

Budget Governance and National Development: The Nigerian Perspective

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Abstract

Over the years, developing countries have suffered dysfunctional governance systems as a result of inapt allocation of resources, inept revenue systems, fragile budgetary system and weak delivery of critical public services. This adopts ethical theory using secondary data to examine the effects of budget governance on national development. The study generates evidence on the gaps in transparency and accountability mechanisms on budgets processes in Nigeria. The study reveals that budget governance has been seriously abused by both legislatures and the executives and as a result gravely affects national development. The study envisioned that transparency and accountability could bear fruit if budget stakeholders, technocrats, and budget processes are opened up to greater participation of the target beneficiaries and scrutiny by the relevant institutions. It further recommend that access to budget information and budget processes is a potential to citizens empowerment and could make governments respond to their demands. Finally, to attain national development, the study recommend for adherence to the fundamental principles of good budgetary governance, such as the management of budgets within clear, credible and predictable limits for fiscal policy.

Keywords: Budget governance, national development, accountability, transparency

Introduction

Budget is an instrument for macro-economic management of the economies which determines the success or otherwise of government in achieving economic, political and social goals. It is a factor that shapes and reshapes public sector performance—embedded in a country's accountability frameworks. An effective public management sector and government spending determine the course of economic development and social equity, particularly for the deprived groups, like women, children and the aged. Scores of developing countries have persistently suffers unsatisfactory and often dysfunctional governance systems that include rent seeking and malfeasance, inapt allocation of resources, inept revenue systems, and weak delivery of critical public services.

The budget is an essential policy document of government that prioritized its annual and multi-annual objectives. Aside from financing new and existing programs, the budget is the prime instrument for implementing fiscal policy, and thereby influencing the economy as a whole. In addition to other instruments of government policy—such as laws, regulation and joint action—the budget seeks to turn plans and target desires into realism. In the same vein, the budget represents a contract between citizens and state, showing how resources are raised and allocated for the delivery of public services. Such a document must be comprehensible, transparent and realistic if it is to grasp trust, and to serve as a basis of accountability.

The common policy challenge facing developed and developing nations is the process of generating and allocating public resources and the ways the resources are utilized. In addressing these challenges, governments at various levels, local, state and national adopt budget as a policy instrument to surmount the situation. Budget is an essential policy document of any government. It defines resource generation and allocation among various needs of the citizens and government institutions, such as national defense, infrastructure, education, health

care service delivery among others. As an economic and political apparatus, budget is value ridden indicating the government's ideological commitment, political philosophy and policy platform vis-à-vis a proclamation of government policy articulated in economic terms.

According to Shane (2017), budget shapes the political landscape of the global community. Paucity of resources affects budget implementation and has made it impossible for the annual budgets to satisfy the demands of the citizens; this necessitates prioritization of expenditures and program implementation. Inadequate resources also call for reconciliation on what policies and programs to fund and at what location and level. This decision-making process is inherently political and therefore requires lobbying and active participation of the executive and legislative arms; this represents one of the vital checks and balances of democracy and the most important piece of legislation addressed by the two arms of government to achieving national development (Shane, 2017).

Development at local, national and international levels has become a relevant discourse in contemporary time and a matter of concern that requires collective participation of policy actors and the citizens (Yilmaz, 2018). National development presupposes the provision of social services to the citizen to improving their wellbeing. Essentially, a responsible government laid emphasis on using the budget to provide vital social services through effective budget such that it will improve the national resources and development. In order to achieve development, Yilmaz (2018) acknowledged that governments at all levels (federal, state and local) require effective economic apparatus called budget. Effective budget governance and the attitude of the government (executive and legislature) determine successful implementation of the budget that will translate to the development of a state. Preceding studies established that, the common challenge of national development is the process of allocating public resources (budget) and the ways the resources are utilized; hence the objective of this study is to find out the effects of budget governance on development in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The rate of unethical behavior and ineptitude in governance has led to inefficiency in the public services and consequently constrained development efforts of Nigeria state. This paper adopts ethical theory to examine the relationship between budget governance and national. Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Mill Stuart are prominent advocates of ethical theory based on utilitarian principle. Ethical theory is relevant to this study because it shares common philosophy with good governance (transparency, rule of law, participatory, equity among others). Ethics explain what is morally acceptable and principles that guide the behavior of humankind in the society. In addition, ethics clarifies moral values like honesty, application of moral standards, justice that is present or absent in an organization. The importance of ethics and budget governance in the conduct of human affairs and public administration cannot be overemphasized bearing in mind that ethics define the codes of public service, human life and governance and above all effective performance of the government.

Methodology

This paper is positioned on the qualitative method using secondary sources of data drawn from libraries and archives in Nigeria and oversea academic resources internet sources, local publications such as newspapers, magazines to provide detailed accounts for the effect of budget governance on national development.

Conceptual Discourse

The conceptual discourse centrally focused on the key variables namely, budget, budget governance and its elements like transparency, accountability and national development respectively. The term budget was originally a French word "*Bougette*"-meaning a little or

small container (sack or bag). The term was used in the past in England to depict the skin bag in which ministers of the Crown carried financial policy or plans to the parliament. Budget is related to individual, groups or companies and organizations. A budget is a framework for revenue and expenditure lay out over a specific period usually one year (Olurankise, 2012)). Meigs and Meigs, (2004) defined budgets as a comprehensive financial plan, setting forth the anticipated path to achieving the financial and operational goals of an organization". In addition, Omolehinwa (2003) perceived budget as an organizational plan expressed in monetary term. It serves as a key instrument for macro-economic management in most economies which determines the success of governments in meeting economic, political and social goals. Budget constitutes one of the policy nerve centers of government's response to the political environment in terms of authoritative allocations of scarce resources.

Several scholars have examined the effects of budgeting on the economies. Nurudeen and Usman (2010) investigated the effect of government expenditure on economic growth with disaggregated expenditure data from 1979 to 2007. The results reveal that government total capital expenditure, total recurrent expenditures, and government expenditure on education have negative effect on the economy. Obadan (2003) found significant relationship between national budget and socio-economic development in Nigeria s: and thus decry the neglect of development planning. Alesina et al (1996) contested the proposal of significant relationship between fiscal budget and economic growth. They presented negative relationship and further alluded that the issue of 'hierarchical' and transparent procedures jeopardized the positive effect expected from budget by citizenry. In recent years, development practitioners, donors, academicians and politicians have developed interest in promoting sincerity in government budget-making. While budget transparency was once considered esoteric or even undesirable, it has more recently come to be seen as a pillar of good governance. This new outlook has propelled initiatives that seek to promote transparency, accountability and public participation in the budget process. To date, however, such initiatives have not been systematically assessed.

National Budget and Stakeholders

The executive and legislature constitutes the major stakeholders of the national budgetary process. The transaction between the executive and the legislative arms highlights their relations at the local, state and national level. It is an interaction that explains the principle of separation of powers as an essential requirement in any democratic setting. The interconnections between the legislature, the executive and legislature ought to have being cordial and functional since they are created and guided by the same constitution and ultimately working to achieve national goals. The importance of this dissection cannot be over stressed as it minimizes arbitrary exercise of power by one arm against the other. According to Linz, (1994) and Pennings, (2003), the institutional arrangement in which both the executive and the legislature are popularly elected and mandated to pursue state policies can create dual purpose legitimacy. This dual democratic legitimacy results to frequent legislature-executive stalemate and impairs the ability of the executive political system to control its appointed officials and therefore limit its capacity to manage the economy.

Public officials, political practitioners, journalists, scholars, and other observers have remarked on the legislative-executive variation and spectacular interconnections. Specifically, an opinion has been expressed on conflict and cooperation, whether one or the other dominates, and whether benefits or liabilities result from either. Conflict in this context refers to competition between opposing forces, reflecting a diversity of opinions, preferences, needs or interests. Conversely, cooperation entails working together; achieving goals through collective action. While some perceived conflict between the executive and legislature as a necessary and beneficial prerequisite to restricting and regulating government, others view it as contributing to gridlock over major public policy decisions, thus, making government ineffective (Abdullahi, 2017; John, 2018; Na'abah, 2014; Oni, 2013).

Corroborating the above submission, Momodu and Matudi, (2013) contended that political development and national development of any democratic country is a function of the mutual and cordial/genuine relationship between all arms of government. The legislature and executive are two central political institutions in democratic setting with critical task to promoting good governance and national development. The success of this task depends on whether the relationship that exists between the institutions is constructive or conflictive. Where such relation is not a cordial one, it leads to break down of the apparatuses of the state.

The separation of powers as advocated by the founder of the liberal school of governance of Baron De Montesquieu is to ensure that conflict is reduced to barest minimum. The relationship between the executive and the legislature in a presidential system is certainly one of the most intriguing empirical questions in the study of political institutions. The associated effects of the institutional arrangements of the presidential system often pose the crucial problem of relationship between the executive and the legislature which is being pejoratively (negatively) referred to as “deadlock”, “gridlock” or “stalemate” (Lijphart, 1999; Hammond, & Butler, 2003).

In addition, Momodu and Matudi, (2013) affirmed that the development of budget, deliberation and passage by both legislative and executive represents one of the vital checks and balances of democracy; it is the most important piece of legislation addressed by the legislative and executive branches because daily routines of any government are connected to budgeting. Within the legal framework on passage of Appropriation Bills in Nigeria, the Constitution provides for the powers of the National Assembly to make laws, it states as follows:

The National Assembly shall have power to make law for the peace, order and good government of the federation or any part thereof with respect to any matter included in the Exclusive Legislative List set out in Part I of the Second Schedule to the Constitution.

This power implies that in exercise of its legislative powers to make laws in relation to the 68 matters specified under the Exclusive Legislative List, the National Assembly must be motivated by the desire for peace, order and good government of Nigeria. The question that arises is whether in the exercise of these powers, the National Assembly can occasionally go outside its sphere of authority. The answer would appear to be in the affirmative provided it is in consequence of the exercise of its authority to make laws for peace, order and good government in relation to matters in the Exclusive List (Rasheed, 2012).

The constitutional responsibility of the legislature and executives on budget is apparently defined. Section 81(1) of the Constitution prescribes the role of the President in the annual budgetary process – to prepare the estimates of revenue and expenditure and place same before the National Assembly. The role of the National Assembly in the passage of money bills is spelt out under section 59 of the Constitution to ensure transparency and accountability. The provisions of this section do not however limit the extent to which the National Assembly may alter the budgetary estimates submitted to the President (Ambrose, 2017).

The state government reformers have lamented the presumed decline in legislative abilities, attributing present legislature-executive imbalances to a combination of legislative handing over and enhanced gubernatorial power. More so, Ambrose and Patrick (2017) argued that in the interest of the nation, trade unions, Non-Governmental Organizations, stakeholders are given opportunities to offer input into the national budget. To this end the National Assembly should not blame if they modify the budget submitted by the executive, either marginally or fundamentally. This is in line with the international practices, which vary, depending only on constitutional or legal provisions in individual countries.

Similarly, Oni (2013) argues that the pattern of legislature-executive relations 1999 and 2003 revealed more of cooperative legislature-executive relations than conflictual relations. On the contrary 2012 relationship pattern was perceived as conflictual as the national assembly threatening to impeach the president for failure to execute all the constituency projects of lawmakers built into the 2012 Appropriation Act. Their complaint followed the allegation that some ministers had more projects than members of the National Assembly in their constituencies. Funding for projects was also discovered to have been skewed in favour of the projects initiated by the appointees of government, as against those put in the budget by the elected representatives of the people (Okocha, 2012). The impeachment threat therefore was a reminder to the President of the legislature's constitutional power, should the executive continued to disregard their request.

Anyaegbunam (2010) refers to this model of legislature-executive relations as cordial relationship between the executive and legislature in which divergence over policies are resolved through discussion and understanding. This cooperative approach was dictated by the suppression of the legislature under the executive and the predominance of one party, for instance the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) in both the executive and the legislature. The worth of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) leadership to intervene between the two arms of government through party loyalties also contributed to this pattern of relationship.

Rockman (1983) attributed the causes executive and legislature conflict on budget to pride and personality clash, executive dominance, ignorance of the constitution, functional overlapping and legislative performance of oversight function. Yet, the general causes of executive-legislative conflict include struggle for power and control, conflict of roles, limited understanding of their constitutional duties, high-handedness of the executive on the legislature, greediness among others.

Budget governance

The term governance entails the direction-finding of a country towards the understanding of societal goals. It implies the process of decision making and the process of its implementation or non-implementation (Adejumobi, 2006). Governance refer to the procedure and institutions where decisions and authority are made and exercised (Mucunguzi, 2011). Governance explain the exercise of authority through formal and informal procedures for the common good (Daniel, 2003). Governance could be corporate, local, national or international. Some of its fundamental characteristics includes: participatory, consensus oriented, accountability transparency, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive as well as rule of law (Zheng, 2010). The term governance can either be good or bad, hence, this put in plain words the distinction in the stage of development of different countries across the globe. Governance entails the process of making decision and the process where decisions are implemented by the government or otherwise (Mucunguzi, 2011).

Budgetary governance refers to the processes, laws, structures and institutions in place for ensuring that the budgeting system meets its objectives in an effective, sustainable and enduring manner. It also highlights the process of formulating the annual budget, overseeing its implementation and ensuring its alignment with public goals. Governance practitioners were often wary of emphasizing rapid democratization in developing countries with weak state institutions, terrified that premature political liberalization might pave the way for fragmentation and populist pressures that would undermine efforts to foster governance efficiency and effectiveness. Considering the ongoing drive in development circles to support budget-related transparency and accountability initiatives (TAIs), it is significant to take stock and determine whether such initiatives are likely to achieve their stated goals.

In the same vein, budget transparency has been adopted as an important principle by a number of influential actors, including the World Bank, financial regulators, private-sector investment analysts, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, foreign aid donors and international NGOs respectively. The international development community's interest in improving transparency and accountability in the budget process also reflects broader commitments to good governance and anti-corruption reforms. Such reforms have attempted to encourage greater transparency of government decision-making across the board, in part through the creation and encouragement of civil-society watchdogs (Persson et al., 2010).

Transparency

Development practitioners, donors, academicians and politicians have in recent years developed interest in promoting sincerity in government budget-making. While budget transparency was once considered esoteric or even undesirable, it has more recently seen as a pillar of good governance. This innovative stance has propelled initiatives that seek to promote transparency, accountability and public participation in the budget process.

Transparency is a noticeable decision making process that is opened to public input, allows the public maximal choice, and is conducted in cooperation with organizations working together for common public purposes (Gortner, Nicholas & Ball 2007). In the same vein, transparency connotes an attribute of being 'able to be seen through, clear, pellucid; pervious to rays; easily detected, understood; obvious, evident; ingenuous, frank; shining through'. The antonym of transparency is bias, to be corrupt, or incompetent until proved otherwise. Accordingly, IMF Fiscal Transparency Code 1998, identified four (4) principles of transparency namely; clarity of roles and responsibilities; public availability of information; open budget preparation, execution and reporting and independent assurances of integrity (Petrie, 1999).

Budget transparency refers to the extent and ease with which citizens can access information about and provide feedback on government revenues, allocations, and expenditures. Budgets are key documents since they lay out a government's priorities in terms of policies and programs. Opening up budgets is a first step toward democratizing the budget process and giving citizens a say in policy formulation and resource allocation. Budget transparency, while not a goal in itself, is a prerequisite for public participation and accountability.

Transparency in budgetary processes is an indispensable condition for responsive decision making by the government apparatus. It brings in better insights and strategies, encourages timely and effective implementation of policies, and helps create public confidence in the willingness as well as the ability of the government to work for people. Also, citizens across the country are keen to understand policy decisions pertaining to government budgets and participate meaningfully in discussions on budgetary priorities. But, the limited transparency in government budgets in developing countries like India, Ghana, and Nigeria at different levels along with the complexity of the accounting system has been a obstructed in this regard.

A non-transparent budget can neither be properly analyzed nor can its implementation be effectively monitored. Transparency allows citizens to provide inputs into the budget process and to evaluate whether a government executed the development plans in accordance with budgetary allocations. Transparency can lead to better budgetary outcomes by reducing manipulations of budget, misappropriation of resources and fostering sensible, accountable and equitable resource allocations. There has been a civil society movement, particularly in developed countries in the recent years to improve transparency in budget

processes. A number of developing countries like Nigeria, Gambia, Ghana among others have also enacted legislations to enhance public access to budget information.

Accountability

Accountability entails responsibility for an action, sanctions where clarification or justification for an action is not sufficient, ability to withdraw or annul a mandate, public investigation of government actions, citizen participation in government policies and programs among many others (Ma, 2009; Premchand, 1999). In a precise views, accountability is one of the elements of governance and it is a proactive course that public officials notify and justify their actions on the responsibilities assigned to them (Ackerman, 2005).

In a similar development Ogunleye (2010) perceived enhanced probity and accountability as one of the steps government at all levels would facilitate poverty alleviation vis-à-vis national development in Africa and particularly Nigeria. Accountability is ultimately about promoting and reporting public and performance. Public financial accountability requires that governments manage finance prudently; that they integrate their financial and non-financial reporting, control, budgeting and performance; that they report comprehensively on what they achieved with their expenditure of funds, and that stakeholders behave ethically. Any organization (public or private) that manages and reports on its finance, mitigates the risk of malfeasance, builds good quality and openness into its financial and non-financial analyses, monitors the sustainability of benefits that accrue from its investments, and fulfils its performance reporting and fiduciary obligations to its constituents reflects sound financial accountability. Manifesting financial accountability is therefore much more than building and maintaining accounting and auditing systems.

Transparency and Accountability in Nigerian Budget

It is commonly acknowledged that transparency in government leads to accountability since it allows citizens of a democracy to condense government corruption, bribery and other malfeasance, vis-a-vis regulation of government activities. It is also widely accepted that an open, transparent government allows for the dissemination of information and proceedings of government, which in turn forces government to be accountable, helps to guarantee societal progress and effective public oversight, while ensuring participation. There have been several transparency, accountability and participation movements across the globe. Such movements in developing countries like Nigeria have more justifications for clamouring for such as a result of poor governance, systemic wrecking of public funds, public records inaccessibility and impecunious citizen participation in governance. As a result, citizens of such countries have found it increasingly difficult to hold their governments to account.

Politics in Budget Governance and National Development

Politics in budget governance highlight major dilemma and its effects on national development. Politics is exciting because people disagree to agree. They disagree about how they should live and associate with one another. Who should acquire what? How should power and other resources be allocated and distributed? For Aristotle, this made politics the ‘master science’: that is, nothing less than the activity through which human beings attempt to improve their lives and create the good Society. Politics is defined as the exercise of power, the science of government, the making of collective decisions, the allocation of scarce resources, the practice of deception and manipulation, and so on.

Easton (1965), defined Politics “as those interactions through which values are authoritatively allocated for a society”. The word “authority” has to do with legitimate political power. So the definition simply says that Politics refers to interactions through which values (positive and or negative) are distributed by those who have legitimate powers. But it is

common knowledge that dictators in aberrant political systems can use their political influence to allocate values in the society. This situation cancels legitimacy or authority argument.

Development on the other hand refers to a sustained social, political, and economic progress designed to improving the well-being of the global community, particularly the poor people. Development lies in the structural and institutional transformation of the society. It is a process of attaining a sustainable growth and the system's ability to cope with periodic changes in the realization of political, economic and social development. It is a function of collective responsibility and accountability to promoting the welfare of the people (Idris & Otinche, 2018).

Politics, power and budget are crucial to accountability and national development. Politics pervades all facets of human life, the home, religious institutions, public and private organizations respectively. Politicking has been element of Nigerian budgetary system. The study of politics of the budget process essentially means examining the ways in which exercise of power within budget process affects the subsequent distribution of public resources. Social theorist asserts that the concept of power is concerned with irregularities in human relations, power conditions dominant norms about whom in society are legitimate holders of knowledge – and thereby affects not just the range of people who can participate in making decisions, but also the distribution of the resources (Fozzard, 2000). Wildavsky reasoned that conflict organizations may use budgets to establish and maintain dominations. The author further claimed that budgeting does not serve decision-making and problem solving directly, but its processes causes confrontation between major stakeholders involves in budget activities.

The politics of the budgeting process is widely related to the political system of the ruling government (Wildavsky, 1986). The political friction between the executive and the legislature regarding budgetary process is affected by the demands of technical expertise and democracy. It is believed that the executive is better situated to prepare the budget, because it possesses comprehensive information on expected revenue and expenditure. The role of the legislature, on the other hand, is to authorize the executive to raise and spend money and to exercise oversight over the activities of the executive. There are, however, disagreements and discrepancies in practices with regards to the specific powers of the legislature over the budget. Bribery and corruption cases of the legislature and the executive have blemish the image of the two arm of government. For instance the cases of Farouk Lawan versus Femi Otedola; Aromah Otteh against Haman Hembe El-Rufai and Senetor Olowopkuuruku vis-a-vis Fabian Osuji, Abdulmumin Jibrin cases among others on budget influence padding.

Nigeria political development has been hampered by the conflictual political relationship existing between the key actors of policy making and policy execution. The theory of separation of power was used to explain what is needed from these key political players in the government of Nigeria. The harmony expected from these major players results to institutional stability, political development as well as defined legal institutions that protect all aspects of the Nigerian state. The politics of the budgeting process and budget governance is related to the political system of the ruling government (Wildavsky, 1986) and would be better to understand with the followings

Delay in budget processes

Budget preparation, submission, consideration, approval and signing delays are predominant in the Nigeria's to an extent that the budget is often not available for implementation in the first quarter and a better part of the second quarter over the past one and half decades. It is noted that businesses generally record poorer performance as a result of unapproved budget by the legislature or waiting for the president's assent.

Budget delay slows down the economic recovery process by postponing the multiplier effect of government spending. If funds for critical projects are not disbursed on time, industrial activity will be reduced, dragging the economy into a state of inertia and economic decline. The late passage of the budget is therefore a threat to achieving the ERGP targets and to Nigeria's goal of becoming one of the top 20 economies by 2020. Delay in the release of funds for recurrent expenditure will cause a delay in the payment of salaries and allowances of federal workers. This feeds into the cycle of further slowing down economic recovery by reducing the purchasing power and consumption of citizens;

Misuse of official rules

Politics of budget in Nigeria was as a result misuse of formal rules governing decision-making, political choice and accountability within the public expenditure management system. Politicians are always self-interest against national interest, short-sighted, politically motivated individuals with little sympathy on fiscal prudence and national development. The legislature uses the appropriation process as a witch-hunt tool to fight its perceived political rival. Selfish interest is the cause of perceived rivalry between the Executive and the Legislature. Budget was used to fight Arumah Oteh, the DG of Security and Exchange Commission and continually to wrestle the executive arm of government over the years. (Saraki, 2014, Ejike, 2014, Brown, 2008 and Gbajabiamila 2014). Witch-hunted Ministers have been questioned, probed and invited beyond what the legislative oversight demands.

Offiong (2018) affirmed that the action, inaction or reaction of the nation's legislative arm can best be described as assemblage of interest seekers. Every issue is viewed through a prism of manifest selfish political consideration. There is a clear social disconnect between legislators and their constituents, hence, there is no room for the electorates input into the budget, needless to mention transparency and accountability. This grossly affects national development. The frequent recess of the national assembly is inimical to our nascent democracy and nation's stability

Politics of budget is concerned with desperate desire of the executives to fulfill their campaign promises and competition between geographical units (constituencies) for access to budget resources. The competition for a better slice of the resources of the level above occurs both in aggregate (arguing for a larger share being allocated to constituent units) (Wildavsky, 1986).

Allegiance to political gladiators and party faithful

The networks of stakeholder power and influence (outside the formal allocation of roles and responsibilities), inspires politics in budget process and consequently influence the outcomes of the budget process. The networks of interested stakeholders who benefit from illegal procedures are so diverse and multi-faceted that it may seem inevitable that any attempt to initiate real change is bound to fail. Both legislature and the executives want to satisfy their political godfathers and party faithful at the detriment of basic needs of the citizens. This greatly hampers transparency, accountability and national development.

Political analysts argue that the idea of constituency projects should not arise in presidential democracy; it is the responsibility of the executive, the legislature only design and selects its locations. Hence, the illegal inclusion of foreign projects in the name of constituency projects by the legislature as defined by Gbajabiamila, (2014) constituency projects are earmarks or pork-barrel legislation. By analysis, the legislature on their own volition includes in the federal budgets projects that the government should execute for them in their constituency. This is inimical to transparent budget, accountability and national development. So far, over N900 billion had been budgeted as constituency projects since 2004 (Ndume, 2013, Udefuma and Fadila and Adebayo, 2013 and Arizona-ogwu, 2014). Lawmakers loot from the

budget by allocating huge sums to themselves in the guise of ‘Constituency Projects.’ Doubt has been raised regarding the execution of constituency projects and its constitutional status in the country, moreover, its implementation is marred by misconception and mismanagement. Studies revealed that this strategy does not involve “Constituency Projects,” but solely conceptualized to misappropriate. This strategy existed for more than a decade and networked by the lawmakers, budget jobbers – mostly miscreants – criminally minded businessmen, and government officials respectively. Experts perceives constituency projects as breach of check and balance norm and connivance between the Legislature and the Executive to grease my palm I rub your back strategy to direct public fund to non-productive but self-milled projects. These illicit transactions between the budget stakeholders (executive and legislature) have gravely hampered the principle of transparency and accountability in the budget circle.

In addition, incentives for action covertly and overtly affect the decision-making process of politicians and officials during the budget formulation and execution process. Allegations of financial inducement by agencies of government in order to allow their budgets have easy ride to approval before their relevant committees. There is established allegation of financial inducement or outright demand for financial support by committees of the legislature since the return of democracy in 1999 (Vanguard, 2012, and AbdulRasheed, 2010). Popular among those allegations of financial impropriety associated with budget in the national assembly include but not limited to N54m bribery saga against Adolpus Wabara versus the Ministry of Education under Prof. Osuji Fabian; N628m scam against Patricia Ete as the Speaker House of Representative in 2007, the former Speaker Dimeji Bankole was enmeshed in a contract scam of N894m, the Former finance minister Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala reveals how the Jonathan administration placated lawmakers with N17 billion before the 2015 budget could be passed (Vanguard, 2012; AbdulRasheed, 2010; Okonjo-Iwella, 2015). It is pertinent to point out that the foregoing institutional factors coupled with weak legal framework and absence of political-will are factors affecting budget transparency and accountability in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The state exists largely to improve the well-being of its citizens. Budgeting is one of the means the state uses in empowering its people to accomplish their dreams. This study generates evidence on the gaps in transparency and accountability mechanisms in budgets in Nigeria as well as seeks ways for improving the norms and practices in this sphere. The Nigerian experience reveals marginal transparency, accountability and discipline across all the sectors and specifically the budget unit. This study envisioned that transparency and accountability could bear fruit once the budget stakeholders, technocrats, and budget processes are opened up to greater participation of the target beneficiaries and scrutiny by the relevant institutions. Access to budget information and budget processes evidently has the potential to empower citizens and make their governments respond in ways that may improve their lives and properties. In order to ease public participation, the budgetary process in a country needs to be at the sub-national levels.

Finally, to attain national development, the study recommend for religious adherence to the fundamental principles of good budgetary governance, such as the management of budgets within clear, credible and predictable limits for fiscal policy. Government should ensure that budget documents and data are open, transparent and accessible, provide for an inclusive, participative and realistic debate on budgetary choices present a comprehensive. This study has methodological and scope deficiency as it generate data through secondary source which might be inadequate to make generalization. Therefore, future study should adopt mixed method for sufficient information and generalization.

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