

Trust in government and the politics of fuel subsidy removal in Lagos, Nigeria.

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Abstract

Government's incompetence causes public restlessness; nevertheless, it overlooks how this shapes public trust. This paper examines how government's failure to meet the expectations of the governed has caused it to lose public trust in Nigeria. Using exchange theory as its theoretical framework, the survey research design, involving the use of qualitative and quantitative methods, was adopted. It covered the three senatorial districts in Lagos using data obtained from 220 respondents selected through a multistage sampling procedure. Three focus group discussions were conducted for complementary qualitative data. Data analysis involved the use of simple percentages, chi square and content analysis. The findings indicated that 90.0% of the respondents said subsidy proceeds were poorly managed by government, that they distrust government (85.0%), equate trust with votes (60.0%) and that dishonesty reduces public trust (60.0%). To develop trust in government, 80.0% of the respondents suggested transparency. The paper concludes that non-fulfilment of promises by government erodes its trust by public. Therefore, the paper suggests that for public trust in government to endure, the culture of impunity should be uprooted from Nigerian polity.

Keywords: Democracy, trust, fuel subsidy, politics, Lagos, Nigeria

Introduction

It was as if Bentham (1999) had Nigerians and their government in mind when he posed the seeming rhetorical question: whom should he be wary of if not the government who wields great power with great temptations to abuse it? The Nigerian government gave credence to the foregoing fears when on the first day of 2012 it withdrew the fuel subsidy without considering its consequences for its subjects. Government advanced a series of seemingly powerful justifications to convince its distraught citizens that it wanted to 'liberate them from frustration'. Nigerians doubted government's excuses. Unfolding events now appear to have proved that public anxieties had a firm root in conventional wisdom. The approach which Nigerians adopted may seem uncooperative, even if repugnant; it has shown them as a people who are not pathologically docile but demonstrably articulate and capable of independent clear thinking over issues that border on their collective development. Even though the government has hitherto refused to pitch its tent with the people, it is aware that Nigerians still disbelieve its arguments for the fuel subsidy withdrawal. This is especially so because Nigerians see government's keeping the cost price of crude oil secret as overly suspicious. All that Nigerians are annually inundated with is the selling price. Going by past records of government's betrayal of the Nigerian people, most Nigerians believed that government should no longer be trusted to do anything helpful for the common man. Here, the nexus between public trust in government and people's access to the dividends of democracy became a legitimate security issue.

Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English (2003:1781) defines trust as a "strong belief in the honesty, goodness, etc. of someone or something". For as long as trust hinges on reputation, someone who has a good reputation is very likely trustworthy. It could be argued, therefore, that trust is a virtue engineered and passed on by the family (Frazier 2007). On the other hand, while Asiwaju (2003) has observed that a subsidy is an assistance paid to a business or economic sector, Bakare (2012) has noted that it is unrecovered costs in the public provision of private goods. However, Oladipo (2012) identified subsidies given to producers or distributed as subventions in an industry to prevent the decline of that industry (e.g. as a result of continuous unprofitable operations) or an increase in the prices of its products or simply to encourage it to hire more labour (as in the case of a wage subsidy) as veritable instances in which the need to incur this cost by government is inevitable. Though Asiwaju (2003) holds that subsidies are often regarded as a form of protectionism or trade barrier by making domestic goods and services artificially competitive against imports, such action is often fraught with implications as subsidies may distort markets and impose large economic costs on production.

But placing the claims of some concerned Nigerians that there is, in fact, no such subsidy (Agbakoba 2012) side by side with statements by the government which insists that even the current price of petrol at N97 per litre includes a subsidy of about N55 per litre (Abimboye 2012), a healthy basis for suspicion appears to have been established. This indicates that a litre of fuel without any form of subsidy costs N152. With the pattern of fuel subsidy politics in Nigeria, it is doubtful

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if Nigerians agree today to pay N152 for a litre of fuel, the cost will not become an issue within the next twelve calendar months. It is uncertain if Nigerians who are convinced that government exploits them through essential utilities such as stable electricity, affordable fuel supply and motorable roads, will find a suitable reason to trust it. The primary objective behind fuel subsidy policies in many emerging economies has been the promotion of industrialisation, such as Nigeria (Adenikinju 1998) or Brazil (De Oliveira & Laan 2010); its removal without any suitable alternative is inconsistent with the ideals of social contract entered into with the Nigerian electorates at elections.

As illustrated in a study by Clements *et al.* (2007) on effects of oil-subsidy reform in Indonesia, the increase in petroleum prices has ripple effects on production costs and incomes in the economy. While the literature suggests that a lack of trust in federal government and politicians is driven by particular events and scandals, concerns about poor government performance, excessive control and power, and lack of honesty and ethics (Job 2005), withdrawal of subsidy in the atmosphere of mass poverty is probably one of such related events because it has generated widespread discontent with and lack of trust in the Nigeria government. Studies in political science have unveiled the role of trust in the formation and maintenance of a political system (Conteh-Morgan 1997). Governments all over the world are probably aware that trusting persons, groups or institutions will be “freed from worry and the need to monitor the other party’s behaviour, partially or entirely” (Levi & Stoker 2000:496). Given the theoretical importance of trust in government, a significant body of research has examined both the determinants and consequences of the relatively low levels of trust observed in recent decades (Chanley 2002). None of these earlier empirical activities has found that efforts ostensibly taken by government to improve the lot of vulnerable members of society could generate such dimension of public resentment as were seen nationwide in Nigeria in January 2012.

Who does not know that when the individual’s experiences are largely good, he or she tends to trust the state (Kumlin 2002; Rothstein & Steinmo 2002)? In reality, trust has even deeper merits. Trust encourages voluntary compliance (Ayres & Braithwaite 1992), creates effective government and makes democracy work (Putnam 1993), creates economic prosperity (Fukuyama 1995) and is a major factor in compliance with law and government regulation in nursing homes, taxation compliance, policing and the court system (Braithwaite 1995, 1998, 2003; Braithwaite *et al.* 1994; Tyler 1984, 2001, 2004); facilitates private businesses (Maxfield & Schneider 1997; Cai, Chen, Fang & Zhou 2009). From detailed survey data in Africa, there is a significant impact of trust in government on citizens’ beliefs that government is right to make people pay taxes (Levi & Sacks 2009). Little wonder then that on New Year’s eve, government removed its subsidy on petroleum products, more than doubling the price of fuel in a country where 90 percent of the population live on \$2 or less a day. As a result, anger cannot but rise nationwide as the cost of transport and food increased dramatically, especially against the background of the government’s declaration that the issue of bombing is one of the burdens we must live with (Herskovits 2012).

A Gallup poll conducted among Nigerians confirmed that 94% of Nigerians distrust government because they believe that it is corrupt. It is a paradox that though Nigeria is a very rich country, her people are very poor and distrustful of government because of a cycle of broken promises made by their government (Amuwo 2012). All these do not sum up to promote the kind of patriotism that will encourage distressed citizenry to trust government. That the motivations and actions of political leaders cannot be known with certainty in advance (Przeworski 1991) now seems to have more meaning to Nigerians in the light of their political expectations that failed to match evolving realities.

This study used Exchange Theory as its theoretical framework. With it, Blau focused his early writings towards the economic and utilitarian perspective that emphasised technical economic analysis (Emerson 1976). Blau’s utilitarian focus encouraged actors in exchange engagements to look forward as what they anticipated the reward would be in regard to their next social interaction (Cook & Eric 2003). Blau felt that if individuals focused too much on the psychological concepts within the theory, they would refrain from learning the developing aspects of social exchange (Emerson 1976). When people engage in these behavioral sequences, they are dependent to some extent on their relational partner. In order for behavioral sequences to lead to social exchange, Blau (1964) identified two conditions that must be achieved: first, it must be oriented towards ends that can only be achieved through interaction with other persons, and second, it must seek to adapt means to further the achievement of these ends. The concept of reciprocity which derives from this pattern refers to the mutual reinforcement by two parties of each other’s actions (Ekeh 1974). The process begins when at least one participant makes a “move”; if the other reciprocates, new rounds of exchange commence. Once the process is in motion, each consequence can create a self-reinforcing repetition. Through his microsociology of strategic interaction, Blau explained how actors are stimulated in the context of aspirations and expectations. Even though the norm of reciprocity may be a universally accepted principle, the degree to which people and cultures apply this concept varies (Zafirovski 2005) from one cultural setting to the other.

To the extent that Blau saw that social structures are essentially driven by norms and values, the level of mutual confidence in any exchange interaction dwindles with any party to that exchange attempting to renege on the expressed

terms of the exchange. This is the case with the Nigerian government and Nigerians in the context of perennial fuel hikes because one of the functions of trust in a government is the establishment of legitimacy which causes uninhibited interactions between the government and the governed. If members of the public are apprehensive of their government because it fails to keep faith with its agenda of development, individual and collective aspirations are threatened. Therefore, public trust in government is one process by which modern societies respond to their governments through their assessment of governance.

Problematic as public distrust in government is, it is not an exclusive Nigerian predicament. Edelman Trust Barometer noted that public trust in government has suffered a severe breakdown across the world. As a result, in 17 of 25 countries surveyed, governments are not trusted to do what is right by less than half of respondents (BBC Business News 2012). Though it is a matter of course in all decent civil societies, democracies are conceived as regimes of regulated and institutionalised political conflict (Dunn 1988; Braithwaite 1998; Strompcka 1999; Thompson 2004), anywhere ideal democracy is in practice, democratic governance requires the sceptical deployment of checks and balances which calls for accountability and the negotiation of conflicts of interest in the political arena (Dunn 1988; Warren 1999a). Therefore, some scepticism about government is in order if its legitimacy is to rest on its programmes and policies and not solely on ethnic or patrimonial connections (Cook, Levi & Hardin 2005). The only non-criminal way a distraught citizenry can express a repudiation of governments and politicians who are perceived as deceitful and corrupt, or negligent and inept, and who, in each and every case, are suspected of brazenly favouring the 'top 1% while remaining astonishingly aloof from popular distress (Perugorria & Tejerina 2013), is to deprive them of public trust. This study therefore answered the following questions: (i). Why are Lagos residents distrustful of their government? (ii). Why did Lagos residents spontaneously respond to the fuel subsidy withdrawal of January 2012? (iii). How is the fuel subsidy withdrawal protest related to decreasing public trust in government among residents in Lagos? (iv). How can public trust in government be improved for the sake of the sustenance of Nigeria's nascent democracy?

Data and methods

The study was conducted in Lagos. The survey covered all the state's statutory 20 Local Government Areas. The study is purely an empirical inquiry in which qualitative (focus group discussion) and survey (questionnaire) methods were used to measure the impact of the subsidy removal protest on public trust in government among Nigerians resident in Lagos. Each questionnaire for the study has three sections and each of those sections contains an average of five questions. One local government was randomly selected from the twenty statutory local government areas in each of the three senatorial districts making up Lagos. From each of the local government areas, one ward was randomly selected. From each ward, twenty streets were randomly selected. Finally, from each street, four households were randomly selected. In each of the households, a copy of the questionnaire was administered on the household head, whether male or a female. In all, two hundred and twenty copies of a questionnaire were administered on the respondents for the study in Lagos. The study area was chosen for its level of urbanisation and diverse characteristics. Lagos derives its demographic significance from being a premier city with considerable social, political and economic functions.

It has a population of 17.5 million. These figures are however disputed by the Nigerian government and judged unreliable by the National Population Commission of Nigeria (Lagos State Government 2011). The UN estimated Lagos's population as 11.2 million in 2011. The *New York Times* estimates that it is now at least 21 million, surpassing Cairo as Africa's largest city, making Lagos the largest city in Africa (Campbell 2012). It is clear that whatever the size, and however the city is defined, Lagos is the centre of one of the largest urban areas in the world. With a population of perhaps 1.4 million as recently as 1970, its growth, ever since, has been stupendous. Though Rice estimates that Lagos generates about a quarter of Nigeria's total gross domestic product, in the face of oil subsidy politics, the centre of Nigeria's modern economy, Lagos has many millionaires, while approximately two thirds of the population are slum dwellers (Rice 2012). Metropolitan Lagos is the most heterogeneous city and remains the economic nerve centre of the nation and most industrialised city in Nigeria.

Quantitative data collected were subjected to three levels of analysis. The first level was univariate analysis. It addressed the description of the socio-demographic and economic characteristics of respondents, and the incidence of various forms of crime reporting as well as indicators of crime reporting practices. This is anchored on the assumption that the behaviour of individuals in society is, to a large extent, determined by their personal characteristics as well as those of the environment in which they live. For this reason, it is expected that public trust in government will be greatly determined by individuals' background characteristics such as education, age, marital status, occupation, income, place of residence, ethnic origin and religion. To this end, simple percentages were employed to describe these variables. Here, frequency distribution tables and graphs were used to provide a general overview of the various socio-economic variables that affect respondents' crime reporting practices. The second level of analysis is bivariate analysis. It involved the

examination of the pattern of relationship between the dependent variable and other independent variables. The third level of analysis is multivariate analysis. It involved the use of advanced statistical techniques to test the formulated hypotheses and the pattern of relationship between dependent and independent variables. The regression technique was used to test these relationships. Specifically, logistic regression was used to show the relationship between the dependent variable and other independent variables.

The focus group discussions were conducted in both English and Yoruba. During the exercises, data were recorded using hand-written notes and tape recorders. The principal researcher transcribed the tapes from the various discussions and they were compared with field notes from field assistants. Both the transcribed tapes and the field notes were utilised for the purpose of data analysis. The principal researcher cleaned and structured the qualitative data into themes according to various headings representing the key issues raised in the discussions using the research objectives and purpose of study as guides. Simple descriptive and narrative technique was used to report the discussions. The analysis was focused on comparing the responses of respondents from the three selected senatorial districts to see whether a similar pattern of responses existed among them. The analysis involved the categorisation of data collected into the objectives of the study. The information included was arranged in line with the responses of male and female respondents.

Results

The results consist of demographic variables and responses to the four research questions.

Demographic variables

Table I Socio-demographic variables

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	100	50.0
Female	100	50.0
Total	200	100.0
Age		
Less than 20 years	20	10.0
21-25	50	25.0
26-30	50	25.0
31-35	40	20.0
36-40	20	10.0
41 and above	20	10.0
Total	200	100.0
Education		
Primary education	10	5.0
Secondary education	30	15.0
OND	40	20.0
HND	30	15.0
BSc	70	35.0
MSc and above	20	10.0
Total	200	100.0
Marital status		
Single	50	25.0
Married	150	75.0
Total	200	100
Ethnicity		
Ibo	90	45.0
Hausa	10	5.0
Yoruba	80	40.0
Others	20	10.0
Total	200	100.0
Religion		
Christianity	180	90.0
Islam	20	10.0
Traditional/Others	0	0.0
Total	200	100.0

Table I shows socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. Data showed that gender representation in this study was equal, as 50.0% male and 50.0% female respondents participated. Respondents whose ages were below twenty

years were 10.0%, 21-25 and 26-30 years (25.0%) each, 31-35 (20.0%), 36-40 and 40 years and above each (10.0%). About 25.0% of respondents are married, single (75.0%). A bulk of respondents (35.0%) hold a first degree, HND and WASC each (15.0%), OND (20.0%), MSc and FSLC (10.0%) and (5.0%) respectively. In terms of ethnic origin, 45.0% of the respondents are from Igbo, Yoruba (40.0%), Hausa (5.0%) and other groups (10.0%). About 90.0% of the respondents are Christians and Muslims (10.0%).

Reasons for Lagos residents' distrust of their government

Table 2 General background of citizens' trust and government

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Meaning of trust in government		
To vote	120	60.0
Not to criticise	40	20.0
Others	40	20.0
Total	200	100.0
Benefits enjoyable from government		
Good health	10	5.0
Jobs	20	10.0
Justice	70	35.0
Participation	60	30.0
Others	40	20.0
Total	200	100.0
Benefits influence trust		
Yes	80	40.0
No	120	60.0
Total	200	100.0
To develop trust in government, look at		
Freedom of speech	30	15.0
Public security	20	10.0
Empowerment	100	50.0
Equitable distribution of resources	20	10.0
Others	30	15.0
Total	200	100.0
Indicators of trust in government		
Vote	70	35.0
Criticise usefully	30	15.0
Obey laws	60	30.0
Avoid protest against government	10	5.0
Others	30	15.0
Total	200	100.0
Nigerians trust their government		
Yes	30	15.0
No	170	85.0
Total	200	100.0
Government officials not honest		
Yes	120	60.0
No	80	40.0
Total	200	100.0
Access to better roads		
Very satisfactory	10	5.0
Satisfactory	70	15.0
Very unsatisfactory	30	35.0
Unsatisfactory	90	45.0
Total	200	100.0
Access to better health care		
Very satisfactory	0	0.0
Satisfactory	60	30.0
Very unsatisfactory	60	30.0
Unsatisfactory	80	40.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 2 reveals that more respondents (60.0%) understood trust in government to mean willingness to vote at elections, reluctance to criticise government (20.0%) and other identified meanings (20.0%). On the benefits which citizens can enjoy from government, 35.0% of respondents said it is justice, participation (30.0%), jobs (10.0%), good health (5.0%). On whether the benefits which Nigerians derive from government improve their level of trust in government, 60.0% of respondents said no while 40.0% of respondents said yes. Identifying the indicators of trust in government, 35% looked at the direction of voting; constructive criticism (15.0%), obedience of laws (30.0%), other indicators (15.0%), avoidance of protest against government (5.0%). More (60.0%) respondents said the level of trust will continue to decline because government officials are dishonest, while 40% of respondents think otherwise. Focus group discussions indicated a unanimous condemnation of the attitude of government in respect of the sudden and unsympathetic withdrawal of the fuel subsidy. They doubted if government is actually subsidising fuel. What does it cost government to tell Nigerians how much it spends to refine a litre of petroleum so as to know whether government is sincere or not in its frequent price regimes? The three focus groups concluded that unless government plays its cards facing up, the generation of public trust may remain a mirage in the Nigerian context, as the basis of trust is honesty and singleness of purpose.

Justifications for Lagos residents' spontaneous response to fuel subsidy withdrawal

Public reaction to government's announcement of the withdrawal of the fuel subsidy was spontaneous. Therefore, assessing public trust in government based on indices of infrastructural development, access to better roads, 45.0% of the respondents said it was unsatisfactory, very unsatisfactory (35.0%), satisfactory (15.0%) very satisfactory (5.0%). Doing an evaluation of public trust in government in terms of government's delivery on better healthcare, 40.0% of the respondents said it was unsatisfactory, satisfactory (30.0%) and very unsatisfactory (30.0%). As if harmonised, the consensus of the three focus group discussions is that the government is blameworthy for being too irrational and insensitive in the instance of subsidy removal. They maintained that government could reform Nigeria without compromising the wellbeing of the present generation of Nigerians on the altar of salvaging the future generation. They agreed that there are other painless methods that could achieve the same desired end without causing so much tragedy to the citizenry.

Table 3 shows that on public access to better education, 45.0% said it was unsatisfactory, satisfactory (40.0%), and unsatisfactory (15.0%). Focus group discussion participants agreed that the task of government in the modern time is acceptably onerous; nevertheless there should be noticeable signs of achievement which are not anyway very widespread. It is probably against this background that 50.0% of the respondents considered that access to better security was very unsatisfactory, unsatisfactory (30.0%) and satisfactory (20.0%). About 50.0% of the respondents revealed that the state of public security was very unsatisfactory, unsatisfactory (30.0%) and satisfactory (20.0%). Also, 45.0% of the respondents adjudged public access to better electricity supply to be satisfactory, unsatisfactory (30.0%), very unsatisfactory (20.0%) and very satisfactory (5.0%).

Relationship between fuel subsidy withdrawal protest and decreasing public trust in government

Respondents' reaction to how government managed the fuel subsidy proceeds: 50.0% of the respondents acknowledged that the management of the proceeds was very unsatisfactory, unsatisfactory (40.0%) and satisfactorily (10.0%). On the performance of government as a measure of public confidence in government, 50.0% of the respondents said the performance was very unsatisfactory, unsatisfactory (45.0%) and satisfactory (5.0%). On the possible effects of declining public trust in government, 20.0% looked in the direction of rising crime rates, social disorder (35.0%), disappointment (15.0%), unreliability (10.0%), corruption (10.0%) and other categories (10.0%). The consensus of respondents of the three focus group discussions was that successive governments after a long spell of military administration in Nigeria are satisfied to note that civil administration appears to have become a norm in Nigeria, but highly dissatisfied that political office holders are not altruistic. Therefore, they are not sufficiently committed to satisfying the yearnings of the electorates who voted them to power.

Further strengthening the above, at one of the focus group discussions, participants examined the question of performance as the harbinger of trust in government very exhaustively. They all agreed that it is not that the Nigerian public is not capable of trusting their leaders. In a few states scattered all over the geopolitical zones making up the Nigerian polity, participants identified some states in which the governments have performed and noted that the people of those states have trusted their governments. In all, focus group discussion participants agreed with the foregoing

quantitative data when they observed that government will continue to witness a lack of public trust if each time politicians secure political positions they live like lords while the individuals who voted them to power live like serfs.

Table 3 Citizens' trust and government

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Access to better education		
Very satisfactory	0	0.0
Satisfactory	80	40.0
Very unsatisfactory	30	15.0
Unsatisfactory	90	45.0
Total	200	100.0
Access to better housing		
Very satisfactory	0	0.0
Satisfactory	40	20.0
Very unsatisfactory	100	50.0
Unsatisfactory	60	30.0
Total	200	100.0
Access to better security		
Very satisfactory	0	0.0
Satisfactory	40	20.0
Very unsatisfactory	100	50.0
Unsatisfactory	60	30.0
Total	200	100.0
Access to better electricity supply		
Very satisfactory	10	5.0
Satisfactory	90	45.0
Very unsatisfactory	40	20.0
Unsatisfactory	60	30.0
Total	200	100.0
Management of fuel subsidy proceeds		
Very satisfactory	0	0.0
Satisfactory	20	10.0
Very unsatisfactory	100	50.0
Unsatisfactory	80	40.0
Total	200	100.0
Performance and citizens' trust		
Very satisfactory	0	0.0
Satisfactory	10	5.0
Very unsatisfactory	100	50.0
Unsatisfactory	90	45.0
Total	200	100.0
Effect of declining trust		
Rising crime rate	40	20.0
Social disorder	70	35.0
Disappointment	30	15.0
Unreliable	20	10.0
Corruption	20	10.0
Others	20	10.0
Total	200	100.0
Improving trust in government		
Receptivity	20	10.0
Transparency	160	80.0
Ensuring public security	20	10.0
Total	200	100.0

Improving public trust in government to sustain Nigeria's nascent democracy

To develop trust in government, 50.0% of the respondents looked at empowerment, freedom of speech (15.0%), public security (10.0%), and the equitable distribution of resources (10.0%). Only 15.0% of the respondents acknowledged that they trust government and 85.0% admitted that they distrust government. Whether there are means by which public trust in government could be improved, 10.0% of the respondents suggested government's receptivity, recommended government's transparency (80.0%) and proposed the enhancement of public security (10.0%). Qualitative findings support an aspect of quantitative data here, as a focus group discussion which actively x-rayed

measures to be embarked upon to improve public trust in government emphasised the significance of performance and public access to the utilities provided. It was strongly suggested that leadership and leadership performance should be taught in schools to make them values that everybody will key into in the emerging societies in Nigeria. It was also a consensus that the culture of sweeping probe panel findings and white papers under the carpet is destructive of government's credibility and undermines the development of public trust in government.

Discussion

The socio-demographic structure of participants is significantly extensive for the study. The fact that the majority of respondents associated the meaning of trust in government with election shows the political sophistication of the sample population. Also, a pervasive distrust of political institutions and elected officials surely indicates that something has gone wrong in a democracy (Warren 1999b). In addition, low government trust creates a climate in which it is difficult for political leaders to succeed (Hetherington 1998). Respondents in this study demonstrated this political vibrancy in identifying political inclusion as one of the key benefits which citizens could enjoy from government. To that extent, the majority of respondents noted that the benefits which citizens enjoy from governments have the capacity to improve their level of trust in government. Only if government realises that as trust in government increases, citizens' support for expending public resources rises (Chanley 2002), the Nigerian government would have done more for the public.

Essentially, trust comes into play every time a new policy is announced (Ocampo 2006). For government to have overlooked the implications of the relevance of trust for public security, it must have seen confidence as a passive emotion, whereas trust is based on 'beliefs and commitment' which allow individuals to deal actively with the future unknown actions of others (Sztompka 1999:27). Half of the respondents recognised empowerment more than equitable distribution of resources and other concerns to be an issue which is critical enough to serve as the fundamental basis for the existence of government. The majority of respondents therefore predicted that the level of trust will continue to decline unless government officials turn over a new leaf and act honestly. Assessing public trust in government based on different indices of infrastructural development which they identified, findings clearly indicated massive discontent among the Nigerian people with the government which has been scored poorly in most of its area of assessment

Judging by the pervasive atmosphere of insecurity in the country, respondents probably have grounds to castigate their government for not doing enough to ensure public safety. Overall, when all these indices of poverty of performance are aggregated, there is no way public trust can improve in the face of the failure of government to provide basic social amenities for the people. Granted that trust is a concept inherent in the Western democratic model which may or may not be transferable across global contexts and about which political scientists still remain divided (Secor & O'Loughlin 2005), it is high time the Nigerian government recognised it will be greatly helpful to it if it appreciates that 'trust occurs when parties holding certain favourable perceptions of each other allow this relationship to reach the expected outcomes' (Wheless & Grotz 1977: 251). Nigerians forced themselves to trust government over the public good it swore to protect, but revelations that came to the market place of public discussion confirmed a public trust betrayed.

Conclusion

Public trust in government and the enjoyment of the proceeds of good governance in developed societies of the world are two interlocking concepts that drive one another. However, in developing countries, governments expect public trust as a matter of course. Provision of utilities that will make life more abundant for the citizenry is optional. Unless government cuts down on its reckless expenditure, salaries and allowances, manifestly fights corruption, ensures the restoration of electricity supply, ensures public security, and provides an assortment of empowerment for most Nigerians that desire them, most citizens will not have any concrete reason to be happy with and develop trust in government. If government takes progressive steps to reduce waste and provide electricity for economic enterprise, individual and national economies will bounce back, as if by magic. As a result, public trust in government that brings about widespread joy to the people will be inspired also, as if by magic.

In the light of the findings, this paper makes the following recommendations: Nigerians should organise themselves into groups that critically engage government to keep it more focused and effective; the government should not control mass struggle by means of intimidation because it could completely damage what it counts on as public trust; the government should abhor the culture of impunity by not sweeping probe panel findings and government white papers under the carpet. Nursing sacred cows in issues that border on corruption is destructive of government's credibility and undermines the development of public confidence in it. To enjoy public trust, the government must make the practice of corruption too risky and costly in Nigerian society by equipping anti-corruption agencies with the power to bark and the teeth to bite. The judiciary, mass media and civil society should be recognised and allowed to operate as vibrant components that help monitor governance in every virile democracy; nationwide, government must provide employment

for the jobless, improve transportation, ensure public security and empower women and physically challenged citizens to function effectively in society. Finally, mismanagement of proceeds from the fuel hike has confirmed the fears of Nigerians that their government cannot be trusted to act fairly at all times. Corroborating this position, a former Deputy Speaker, Nigerian House of Representatives, Nwuche (2014) described the subsisting oil subsidy regime by the federal government as a scam which must be phased out by December, 2014, arguing that the subsidy had very good intentions though the impact on the poor was questionable and dubious.

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