

PERCEIVED ROLES AND CHALLENGES OF THE STATE'S ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION IN FIGHTING CORRUPTION IN ZAMFARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The establishment of Zamfara state anti-corruption has been helping in reducing the cases of corruption in the state, as the activities of the commission touches all sectors that are considered to be governmental and non-governmental organizations throughout the state. It is against this back ground that, the paper explores the roles and challenges of Zamfara state anti-corruption commission in fighting corruption. Brief history of the state was provided to serve as prelude, also formation and functions of the commission were analyzed. Moreover, activities of the commission that have been helping in the fight against the menace of corruption were stressed, then challenges facing the commission , finally the paper ends with conclusion and recommendations.

Key words: Perceived, Fight, Against, Anti, Corruption, Commission and Role

Introduction

It is worth noting that corruption has become endemic phenomena with negative consequences in all sphere of human endeavor, Corrupt practices are widely spread and causing serious damages to the society (Joda, 2011). This is the reason why corruption in Islam has various meaning covered by single Arabic word “*Fasad*”. The word stand for any kind of deviation from *shari’ah*, that include bribery, gratification, nepotism, favoritism, deception or the spread of immorality or crimes like consumption of alcohol, gambling, sexual inter course, homo sexual, lesbianism, among others.

The committance of the above is referred to as mischief as indicated in the Qur’anic verses quoted below. It is the opposite of “*Islah*” which means to reform, to do good, to correct, to contribute to progress development and overall welfare of the Muslims. It also denotes total submission to the laws of Allah (S.W.T) That is why Allah says:

And follow not the bidding of those who are extravagant, who make mischief (corruption) or *Fasad* in the land and amend or reform not (their ways) 26:151-152

In another verse Allah says:

Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of (the Meed) that the hands of men have earned, that (Allah) may give them a test of some of their deeds: in order that they may turn back (from evil) 30:41

From the above quoted verses it is understood that all the mischief or *Fasad* that spread in the land that also resulted in the establishment of anti-corruption commission are as a result of the handiwork of Muslims. Since Islam is against any form of *Fasad* (mischief or corruption) therefore, it must to find avenue of fighting against such immoral pervasion among others. Based on the above Aliyu (2002:2) maintained that corruption has three stages that include the course, which is considered to be the non-

compliance with the teaching of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* of the Prophet (S.A.W). The symptoms which include bribery, gratification, nepotism, consumption of alcohol, gambling, sexual intercourse out of wedlock, and the moral decadence in the society. Lastly, the consequences that include high rate of crimes and criminals, social deviations juvenile delinquencies, immoral pervasion all these will be the order of the day in society. To this end the Hadith of the Prophet (S.A.W) teaches that indulging in all such activities that are against the *shari'ah*, is as a result of lacking faith in Allah (S.W.T) and the evil that is in the mind of Muslim which cannot be cured until we have faith in Him and submissive to His laws.

Prophet (S.A.W) says:

Surely in our body there is a flesh in our body, if it is pure the whole body is clean, and it is impure the whole body is bastardized, surely it is the heart" (Sahih Muslim)

Based on the above Quoted hadith, if Muslims want to get rid of corruption, they must have faith in Allah (S.W.T) and abide by His laws as contained in the *Qur'an*, *Sunnah* of the Prophet (S.A.W) and other sources of law

It is against this back ground that after *Shari'ah* re-implementation in the state a Commission was established in order to fight the corrupt practices, as a result of this the paper is apt to unveil the roles being played by the commission in fighting corruption as well as the challenges facing the commission in the cause of discharging its duties at the end to recommend solution to them.

Purpose of the study

The objectives of this paper are:

1. To unveil the expected roles to be played by the commission in curbing the menace of Corruption in the state.
2. To Create awareness to the People on the activities of the commission.
3. To find out to what extent does the activities of the commission affect the lives of the People in the state.

4. To find out the Challenges facing the commission and proper solution to them.
5. Also to encourage other state Governors of the federation to establish Anti Corruption commission in their respective states

Conceptual Clarifications

Oxford advanced learner's dictionary (2006) defined fight to mean to try hard to stop, deal with or oppose something bad. Fight in the context of this paper is referring to fighting against the evil of corruption which is being done by the commission. The same dictionary defined against to mean preventing something from happening, but in the context of this write up it mean preventing corruption to prevail in our society as a result of the effort of the commission.

Role: the same dictionary also defined the term to mean the degree to which something or somebody is involved in a situation or an activity and the effect that they have on it. But as far this paper is concern the role is referring to the effort making by anti-corruption commission in fighting corruption in the state.

Commission: means an official group of people who have been given responsibility to control something or to find out about something usually for the government. But under this situation commission is referred to Zamfara state anti-corruption commission and the power given to it to fight against corrupt practice in the state.

Perceive: The same dictionary defined the term to mean noticing or becoming aware of something or to understand or to think of something in a particular way. But in the context of this paper the word is referring to the methods and ways the commission will follow to tackle the cases of corruption in the state. Therefore, the topic of this paper urges us to examine the effort of Zamfara state Anti-corruption commission in fighting corruption in the state which may be as a result of unveiling its activities and achievements to the general public.

Brief History of Zamfara State

Zamfara state is located at the North West region of Northern Nigerian. It lies between latitude and longitude, it covers a landscape area of 38,418 square kilometers. It shares boundaries with Sokoto to the north, Kebbi and Niger state to the west, Katsina to the east and Kaduna to the south. It is one of the thirty six (36) states in Nigeria created on 1st October 1996 by the then head of state late general Sani Abacha with, Gusau as the State capital, it has fourteen (14) local government areas, it has a population of 3.260 million people according to 2006 census. (Musa & Bawa, 2015). Islam is the dominant religion of the people of the state because 98.7% are Muslims, Christians carry 0.8% likewise the followers of the traditional religions constitute only 0.5% (Zamfara at glance, 2014)

The climate conditions of the area are dry season (including Harmattan) that occur from November to April, and rainy season that begins from May to October every year. The people of the state are mostly farmers, this is the reason why the slogan of the state reads: "Farming is our pride". A part from the Zamfarawa living in the state there are other ethnic groups that have become the prominent indigenes of the state, they are the *Gobirawas*, they are mostly found in Shinkafi Local government and they are also found in small number in other Local government areas, the *Burmawas* found in Bakaura Local government, the *Fulanis* found in Maru, Bungudu, Gusau and Maradun Local governments respectively. The *kashinawa*, found in Tsafe, Gusau and Maru Local government areas.

The *Alibawas'* are located in Zurmi and Kaura Namoda Local government. The *Garewas* they are found in Tsafe, Bungudu Local governments. The *Hadeji* was that migrated from *Hadajein* present Jigawa state. A part from the ethnic groups mentioned above, there are also some other tribes that their number is meager and they are scattered all over the state they are; *Bare-Bari*, *Zazzagawa*, *Yoruba*, *Igbo*, *Tivi*, *Ebiras*, among others.

Establishment of Zamfara State Anti Corruption Commission

When the then Governor of Zamfara state decided to re-implement *shari'ah*, it is considered that the success cannot be achieved without fighting corruption which is one of the social evils bedeviling the society. However, a commission was established named Anti-Corruption in October 1999 five months after he was sworn in office in order to check and control the existence of corruption in the ministries, Parastatals, boards and agencies. But later the commission was supported with a law no 17 of 15th September 2000 that gives it power to abolish all corrupt practices and abuse of power in the state.

Structure of the Commission

From the initial stage the commission has the following departments:

- (a) Administration (b) Finance (c) Monitoring (d) Investigation (e) Public complaint
- (b) (f) Public enlightenment (g) Research and planning (h) Legal department

Composition of the Commission

The commission consists of the following:

- (a) Executive chairman (b) Secretary (c) Permanent members (d) Special Assistants
- (e) Fifteen (15) part time, members.

But one thing to note, having realized the workload of the commission, the public complaint department was removed in July 2003 and upgraded to a full pledge commission. As a result of this development cases related to the commission were transferred there that include Debts, Marital problems, Inheritance among others. Therefore, at that initial take up five hundred and forty one (541) cases were registered in the newly established commission. However, new law was enacted for the establishment, composition and powers of the new Anti-corruption commission. To this effect law No 12 of 2003 was formed under the provision of section 15(5) of the 1999 constitution which gives power to the state to abolish all corrupt practices and abuse of power and the law shall come into force on the

23rd July 2003. (Zamfara State official gazette, 2003) More so, the structure and composition of the commission were also affected as far as the appointment of members to man the affairs of the commission, the composition reads:

- (1) Chairman
- (2) Five permanent commissioners and there must be legal practitioners and knowledgeable in Islamic education.
- (3) And not less than seven (7) and not more than fifteen (15) part time members at least seven out of them must be retired officers. But considering the dimension of the activities and in order to ease the task ahead of the commission the members were raised to twenty seven (27) (Surajo, 2008:23).
- (4) Secretary (5) Special Advisers

The law stated that all those appointed as members shall be persons of proven character/integrity.

From the composition above, it is evident that the commission will discharge its functions and duties as expected for the fact the criteria for selecting officials of the commission is in order because some qualities are to be looked into before considering a particular individual to be an official of the commission.

Roles/ Duties of the Commission

The law establishing the commission specified the following roles to be discharged by the members appointed to overlook the affairs and activities of the commission.

- (1) To ensure justice in the distribution and completion of all contracts awarded by the state government.
- (2) To make sure that, government officials in the state are abiding by the ethics of civil service rules, and avoiding any act that will lead them to corruption in the course of discharging their official assignments.
- (3) In making sure that the common man in the state is not being subjected to hardship difficulties and maltreated by any judicial officer, security agencies or non-

governmental organizations in the states as a result of levying an unnecessary tax to him.

- (4) It is also the duty of the commission to deal with any fraud government official working under the state.
- (5) To organize workshop, seminars public enlightenment, sensitization to public on the effect of corruption.
- (6) To establish offices in each of the fourteen (14) local government areas in the state.
- (7) To receive all allegations submitted through the local government offices for immediate action
- (8) To contact the office of the attorney general for legal advice and prosecution and to the governor for his information and notice. (Musa, 2009)

The above cited roles/duties or functions are expected to be performed by the commission, it is hoped that when they are executed or carried out without fear or favor, cases of corrupt practices would be less or reduced in the state, because the duties cover all areas where corruption finds its way.

Activities of the Commission

Within a short period of time the commission listened to and investigated more than three thousand four hundred and sixty (3466) cases of corrupt practices (Salisu Dodo) owing to the fact that there was a low level of awareness on the activities of the commission at that time. The cases were treated in accordance with the provision of the law establishing the commission which suggested five (5) options under which a defaulter would be punished, they include the followings:

- (1) Admonishing (*Wa'az*)
- (2) Transfer
- (3) Suspension
- (4) Prosecution
- (5) Dismissal from service. (Musa, 2009)

Based on the above, some civil servants and other affected individuals in the state whose cases of corrupt practices were established

beyond reasonable doubt faced the wrath of the law as indicated below:

- (1) Four (4) *Shari'ah* court judges were dismissed from service.
- (2) Two (2) Court Registrars were also dismissed
- (3) One (1) Zonal inspector of *Shari'ah* was also dismissed.
- (4) Seven (7) civil servants were dismissed from service
- (5) One officer from the board of internal revenue was found wanting and dismissed from civil service (Musa,2009)

Not only this, other people in the state that have committed one form or the other of corruption and were arraign before the Commission faced the wrath of the law as the same cases of civil servant cited above to this effect, some traditional rulers, business men, top government officials Commissioners and Individuals in the society among others, also experienced the same.

From the above it is obvious that, the measures taking by the Anti-computation of dismissing any civil servant found wanting in the discharge of his duties is commendable and it show to the Public that Zamfara is operating *Shari'ah* legal system which prohibited receiving and giving bribe. This is the reasons why Prophet (S.A.W) in one of his ahadith condemned giving and taking bribe where he says:

The curse of Allah (S.W.T) is upon whom gives and takes bribe--- (*Sahih Muslim*)

A part from listening and attending to cases that have direct bearing with Corruption the commission also is vested with the following responsibilities which are considered to be part of their activities as maintained by Surajo (2002) the commission advise government on where to intervene in order to restore peace, maintain law and order and return rights to legitimate owners. The commission also advice government on the disciplinary measure to be taken to any corrupt officer found guilty in the cause of their investigation

Is also one of the roles of the commission to engage in public enlightenment by using several

methods enshrined by *Shari'ah* against all corrupt practices and abuse of Power. During this campaign the members involved insist on the fear of Allah while discharging their duties and reminding people that they are going to account their deeds on the Day of Judgment. Monitoring of government activities and functions to be carried out in line with the teaching of *Shari'ah* the commission also monitor civil service rules and procedures of employments, payment of salaries execution of contract awarded by government. They also carried out investigation as a result of petition or complaint received on a particular Ministry or Parastatal and the parties involved are being invited for fear hearing and everybody most answer the call in respective of his position in the society or in the government. Shinkafi and Talata Mafara local government areas of the state were sampled and structured interview was conducted responses gathered from the respondents shows that there is high level of awareness among the people in the state on the activities of the commission and they are making positive impact, they maintained that, corruption has being reduced to the minimal level in the state this might be connected with perceived roles and duties the commission is performing towards that direction, and some challenges facing the commission were equally heard from the respondents which some of them are listed in the paper, To this end advices were offered that serves as recommendations it is hoped that if they are put into practice the objectives will be achieved (Aliyu & Dalhatu). These and many more serve as the activities of the board which are believed to have been contributing in the reduction of corruption in the state.

Achievements of the commission

As a result of the role been played by the commission the following were recorded as success:

- (a) The commission recorded an investigated corrupt practices reported from the various Ministries, Colleges, Parastatals, directorates etc. for instance a case was represented before the commission that

involves corrupt practices from the ministry of Education the accused persons were invited for hearing they were found guilty, later they refund the money alleged to have stolen and some Parastatals the salaries of their staff were diverted but later were handed over to the owner etc.

- (b) A number of corrupt practices were said to have been reported to the commission that involved some judicial officers, later investigations were made those found guilty were punished as stated by the law.
- (c) As earlier mentioned the activities of the commission were extended to local government areas in the state. Therefore, the commission received report of unnecessary deductions of salaries of some local government workers and other related cases and actions were taken.
- (d) Also there were civil associations that used to forward their complaints to the commission in the period under review. For example some officials of *MiyyetiAllah* (Cattle Reares Association) have been petitioned by their members for conniving with Police in various forms of mischief which make some of them to leave the state. All the money collected illegally are returned to them.

Based on the above it is obvious, that Zamfara state Anti-corruption commission has assisted immensely in reducing the rate of Corruption in the state because the punishment meted to culprits is serving as deterrent to the public

Challenges Facing the Commission

The commission is faced with some challenges as maintained by Aliyu, (2002) corruption has eaten deep into the body of Nigerians and therefore, it is difficult for any government fighting against corruption to 100% succeed in its campaigning on the eradication of corruption. Also, the political dispensation is another challenge because the opposition parties in the state are not ready to give helping hand in the fight against corruption and sometimes the politicians are not open to positive change which the commission is out for..

Economic constraint has weakened the morale of the commission to the extent that their activities are not properly being managed most especially at local government level. Manpower is another challenge facing the commission, because the staff strength hinders the commission to carry out its activities efficiently.

Recommendations

The paper recommends the following, which is the believe that if put into consideration the board will perform its role as expected and the challenges would be reduce to the minimal level.

1. Let Muslims realize that Islam condemned corruption in totality, therefore, they should shun away from it and support the commission in the fight against it.
2. The government should through the commission organize a constant enlightenment campaign on the effect of corruption as a result of this those nominal Muslims that are not willing to accept positive change will do so.
3. There should be a proper funding of the commission by the government
4. Qualified staff should be appointed to manned the affairs of the commission
5. Modern equipments should be provided in order to ease the activities of the commission.
6. A separate building with enough facilities should be provided to enhance the activities of the commission.

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- Salisu Dodo (54), Director Planning Research and Statistics, Anti-corruption Commission, Gusau Zamfara state, 25/06/2017, 3:00pm