Corrupt behaviors of agents and users of public service in Cotonou in the face of representation of money and ethno-linguistic affiliations

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Abstract

The present study aimed to measure the link between representations of money, ethnolinguistics affiliations and the nature of corruption among agents and users of public services. The numerous legal mechanisms put in place have produced limited results without big effects. Thus, this survey raises the problem of the persistence (obstinacy) of corruption in spite of the multiple efforts taken various levels (institutional, national, and international). The sample of the study consists, on the one hand, of 100 users of public services chosen at random at the Directorate of Treasure and Public Accounting (DGTCP) and at the General Directorate of Taxes and Domains (DGID) in Benin. And on the other hand, of 50 agents in public service; identified in the two directorates according to their contact with the users in the exercise of their functions. Two different questionnaires were used to collect data on the two targets (of agents). The results from the correlation and regression analysis confirm the existence of a significant link between the representation of money, ethnolinguistics affiliations of the agents and users of public services and the behavior of corruption. The results of this research will allow authorities at various levels to better understand the behavior of corruption of the agents and users of public service and it will also be of use in the drafting of measures that aim at changing people's behavior for an effective and productive fight against corruption.

Keywords: Representations; directorate; corruption; money; changing the minds; ethnolinguistics affiliations; attitudes

1. Introduction

The United Nations (UN), through its General Assembly, adopted on December 14th, 2005, the United Nations Convention against Corruption. This contains provisions for preventing corruption, as well as rules for the organization of international cooperation. Long before this, the Conference of the African Union, at its second ordinary session in Maputo on July 11th, 2003, adopted the Convention of the African Union on the Prevention and Fight against Corruption. In Benin, corruption is as old as the country's independence, and all the different regimes and governments have tried to remedy it through the establishment of legal and regulatory mechanisms. The goal of these initiatives is to reduce corruption, if not to eradicate it completely. According to Elias (2012), in spite of these laws, not much has been achieved in the fight against corruption. According to Delavallade (2014), "_There may be corruption if an individual has a personal benefit of the delegated power at its disposal_." It is a phenomenon that occurs all over the world

and takes many forms. Given the challenges it poses to the development of the society and people; many studies have tried to understand the phenomenon in order to provide effective remedies. There is almost a general consensus on the adverse effect of corruption. For instance, Kabou and Yahouédéhou; and also Transparency International, Benin have all been unanimous on the dangers of corruption to both current and future generation of the society. The various studies in law, political science, economics, and sociology have stated and explained the phenomenon of corruption and have proposed possible solutions curb the problem, but the fact is that these works address corruption through its manifestations, without considering the main actor(s) of corruption. Based on existing works and findings, we realize that money; and languages and ethnic affinities emerge as trigger factors of corruption. When corruption is considered as behavior in social psychology, then the concept of social representations needs to be elucidated in order to better understand it.

Mentioned for the first time by Durkheim (1968), the concept of representation has evolved over time and is now treated in two ways: the structure and content (the subject of the representation). In fact, there are two approaches, first, there is the structural approach that concerns the structure (core and peripheral elements). Second is the classic approach which deals with the content (objectification and anchoring). All these approaches, however, agree that representation is a social construct that guides and justifies the behavior of individuals. So what then are the different representations of money of the ethnolinguistic affiliations of agent and users of public services? And what are links between these representation and corruption behavior? This study seeks to provide answers to these questions. The study is organized as follows: first, the goals and assumptions of the study, followed by a highlight of the problem, then the methodology and finally results, interpretations, and discussion are presented.

1.1 Objectives and hypothesis

The overall objective is to examine the representations of money and ethnolinguistic affiliations in corruption among agents and public service users in Cotonou in order to propose ways for a more effective fight against corruption.

The specific objectives are:

- ❖ To characterize the representation of money among workers and public service users in Cotonou as an explanatory factor in the persistence of corruption
- ❖ To analyze the representation of ethnolinguistic affiliations among agents and public service users in Cotonou as an explanatory factor in the persistence of corruption.

Based on these objectives the study tests the following hypothesis:

- ➢ **General Hypothesis:** Representations of money and ethnolinguistic affiliation among agents and public service users explain the persistence of corruption.
- ➢ **Specific Hypothesis 1:** the more money is important to agent and public service users, the more they are prone to engage in corrupt behavior;
- ➢ **Specific Hypothesis 2 : ethnocentric affiliation**   More ethnolinguistics affiliation is important for agents and users of public services and more they are prone to corruption.

2. Issue

According to Kabou (1991), corruption and embezzlement occupy a place among the behaviors that prevent the development of the African continent. Corruption seems like evil that corrodes and clogs the path of development of African countries. According to the report of a survey commissioned by the government of Benin on the state of corruption and governance, a majority of the population recognize the existence of corruption as the fourth obstacle to development of the country (Corruption and Governance in Benin, report the results of the diagnostic survey, 2007). That is, how the actors involved in corruption are unaware of the negative impact of corruption on their welfare. Numerous studies have addressed corruption as a social fact against which you just find solutions without taking into account the human actor. And works in legal sciences, economics and sociology have also not studied corruption as human behavior. The present study joins the discussion on corruption by analyzing the role of representation of money and ethnolinguistic affiliation in determining corrupt behavior. The analysis carried out from the perspective of social psychology, and hence analyses corruption as a human behavior.

3. Methodological approach

This paper combines both qualitative and quantitative techniques to achieve its objectives. The quantitative analysis involves regressing corrupt behavior on the representation of money and ethnolinguistic affiliations.   Using Cotonou as a case study, data for the study was collected from agents and users of Directorate of Treasure and Public Accounting (DGTCP) and at the General Directorate of Taxes and Domains (DGID). Table 1 presents the distribution of the two samples from the agents and users of public services. The targets are divided into two categories following the structure where they were questioned. And utility officials exercising are distinguished in both structures on the one hand and public service users on the other.

Table 1: Distribution of participants in focus groups and structures

the public service structure / social categories of target	DGTCP	DGID	Total
public service workers	25	25	50
public service users	70	30	100

Note that since some of the workers in these directorates have no contact with the public, the agents were sampled from those who, in the performance of their duties, come into contact with users. This explains why 50 public service agents were surveyed.   Agents were selected based on their availability during the time of survey since they only come to the directorates only for specific business and leave. Based on the objectives and hypotheses of the study (Van Campendhout and Quivy, 2011), the data were collected with the aid of a structured questionnaire which was administered by an interview assistant. Different questionnaires were administered to agents and users. Each questionnaire had two parts. The first part deals

with the conduct of individuals and their behavior. This part of the questionnaire asked questions on the individual's representation of money, his/her ethnolinguistic affiliation, the behavior adopted towards money in the presence of ethnolinguistic links. Thus, questions 1.2 to 1.5 of the agent's questionnaire deal with representations of money and ethnolinguistic affiliations; 1.6 to 1.10 deal with behavior. Questions 1.5 to 1.7 of the users' questionnaire asked about corrupt behaviors while 1.1 to 1.4, 1.8 and 1.9 deal with performances.   The second part of each questionnaire contains information on the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Questions on the respondent's age, sex, marital status, ethnicity and departments as well as the positions of the agents, are asked in this part. The questionnaires were administered between 8th and 21st February 2016 at the General Directorate of Taxes and "(DGID)" and the Treasury and Public Accounting "(DGTCP)". Whilst data from users were collected without much difficulty, most of the agents were reluctant in their response and in some cases they were absent. The filled questionnaires were processed using Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS).

The main results from the data analysis are discussed in the next section of the paper. The analysis was carried out in two parts. On the one hand, a descriptive analysis through cross-tabulation is used to describe the representation, ethnolinguistic affiliations, and corrupt behaviors. On the other hand, inferential analysis through correlation and regression analysis were used to identify the predictors of corrupt behavior.

4. Results and discussion

The correlations result in Table 2 confirms that there is a link between representations of money, ethnolinguistic affiliation and corrupt behaviors. Indeed, the correlation coefficients (all higher than the ratio observed in the table of the law of Bravais and Pearson r = 0.16 and 0.23 for users for agents respectively) show that representations of money, ethnolinguistic affiliations vary in the same direction as corrupt behavior. The tables below present the results of the correlations and regressions.

Table 2: Correlation matrix of the independent variables with the dependent variables for public service users

	RepEthling1	RepEthling2	RepEthling3	RepEthling4	RepArg	ArgPrSceViteRendu	EffetContact
RepEthling1	1						
RepEthling2	,975**	1					
RepEthling3	,778**	,818**	1				
RepEthling4	,847**	,866**	,876**	1			
RepArg	,367**	,380**	,430**	,466**	1		
ArgPrSceViteRendu	,498**	,537**	,573**	,557**	,888**	1	
EffetContact	,678**	,679**	,703**	,726**	,546**	,685**	1

Table 3: Regression Table of the independent variables with the dependent variable effect on touch users

	B	Err Standard	Beta	T	P
Effet contact	-1,375	,502			,007
RepArg	,270	,074	,266	3,662	,000
RepEthling 1	,605	,419	,423	1,445	,152
RepEthling 4	,323	,229	,230	1,411	,161
RepEthling 3	,395	,215	,259	1,843	,069
RepEthling 2	-,337	,437	-,245	-,771	,443

R= 0,79 ; R²= 0,61 ; R² ajusté= 0,60 ; Erreur standard= 0,79

Table 4: Regression Table of the independent variables with the dependent variable on the money on public service users

	B	Err Standard	Beta	T	P
ArgPrSceViteRendu	-1,490	,343			
RepArg	,898	,050	,801	17,845	,000
RepEthling1	-,553	,286	-,350	-1,933	,056
RepEthling4	-,303	,157	-,194	-1,933	,056
RepEthling3	,327	,147	,194	2,234	,028
RepEthling2	,886	,299	,583	2,967	,004

R= 0,92 ; R²= 0,85 ; R² ajusté= 0,85 ; Erreur standard= 0,54

Table 5: Correlation matrix of the independent and dependent variables

	ArgPrSceRendu	ArgPrSceAvtDélai	EthlingDsSceRendu1	EthlingDsSceRendu2	RepArg1	RepArg2	RepArg3	RepArg4	RepArg5
ArgPrSceAvt Délai	,373**								
EthlingDsSce Rendu1	,478**	,649**							
EthlingDsSce Rendu2	,467**	,660**	,964**						
RepArg1	,344*	,585**	,566**	,548**					
RepArg2	,437**	,299*	,310*	,305*	,380**				
RepArg3	,598**	,295*	,337*	,343*	,218	,652**			
RepArg4	,536**	,595**	,432**	,419**	,393**	,466**	,629**		
RepArg5	,495**	,655**	,687**	,686**	,498**	,286*	,280*	,456**	
RepEthling	,489**	,602**	,645**	,660**	,599**	,300*	,413**	,567**	,622**

Table 6: Correlation matrix of the independent variables and the dependent variable receiving money for services rendered

	B	Erreur standard	Bêta	T	P
ArgPrSceRendu	,083	,905		,092	,0927
RepArg1	,014	,246	,009	,058	,954
RepArg2	,002	,192	,002	,010	,992
RepArg3	,427	,206	,374	2,066	,045
RepArg4	,124	,228	,093	,546	,588
RepArg5	,413	,203	,288	2,028	,049
RepEthling	,107	,160	,113	,668	,507

R= 0,70 ; R²= 0,50 ; R² ajusté= 0,43 ; Erreur standard= 1,20

The results show that representation of money is positively correlated with corrupt behavior among both agents and users of public services. The regression analysis also shows that money representation is also a good predictor of corrupt behavior. Thus, the more important is to an agent the more he develops corrupt behaviors. The same relationship is found between ethnolinguistic affiliation and corrupt behavior. We can say in light of the structural approach of the theory of social representation, that money is the central core in the representation of corrupt officials and public service users in Cotonou and ethnolinguistic affiliations are the peripheral system.

Barr and Serra (2008) as quoted by Delavallade (2014) stated that the fight against corruption should work towards changing attitudes since policies that aimed economic and institutional conditions have achieved limited results. It is, therefore, clear from these previous studies that many of the provisions and mechanisms put in place so far have limitations in terms of their ability to fight corruption. It is, therefore, important to re-focused the fight against corruption at changing the minds and attitudes of people. This article aimed to address corruption in the dynamics of the representations of the corrupt actors. The representation of money and ethnolinguistic affiliations in corruption is a construction of common sense knowledge. In view of the results of this study, people's representation of monetary corruption, ethnolinguistic affiliations basically determines the favorable attitude of people towards corruption in the face of two main factors (money and ethnolinguistic affiliation) consequently, reflecting the corrupt behaviors.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of data showed that representations of money, ethnolinguistic affiliations of public officials and users are significantly and positively correlated with the corrupt behavior. Specifically, it found that money is the fundamental cause of corruption among agents and users of public services, this is further re-enforced by ethnolinguistic affiliations. This finding allows us to say that the representation of money by public service agents and users and their ethnolinguistic affiliations explains corrupt behaviors. Policies must, therefore, be directed at changing the representation of money among agents and users of public services.

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