

Corruption as a source of government project failure in developing countries: Evidence from Ghana

ABSTRACT

This study explores how corruption impacts the failure of government projects in developing countries with evidence from the Ghanaian context. This study solicits the perceptions of project management practitioners (14), contractors (6), government officials (clients) (5) and the general public (5) on the subject. The findings indicate that corruption, influence government project failure on all the failure criteria used as the evaluating tool. However, corruption influences failure at two different levels: project management and product phase. At the management level, corruption has direct influence whilst at the product phase level, the influence is indirect.

INTRODUCTION

This study explores how corruption impacts on the failure of government projects in developing countries with evidence from the Ghanaian context. Corruption is a constant concern for countries facing economic problems (D'Agostino et al., 2013). Increasingly, researchers have devoted extant literature to the discussion of the phenomenon; however, these discussions have focused mainly on the relationship between corruption and variables such as; economic development (Riesman, 2000; Huang, 2016), social effects (Saha & Gounder, 2013), innovation (Paunov, 2016), firm management quality (Athanasouli and Goujard, 2015), gross domestic product (GDP) (Pellegrini & Gerlagh, 2004), returns on investment (Boycko et al., 1996), increase in government budget (Hessami, 2014), political discontent, instability and violence (Aisen & Veiga, 2013), rule-violating intentions (Sundstrom, 2016), democracy (Jetter et al., 2015), and inequality (Dobson & Ramlogan-Dobson, 2012).

Despite the extensive research devoted to the subject, there is limited research on the potential impact of corruption on project failure. Some researchers (Heeks, 1999; Corojan & Criado, 2012; Kim, 2014) have mentioned in their research that corruption may influence e-government project failure but, they did not discuss how this really happens. The closest research on corruption and projects failure is the theoretical exposition of Aladwani (2016) on how corruption could be a source of e-government project failure. We, therefore, contribute to governance, project management and corruption literature by conducting an exploratory study on how corruption may influence government project failure in developing countries using Ghana as a case study. The main question is: *How does corruption, influence Ghanaian government project failure?*

However, project failure in this context is vague as studies over the years indicated that projects failure criteria are many (Atkinson, 1999; Ahonen & Savolainen, 2010; Mir & Pinnington, 2014). The study conducted by Ruuska & Teiglanad (2009) on Bygga Villa (Sweden) identified satisfaction of the individual stakeholder's needs as a subjective component of project success. Davis (2014) echoes this claim by asserting that success/failure is a matter of stakeholders' perception. Nevertheless, the studies' of Heeks (2002, 2006) challenge the subjectivity of project failure to some extent. The studies contend that if a project fails at the initiation phase, that project could be classed as a total failure. Thus, once the project is abandoned before actual implementation or its abandoned halfway through the project life cycle, then such projects could be described as a total failure. In this research, one of the criteria in which we assess how corruption may influence government project failure is abandonment. This leads us to our first research question:

RQ1: How does corruption influence Ghanaian government project abandonment?

Traditionally, projects were assessed using time, cost and requirements as the evaluating criteria. Advocates of this definition of project failure, such as De Wit (1988),

Turner (1996), Kappelman et al. (2006) and El Emama and Koru (2008) have concluded that that project success/failure should be judged on whether the project has met the set time, cost and requirement. They contend that a project is said to have failed when it fails to meet one and/or all the triple constraints. However, De Wit (1988), Turner (1996) and Wateridge (1998) did not rule out the existence of other possible success/failure criteria. In these performance criteria, projects are assessed at the management phase. This leads us to our second, third and fourth research questions:

RQ2: How does corruption influence cost overrun of Ghanaian government projects?

RQ3: How does corruption influence time overrun of Ghanaian government projects?

RQ4: How does corruption influence negative requirement deviation of Ghanaian government projects?

On the other hand, studies such as De Wit (1988), Pinto & Slevin (1988), Turner (1996), Atkinson (1999), Abednego & Ogunlana (2006), Kappelman et al. (2006), El Emama & Koru (2008) and Toor & Ogunlana (2010) have called for the inclusion of other factors that are beyond the management phase. They argue that assessing project only in the management phase is not sufficient because it is possible for a project to deviate from its projected time, cost and requirement and yet be considered successful at the usage phase. A typical example is the widely cited Sydney Opera House project, which is considered as an engineering masterpiece despite taking 15 years to complete and being 14 times over budget (Jugdev and Muller, 2005; Ika, 2009; Savolainen et al., 2012). This leads us to our fifth and sixth research question:

RQ5: How does corruption influence stakeholder dissatisfaction of Ghanaian government projects?

RQ6: How does corruption influence Ghanaian government projects that may lead to the retarding of the sector where projects are implemented and national development?

The topic is of interest to both academic and practice. Academically, this study sheds light on corruption as a major contributing factor for project failure in developing countries. This would serve as a springboard for further research into the relationship between corruption and projects failure, particularly quantitative study. Practically, by exploring how corruption may influence government project failure using multiple project's failure criteria, it provides a deeper understanding of how corruption affects government project performance and therefore, the findings can be used as a guide during government projects implementation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ghanaian government programs and project failure

The Ghanaian context is important to this study because government projects play an important role in national development (Eichengreen & Vazquez, 1999; Alic, 2008). Since government policies often translate into programs and projects (Goodman & Love, 1980; Bitler & Karoly, 2015); the performance of these projects is central to government performance (Alzahrani & Emsley, 2013). Literature suggests that developed economies were developed through the implementation of government projects and programs (Eichengreen, 1994; Eichengreen, 1996; Alic, 2008). Growth witnessed in the last two to three decades in emerging economies indicates that government projects are inevitable in national development (Gichoya, 2005; Luk, 2009). Nevertheless, many of these projects faces several setbacks such as the total abandonment (Kumar and Best, 2006), cost deviation (Aziz, 2013), schedule deviation (Fallahnejad, 2013; Marzouk & El-Rasas, 2013), scope deviation (Liu et al., 2011), and stakeholders' dissatisfaction (Ahonen & Savolainen, 2010).

Ghana is not an exception to the pursuance of growth and development through the implementation of government programs and projects. Over the years, a significant amount of

money has been solicited from many developing partners, IMF, World Bank and Tax Payers to embark on programs and projects (Ghana Republic Budget, 2012, 2015; Damoah et al., 2015; Damoah, 2015; Damoah and Akwei, 2017). Nevertheless, the literature suggests that most of these projects have failed (Damoah and Akwei, 2017). We, therefore, propose that *corruption may influence these programs and project failure.*

Corruption in Ghana

Corruption, particularly in the government sector has become the most discussed topic in Ghana in recent years (Bawumia, 2014, 2015 and Addo, 2015). Even though it is difficult to find a criminal code that defines corruption (Azeem, 2009), corrupt practices such as bribery of local or foreign government officials and private companies, ‘‘facilitation of payments’’, fraud, embezzlement, theft, collusion, and rent-seeking exist in the country and its pervasive (Gyimah-Boadi, 2002).

Transparency International Report over the years places Ghana among the most corrupt countries in the World¹. Consistent with the definition offered by the World Bank (World Bank, 2017), corruption is defined in the study as the abuse of public office for private gain. Nevertheless, Tax Justice Network (TJN) (2016) has criticised the definition for leaving the impression that it is only people who occupy public office who are capable of abusing their office or power TJN suggests the inclusion of practices such as market rigging, insider trading, tax dodging, non-disclosure of conflicts of interest, and illicit party funding. Even though the TI study’s findings give a picture of the state of corruption in the country, if TJN’s criticism and definition are taken into consideration, the state of the phenomenon could even be worse in the country. To this end, this study adopts the definition offered by TJN as it’s more comprehensive and fits well into this study.

¹ Transparency International (2017). Corruption Perceptions Index. <https://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/overview>

The Ghanaian government has made significant attempts over the years to curb corruption enacting laws, setting up independent bodies and agencies to address the phenomenon (Amponsah, 2010). Notable among them are the Ghana Public Procurement Act, the Financial Administration Act and its Regulations, the Assets Declaration Act, the Whistleblower Act, the Anti-Money Laundering Act, the Public Officers Liability Act, the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) and the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII). Even though these efforts have helped to expose corruption (Short, 2010), recent reports suggest that the phenomenon is on the increase (Bawumia, 2014, 2015; Addo, 2016; TI, 2017). We argue that these corrupt practices in Ghana may affect government project performance. We, therefore, propose that: *Corruption could influence Ghanaian government projects failure.*

Theoretical Antecedents of Factors that may Influence Corruption in Ghana

The corrupt practices in the country may be influenced by other factors. First, the cultural orientation of the country may be translated into the implementation of government projects. Hofstede (1983) six cultural dimension may explain why corruption in government projects. These dimensions include Power Distance; Individualism; Masculinity; Uncertainty Avoidance; Long-Term Orientation and Indulgence.² The Ghanaian society is hierarchical in nature, practising a master-servant relationship; where the rich and those in authority are revered (The Hofstede Centre, 2016). As a result, government project leaders may have significant power to divert projects resources for personal use.

Second, the political culture may influence corruption that could influence government projects failure. Ghana practices multi-party democracy and this has led to partisan politics (Bob-Milliar, 2012; Asunka, 2016). Partisan politics may influence corrupt practices, as

² For further reading please refer to Hofstede, G., 1983. Cultural dimensions for project management, International Journal of Project Management, 1(1), 41-48, for additional understanding of each dimension.

empirical studies in politics show that electoral controls of politicians tend to suffer when voters are strongly attached to a political party (Hellwig & Samuels, 2008; Kayser & Wlezien, 2011). Standardised political agency models also back these findings – there is a positive relationship between partisan politics and accountability of political leaders (Besley, 2007). In agreement with prior studies and political agency models, Asunka, (2016) found that Ghanaians fail to hold their political leaders accountable in districts where there is a strong attachment to political parties and vice-versa.

Third, the management and administration practices within the public sector in the country may also influence corrupt practices that may influence government projects failure. There is a high level of bureaucratic and institutional bottlenecks within the public administration system (Amoako & Lyon, 2014) and this may influence corrupt practices in the implementation of government projects.

Previous Research on Causes of Projects failure

Many reasons (factors) have been cited for projects failures. For instance, Frimpong et al. (2003) and Long et al. (2004) identified 26 and 64 causes of project failure respectively. In spite of the contextualisation of these causes (factors), there are common ones that run through the project management literature. A summary of these factors is presented in table 1 below for emphasis. Surprisingly, attention has not been paid to corruption as a source of government projects (especially in developing countries) failure by researchers despite the pervasiveness of the phenomenon in these countries. We, therefore, propose that *corruption would influence the Ghanaian government projects failure.*

Table 1. General causes of projects failure

Type of causes	Authors and year of publication
Communication	Raymond and Bergeron (2008); Weijermars (2009); Wong et al. (2009); Wi and Jung (2010); Ochieg and Price (2010)
Expertise/knowledge	Perkins (2006); Sambasian and Soon (2007); Ruuska and Teigland (2009); Hwang and Ng (2013)
Funding/finance	Sambasian and Soon (2007); Sweis et al. (2008); Fabian and Amir (2011)
Planning	Odeyinka and Yusif (1997); Assaf and AL-Hejji (2006); Pourrastam and Ismail (2011); Pinto (2013)
Resources	Sambasian and Soon (2007); Teigland and Lindqvist (2007); Sweis et al. (2008); Ruuska and Teigland (2009); Fabian and Amir (2011); Hwang and Ng (2013)
Scope change	Kaliba et al. (2009); Ahonen and Savolainen (2010); Liu et al. (2011)
Socio-culture	Blunt (1980); Hofstede (1983); Hogberg and Adamsson (1983); Adler (1983); Blunt and Jones (1997); Muriithi and Crawford (2003); Heeks (2002, 2006); Saad et al. (2002); Maube et al. (2008); Amid et al. (2012)

Previous Research on Corruption

Extant literature has been devoted to assessing the relationship between corruption and other variables. One of the most dominant variables is economic development. For instance, Farooq et al. (2013) identified corruption as the factor that impedes economic growth in developing countries. A cross-country study of corruption by Saha & Gounder (2013) found that countries with low levels of income tend to be more corrupt than their counterparts who have high levels of income. Similarly, Treisman (2000) assessed the causes of corruption using different countries corruption perception index from Transparency International and identified the same trend.

Saha & Gounder (2013) further found that corruption has a significant social effect. Paunov (2016) identified corruption as the factor that impedes innovation. Athanasouli & Goujard (2015) also found that corruption impacts firm management quality. In an assessment of the relationship between corruption and Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Pellegrini and Gerlagh (2004) found a positive relationship. Boycko et al. (1996) found that corruption impact on returns on investment. Hessami (2014) found that corruption leads to the increment of the government budget. Corruption could also lead to political discontent,

instability and violence as evidence in the work of Aisen & Veiga (2013). It also leads to rule-violating intentions (Sundstrom, 2016). Jetter et al. (2015) found that there is a relationship between corruption and democracy. Corruption also leads to inequality (Dobson & Ramlogan-Dobson, 2012).

In relation to corruption and projects performance, there are few studies that have been devoted to the discussion. For instance, Sonuga et al. (2002) identified corruption as one of the factors that lead to projects failure in Nigeria. In a comparative analysis of drivers and barriers to the adoption of relational contract practices in construction projects using Sydney and Beijing, Ling et al. (2014) suggest that such contract type could lead to corruption allegations. Similarly, Bowen et al. (2015) identified corruption as the factor that impacts on the construction industry in South Africa. Locatelli et al. (2017) discussed types of corruptions and the characteristics of projects that are more likely to suffer from it in ‘‘corrupt project context’’ of megaprojects using an Italian high-speed railway as a case study. They identified several characteristics that increase the odds of megaprojects to suffer corruption. They include project size, uniqueness, heavy involvement of the government and technical and organizational complexity. Moreover, they suggest that those projects executed in countries where there are high levels of corruption are more likely to suffer from corruption than less corrupt country projects-context. They also found that corruption affects project management success and projects success.

The literature suggests that an attempt has been made to cite corruption as a factor for projects failure; however, they did not discuss how corruption impacts on government projects in developing country context – where the phenomenon is pervasive. By exploring how corruption impacts on government project performance, using multiple project assessment criteria, we extend the call to discuss the impact of corruption on project performance (Locatelli et al., 2017).

Theoretical Framework

In this research, we move away from the common factors of projects failure by exploring the relationship between corruption and government projects failure using multiple projects success/failure criteria adapted from Atkinson (1999) square route framework as presented in Figure 1 below. We propose that: Corruption could influence Ghanaian government projects failure in the form of abandonment, requirement deviation, cost overrun, time overrun, stakeholder dissatisfaction and retard sector where projects are implemented and national development.

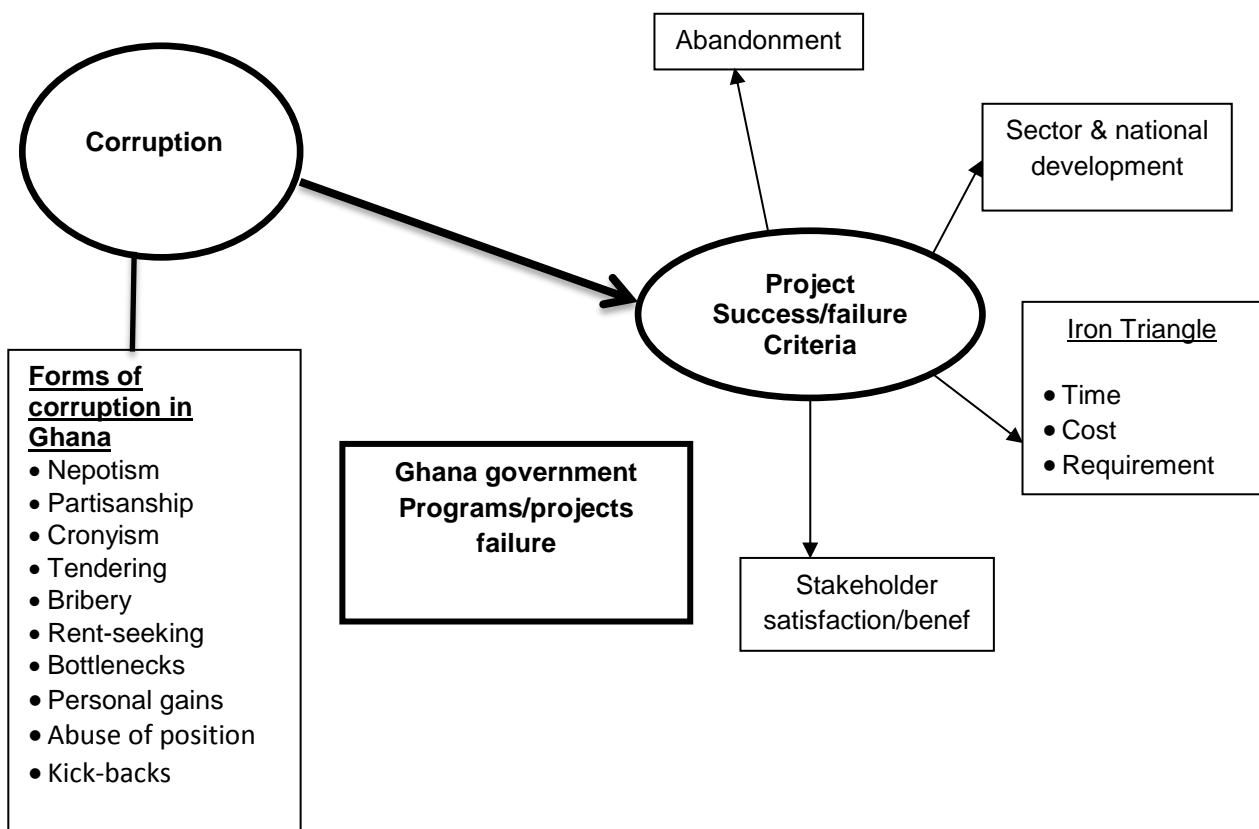


Figure 1 Corruption and government projects failure conceptual framework

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the interpretive philosophy and the social construction paradigm. Due to the lack of research in this area in developing countries, the interpretive paradigm was deemed appropriate since, the practical knowledge sought in this study is embedded in the developing country context, the stakeholder interactions and meanings (Crotty, 1998; Bryman, 2012). Projects are unique (Soderlund, 2004); and factors affecting failure depends on geographical location (Ahsan and Gunawan, 2010), and socio-cultural settings (Maumbe et al., 2008), who is assessing the project (Ika, 2009; Carvalho, 2014) and the criteria being used for the assessment (Amir & Pinnington, 2014). We, therefore, assumed that corrupt practices that may influence failure may be specific to the local context. Thus, the social constructionism paradigm assisted the researchers to generate new understandings of the influences of corruption on government project failure as the stakeholders constructed meanings in their unique ways, which were dependent on the Ghanaian context, experiences and frames of reference of the world they tried to interpret (Crotty, 1998; Silverman, 2013).

We used the purposive sampling technique to select four sets of participants for the study: the general public; contractors; government officials leading and/or involved in government projects (Clients), and project management practitioners (PMP). The participants were selected based on two criteria; knowledge of corruption and government project failure in Ghana (Teddlie & Yu, 2007; Saunders et al., 2012), and practitioners who work for active and well-known project management companies. We targeted the general public because they are the main beneficiaries of government projects (Ahsan & Gunawan, 2010) and even though some of them might not possess the technical know-how in the implementation process, they follow the implementation and the outcomes of government projects closely; hence, their perceptions of the project performance is important.

Further, we used the qualitative research approach to collect data within the Ghanaian environment in which it naturally occurs supported by the social meanings of the four

participants. The data were collected using the semi-structured interview which gave participants the freedom to provide in-depth knowledge and reliable comparable country-specific data for the study. We adopted a face-to-face and Skype interview to allow further probing questions. The initial idea was to conduct all interviews on face-to-face physical presence but, some of them had to be conducted through Skype due to the busy schedules of some participants during the daytime.

A pilot interview involving four (4) participants (one from each category) was conducted and analysed to ensure the validity of the research questions (Foddy, 1994). We conducted a total of thirty (30) interviews with the participants (See the full profile of respondents in table 2 in the appendix) to yield insight from their illuminative and rich information sources (Patton, 2002). The interviews were conducted in participants' homes, offices, construction sites and on Skype by pre-booking an appointment. During the interviews, the snowball technique was also used to identify further participants (Bryman, 2012; Saunders et al., 2012). The numbers of participants were not pre-determined at the beginning of the interviews but data was collected until we reached a saturation point, where the data had been thoroughly optimised such that no new information emerged from participants (Morse, 1995, 2000; Hill et al., 2005; Silverman, 2013; Guest et al., 2006).

The interviews were conducted between June 2014 and February 2015. All the interviews were conducted in English (the official language of Ghana). The participants were asked about their *perceptions of how corruption influences the Ghanaian government projects failure in terms of cost, time, requirement, stakeholder benefits, abandonment, and contribution to sector and nation development*. They were constantly reminded of these criteria and each criterion was re-phrased as a separate question to ensure that all the aspects of the failure criteria were addressed by participants. Each interview lasted between thirty (30) and fifty minutes (50).

All the interviews were transcribed after each interview. The transcribed data were uploaded into the NVivo10 software and reduced by selecting, focusing and condensing the information. The data were analysed using the thematic analysis through a line by line approach to identify themes based on the framework developed in figure 1. After the line by line coding, content and cross-case analysis were conducted to code sentences that explain the themes. Axial coding was also conducted to identify and explain the relationship between corruption and Ghanaian government projects failure. The themes developed from the open coding were grouped together, based on their relationship with each other. We first mapped the themes with the initial framework in Figure 1, and then expanded these into overarching and sub-themes to explain the relationship between them (Braun and Clarke, 2006) (See Figure 2 and Table 2). Most of the overarching themes of corruption were developed from in vivo codes whilst the sub-themes were developed from the initial conceptual framework. We then reviewed the themes to ensure that they work in relation to the data set through visiting and comparing the data many times to verify and confirm the themes identified (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The themes were then refined, defined and organised into a coherent framework that explains corruption and government project failure (see Figure 2) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus, the themes from the initial framework (Figure 1) became prominent, the relationship between the various parts changed and specific aspects were clarified which led to modifications in the conceptual framework developed from the literature review to the current theoretical framework in figure 2. Based on the analysis, the multiple realities constructed by the four sets of participants were used to develop both a diagrammatic model and a narrative of the influence of corruption on Ghanaian government projects failure (Remenyi, et al., 1998).

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Research Question 1: Corruption and Project abandonment

The respondents revealed that in some cases, corrupt practices may result in total abandonment of government projects and suggested that this could be traced to politics. The contractors and project management practitioners perceived that in some cases, project abandonment occurs due to government appointee's project leaders' demand for bribes from contractors, and if they refuse, they would do anything possible for the projects to fail. They would therefore not approve documentations from such contractors; hence, the contractors have no option than to abandon such projects. For instance, one project management practitioner said that:

I have a personal experience, the official wanted me to pay for his fuel –you know what I mean, and I refused, because of that he didn't want to sign my documents for me, I had to spend so much time moving up and down. So I also got angry and left the project. As I speak, the project is still lying down (P7).

The respondents also said that this often happens because government project contracts are mainly awarded on 'whom you know' and on party lines rather than on merit. The perception is that if contracts are awarded on these lines, these monies could be 'kick back' to help run their respective political parties. For example, according to P6, it is rare to get contracts without knowing anybody, more especially local contracts. And once you know the person, these malpractices would 'definitely happen even if you don't want to... If you ask the government officials, they would deny it because of their position and for fear of the media'. Some of the government officials interviewed, admitted, though, that they have heard people talk about these corrupt practices being the reasons for some projects abandonment but, they have not witnessed it themselves. P21, for instance, admitted that corruption could lead to

project abandonment, but he does not think corruption alone should be a reason to abandon a project,

Why should you abandon the project because you have realised corruption is taking place? Maybe, that might be the underlying factor, but other factors such as delays in payment or change of government.

The general public, in particular, were of the view that corruption is the main reason why government projects are abandoned and attributed it to change of government. They stated that the government who takes over from the previous government would not want to continue their projects simply because they cannot get any 'kickbacks'.

Why would they be keen to continue the previous government projects when they know the contract has already been awarded and they have no chance of getting any kicks backs for themselves and their party; my brother, this is common knowledge and open secret in this country (P9).

This is in agreement with earlier studies that found that party members collude with government officials and contractors to syphon government funds through construction contracts and then, they pay back in the form of kickbacks (Luna, 2015). Further, this could be traced to the national culture of Ghanaians as there is a very strong family bond, which serves as the primary source of identity, loyalty and responsibility (The Hofstede Centre, 2016). Political parties are regarded as a family where members join and participate in political activities with the aim of obtaining benefits (Bob-Milliar, 2012).

Research Question 2: Corruption and Projects Cost Overrun

All the participants agreed that corruption leads to cost deviation which results in cost escalation. The majority of the participants (25) identified cost escalation as number one

among all the failure criteria used for the assessment. For instance, P17 stated that ‘cost escalation is the main and probably the number one area in which corruption impact on Ghana government projects failure’. They argue that cost escalation comes in many forms, such as government officials and contractors inflating project prices,

‘look, the government officials would connive with the contractor involved in the projects or programs to increase the prices, so that at the end of it all, they would share the extra money’ (P1).

The project management practitioners said that in most cases, the contractors would wish to avoid such corrupt practice, but ‘their hands are tied’ (P4, P6, P8, P10), because if they do not do so, they would not get the contract; and their competitors would pay as stated by P14,

this is an open secret, nobody would accept that they pay to get a contract and that they also have to add it to the total contract sum, but this is real. You can ask everybody in this country and they would tell you the same thing or even worse things than what I am telling you. Ask even a small boy or girl, and they would confirm this.

Further, the analysis revealed that sometimes suppliers who provide contractors with products on credits are the same as the government officials and therefore, connive to inflate quotation prices of the products so that they can share. The analysis revealed that in Ghana, it has become a norm to pay ten percent or more of the contract sum to government officials involved in the project implementation, which is then added onto the overall contract sum awarded as stated by P16, ‘you know what, payment of ten percent of contract money by contractors to government officials involved in government projects in Ghana has become normal, if you do not pay, forget about the contract’. In all, twenty-two respondents mentioned the ten percent bribe as the reason for cost escalation and project abandonment with the exception of

eight respondents, seven government officials, and one contractor who identified the ten percent bribe but, did not attribute cost escalation solely to the ten percent bribe.

In most cases, when there is escalation of government projects cost, they (citizens) think that we the government officials have collected money from contractors, this perception is not always true, most of these cost escalation is due to other factors which are mainly on the part of the civil servants and not politicians (P23).

Similarly, the participants perceived that in most cases, there are ‘unauthorised middlemen’ who serve as the ‘link’ between the contractor and the public servant. The analysis revealed that, in most government projects, especially at the local level you can only win a contract if you have a middleman, as P28 puts it ‘rarely would you be able to win a contract if you do not have such middlemen who can connect you’. These middlemen have grown very strong in the country because the government officials use them as fronts to avoid being recognised. In view of this, these middlemen charge both the contractor and the government officials for their services and these monies are added onto the contract sum. This excerpt from the interview explains this, ‘the government officials do not want to ‘go with their ‘face’ for fear of being caught by the media and the subsequent disgrace that would follow’ (P26).

These corrupt practices which may influence cost escalation could be traced to the cultural-orientation inherited from colonial rule. This finding is not surprising as previous research have linked poor projects performance in the public sector to cultural orientation in the country (Amponsah, 2010; Damoah & Akwei, 2017). In the colonial era, the public sector work was perceived to belong to the White colonial masters and as such could be handled haphazardly (Amponsah, 2010; Damoah, 2015; Damoah et al., 2015; Damoah & Akwei, 2017). Further, the sector is regarded as a ‘national cake’ where everybody should try and cut as much as possible for their personal gains (share) (Damoah et al., 2015; Damoah &

Akwei, 2017). This encourages people within the country who have access to public money to try as much as possible to embezzle government funds through projects implementation. The implication is that the government ends up spending excessively on projects and programs implementation and extra resources to curb and/or control these corrupt practices.

This finding confirms prior studies conducted in the construction industry and in developing countries. Cheng (2014) found cost overrun as a common problem in the construction industry and Kaliba et al. (2009), Ahsan & Gunawan (2010), and Aziz (2013) all found cost deviation in project implementation in developing countries. Cost deviation in project management has become a norm in organisations (Pinto, 2014). Although our findings confirm earlier studies, it extends the literature through identifying corruption as a further source of cost escalation as the previous studies did not look at corruption as a source of cost of escalation in project management. The implication of this finding to policymakers and practitioners is that, though there are many factors for cost deviation in projects management (Frimpong et al., 2003; Sambasian & Soon, 2007; Kaliba et al., 2009; Ahsan & Gunawan, 2010 and Aziz, 2013), they should not focus only on the common factors such as inflation, delays in payment, scope change but, in addition, focus on context-specific issues such as corrupt practices which are pervasive in developing countries.

Research Question 3: Corruption and Time Overrun

The study revealed that corruption could influence Ghanaian government projects and programs failure in the form of time deviation. Participants argue that corrupt practices have direct and indirect effects on the duration of Ghanaian government projects. Directly, they perceive that in most cases, contractors and politicians deliberately delay projects through connivance. The argument is that once, there is a delay, the cost would be escalated and they could use that as a means to embezzle funds for their personal gains. Twenty (20) of the

respondents said that government officials; public servants and civil servants who serve as consultants (experts) demand money and other resources such as fuel from contractors before they certify the progress projects. This may influence delays if contractors are not willing to comply. The implication is that the cost of the project would escalate once there is a delay in certification,

sometimes, the contractors must buy fuel for the consultants to travel to the project's site; though they have already received their monthly pay... if you fail to buy the fuel, forget it, they would never go and inspect the project for you to move on with the project (P7).

‘they would ask for fuel but in reality, they are talking about money’ (P8).

The participants attributed these corrupt practices to politics. They believe that the culture of corruption has come about due to the political nature of the appointment of these consultants. Hence, they can engage in these practices with impunity, knowing that if they are caught, they cannot be sacked. The issue of political appointment of consultants is due to the Ghanaian constitution that entrusts a lot of powers to the executives (particularly the president) in the appointment of public servants.

Time deviation (escalation) has been identified as a cause of projects failure in developing countries in relation to performing organisations and clients related issues such as scope change, poor planning, communication and delays in payment (see Frimpong et al., 2003; Sambasivan & Soon, 2007; Sweis et al., 2008; Kaliba et al., 2009; Liu et al., 2011); however, it has not been discussed in relation to corruption for such delays, this study bridges this gap in the literature in developing countries.

Research Question 4: Corruption and Projects Requirement Deviation

The analysis of data revealed that some Ghanaian government projects deliverables often do not meet requirements due to corruption. Shoddy work is produced in some circumstances, especially in projects that are directly awarded by Ghanaian government officials. Thus, the quantity and quality of the deliverables are sometimes compromised due to corruption. This was attributed to the lack of supervision by government consultants and regulatory bodies such as quality control officers; hence, contractors end up using the wrong products when carrying out projects. They opined that in most cases, the consultants (inspectors) who are supposed to inspect projects at various stages of the projects life cycle often collude and connive with the contractors to use sub-standard materials which are obviously cheaper than the quality ones in a bid to save the money for themselves, ‘sometimes instead of say five types of cement, they would agree to use two or three.’(P24), and the consultants are unable to supervise and monitor project standardisation. However, they perceive that the consultants cannot be sacked because they are political appointees or the government has influence in their appointment.

You dare not try to sack such consultants, they have strong political backing. Some are hundred percent political party appointments, and you know how politicians are very powerful in this country. So, if you are a contractor, you just have to compromise or forget about getting another job. ... Corruption goes with politics in Ghana in all parts of life here and not only in projects management (P30).

This practice is very common in government projects. Participants P5, P2, P3 and P18 compared this practice between the public and private sector and concluded that although some contractors work for both government and the private sector, they collect bribes in the public sector but, cannot do so in the private sector. In words of P18,

It's funny to know that it the same contractors who work for both the private man and the government but they know that they can engage in these corrupt practices in the public sector but they are afraid to do so in the private sector. So the problem has to do with the government officials and the mentality they have for government work'. People think that it is the only way that they can have a fair share of the national cake – the ordinary Ghanaian thinks that government officials or politicians are ‘chopping’ the taxpayers money anyhow, so they must also ‘chop’ as much as possible if they get the opportunity.

Similarly, eleven of the respondents said: because government officials and contractors do not want to be exposed, they would agree in secret for the contractors to pay them ‘in kind’. They said the industry where this occurs most is in the construction sector where the officials would ask the contractor to build a house for them during the construction of the main projects.

So before the project is completed, they would also have at least one house – depending on the nature of the project and the duration, sometimes, they can get like two or three houses before a major construction project is completed. That is why you can see when roads are constructed, you would see potholes in less than a year after completion, sometimes even before the whole stretch of the road is completed, and those that were constructed earlier on would have potholes. My friend, you can't blame the contractor, he also needs to make a profit (P1).

The implication is that once they have used part of the contract money to build a house for the government officials, they also need to reduce the quality so that they can make a profit.

Research Question 5: Corruption and Stakeholder Dissatisfaction

One area that participants perceive that corruption would influence project failure is in the area of stakeholders benefits or satisfaction. Apart from P19 and P30; all of the participants mentioned that when there is corruption, citizens do not receive all the benefits that they are supposed to receive from such public projects. They perceive that once corruption affects the

management phase of the project, it will have ripple effects on the benefits that the key stakeholders are supposed to receive and often referred to the key stakeholders as the general public/citizens. This is due to the fact that government projects in developing countries are mainly implemented purposely for the ‘ordinary citizens’ (Ahsan & Gunawan, 2010). P13, for instance, stated that:

When there are corrupt practices during government projects implementation, the citizens do not enjoy all the benefits. Assuming, because of corruption, wrong quality of the road is constructed, few years, sometimes months and the road has ‘potholes’, who suffers; it is you and I, the ordinary Ghanaian. So, my brother, stakeholders such as the ordinary citizens would not be satisfied because they are not benefiting as expected.

P1, P12, P13, P23, P26 argue that when there is corruption, what is supposed to go to the citizens go into individual ‘pockets’ and as such are unable to realise the full benefits. For example, P23 stated that,

assuming the actual cost of the project that the central government has approved is \$20m, and before the project begins, \$5m is lost through corruption, I am quoting it in dollars because most of these projects are quoted in dollars and not cedis. Now, do you think the contractor is going to use \$15m or \$20 to execute the project? So, obviously, if he uses \$15m, the people will not get all the benefits that they are supposed to get, hence, they won’t be happy. They won’t be happy because they are aware of these practices; this is an open secret.

Research Question 6: Corruption and Underdevelopment of Sectors where Projects are Implemented and National development

The study revealed that corrupt practices in the management of Ghanaian government projects affect the development of the sector in which such projects are implemented. Ultimately, this has a significant impact on the overall national development as government

projects are perceived to be an engine for national development (Alzahrani & Emsley, 2013; Amoatey et al., 2015).

The findings show that under-development of sectors and national development comes in both direct and indirect. Directly, when there is corruption in the implementation of the Ghanaian government projects, the sectors are unable to develop as expected because funds are sometimes redirected for personal use by officials and projects are delayed or abandoned altogether, 'so obviously it affects the sector where the projects are implemented and ultimately retard national development' (P3). Indirectly, corruption leads to economic and social hardships which impacts on the sector and national development; thus, if there are socio-economic hardships, it is the citizens who suffer. They perceive that if projects are not able to achieve their projected objectives such as time, requirement and cost, citizens are unable to benefit fully from such projects, hence, affecting national development as a whole. This assertion was unanimous among all participants. In the words of one of the participant,

Corruption undermines national development; it is not only in the implementation of government projects or programs but all other parts of governance of our country. You know what, all the problems we have in Ghana in terms of development is corruption – people always talk about corruption in projects because those ones are obvious and visible but trust me, everywhere there is corruption and they are affecting the country (P8).

The figure 2 below illustrates the findings.

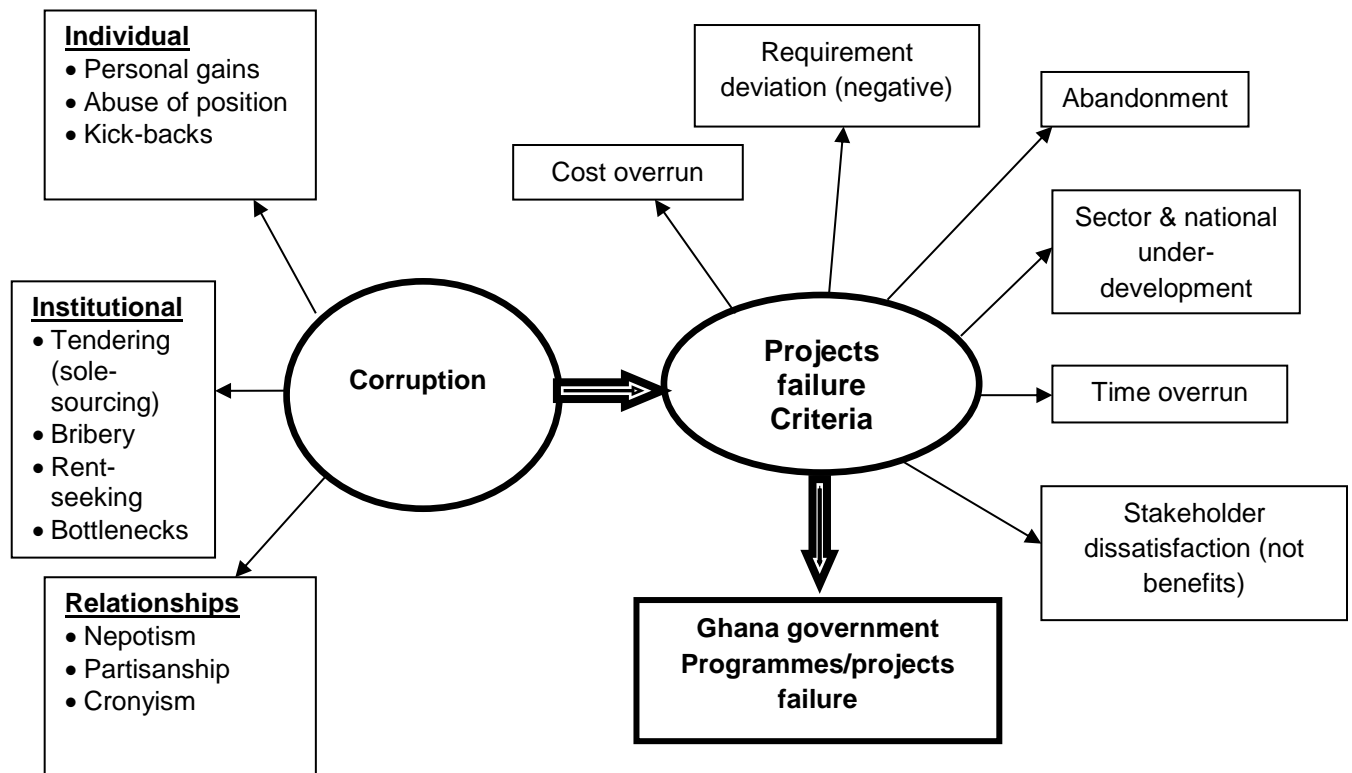


Figure 2. A model summarising the findings on Corruption and government projects failure

The figure 2 above shows that corruption in Ghana comes in many forms and types. This happens at the *individual, institutional and relationships* levels. This may then influence Ghanaian government projects failure in the form of abandonment, negative requirement deviation, cost overrun, time overrun, stakeholder dissatisfaction, and sector and national under-development.

CONCLUSIONS

This study explored how corruption leads to government projects failure, using multiple failure criteria within the Ghanaian context. Six questions were addressed and are:

RQ1: How does corruption influence abandonment of Ghanaian government projects?

The study found that in some cases, corrupt practices result in total abandonment of

government projects. This was traced mainly to partisanship politics. It was revealed that in some projects abandonment cases, the government appointees who lead projects demand bribes from contractors and if they refuse, they would want to halt the project. They would therefore not approve documentations from such contractors; hence, the contractors would have no option than to abandon such projects. Moreover, they would stifle the progress of projects that were commenced by the previous government – in order to gain political capital out of it.

RQ2: How does corruption influence cost overrun of Ghanaian government projects?

The study found that government officials go into the management of projects with the intentions of making money for personal gains and also to use the money to support their party. They, therefore, inflate contracts sums through connivance with contractors. Further, the processes of awarding of government projects contract breed corrupt practices. Contracts awards take long processes and as such contractors and government officials engage the services of unofficial middlemen who take at least ten percent of the contract sums. Consequently, the contractors pass this on to the projects sum.

RQ3: How does corruption influence time overrun of Ghanaian government projects?

Civil and public servants are mainly appointed by the government in the form of consultants often indulge in corrupt practices during projects management implementation that may lead to government projects failure. They request for ‘‘fuel money’’ before they certify projects for further works to continue or the completion of projects. Failure by contractors to comply with their request means that the project(s) has to come to a standstill.

RQ4: How does corruption influence negative requirement deviation of Ghanaian government projects?

The processes of awarding of government projects contract breed corrupt practices. Contracts awards take long processes and as such contractors and government officials engage the

services of unofficial middlemen who take at least ten percent of the contract sums. Some officials also take the same percent of contract sums either in cash or in kind for their personal gains. Consequently, the contractors reduce the quality and quantity of the project deliverables.

RQ5: How does corruption influence stakeholder dissatisfaction of Ghanaian government projects?

It was found that once corruption affects the management phase of the projects, it will have ripple effects on the benefits that the key stakeholders are supposed to gain. Even though different stakeholders are affected, the key stakeholder(s) mostly affected are the general public.

RQ6: How does corruption influence Ghanaian government projects that may lead to the retarding of the sector where projects are implemented and national development?

Like the stakeholder dissatisfaction, this is an indirect impact. The finding is that once corruption has affected government projects at the management level and the project has failed at the management level, it would have indirect effects, hence, failure of the public sector in which the projects are implemented. The ultimate effect would be in the national development.

Overall, the findings indicate that corruption influence government projects failure on all the failure criteria used as the evaluating tool. However, corruption influences failure at two different levels – project management and product phase level. At the management level, corruption has direct influence whilst at the product level, the influence is indirect. Moreover, the corrupt practices happen at three different levels: individual, institutional and relationships; and at any level, they can influence the projects to fail. The implication is that policymakers and practitioners should make conscious efforts to reduce and/or avoid corrupt

practices at the management level in order to avoid the subsequent effects on the product phase level.

Practical Implication

This study extends the causes of projects failure literature by discussing how corruption influence projects failure in government projects failure in a developing country context. The findings of the research will be value-bound and significant to the four key stakeholders in government project within the Ghanaian environment due to the socially constructed process of interaction, co-generation, and interpretation of corruption as a source of government project failure in Ghana. Therefore, policymakers and project management practitioners would be able to use findings as a guide during government programs or projects implementation to avoid corrupt practices that may eventually influence failure. Specifically, the use of hard copies of projects documents should be replaced with electronic ones; this will help reduce corruption and delays in accessing projects documents, which compels practitioners to indulge in corrupt practices. This can also help easy access of projects documents by the media and the general public – this will help monitoring and transparency.

Secondly, Ghanaian government should make the monitoring of its projects a priority with minimal political interference. Thus, projects should be left with technocrats to manage public projects rather than political patronage. There should be independent body devoid of party politics.

Thirdly, to reduce shoddy works (projects deliverables); independent laboratories should be allowed to test projects materials rather than the assemblies; which are part of the government. Consultants who monitor and certify completion of Ghanaian the government projects should be independent. The part which has to be certified by government should

constitute incumbent party and the opposition members of parliaments (MPs). This will help reduce partisanship that leads to corrupt practices.

Moreover, it is important for the leadership of Ghanaian government projects to institute projects offices separate from government agencies. This will help reduce political interference and political patronage that influence corruption.

In addition, stricter laws need to be enacted by parliament to ensure that projects cannot be halted when there is a change of government. Also, the role of national development planning commission to set out programmes and plan for development devoid of politics should be strengthened in order to reduce projects being halted with changes in government.

Academic Implications

Despite the contextualization of projects and programmes and their associated factors (causes) that lead to failure, there are common ones that run through projects management literature as presented in Table 1. This current research extends the causes of project failure to include corruption as a major factor that influences project failure in a developing country. By focusing on corruption, this study sheds light on the phenomenon as a major contributing factor in developing countries; where corrupt practices in the public sector are pervasive. In spite of the pervasiveness of the practice in developing countries and their potential to affect project implementation within the public sector, researchers have not paid much attention to it. Therefore, this research would serve as a springboard to academics, researchers and project management practitioner for further research into the relationship between corruption and projects failure, particularly through quantitative study.

Further, by assessing how corruption may influence government projects failure using multiple projects failure criteria, it provides a deeper understanding of how corruption affects government projects performance. Previous studies, though have mentioned that corruption

can lead to projects failure, but, did not discuss how this actually happens (Heeks, 1999; Corojan & Criado, 2012; Kim, 2014). This study, therefore, extends the projects management literature by exploring how this happens.

The work of Aladwani (2016) provides a theoretical exposition to corruption and e-government projects failure, the current research extends the literature by conducting an empirical study. Further, Aladwani (2016) did not use multiple failure criteria or any individual criterion that is used in the evaluation of projects performance. By using multiple criteria in the assessment, further research could be conducted to compare the extent to which corruption could impact on projects failure on the various criterions.

Finally, this study provides a theoretical framework for the assessment of the relationships that exist between corruption and government projects failure with multiple failure criteria.

Limitations and Further Research

Due to the sampling technique used, the finding cannot be generalised; however, this serves as an exploratory study that provides platforms for further research. Further research would be needed as a confirmatory study that would involve quantitative data and large sample to assess the extent to which corruption could influence government projects failure, using the multiple failure criteria identified in the framework. A representative sample technique would assist to uncover the entire industry players in order to generalise findings.

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APPENDIX

Respondents' Profile

Table 2. In-depth Semi-structured Interview Profile

Respondents	Age	Education	Years of Experience in Current position	Work Experience In Project Management/Implementation	Overall Work Experience	Industry	Sector
PROJECT MANAGEMENT PRACTITIONERS							
P1(Project Manager)	61	Masters	7	15	37	ICT	Private & Public
P2 (Project and Programs Consultant)	57	PhD/ Professional	12	15	32	ICT	Public & Private
P3 (Architect)	37	BA/ Professional	4	10	10	General	Public
P4 (Structural Engineer)	40	BA/ Professional	4	14	14	General	Public
P5 (Project manager)	47	BA/Professional	3	15	18	ICT	Public & private
P6 (Civil engineer)	41	Masters/Professional	5	10	13	Construction	Public & private
P7 (Project Co-ordinator)	55	Masters	10	15	26	General	Public & private
P8 (Consultant)	60	PhD/Professional	15	25	30	General	Public & private
P9 (Architect)	39	Masters	4	5	11	General	Public & private
P10 (Consultant & Lecturer)	46	PhD/ Professional	15	15	21	General	Public & Private
P11 (Architect)	37	BA/PgD/ Professional	4	10	10	General	Public
P12 (Structural Engineer)	40	BA/ Professional	4	14	14	General	Public
P13 (Quantity Surveyor)	39	BA/ Professional	15	15	15	General	Public
P14 (Physical & Works Director)	55	Masters/ Professional	1	32	32	Education	Public
CONTRACTORS							
P15 (Director)	39	Professional	15	15	15	General	Private & Public
P16 (CEO & Administrator)	55	Masters/ Professional	1	32	32	General	Private & Public
P17(Administrative Director)	45	BA	7	15	19	Construction	Private & Public
P18 (Real Estate Developer)	62	A-Level	35	35	40	Construction	Private & Public
P19 (Finance & Administrative Director)	27	Masters	4	15	15	Construction	Public
P20 (Director)	45	A-Level	7	7	25	Construction	Public &

							private
GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS (CLIENTS)							
P21 (Project Coordinator)	50	BA	2	2	27	General	Public
P22 (Consultant)	45	BA/PgD/Professional	10	17	20	General	Public
P23 (Consultant)	60	BA/Professional	5	15	40	General	Public
P24 (Administrator)	55	Masters	5	8	30	Healthcare	Public
P25 (Deputy Administrator)	40	BA/Professional	3	7	17	General	Public
GENERAL PUBLIC							
P26 (Media Practitioner)	45	Diploma	7	-	25	Construction	Public & private
P27 (Teacher)	42	Diploma	19	-	19	Education & Retail	Public & Private
P28 (Medical Practitioners)	45	BSc	15	2	15	Healthcare	Public & Private
P29 (Teacher & Business Woman)	38	Diploma	10	-	10	Education & Retail	Public & Private
P30 (Banker)	31	BA	5	1	7	Banking	Public