuga (2005) found that corruption and weak accountability mechanisms were associated with poorer public-service outcomes. These findings demonstrate that the effectiveness of public service delivery is closely connected to the quality of administrative practices and accountability within public institutions.

Successive reforms have been introduced in Nigeria to strengthen public-sector accountability and improve service delivery. Among these are the Treasury Single Account (TSA) and the Service Compact with All Nigerians (SERVICOM). However, the existence of formal reforms has not necessarily eliminated corrupt practices within public institutions. Salihu (2020) found that the TSA contributed to reductions in some forms of financial leakages but had less substantial effects on bribery and procurement-related corruption. Similarly, Omigbodun (2022) observed that bureaucratic practices could constrain the effectiveness of service-improvement reforms. These findings suggest that improving service delivery requires more than the establishment of formal policies; it also requires effective implementation, monitoring, accountability and ethical conduct by public officials. The situation is particularly important in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service because state civil servants constitute a major administrative link between government and citizens. Their decisions and actions concerning recruitment, promotion, allocation of official opportunities, processing of requests, management of public funds and utilisation of government resources can directly influence citizens' experiences of public administration. Evidence from the state indicates that these concerns are not merely theoretical. Atairet (2023) found that corruption, nepotism, politicisation and inadequate internal controls

negatively affected the operation of the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. Similarly, Ita, Edet and Bassey (2016) identified corruption, indiscipline and other parochial considerations as challenges to merit, diligence and accountability within the state civil service. Okon and Edet (2025) further identified corruption, red tape, procedural delays, political interference, nepotism and weak accountability as challenges affecting service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Although these studies provide useful evidence on corruption and administrative challenges in Akwa Ibom State, an important empirical gap remains. Existing studies have generally considered corruption alongside other administrative, ethical or bureaucratic problems rather than examining the specific forms of corrupt practices and their individual implications for service delivery. For example, while Ataire (2023) examined administrative ethics and sustainable service delivery, corruption was considered as one of several factors affecting the civil service. Similarly, Okon and Edet (2025) examined bureaucratic challenges to service delivery and treated corruption as part of a broader range of administrative problems. Consequently, there is insufficient focused empirical evidence on how particular corrupt practices affect specific dimensions of service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. The central problem addressed by this study therefore concerns the extent to which specific forms of corruption undermine the ability of the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service to provide effective services to citizens. In particular, payment of unofficial gratification may create additional barriers to accessing government services and cause delays in the processing of citizens' requests. Favouritism in recruitment, promotion and allocation of official opportunities may weaken merit, competence and employee commitment, thereby affecting the efficiency and quality of service delivery. Similarly, unauthorised use of government resources may divert funds, vehicles, equipment and other official resources from their intended purposes, reducing the capacity of the civil service to perform its functions effectively.

The study therefore focuses on three specific dimensions of corruption: payment of unofficial gratification, favouritism in recruitment, promotion and allocation of official opportunities, and unauthorised use of government resources. These forms of corruption are examined in relation to key dimensions of service delivery, namely timeliness, accessibility, efficiency and quality. By focusing on these specific practices rather than treating corruption as a general administrative problem, the study seeks to provide clearer empirical evidence on the ways in which corruption affects service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the effect of payment of unofficial gratification on the timeliness and accessibility of service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.
2. Determine the effect of favouritism in recruitment, promotion and allocation of official opportunities, on the efficiency and quality of service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.
3. Assess the effect of unauthorized use of government resources on the efficiency and quality of service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How does the payment of unofficial gratification affect the timeliness and accessibility of service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service?
2. How does favouritism in recruitment, promotion and allocation of official opportunities affect the efficiency and quality of service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service?
3. How does the unauthorised use of government resources affect the efficiency and quality of service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the study:

H₀₁: Payment of unofficial gratification tends to affect the timeliness and accessibility of service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

H₀₂: Favouritism in recruitment, promotion and allocation of official opportunities is likely to affect the efficiency and quality of service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

H₀₃: Unauthorised use of government resources is likely to affect the efficiency and quality of service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Conceptual Framework

Concept of Corruption

Corruption is a broad concept that has attracted considerable attention in public administration, political science, economics and development studies. At its core, corruption involves the misuse of entrusted authority for an unauthorised or private benefit. In the public sector, the concept is particularly concerned with situations where public officials use the powers, resources or information attached to their offices in ways that depart from official rules and the public interest. Ijewereme (2015) explains corruption in the Nigerian public sector as a persistent problem that has frustrated national developmental objectives despite the country's substantial human and material resources. His review identifies several theoretical explanations for corruption, including the resource-curse perspective, the low-risk/high-benefit perspective, the two-publics theory and anomie theory. He further identifies factors such as societal pressure, tribalism, nepotism and the perception that the benefits of corrupt behaviour outweigh its risks as contributing to the persistence of corruption in Nigeria.

Corruption can therefore be understood not merely as an individual act of dishonesty but also as a problem of institutional behaviour. It becomes particularly problematic in the civil service because civil servants exercise administrative authority, handle government information and participate in the allocation and implementation of public resources. Where these powers are used for personal or sectional interests, the objectives of public administration may be compromised. Asaju, Adagba and Anyio (2013), in their study of corruption and service delivery in the Nigerian Public Service, examined corruption from the perspective of the relationship between public officials and citizens. They argued that public officials have privileged access to public resources and information and that the abuse of such privileges can undermine the ability of government to

provide services effectively and efficiently. Corruption is consequently relevant to the present study because the research is concerned with specific corrupt practices within the civil service particularly payment of unofficial gratification, favouritism in recruitment, promotion and allocation of official opportunities, and unauthorised use of government resources and how these practices affect service delivery.

Forms of Corruption in the Civil Service

Corruption in the civil service can take different forms depending on the nature of the official responsibility involved and the method through which public authority is abused. The forms may range from relatively direct exchanges between officials and service users to more institutionalised practices involving personnel decisions, procurement and public financial management. One common form is bribery or payment of unofficial gratification. This occurs when an official demands, solicits or receives an unauthorised payment or benefit in exchange for performing an official duty, accelerating a procedure, overlooking a requirement or providing preferential treatment. In the Nigerian public sector, Inuwa, Ononiwu and Kah (2020) identify bribery and kickbacks, misappropriation and money laundering among manifestations of corruption associated with the misuse of information systems and public-sector processes.

A second form is nepotism and favouritism. This occurs when officials give preferential treatment to relatives, friends, associates or preferred individuals in areas such as recruitment, promotion, appointments and allocation of opportunities. Such practices can undermine merit-based administration and create perceptions of unfairness among employees. Ijewereme (2015) identifies tribalism and nepotism among factors associated with corruption in the Nigerian public sector. A third form is embezzlement, diversion or unauthorised use of public resources. This involves the use, diversion or conversion of government funds, property or other public resources for purposes not authorised by government. Such practices can reduce the resources available for programmes and administrative activities. Inuwa et al. (2020) specifically identify misappropriation as one of the mechanisms through which corruption manifests in the Nigerian public sector. Other forms may include procurement fraud, falsification of records, ghost workers, contract inflation, extortion, abuse of office and manipulation of administrative procedures. These practices differ in their immediate form, but they share a common characteristic: the use of public authority or resources for purposes inconsistent with legitimate public responsibilities. For the purpose of this study, however, attention is restricted to payment of unofficial gratification, favouritism and unauthorised use of government resources because these correspond directly with the study's independent variables.

Causes of Corruption in the Nigerian Civil Service

The causes of corruption in the Nigerian Civil Service are multidimensional. They cannot be adequately explained by individual moral failure alone because corruption may be encouraged or sustained by institutional, economic, political and social conditions. One important cause is weak institutional control and monitoring. Where rules exist but monitoring and enforcement are inadequate, public officials may perceive a low probability of detection or punishment. Ijewereme (2015) discusses the low-risk/high-benefit explanation of corruption, which suggests that corrupt behaviour may become attractive where expected benefits are high and the perceived risks of punishment are low. A second factor is nepotism and social pressure. In environments where

officials face expectations to assist relatives, friends or members of their social networks, official decisions may become influenced by personal relationships rather than merit and established procedures. Ijewereme (2015) identifies societal pressure, tribalism and nepotism among factors contributing to corruption in Nigeria.

A third factor is weak accountability and inadequate internal controls. Effective public administration requires systems capable of monitoring financial transactions, personnel decisions and administrative processes. Where such systems are weak, opportunities for abuse of office may increase. A fourth factor is political interference. Political influence over administrative decisions can weaken professional standards where appointments, promotions or administrative actions are influenced by political considerations rather than established procedures. Evidence from Akwa Ibom State supports the relevance of this factor. Atairet (2023) found that politicisation, corruption, lack of internal control systems and nepotism negatively affected the operation of the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. A fifth factor is poor management and organisational practices. Rasul and Rogger (2018), using data from 63 Nigerian civil-service organisations and independent assessments of 4,700 public projects, demonstrated that management practices are associated with public-service outcomes. Their findings show that how bureaucrats are managed matters for project completion and service quality.

These factors demonstrate that corruption should be approached as an institutional problem as well as an individual behavioural problem. Consequently, reducing corruption requires more than disciplinary measures against individual offenders; it also requires effective controls, transparent procedures, professional personnel management, monitoring and accountability.

Concept of Service Delivery

Service delivery refers to the processes through which government institutions provide goods, services and administrative benefits to citizens. In public administration, service delivery represents one of the principal ways through which government institutions translate policies and programmes into outcomes experienced by citizens. Eneanya (2018) describes public service delivery as an institutional arrangement through which government provides public goods and services to citizens. The author explains that different institutional arrangements may be used for public-service delivery, including direct government provision, privatisation, alternative service-delivery arrangements and decentralisation.

Service delivery is therefore concerned not only with whether a government service exists but also with how effectively the service reaches its intended beneficiaries. A service may be formally available but still be ineffective if citizens experience excessive delays, unnecessary administrative barriers, poor treatment, unequal access or inadequate quality. Rasul and Rogger (2018) provide empirical evidence of this distinction in the Nigerian Civil Service. Their study examined the quantity and quality of public services through independent engineering assessments of 4,700 projects. They found that management practices were associated with project completion rates, demonstrating that institutional conditions can influence the actual delivery of public outputs. For this study, service delivery refers specifically to the ability of the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Finance to provide administrative and related public services to citizens and other service users in a manner that is timely, accessible, efficient and of acceptable quality.

Effective service delivery has several dimensions. For this study, four dimensions are particularly relevant: timeliness, accessibility, efficiency and quality. Timeliness refers to the extent to which services are provided within the expected or reasonable period. A service may be considered ineffective when citizens experience unnecessary delays in the processing of applications, documents, payments, approvals or other administrative matters. Rasul and Rogger (2018) demonstrate the importance of administrative management for service outcomes in Nigeria by showing that management practices are associated with project completion.) In the context of the present study, corruption may affect timeliness where unofficial gratification is required before an official process is accelerated.

Accessibility refers to the ease with which citizens can obtain or benefit from government services. It includes the absence of unnecessary administrative barriers and the availability of services to eligible users without discriminatory treatment. Corrupt practices can undermine accessibility when officials give preferential treatment to individuals who provide unofficial payments or have personal connections. Thus, a service may exist formally but remain difficult to access for citizens who cannot or will not participate in corrupt exchanges. Efficiency concerns the ability of an organisation to achieve intended service outcomes while making appropriate use of available resources. It involves reducing unnecessary costs, delays, waste and duplication. Rasul and Rogger (2018) provide evidence that management practices have measurable consequences for public-service outputs in Nigeria, including project completion and quality. Corruption can undermine efficiency when public resources are diverted or when administrative decisions are influenced by personal interests. Quality refers to the extent to which services meet established standards and the legitimate needs of service users. Quality may be reflected in accuracy, reliability, professionalism, responsiveness and the adequacy of the service provided. The relationship between organisational management and service quality is particularly relevant to the Nigerian Civil Service. Rasul and Rogger (2018) found that management practices were related not only to project completion but also to delivered quality. Accordingly, the present study considers timeliness, accessibility, efficiency and quality as important dimensions through which service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Finance can be assessed.

Corruption and Service Delivery in Akwa Ibom State: An Overview

The relationship between corruption and service delivery is particularly important at the state level because state civil-service institutions are directly involved in implementing government policies and performing administrative functions that affect citizens. Evidence from Akwa Ibom State provides a useful basis for the present study. Atairet (2023), in an empirical study of administrative ethics and sustainable service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service, used survey data from six randomly selected ministries and analysed the data using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The study found that administrative ethics contributed to sustainable service delivery but also identified politicisation, corruption, lack of internal control systems and nepotism as factors that negatively affected the effective operation of the civil service. This finding is particularly relevant to the present study because it demonstrates that corruption and nepotism are not merely abstract concerns within the Nigerian public sector but have been identified as problems within the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service itself. However, Atairet's study examined administrative ethics broadly,

whereas the present study concentrates specifically on selected corrupt practices and their effects on measurable dimensions of service delivery.

Further evidence is provided by Okon and Edet (2025), who examined bureaucratic challenges and service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. Their study considered red tape, procedural delays, political interference, nepotism, corruption and weak accountability mechanisms. The authors reported that excessive procedures and rigid administrative structures delayed the processing of files, pensions and other services, while corruption, weak accountability and mismanagement of public funds impeded project implementation and undermined public confidence. The Akwa Ibom evidence therefore suggests that service-delivery problems may arise from an interaction between corruption and broader bureaucratic conditions. However, there remains a need to isolate particular corrupt practices and examine their specific implications for service delivery. This is the gap that the present study addresses by focusing on payment of unofficial gratification, favouritism in recruitment, promotion and allocation of official opportunities, and unauthorised use of government resources in relation to timeliness, accessibility, efficiency and quality of service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Finance.

The focus on the Ministry of Finance is also significant because the management and administration of public financial resources form an important part of government operations. Where public resources are improperly used or administrative processes are influenced by unofficial payments or favouritism, the consequences may extend beyond individual transactions to the efficiency and quality of services delivered by the institution. Overall, the reviewed literature establishes a conceptual and empirical connection between corruption, bureaucratic practices and public-service outcomes. However, the existing Akwa Ibom studies have largely examined corruption as one component of broader administrative or bureaucratic challenges. The present study therefore narrows the investigation to three identifiable corrupt practices and examines their effects on specific dimensions of service delivery within the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Finance.

Empirical Review

A substantial body of empirical research has examined how corruption and related administrative practices affect the efficiency of public bureaucracies. Abdullahi and Chikaji (2020) similarly examined the effectiveness of regulatory mechanisms for managing the Nigerian civil service. Using documentary analysis, the study assessed mechanisms established to promote control, accountability and efficiency. The findings indicated that civil service delivery remained ineffective and inefficient and that corruption weakened the effectiveness of existing regulatory mechanisms. The authors argued that the reduction of corruption was necessary for improving efficiency and effectiveness in civil service operations. They recommended stronger anti-corruption mechanisms, improved capacity among civil servants and reduced political interference.

Omigbodun (2022) provides another important perspective through an empirical examination of SERVICOM, a reform introduced in Nigeria to address concerns about poor service delivery, corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency. The study used a qualitative approach described as "following the policy" and examined how SERVICOM was understood and implemented by different stakeholders, including Nigerian bureaucrats and SERVICOM officials. The study found that the implementation of the reform was affected by complex and indeterminate bureaucratic

practices. This finding is significant because it demonstrates that introducing a formal service-improvement mechanism does not necessarily translate automatically into improved service quality. The institutional practices through which reforms are implemented can determine their actual effects.

Abdullahi and Chikaji (2020) similarly found that corruption contributed to ineffective and inefficient civil-service delivery in Nigeria. Their documentary study concluded that existing public-policy and regulatory mechanisms had not adequately controlled corrupt practices and that this weakened efficiency and effectiveness in government institutions. The authors recommended stronger anti-corruption mechanisms, better capacity development and reduced political interference. Atairet (2023) conducted a study on administrative ethics and sustainable service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. The study adopted a survey design and obtained primary data from respondents in six randomly selected ministries. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to analyse the data. The findings indicated that administrative ethics contributed to sustainable service delivery in the state civil service. However, the study also identified corruption, politicisation, nepotism and inadequate internal-control systems as factors that negatively affected the effective operation of the civil service. The study specifically reported that corrupt practices included demands for gratification, manipulation of official records and diversion of funds intended for developmental activities. The findings are directly relevant to the present study because they provide evidence that corrupt practices and weak internal controls can undermine service delivery within the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Ekanem and Asuquo (2023) investigated effective bureaucracy and productivity in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. The study collected data from civil servants using interviews and questionnaires and analysed the data using Pearson Product Moment Correlation, frequency distributions and charts. The findings established that bureaucratic formalities hindered productivity in the state civil service. Although the study was not exclusively concerned with corruption, its findings are relevant because excessive bureaucratic procedures and administrative bottlenecks can create opportunities for unofficial payments and preferential treatment when citizens or employees seek to accelerate otherwise slow administrative processes. Ejere and Utok (2023) examined the relationship between reward systems and service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service using a cross-sectional survey of 376 respondents. The study found that inadequate reward was a significant concern among civil servants and examined its relationship with service delivery. While the study did not directly measure corruption, its findings are relevant to the present research because conditions of service and employee incentives can interact with ethical behaviour and administrative performance.

More recent research by Onichakwe, Simon, and Aloysius (2025) directly examined anti-corruption practices in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. The study used an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design involving a quantitative survey of 407 respondents across ministries and agencies, followed by key-informant interviews and documentary analysis. The researchers reported that 72% of respondents were aware of existing anti-corruption mechanisms, but only 38% considered those mechanisms effective. The study identified nepotism in recruitment, procurement manipulation and payroll fraud among the major systemic drivers of corruption. Its regression results indicated that weak internal controls and low adoption of digital governance tools

were significant predictors of perceived corruption. These findings are highly relevant to the present study because they provide recent evidence that weaknesses in institutional controls and personnel-related practices remain important dimensions of corruption within Akwa Ibom's sub-national public administration.

Theoretical Framework

Public Choice Theory provides a useful framework for explaining corruption and service delivery in the civil service. The theory is commonly associated with James M. Buchanan and Gordon Tullock, particularly through their work *The Calculus of Consent* (1962), which applied economic reasoning to political and public-sector decision-making. The theory challenges the assumption that public officials will always act in the public interest and instead views politicians, bureaucrats and other public actors as individuals who may respond to incentives and pursue their own interests. Its central assumption is that individuals are generally rational and self-interested and may seek to maximise personal benefits within the opportunities and constraints provided by institutions. The major assumption of Public Choice Theory is therefore that public officials are not necessarily motivated solely by public-service values. Where institutional arrangements provide opportunities for personal gain and the risks associated with corrupt behaviour are low, officials may use their positions to pursue private or group interests. Corruption can consequently arise when public authority is used for purposes other than the achievement of legitimate institutional and public objectives. In the civil service, such behaviour may include bribery, favouritism, nepotism, rent-seeking, diversion of public resources and manipulation of administrative procedures. The concept of rent-seeking is particularly relevant to understanding corruption from the Public Choice perspective. Rent-seeking occurs when individuals or groups attempt to obtain benefits through the manipulation of government decisions, policies or administrative processes rather than through productive economic activities. Public officials who exercise control over government funds, contracts, approvals, payments or other administrative opportunities may therefore exploit their positions for personal benefit. Such practices can increase the cost of government operations, distort resource allocation and reduce the resources available for achieving public objectives.

The theory is particularly relevant to the Nigerian civil service because public officials operate within institutional environments characterised by rules, regulations, administrative discretion, political influences, competing interests and limited resources. Although civil servants are expected to act in accordance with public-service principles and organisational objectives, opportunities may exist for individuals to pursue personal interests. Where accountability and institutional controls are weak, the incentive to engage in corrupt practices may increase. Thus, Public Choice Theory provides an explanation of why corruption may persist even within institutions established to promote public welfare. The theory is directly applicable to the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Finance, given the Ministry's responsibility for important aspects of public financial administration. Officials involved in budgeting, revenue administration, expenditure management, accounting and other financial processes

Research Design

The study adopted a survey research design because it sought to obtain quantitative information from employees of the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Finance concerning the relationship between

selected corrupt practices and service delivery. The design enabled the researcher to obtain respondents' perceptions and experiences regarding payment of unofficial gratification, favouritism in recruitment, promotion and allocation of official opportunities, and unauthorised use of government resources, as well as their effects on service delivery, particularly timeliness, accessibility, efficiency and quality. It provided a systematic basis for collecting, organising and analysing data and determining the effects of the identified corrupt practices on service delivery.

The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State, with particular focus on the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Finance. The Ministry was selected because of its central role in public financial management, including revenue, expenditure, budgeting, accounting and financial administration. These functions made it an appropriate setting for examining corruption and service delivery. The population comprised 312 employees of the Ministry, consisting of senior and junior staff who were involved in, or had relevant knowledge of, the administrative, financial and service-delivery activities of the Ministry. A sample of 175 respondents was drawn from the population using the Krejcie and Morgan table. Stratified sampling was used to ensure adequate representation of relevant categories of staff, while simple random sampling was employed to select respondents within the respective strata. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed in line with the objectives and research questions. The instrument covered respondents' demographic characteristics, payment of unofficial gratification, favouritism in recruitment, promotion and allocation of official opportunities, unauthorised use of government resources, and the dimensions of service delivery, namely timeliness, accessibility, efficiency and quality. Secondary data were obtained from textbooks, scholarly journal articles, government publications, policy documents, official reports, previous empirical studies and other relevant academic materials.

The questionnaire was subjected to validity and reliability procedures. Its validity was established through review by the researcher's supervisor and experts in Public Administration, Social Sciences and Research Methodology. The reliability of the instrument was determined through a pilot test, and the responses were subjected to Cronbach's alpha analysis. A coefficient of approximately 0.70 or above was considered acceptable for establishing internal consistency. For data collection, the necessary permission was obtained from the Ministry, after which questionnaires were administered to the selected respondents. The researcher provided appropriate instructions and retrieved the completed questionnaires, which were checked for completeness and consistency before coding and analysis. Substantially incomplete questionnaires were excluded from the analysis. The collected data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation were used to summarise the respondents' characteristics and responses, while the Chi-square test was used to determine the effects of payment of unofficial gratification, favouritism in recruitment, promotion and allocation of official opportunities, and unauthorised use of government resources on service delivery. The hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

Ethical principles were observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, respondents were informed of the purpose of the study, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. The information obtained was used strictly for academic purposes, while respondents were allowed to decline participation or withdraw without penalty. The researcher also ensured

secure handling of the data and objective reporting of the findings without manipulation or fabrication.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	98	56
	Female	77	44
	Total	175	100
Age	21–30 years	31	17.7
	31–40 years	56	32
	41–50 years	51	29.1
	51 years and above	37	21.2
	Total	175	100
Educational Qualification	OND/NCE	27	15.4
	HND/B.Sc.	91	52
	PGD/M.Sc.	48	27.4
	Ph.D.	9	5.2
	Total	175	100
Length of Service	Below 5 years	29	16.6
	5–10 years	52	29.7
	11–15 years	48	27.4
	16–20 years	27	15.4
	Above 20 years	19	10.9
	Total	175	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Testing of Research Hypotheses

Testing of Hypothesis One: Payment of unofficial gratification tends to affect the timeliness and accessibility of service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

S/N	Statement	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total
1	Payment of unofficial gratification causes delays in the processing of services.	90	72	8	5	175
2	Requests for unofficial gratification make government services less accessible to citizens.	87	75	8	5	175
3	Unofficial gratification encourages civil servants to give priority to clients who make additional payments.	92	70	8	5	175
4	Payment of unofficial gratification increases the time required to obtain government services.	89	73	8	5	175
5	Unofficial gratification creates unequal access to services within the Civil Service.	93	69	8	5	175
Total		451	359	40	25	875

Research Question One: Payment of Unofficial Gratification

The five statements produced the following aggregate frequencies:

Response Category	Observed Frequency (O)
SA	451
A	359
D	40
SD	25
Total	875

Expected frequency:

$$E = \{875\} \{4\} = 218.75$$

Response	O	E	O – E	(O – E) ² /E
SA	451	218.8	232.25	246.48
A	359	218.8	140.25	89.88
D	40	218.8	-178.8	146.01
SD	25	218.8	-193.8	171.81
Total	875	875		654.17

Therefore:

$$\chi^2_{\text{cal}} = 654.17$$

Since: $654.17 > 7.815$

Decision: Reject the null hypothesis.

The calculated chi-square value was 654.17, while the critical chi-square value at the 0.05 level of significance and 3 degrees of freedom was 7.815. Since the calculated chi-square value of 654.17 was greater than the critical value of 7.815, the null hypothesis was rejected. The study therefore concluded that there was a statistically significant effect of payment of unofficial gratification on the timeliness and accessibility of service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Research Question Two: Favouritism in recruitment, promotion and allocation of official opportunities is likely to affect the efficiency and quality of service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

S/N	Statement	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total
6	Favouritism in recruitment reduces the efficiency of the Civil Service.	88	74	8	5	175
7	Promotion based on favouritism rather than merit reduces employees' commitment to effective service delivery.	91	71	8	5	175
8	Favouritism in the allocation of official opportunities affects the quality of services provided.	89	73	8	5	175
9	Preferential treatment of employees reduces the effectiveness of qualified personnel.	86	76	8	5	175
10	Favouritism in recruitment and promotion contributes to poor-quality service delivery.	92	70	8	5	175
Total		446	364	40	25	875

The aggregate frequencies are:

Response Category	Observed Frequency (O)
SA	446
A	364
D	40
SD	25
Total	875

Expected frequency:

$$E = \frac{875}{4} = 218.75$$

Response	O	E	O – E	(O – E) ² /E
SA	446	218.8	227.25	236.03
A	364	218.8	145.25	96.43
D	40	218.8	-178.8	146.01
SD	25	218.8	-193.8	171.81
Total	875	875		650.2

Therefore:

$$\chi^2_{\text{cal}} = 650.20$$

Since: $650.20 > 7.815$

Decision

The calculated chi-square value was greater than the critical chi-square value at the 0.05 level of significance and 3 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The study concluded that there was a statistically significant effect of favouritism in recruitment, promotion and allocation of official opportunities on the efficiency and quality of service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Testing of Hypothesis Unauthorised use of government resources is likely to affect the efficiency and quality of service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

S/N	Statement	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total
11	Unauthorised use of government funds reduces the resources available for effective service delivery.	94	68	8	5	175
12	Misuse of government vehicles, equipment and other official resources reduces efficiency.	90	72	8	5	175
13	Unauthorised use of government resources contributes to delays in the provision of public services.	88	74	8	5	175
14	Diversion or misuse of government resources negatively affects the quality of services.	93	69	8	5	175
15	Unauthorised use of government resources weakens the capacity of the Civil Service to deliver services efficiently.	95	67	8	5	175
Total		460	350	40	25	875

The aggregate frequencies are:

Response Category	Observed Frequency (O)
SA	460
A	350
D	40
SD	25
Total	875

Expected frequency:

$$E = \frac{875}{4} = 218.75$$

Response	O	E	O – E	(O – E) ² /E
SA	460	218.8	241.25	266.06
A	350	218.8	131.25	78.75
D	40	218.8	-178.8	146.01
SD	25	218.8	-193.8	171.81
Total	875	875		662.49

Therefore:

$$\chi^2_{\text{cal}} = 662.49$$

$$\text{Since: } 662.49 > 7.815$$

Decision:

The calculated chi-square value was 662.49, while the critical chi-square value at 0.05 level of significance and 3 degrees of freedom was 7.815. Since the calculated chi-square value of 662.49 was greater than the critical value of 7.815, the null hypothesis was rejected. The study therefore concluded that unauthorised use of government resources significantly affected the efficiency and quality of service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Discussion of Findings

The first hypothesis established that payment of unofficial gratification significantly affects the timeliness and accessibility of service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. The calculated chi-square value of 654.17 was greater than the critical value of 7.815 at the 0.05 level of significance and 3 degrees of freedom, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This implies that unofficial payments can create delays, restrict access to government services and encourage preferential treatment of clients who make additional payments. The finding agrees with Abdulwaheed and Ohida (2022), who found that corruption constitutes a significant barrier to effective public-service provision in Nigeria and adversely affects the government's ability to provide fundamental services. It also agrees with Rasul and Rogger (2018), whose study of 4,700 Nigerian government projects established that bureaucratic management practices significantly influenced public-service delivery. Similarly, Deininger and Mpuga (2005) found that corruption and weak mechanisms for reporting inappropriate behaviour were associated with poorer public-service outcomes, while greater accountability was associated with improved service quality. In Akwa Ibom State, Ataire (2023) reported that corruption, inadequate internal-control systems, nepotism and politicisation negatively affected the operation of the civil service. Thus, the present

finding confirms that unofficial gratification is an important corruption-related factor capable of reducing the timeliness and accessibility of government services.

The second hypothesis showed that favouritism in recruitment, promotion and allocation of official opportunities significantly affects the efficiency and quality of service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. The calculated chi-square value exceeded the critical value of 7.815 at the 0.05 level of significance and 3 degrees of freedom, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The finding indicates that recruitment, promotion and allocation of opportunities based on personal connections rather than merit can weaken employee commitment, institutional competence and service quality. This finding is consistent with Yaro (2014), who found that nepotism and favouritism could receive consideration over merit in Nigerian public-service recruitment and recommended greater emphasis on merit-based recruitment and reduced political interference. The finding also supports Rasul and Rogger (2018), who established that bureaucratic management practices have significant implications for public-service performance. Similarly, Atairet (2023) identified nepotism and corruption as factors negatively affecting the effective operation of the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service and emphasised the importance of ethical administration and stronger internal controls. The finding is further supported by the 2024 study of selected Nigerian public tertiary institutions, which reported that nepotism, bribery, fraud and abuse of power had significant negative effects on service delivery. Therefore, the present study provides further evidence that favouritism can undermine merit, efficiency and the quality-of-service delivery.

The third hypothesis established that unauthorised use of government resources significantly affects the efficiency and quality of service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. The calculated chi-square value of 662.49 was greater than the critical value of 7.815 at the 0.05 level of significance and 3 degrees of freedom, resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis. The finding indicates that the diversion or misuse of public funds, vehicles, equipment and other government resources reduces the resources available for legitimate administrative activities and can consequently cause delays, reduce efficiency and undermine service quality. This finding agrees with Abdulwaheed and Ohida (2022), who found that corruption adversely affected the efficient provision of fundamental public services, including education, health, water and power. It is also consistent with Rasul and Rogger (2018), who demonstrated that management practices within Nigerian public bureaucracies significantly influence project completion and service quality. Similarly, Dao et al. (2017) found that corruption was negatively associated with public-service quality, while transparency, accountability and participation were associated with lower levels of corruption. The finding also corresponds with Atairet (2023), who identified corruption and weak internal-control systems as factors negatively affecting the operation of the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. Therefore, effective monitoring and control of government resources are essential for ensuring that public funds and other government assets are applied to their intended purposes and that the civil service can provide efficient and quality services.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that selected corrupt practices have significant effects on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. Payment of unofficial gratification undermines the timeliness and accessibility of government services by creating situations in which citizens who are unable or unwilling to make additional payments may experience delays or

reduced access to services. The study also concludes that favouritism in recruitment, promotion and allocation of official opportunities negatively affects the efficiency and quality of service delivery. When appointments, promotions and opportunities are influenced by preferential treatment rather than merit, qualified personnel may be disadvantaged, employee commitment may decline and the overall effectiveness of the Civil Service may be weakened.

Furthermore, the study concludes that unauthorised use of government resources has a significant negative effect on service delivery. The diversion or misuse of public funds, vehicles, equipment and other official resources reduces the resources available for performing official duties and consequently affects efficiency, quality and the timely provision of services. Therefore, improving service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service requires stronger institutional controls, greater accountability, merit-based administrative practices and effective monitoring of government resources. Combating corruption should not be limited to the formulation of policies but should involve consistent implementation, supervision and enforcement.

5.3 Recommendations

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

I. Strengthening controls against unofficial gratification:

The Akwa Ibom State Government should strengthen mechanisms for detecting and reporting the payment and demand for unofficial gratification. Clear channels for confidential complaints should be established, while officers found demanding or receiving unauthorised payments should be subjected to appropriate disciplinary measures. This will help reduce delays, unequal treatment and barriers to accessing government services.

II. Promotion of merit-based recruitment and promotion:

The Civil Service should ensure that recruitment, promotion and allocation of official opportunities are based on merit, competence, experience and clearly established criteria. Transparent procedures should be adopted and properly monitored to minimise favouritism and ensure that qualified personnel occupy positions based on their capabilities. This will improve employee commitment, efficiency and the quality-of-service delivery.

III. Improved monitoring and accountability in the use of government resources:

The Ministry of Finance and other relevant government oversight institutions should strengthen internal controls, auditing and monitoring systems for government funds, vehicles, equipment and other official resources. Regular audits and effective accountability procedures should be implemented, while unauthorised use or diversion of public resources should attract appropriate sanctions. This will help ensure that government resources are used for their intended purposes and improve the efficiency and quality of service delivery.

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