

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS ON THE QUALITY OF JUDICIAL SERVICES PROVIDED BY COURTS IN KANO METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT

Many citizens seem to be unhappy and dissatisfied with the quality of judicial services provided by courts in Nigeria. This paper aims at obtaining public perceptions on the quality of judicial services provided by the courts in Kano metropolis and examines how members of the public belonging to different gender, social classes and educational backgrounds vary in terms of their perception on the quality of judicial services provided by the courts in Nigeria. Efforts are made to identify the major problems bedeviling the courts. The target groups used were males and females adult residents of Kano metropolis and a sample size of 208 was drawn. Multi stage cluster sampling method was used in selecting the respondents, structured questionnaires were administered to 200 respondents; and in-depth interview was conducted on 2 judicial officers, 1 police prosecutor, 2 plaintiffs, 2 defendants, and 1 inmate awaiting trial that were selected using purposive sampling technique. The quantitative data were processed using the SPSS and frequencies, percentages and chi-square value obtained in the analysis. The qualitative data were used to complement the quantitative data gathered. The study reveals that the public have negative perceptions on the quality of judicial services provided by Nigerian courts. This is mainly due to rampant corruption and failure of the judicial personnel to adhere to professional ethics. Variation was discovered among the respondents belonging to different gender as females expressed more dissatisfaction with the quality of judicial services provided by courts than their male counterparts. However, no significant relationship was found among the respondents in terms of their perceptions and their social class or level of education. It was also discovered that corruption was the major problem that accounted for the public dissatisfaction with the quality of judicial services provided by these courts. The paper, thus, recommends that for quality judicial services to be provided by Nigerian courts, the problem of bribery and corruption must be tackled via close monitoring of the judicial personnel; that thorough vetting of the candidates seeking for employment into the Nigerian courts should be made; and that proper sanctioning mechanisms and modern techniques for investigating office abuse by the judicial personnel be provided.

Keywords: Public Perceptions, Quality Judicial Services, Courts, Judicial Personnel

Introduction

The judiciary is one of the three fundamental organs of the modern Nigerian government responsible for the interpretation of law in consonance with the provisions of Constitution. The other two organs are the legislature – the body responsible for making the laws, and the executive – charged with the implementation of such laws (Abdurrahman, 2011). Presumably, each of these arms is independent and separate from one another in terms of functions and operations. The basis for the separation is to allow for efficiency among the three components and to guard against one of them having access to excessive powers that could be potentially abused. This doctrine of separation of powers and responsibilities is the foundation upon which modern democratic system is built.

By interpreting the laws on the blind scale of justice, the judiciary renders an important service of providing justice to the citizens, which is an essential ingredient for a decent life. This is because modern life is characterized by citizens' involvement in economic, political and social activities for survival. In all these activities, human beings, invariably, demand justice from the state. The state, on its part, delivers such justice via the judiciary whose cardinal role is protecting the inalienable rights of the citizens against abuse by either its agents or other fellow citizens. In Nigeria, the judicial powers of both states and federal government are vested in the states' and federal courts respectively (Section 6 (1) and (2) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria).

The above implies that the effectiveness and success of the judicial arm of government, to a great degree, depends on the ability of the courts to resolve cases (both civil and criminal) promptly and justly in line with the ethical standards of the judicial practices and rule of law (Dimitrova-Grajzl et al, 2012). The extent of this ability is an important indicator of the strength, success, popularity, public

acceptance, trust, confidence and positive rating of the judiciary, which will certainly elevate its position in the Nigeria's political structure. Hence, the courts occupy an important position in the modern democratic Nigeria that no other institution can sufficiently take its place (Cocodia, 2010).

Thus, understanding the problems bedeviling the ability of the courts in Nigeria to provide quality judicial services will require knowledge of how public perceive the judicial services being provided by the personnel of the courts, which is the focus of this paper. This paper is however, divided into eleven sections. The first section after the introduction presents the hypotheses and objectives, the second is on the perspectives on the Nigeria's court system, while section three and four deals with the power of the courts and the judicial precedents/hierarchy of the Nigerian courts respectively. Problems of courts administration in Nigeria is the theme for section five, while sections six and seven are devoted to a theoretical discourse on justice administration and the study methodology respectively. In addition, section eight presents the results found by the study; section nine is devoted to discussion of findings whereas sections ten and eleven contain recommendations and conclusion respectively.

Statement of the Problem

The complexity of the modern state has made Nigerians' involvement in economic, political and social activities necessary for survival. In each of these activities there are potentials for some individuals to be abused by others, implying that the vulnerable individuals will invariably demand justice from the state. Courts in Nigeria are the only institutions recognized by law to deliver such justice. To successfully carry out their legal mandates, the courts require not only recognition and total submission to its decisions by the citizens, but

also the knowledge and experience of those on whom these judgments are consistently being administered. Unfortunately, it appears that the attention of the Nigerian criminal justice researchers is focused more on specific problems, like judicial corruption, poor staff welfare, training, political interference, judicial politics, delay in proceedings, under qualification, in-experience and lack of integrity on the part of some judges, and other unethical and unprofessional conducts, etc (Alemika, 2002; Dina, Akintayo and Ekundayo, 2005; Dambazau, 2007; and Musdapher, 2011). The above emphasis will only allow for a partial understanding of the problems that impede the successful delivery of quality judicial services by the courts in Nigeria. A holistic understanding of these problems will require the knowledge of public feelings, opinions and general perception on how judicial services are being provided by these courts. This will not only provide an insight into the problem of justice administration in Nigeria, but also highlight the destructive potentials of such feelings to the sustainability of both legal and social systems.

Accordingly, this paper presents data so as to bridge the gap in knowledge thereby setting precedent for a better and more holistic understanding of the problems confronting the judicial organ in its efforts to provide justice for all. Understanding the problem will, however, provide an opportunity for researchers and government to device better techniques for addressing these problems thereby making the system more effective, efficient, ideal and acceptable to the public. This is important because for a legal system to be effective and efficient, it has to be recognized, accepted and generally perceived as positively and functionally contributing to public survival.

In this paper, the following basic questions were raised: How do the public perceive the quality of judicial services provided by courts

in Kano Metropolis? And what are the major problems facing the courts in Kano metropolis in providing quality judicial services? In an attempt to provide answer to these questions, the paper examined public perceptions on the quality of judicial services provided by courts in Nigeria, identified the major problems bedeviling the courts and assessed the services being provided by the judicial services in relation to gender, income and level of education of persons.

The Nigeria's Court System

Prior to the Nigeria's contact with the Europeans, the diverse ethnic nationalities that constitute the present Nigeria have their customs, norms and native legal systems that were applied to regulate the conducts and behaviors of their members. Available records pointed to the fact that most of the areas covered by the present Northern Nigeria had administered Islamic legal codes (affiliated to Maliki School of Islamic Jurisprudence) as the principal law. While in the territories covering most of the present Southern Nigeria, the legal systems were more inclined to the customary laws (Obilade, 1975).

The advent of the British and other European merchants before the nineteenth century was the turning point in the history of the Nigerian court system. This was an offshoot of the multiple attempts on the part of indigenous courts to settle trade disputes involving foreigners, most especially Briton and indigenous people. Unfortunately, these customary laws and even the court system were completely strange, unfamiliar and therefore unable to meet the justice demands of the British and other European traders, which subsequently led to the appointment of British first Consul to Nigeria in 1849. The Consul was, essentially, to regulate trade activities between the British traders and their host communities (Obilade, 1975; and Beredugo, 2009).

With the colonization of Nigeria, the British colonial government introduced the English legal system, which contained colonial statutes, the common law and the principles of equity into the country's legal system in 1886. It was said that, the newly introduced legal system did not totally displace the indigenous legal system, but instead operated simultaneously side-by-side with the customary laws (Obilade, 1975; Sanni, 1999 and Beredugo, 2009).

However, when the country gained political independence in 1960, the English legal system was made part and parcel of the country's legal system. Similarly, from the independence onward, the country had from municipal legislative enactments and case law, created and developed a distinctive national legal system anchored on Nigeria's precepts of law and justice administration. Hence, the country operates a mixed legal system that emanates from three different strands of customary law; English law and local or municipal legislations (Obilade, 1975; Akaniro, 1997 and Beredugo, 2009).

Powers of the Nigerian Courts

A court of law is an important component of the judicial arm of government in Nigeria. The court is legally established, constituted and constitutionally empowered to administer justice publicly by hearing and deciding cases and matters brought before it by disputants. Thus, a court could be seen as a formal body created by law and administered by persons trained, skillful and knowledgeable in law, who are authorized by the law creating the court to settle disputes brought before them peacefully and in consonance with the laws of the country. The above statement implies that, Nigerian courts have been created by the Nigerian Constitution and it is the same Constitution that outlined the powers of the Nigerian courts as contained in Section 6(6)(a) of the 1999 Constitution, which provided that

the judicial powers of the courts shall extend to all inherent powers and sanctions of a court of law. Beredugo (2009) has summarized these inherent powers and functions of a court of law into the followings:

- (i) The power to punish for contempt of court, which empowered courts to apply sanction on any person for contempt of their authority. Contempt here implies the refusal of a person to comply with court order or showing any disrespectful attitude towards a court.
- (ii) The court of law is also empowered to issue originating writs or other court processes necessary for the exercise of their respective jurisdiction; the settlement of issues; the issuing of arrest warrants; granting and cancelling of bails; the appointment of interpreters for unlettered litigants, and the appointment of legal practitioners to defend indigent persons accused of a capital offence who cannot afford the services of legal practitioners of their choice.

In addition to the above, Section 6(6)(b) of the 1999 Constitution provides that the judicial powers of the courts shall also extend to:

...all matters between persons, or between government or authority and to any person in Nigeria, and to all actions and proceedings relating thereto, for the determination of any action as to the civil rights and obligations of that person.

From the above constitutional provisions, one can easily assess the strength and powerful place occupied by the courts in Nigeria. Hence, an order by the court, no matter how odd and unpleasant it may appear, is capable of legal consequences. To re-affirm the above position, Nwabueze (1994) cited in Musdapher

(2011) noted that under the Nigeria's constitutional scheme:

Only a court of law has the power and right to say authoritatively and conclusively what the law is And once a superior court of record has spoken, then, its pronouncement, however perverse or blatantly wrong it may appear to be, establishes the law unless and until it is reversed on appeal by a higher court (Mudphar, 2011: 5).

The above strategic status of court in the Nigeria's legal system implies that justice is a trust and the court is the custodian of that trust. The court must therefore be just and fair. It must not favor any political party, pressure group, racial or ethnic group, gender, and geopolitical entity. The court judges must also be able to avoid any discrimination on the basis of family or any other emotional ties. It should always be consistent with the symbol of justice which depicts a blindfolded person holding two equal scales. This implies that the mandate of the courts is to dispense justice to all Nigerians, without fear, favor, affection or ill-will (Mudphar, 2011).

The Structure and Hierarchy of Nigerian Courts

The doctrine of judicial precedents is rooted in the principle of *stare decisis* (i.e following the previous decisions), implying that a court is bound to follow the decision of a court with higher jurisdiction. In other words, a court which is inferior in authority is obliged to follow the decision of a court with superior authority, if called upon to decide on facts analogous to facts already tried by the superior court. But an inferior court is not legally bound to follow a decision of a superior court provided such decision is in conflict with a decision of another court which is above such higher court in the court hierarchy. Moreover, in principle, an inferior court is

legally empowered to choose which of the two conflicting decisions of a higher court or higher courts of equal standing it would follow. The doctrine of judicial precedents does not rigidly apply to certain courts like the customary/area courts and the shari'a courts in Nigeria. It only applies to those courts that apply common law of which the doctrine forms apart (Obilade, 1975; Okonkwo, 1980; Akanio, 1997; and Asein, 1998).

It should be noted that, it is not the entire decision or every legal statement contained in the decision that creates a binding precedent. But only the aspect of the judgment or decision that creates binding precedent must relate to the legal principles that were applied by the court in deciding a particular case brought before it. This is called the *ratio decidendi* of a case.

According to Section 233(1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Supreme Court is at the apex of the Country's courts hierarchy and is the only court, to the exclusion of any other court of law in the Country, with the appellate jurisdiction to hear and determine appeals coming from the Court of Appeal. The second along this hierarchy is the Court of Appeal, which is constitutionally empowered, to the exclusion of any other court of law in Nigeria, to hear and determine appeals steaming from the Federal and State High Courts as well as other courts of coordinate and concurrent jurisdiction to the High Courts. These courts include the Federal and State Sharia Courts of Appeal, the Federal and States Customary Courts of Appeal (See Section 240, 1999 CFRN), the Customary and Sharia Courts of Appeal for the FCT and the National Industrial Court (NIC). But an appeal from the NIC is limited to the question of fundamental rights (See Section 3(a) and (b) and Section 9(2) of the National Industrial Court Act, 2006).

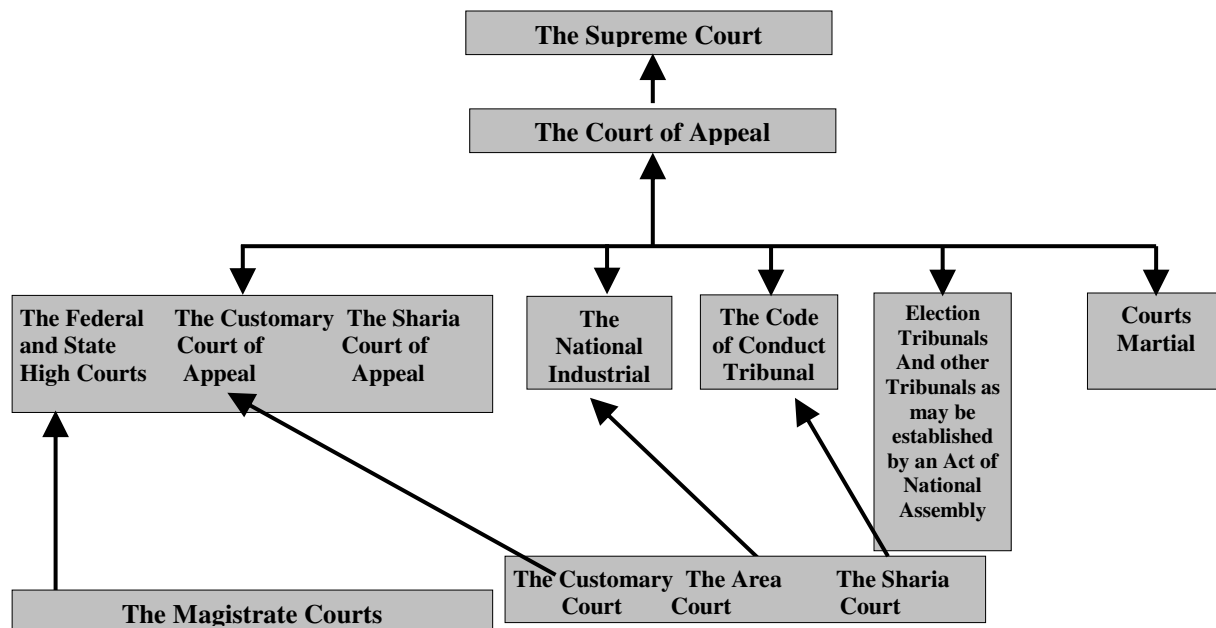
Similarly, appeals to the Court of Appeal may come from the decisions of Court Martial

or other tribunals as may be prescribed by an Act of National Assembly (See Section 240, 1999 CFRN). Some of these tribunals include the Code of Conduct Tribunal and Elections Tribunals (See Section 246(1)(a) and (b), 1999 CFRN). The Court of Appeal is legally bound by its previous decisions and the previous decisions of the Supreme Court. The High Courts and other courts of coordinate or concurrent jurisdiction are the third along courts hierarchy in Nigeria and are bound by the previous decisions of the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal and by their previous decisions. Beneath these courts lie

Magistrates Courts. These courts are absolutely bound by the previous decisions of all the superior courts by the virtue of their bottom position along Nigerian courts hierarchy.

However, Customary Courts in the South and Area Courts in the North of Nigeria are not bound by the doctrine of judicial precedents. This is due to the fact that various laws that established such courts did not provide for the application of common law by these courts. The above court hierarchy is been reflected in the following chart

Fig. 1: Hierarchy of the Nigerian Courts



Source: 1999 CFRN; NICA (2006); Dina et al (2005) ;and Obilade (1975)

Problems of Justice Administration in Nigeria

There are several problems encountered by and in the Nigerian courts in the course of justice administration. These problems include among others, poor qualification, low experience and lack of integrity on the part of court officials, poor training on the part of the

court personnel, bribery and corruption among the personnel of both lower and higher courts, insufficient human, material and financial resources and poor infrastructures. Other problems are inadequate number of courts leading to heavy case loads, poor

salaries and remuneration of the judicial personnel, outdated manual recording of the proceedings, judicial politics, political interference by the legislative and executive arms, delays and long pretrial detention, poor relation with members of the press, poor, unprofessional and subjective application of laws by some of the judges (Oyedife, 1986; Okonkwo, 1980; Akaniro, 1997; and Asein, 1998; Alemika, 2002; Radda, 2005; Dambazau, 2007; Ani, 2011; Jauhari, 2011; Musdapher, 2011).

The inability of the judiciary to overcome the aforementioned problems may likely frustrate the citizens, create suspicions and mistrust and thus erode the very confidence that people have in the court, which is the pillar that sustains not only the judicial arms, but also the entire social system at large. The above problems could possibly explain why complaints about courts inefficiency and failures abound; however, the most important issue at stake is to uncover how citizens generally perceive these courts in terms of their performance vis-à-vis their ability to effectively deliver quality judicial justice to the people in line with the constitutional provisions.

A Theoretical Discourse on Justice Administration

This work will employ two important theories as its theoretical frame of reference. These theories are utilitarian theory developed on the assumption that the purpose of any public institution shall be to ensure greatest happiness to the greatest number. Whereas, the second theory, social contract theory, was built on the assumption of presumed contractual agreement entered into between the state and its people, where they agree to live together for their mutual harmony by surrendering some of their liberties to the state in exchange for the protection of their lives and properties. The choice of the two

theories was done to enable the study harmonize their relative strengths and minimize their associated shortcomings. The focuses of these theories have been presented below.

Utilitarian Theory

A society, according to utilitarian theory, is just to the extent that its laws and institutions are designed to promote the greatest overall or average happiness of its members. John Stuart Mill, one of the three most important 19th century proponents of utilitarianism (the other two were Jeremy Bentham and Henry Sidgwick), argued that freedom or liberty, both political and economic, were indispensable requisites for happiness. Basing his view upon much the same interpretation of human beings and human life as Aristotle, Mill argued that democracy and the basic political liberties – freedom of speech (and the press), of assembly, and of worship, were essential to the happiness of rational end-choosers; for without them they would be prevented from effectively pursuing their own conception of a good and satisfying life. He further argued that some degree of economic prosperity (wealth) was indispensable to having a realistic chance of living such a life of realizing one's ends (Reid, 1997). So, according to utilitarianism, the just society should be so organized in its institutions, government, laws, and economy, that as many people as possible shall have the means and opportunity to achieve their chosen conception of a desirable life. To reform the institutions of one's society toward this goal, in the utilitarian view, is to pursue greater justice.

Looking at the above argument one can easily assess the strategic position occupied by court as an institution in ensuring hitch-free democracy and in protecting inalienable rights of the Nigerians, thereby making available the means through which Nigerians can attain their chosen conception of desirable life.

Hence, for the Nigerian courts to perform such important functions they must be impartial arbiters of truth. If problems like corruption, political interference, poor standard techniques of proceedings, etc. are allowed to plague in the system, then, the adjudications by the courts will be delivered in favor of the highest bidders thereby blocking all possible chances for other under-privileged Nigerians to achieve their own conception of a good and satisfying life. The above may imply that the purpose for establishing courts in Nigeria is defeated because Nigerian courts, as institutions of justice delivery, have failed to provide greater happiness to the greatest number which is the cardinal reason for their formation. How do we know if Nigerian courts do not provide greatest happiness to the greatest number of Nigerians? The answer to this question will, to a large extent, depend on how members of the public perceive the Nigerian courts in terms of the quality of judicial services provided by them, which is the hallmark of this research.

Social Contract Theory

The social contract theory explains how society originates as well as the presumed relationship between its members, how they incur responsibilities, and their rights. Early proponents of the social contract, like Hobbes (1651/1985) and Locke (1689/2003) differed in their views and both have been surpassed by Rousseau whose influential 1762 treatise, *The Social Contract*, has made him synonymous since its publication with the theory of the social contract.

The central argument of social contract theory is that, the fundamental basis for government and law in the system is the concept of the social contract, according to which human beings begin as individuals in a state of nature, and create a society by establishing a contract whereby they agree to live together in harmony for their mutual

benefit, after which they are said to live in a state of society. This contract involves the retaining of certain natural rights, an acceptance of restrictions of certain liberties, the assumption of certain duties and the pooling of certain powers to be exercised collectively (by the state or government as the representative of all).

One of the most important obligations that Nigerian state has towards the citizens is the protection of civil liberties and respect for human rights, which is the hallmark of modern court institutions. The failure of the courts to discharge these important responsibilities will amount to state's inability to honor the social contract entered into with its citizens. This failure may be in the form of judicial corruption; obsolete proceeding techniques, judicial politics, delay in legal proceedings, and lack of integrity on the part of judicial personnel including the judges, etc. When this occurs, then a ground for chaos exists. In order to maintain social order and by extension social contract, the Nigerian state has to make sure that its obligations towards the citizens are fulfilled.

Method and Results

This paper used both qualitative and quantitative data to examine the public perception on justice delivery by the Nigerian courts. The population used consisted of all adult residents in Kano metropolis both males and females, others were the judicial officers, police prosecutors, and inmates awaiting trial as well as plaintiffs, defendants, suspects, witnesses, or even victims of crime. The sample size used was 208 respondents obtained using multi-stage and purposive sampling methods. At stage one, each of the eight Local Government Areas in Kano metropolis was considered as a cluster within which one traditional ward was randomly selected using lottery method. At stage two, the traditional wards chosen were divided into

the clusters of streets and five streets were selected in each using the same method. At stage three, the selected streets were divided into clusters of households and the first five households were selected using accidental method. Finally, at stage four, questionnaires were administered to one respondent from these first five houses using the same accidental method. Thus, the first adult family member that came into contact with the researcher in the selected household was chosen to be part of the sample. Purposive sampling was used to select 2 judicial officers, 1 police prosecutor, 2 plaintiffs, 2 defendants,

and 1 awaiting trial inmate for in-depth interview. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically frequencies and percentages. Chi-square tests were performed to examine the relationship between respondents' perceptions and their socio-economic and demographic characteristics. The qualitative data obtained were utilized to support the quantitative data.

Results

This section presents and analyzes both the quantitative and qualitative data gathered.

Table 1: Distribution of the Respondents by Age

Age Category	Frequency	Percentage
18 – 25	77	38.5
26 – 35	78	39
36 – 45	36	18
46 – 55	6	3
56 and above	3	1.5
Total	200	100

Table 1 above shows that a majority of the respondents (39%) were between the ages of 26 to 35 years. However, only 1.5% of the respondents were within the ages of 56 and above years. This shows that the bulk of the respondents were youth who are very energetic and therefore more likely to engage in violence and other civil conflicts that will require intervention by courts (Dambazau, 2007).

Table 2: Distribution of the Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	130	65
Female	70	35
Total	200	100

Table 2 above indicates the gender distribution of the respondents. Males were the majority as they constituted 65% of the respondents, while females constituted only 35% of the respondents. Looking at the society within where this study was conducted, females are less visible when compared with their male counterparts. This might be due to the religious and cultural reasons, which emphasize division of labor, in which men provide bread for the family and females take care of the home.

Table 3: Average Monthly Income of the Respondents

Income	Frequency	Percentage
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(N10,000 and below)	64	32
(N10,001 – N200,000)	110	55
(N200,001 and above)	26	13
Total	200	100

From the Table 2 above, a majority of the respondents (55%) were middle income earners (who earned monthly income of between N10,001 – N200,000), whereas only 13% of the respondents were high income earners (as they earned a monthly income of N200,001 and above). This could be related with the fact that the study was conducted in an urban area which offers the residents opportunities for engagements in small and medium enterprises.

Table 4: Distribution of the Respondents by Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	73	36.5
Married	103	51.5
Widowed	16	8
Divorced	8	4
Total	334	100

Table 4 above shows that a majority of the respondents (51.5%) were married, whereas only 8% of the respondents were divorced. This is a fair distribution because a study of this nature required both married and unmarried respondents, for some of them may have unique experiences that may be peculiar to them. For example, married people are more competent to supply data on civil litigations and domestic violence and perhaps how the personnel of the courts handle cases of such nature. Therefore, the perceptions of both categories are important for a study on public perceptions on the quality of judicial services provided by the courts in Kano metropolis.

Table 5: Highest Educational Qualification of the Respondents

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
PhD/D.Phil	1	0.5
Masters	19	9.5
Bachelor Degree/HND	56	28.0
NCE/OND	74	37.0
SSCE	15	7.5
Primary Cert.	5	2.5
Non-Formal	30	15.0
Total	200	100

The literacy level of the respondents, as shown in the Table 5 above indicates that a majority of the respondents (37%) holds NCE/Diploma, while only 0.5% of the respondents hold PhD. This implies that a majority of the respondents are educated and possessed higher qualifications, which is anticipated because Kano metropolis offers educational opportunities to the residents.

Table 6: Respondent's Experience of Court Proceedings Session(s)

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
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Witnessed	126	63
Heard	74	37
None	0	0
Total	200	100

Table 6 above indicates that a majority of the respondents (63%) have witnessed court proceedings session(s) in their lives, while 37% of the respondents claimed to have heard of courts' proceedings. This means that all the respondents have an idea on the quality of judicial services provided by the Nigerian courts.

Table 7: Perceptions on the Quality of Services Provided by Courts

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	24	12
Negative	176	88
Total	200	100

When the respondents were asked on how they perceived the quality of judicial services provided to them by courts in Nigeria, a majority of them (88%) admitted that it is negative (unsatisfactory) against the opinions expressed by few of the respondents (12%) who claimed that their perceptions on the quality of the judicial services provided by the courts was generally positive (satisfactory), (Table 7 above). This is in agreement with the opinion expressed by one defendant who argued that:

Honestly, I was not satisfied with the proceeding I was involved in. I think the whole process has been corrupted. I have a suspicion then that the plaintiff in my case had bribed the court officials. What they did to me cannot be called justice, in fact, what I had was simply injustice... (Defendant, Gwale LGA, 2014).

Another defendant added that:

I think most of the judicial staff are not properly trained to efficiently carry out their mandate....most of them need to be retrained on how to conduct their work. To me I prefer taking my case to

the nearby elders or even the traditional rulers than going to the court (Defendant, Fagge LGA, 2014).

To reaffirm the above positions, a plaintiff had said:

I want to tell you that there is nothing like justice in our courts today. To my understanding the Nigerian courts are nothing other than state machineries utilized by the rich and powerful elements to dominate the weak and poor... in my own case, for example, I ran to the court seeking for its help to bring back my money from one of my business partners. Unfortunately for me, the first thing demanded from me was to agree that if the money was returned 10 percent of that money will be given to the court, I am not sure if this is also part of our laws. When the money was brought to the court by the defendant I finally discovered that I cannot access my own money because the official in charge had 'borrowed' the whole money. It is exactly 3 years now, but no single penny has been paid to me yet... I have regretted taking my case to the court (Plaintiff, Nassarawa LGA, 2014).

A prosecutor in one of the courts visited by the researcher admitted that:

The quality of judicial services provided by our courts today is just poor. This is because it is in our courts that someone who has stolen a chicken is processed and even convicted for three to six months prison terms, while

another person who steals cattle is kept in prison for days, because s/he has money to offer. Remember, the first suspect might be in crime out of necessity; s/he might have stolen because s/he is hungry, but anyone who steal cattle must to be a full time criminal that considered stealing a profession (Prosecutor, NPF Dala Division, 2014).

Table 8: Reasons for the Respondents' Negative Perception

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
Poor Proceeding Techniques	9	4.5
Bribery and Corruption	94	47
Inexperienced Court Officials	7	3.5
Decaying Infrastructure	6	3
Delay in Proceedings	17	8.5
Rampant Pretrial Detention	11	5.5
Subjective Application of Law	32	16
Not Applicable	24	12
Total	200	100

Table 8 above shows that a majority of the respondents (47%) has attributed the failure of the Nigerian courts to deliver quality judicial justice to bribery and corruption. However, only 3% of the respondents associated their negative perception on decaying infrastructure. Again, the responses here reflect the problems that bedeviled the ability of the courts in Nigeria to provide quality judicial services. However, of all the aforesaid problems, corruption seem to be in the front line although a court registrar interviewed had denied the existence of corruption in the Nigerian courts, particularly those in Kano, as he opined that:

All those allegations, especially the ones bordering on corrupt practices were mere fallacies. This is because court is a place where cases are heard and treated on the basis of rule of law, that is, equality and fairness. So those

who were found guilty by the courts might be unhappy and unsatisfied with the judgment of the courts. The courts are not places where people will just be given what they wanted, but places where justice is given to those who would have rather remained marginalized by those in powerful positions (Registrar, Kano Municipal LGA, 2014).

However, this position was challenged by a prosecutor who argued that:

I must confess that sometimes we do collect bribery from those who come to us for justice. And for your information, all court workers are involved. It is hardly to find a court staff that is corrupt free now. But it is true that some of the judges are innocents, they don't even know about the black markets operating within their courts (Prosecutor, NPF Dala Division, 2014).

A suspect of crime was interviewed on what he thinks was the major problem bedeviling the courts' ability to provide judicial justice, which will be appreciated at least by the significant number of Nigerians. He responded by saying that:

The most serious and disturbing development in all I experienced in the court was when the registrar and other court officials were quarrelling over the sharing formula of the money extorted from me in the name of 'bail money' in my presence. Their drive for money had blinded them that they have even forgotten that I was still there.... That shows how irresponsible these people are, they have actually criminalized the whole process (Suspect, Gwale LGA, 2014).

An inmate awaiting trial, who claimed to have been tried in the court on many occasions since 1984, had this to say:

... to be frank with you, money is everything in our courts. The kind of justice provided is much favorable to the highest bidder. The kind of justice one get is entirely defined by the monetary bribe offered to the officials, especially registrars and other clerks... the judges are not much involve in corrupt practices, even if they do, they might have probably been using their subordinate staffs to serve as intermediaries, but the key players have remain those subordinating staffs, from messengers up to registrars (Inmate, Goron-Dutse Prison, 2014).

Testing Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: H_0 : There is no significant variation across the age categories of the respondents in terms of how they perceived the quality of justice services provided by Nigerian Courts. This hypothesis is tested in Table 9 below:

Table 9: Perceptions on the Quality of Judicial Services Provided by Nigerian Courts by Age Categories of the Respondents

Respondents' Age	Perceptions on the Quality of Judicial Services Provided by Nigerian Courts		Total
	Positive	Negative	
18 – 25	11 (14.3%)	66(85.7%)	77 (100%)
26 – 35	9 (11.5%)	69 (88.5%)	78 (100%)
36 – 45	3 (8.3%)	33 (91.7%)	36 (100%)
46 – 55	1 (16.7%)	5 (83.3%)	6 (100%)
56 – Above	0 (0%)	3 (100%)	3 (100%)
Total	24 (12%)	176 (88%)	200 (100%)

Chi-square = 2.03

Critical Value = 13.28

Degree of Freedom (df) = 4

Significance Level = 0.01

Decision Rule: Table 9 above shows how respondents vary across age in terms of their perceptions on the quality of judicial services provided by Nigerian courts. Result obtained

using chi-square indicates that the computed chi-square value (2.03) is less than the critical value (13.28); hence, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. Thus, it can be concluded that no

significant variation was discovered among the respondents in the different age categories in terms of their perceptions on the quality of judicial services provided by Nigerian courts.

Hypothesis 2: H_0 : There is no relationship between the gender of the respondents and their perceptions on the quality of judicial services provided by the Nigerian courts.

Table 10: Perceptions on the Quality of Judicial Services Provided by Nigerian Courts by Gender of the Respondents

Respondents' Gender	Perceptions on the Quality of Judicial Services Provided by Nigerian Courts		Total
	Positive	Negative	
Male	23 (17.7%)	107 (82.3%)	130 (100%)
Female	1 (1.4%)	69 (98.6%)	70 (100%)
Total	24 (12%)	176 (88%)	200 (100%)

Chi-square = 11.4

Critical Value = 10.8

Degree of Freedom (df) = 1

Significance Level = 0.001

Probability = 0.001

Decision Rule: Since, the computed chi-square value (11.4) is greater than the critical value (10.8) from the table, we reject the null hypothesis. It can, therefore, be inferred that there is a significant relationship between the gender of the respondents and their satisfaction with the quality of judicial services provided by the Nigerian courts. Thus, females are more likely to have negative perception on the quality of judicial services provided by the courts than their male counterparts. This could be related to the fact that women are in the most vulnerable and disadvantageous position in the courts, because apart from monetary extortion, they may also suffer sexual exploitation in the hands of corrupt officials in the court. The second reason might be connected with the fact that female respondents are definitely mothers, wives, sisters, daughters or girlfriends of the men; hence, a male victim of court injustice will translate into victimizing other female relatives of that person. A female plaintiff was interviewed and she revealed that:

I took my husband to the court because of socio-economic deprivation. When I filed my case, I was made to be visiting the court on regular account so that my complaint could be heard by the judge. Unfortunately for me I do not have enough money to give and I virtually have no influential relative to come to my aid. It was one evening that (I always remember) the registrar of the court demanded that for my case to be presented to the judge I have to cooperate and have sex with him. I declined the offer and abandoned the case; I told him that I rather die than commit adultery; I therefore went back to my husband house shading tears (Plaintiff, Kumbotso LGA, 2014).

Hypothesis 3: H_0 : There is no relationship between the income of the respondents and their perceptions on the quality of judicial services provided by the Nigerian courts

Table 11: Perceptions on the Quality of Judicial Services Provided by Nigerian Courts by Average Monthly Income of the Respondents

Respondents' Income	Perceptions on the Quality of Judicial Services Provided by Nigerian Courts		Total
	Positive	Negative	
(N10,000 and below)	7 (10.9%)	57 (89.1%)	64 (100%)
(N10,001 – N200,000)	14 (12.7%)	96 (87.3%)	110 (100%)
(N200,001 and above)	3 (11.5%)	23 (88.5%)	26 (100%)
Total	24 (12%)	176 (88%)	200 (100%)

Chi-square = 0.129

Critical Value = 13.816

Degree of Freedom (df) = 2

Significance Level = 0.001

Probability = 0.938

Decision Rule: Since the computed chi-square value (0.129) is less than the critical value (13.816) from the Table we fail to reject the null hypothesis. It can, therefore, be inferred that there is no significant relationship between respondents' income and their perceptions on the quality of judicial services provided by the Nigerian courts. It can therefore be said that negative perceptions on

the quality of judicial services provided by courts in Nigeria cut across all income groups.

Hypothesis 4: H_0 : No variation exists along marital statuses of the respondents in terms of how they perceived the quality of justice services provided by Nigerian Courts. The above hypothesis is tested in the following table.

Table 12: Perceptions on the Quality of Justice Services Provided by Nigerian Courts by Marital Status of the Respondents

Respondents' Marital Status	Perceptions on the Quality of Justice Services Provided by Nigerian Courts		Total
	Positive	Negative	
Single	7 (9.6%)	66 (90.4%)	73 (100%)
Married	12 (11.7%)	91 (88.3%)	103 (100%)
Widowed	3 (18.8%)	13 (81.2%)	16 (100%)
Divorced	2 (25%)	6 (75%)	8 (100%)
Total	24 (12%)	176 (88%)	200 (100%)

Chi-Square = 2.09

Critical Value = 11.34

Degree of Freedom (df) = 3

Significance Level = 0.01

Decision Rule: Table 12 above indicates how respondents vary across marital status in terms of their perceptions on the quality of judicial services provided by Nigerian courts.

Since, the calculated chi-square value (2.09) is less than the critical value (11.35), we fail to reject the null hypothesis. It can, therefore, be concluded that there is no significant variation in terms of the perceptions on the quality of judicial services provided by Nigerian courts by the respondents with different marital statuses.

Hypothesis 5: H_0 : There is no relationship between educational attainment of the respondents and their perceptions on the quality of judicial services provided by the Nigerian courts

Table 13: Perceptions on the Quality of Judicial Services Provided by Nigerian Courts by Educational Qualifications of the Respondents

Respondents' Educational Qualification	Perceptions on the Quality of Justice Services Provided by Nigerian Courts		Total
	Positive	Negative	
PhD/D.Phil.	0 (0.0%)	1 (100.0%)	1 (100%)
Masters	1 (5.3%)	18 (94.7%)	19 (100%)
Bachelor Degree/HND	8 (11.5%)	48 (88.5%)	56 (100%)
NCE/OND	11 (14.9%)	63 (85.1%)	74 (100%)
SSCE	0 (0.0%)	15 (100.0%)	15 (100%)
Primary Cert.	1 (20.0%)	4 (80.0%)	5 (100%)
Non-Formal	3 (10.0%)	27 (90.0%)	30(100%)
Total	24 (12%)	176 (88%)	200(100%)

Chi-square = 4.27

Critical Value = 10.8

Degree of Freedom (df) = 6

Significance Level = 0.001

Probability = 0.641

Decision Rule: Since the computed chi-square value (4.27) is less than the critical value (10.80) from the Table, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. We can, therefore, conclude by saying that there is no significant relationship between respondents' educational background and their perceptions on the quality of judicial services provided by the Nigerian courts. Thus, people of all educational background share negative perception on the quality of judicial services provided by courts in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The broad objective of this study was to examine the public perceptions on the quality of judicial services provided by the Nigerian

courts. The data revealed that the respondents were familiar with the courts' proceedings as 63% and 37% of the respondents claimed to have witnessed or heard of court proceedings in their lives respectively thereby giving an impression that all the respondents have an idea on court proceedings in the Country. On one of the specific objectives of this research that examined the public perceptions on the quality of judicial justice provided by the Nigerian courts, data revealed that a majority of the respondents (88%) were dissatisfied with the quality of judicial services provided by these courts as against the opinion expressed by a few of them (12%) that appeared to be satisfied. This dissatisfaction

stand of the public was in line with the views expressed by Oyedife (1986), Alemika (2002), Dina, Akintayo and Ekundayo(2005) and Jauhari (2011). This implies that the Nigerian courts as judicial institutions have failed to guarantee the greatest happiness to the greatest number as championed by the utilitarian theory (Reid, 1997). These failures also signify state's inability to honor the social contract entered into with its citizens as emphasized by the social contract theorists (Hobbes 1651/1985; and Locke, 1689/2003). The demographic characteristics of the respondents (age, gender, income, marital statuses and educational qualifications) were, however, cross tabulated with the dependent variable, public perceptions on the quality of judicial services provided by the Nigerian courts. The data revealed that while significant variation exists across the gender of the respondents in terms of how they perceived the quality of judicial services provided by courts, no such significant relationship was found among the respondents along their ages, income, marital statuses and educational background. However, females were more dissatisfied than males. This implies that the negative perceptions of the respondents on the quality of judicial services provided by these courts has cut across their socio-economic and demographic characteristics, which shows that the Nigerian state is no longer capable of honoring the social contract it entered into with the citizens (Hobbes 1651/1985; and Locke, 1689/2003). Again, it implies that the court institution no longer promote the greatest happiness of the majority of the citizens as preached by the utilitarian theory (Reid, 1997).

Furthermore, the study sought to identify the major problems bedeviling the courts' ability to provide quality judicial services in Nigeria. The data revealed that a majority of the respondents (47%) have attributed the failure of the Nigerian courts to deliver quality

judicial services to bribery and corruption as against 4.5%, 3.3%, 3%, 8.5%, 5.5%, and 16% that attributed the failure to poor proceeding techniques, inexperienced court officials, decaying infrastructure, delay in proceedings, rampant pretrial detention, and subjective application of law, respectively, which is in agreement with many research findings (Oyedife, 1986; Okonkwo, 1980; Akaniro, 1997; and Asein, 1998; Alemika, 2002; Radda, 2005; Ani, 2011; Jauhari, 2011; Musdapher, 2011).

Conclusion

The research was a study on the public perceptions regarding the quality of judicial services provided by courts in Kano metropolis. The specific objectives were to examine public perceptions on the quality of judicial services provided by the courts in Kano metropolis; to identify the major problems bedeviling the courts' ability to provide quality judicial services in the study area; and to assess how public perceptions on the quality of judicial services provided by these courts relate to gender, income and level of education of the respondents. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered and the results show that members of the public generally have negative perceptions on the quality of judicial services provided by the courts in the Country as many Nigerians perceived the quality of the judicial services provided by the Nigerians courts as far below the ideal.

The above view was reflected in the discontent and dissatisfaction expressed by the respondents (irrespective of their demographic characteristics) while assessing the quality of judicial services provided for them by the courts. The tested hypotheses show no relationship between income and educational attainment of the respondents and their perceptions on the quality of judicial services provided by the Nigerian courts. However, variation was discovered across the gender of

the respondents as female respondents were more discontented with the quality of judicial services provided by courts in Nigeria than their male counterparts.

The study also revealed that corruption was the major problem that contributed to public dissatisfaction with the quality of judicial services provided by courts in Nigeria. Thus, the study recommended that for the courts to provide quality judicial services, bribery and corruption in the judiciary must be tackled, people seeking for employment in the judiciary must be vetted and that proper sanctioning mechanisms and modern techniques for investigating abuse by judicial personnel should be provided.

Recommendations

This study would be more meaningful if lasting solutions to the problems affecting the courts' ability to provide quality judicial justice to Nigerians are proposed and presented. In line with the above, some recommendations have been made.

- i. The first thing to be done in sanitizing the activities of the judicial personnel in line with their ability to provide quality judicial services has to do with their recruitment. The recruitment exercise must be transparent, rigorous and should include other important aspects such as psychological tests and screening of attitude and behavior of the candidates. Whoever is interested in joining the Nigerian judiciary should be properly screened. In the course of the said screening, the judicial administrators should collaborate with the members of the communities such as the community leaders, religious leaders, elders and statesmen that reside within the communities to which the applicants belong. This will greatly help in recruiting the right candidates

worthy in both knowledge and characters thereby avoiding the unnecessary recruitment of criminals who may use their new position to either violate people's rights or perpetuate their criminal related activities.

- ii. Similarly, those that are already working with the judiciary must be properly screened too, using their documents, attitudes and behavior. Those discovered to have questionable characters should relinquish their positions and be replaced with more deserving and outstanding individuals.
- iii. There should be adequate training of the court personnel to deliver justice services with all sense of professionalism and accountability. They must be trained to be fair and just so that the loyalty accorded to court institution by Nigerians will be sustained and will become a matter of continuity.
- iv. The scope and standards of their induction training should be enhanced and be subjected to periodic review, which will provide opportunity for inclusion of those issues that are new and replacing those aspects that are obsolete. It should also emphasize accountability and fairness in justice delivery.
- v. In addition, government must review the welfare packages of the judicial officers to meet their basic needs. Government should make them comfortable by paying them salaries that will be able to cater for their immediate needs. If the judicial personnel are well paid, they will be satisfied with their job and of course shun any act that violates the ethic of their work.
- vi. The judges must be made to closely monitor the activities of their

subordinating staff. Proper sanctioning mechanisms and modern techniques for investigating corruption, negligence of duty and other office abuses should be put in place.

- vii. Mass awareness campaign must be organized. Both print and electronic media should be used to sensitize people on the essence of the judiciary;

through this, people can be enlightened about their rights in the courts and the limitations of the powers conferred on the courts officials by the law. It will also provide a platform through which people will have access to judicial administrators when they have complaint(s) against any of the judicial staff.

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