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Cashless Policy as a Strategic Tool for Fighting Corruption in Civil Service: A study of Imo State Ministry of Land

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ABSTRACT

The investigation on the effects of cashless policy as a strategic instrument in the fight against corruption in the public sector (a study of the Imo State Ministry of Land). The study aims to assess the effects of cashless policy on increasing transparency, its effectiveness in ensuring accountability, and its impact on decreasing cash handling in the Imo State civil service. Does a cashless policy foster transparency in the Imo State civil service? Does a cashless policy ensure accountability in the Imo State civil service? And how has a cashless policy affected the decline in cash handling in the Imo State civil service? These are the questions that the study answers. The null hypotheses are that a cashless approach has no effect on the decrease in cash handling in the Imo State civil service, does not foster transparency, and does not guarantee accountability in the Imo State civil service. Fred Davis' technology acceptance theory was used in the research. The study employs a descriptive survey research methodology, with a sample of 134 people from the Ministry of Lands' 201 workforce chosen using Taro Yemeni. Questionnaires were used to collect the data; 134 questionnaires were sent out, and 130 were properly completed and returned on schedule for analysis. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient statistical instrument was used to evaluate the data, and SPSS version 23 of the Software Package for Social Science was used to execute the data. The outcome demonstrates a link between cashless politics and transparency, responsibility, and cash management. As a result, the research suggests that Imo State's cashless policy has contributed to lowering corruption in the civil service and recommends that the state government make a concerted effort to create an internet security infrastructure that would prevent online fraud and give the public confidence and protection against cyberattacks and fraud. And there should be sufficient regulation covering every facet of the cashless system's functioning.

Keywords: Cashless Policy, transparency, cash handling, accountability, corruption

INTRODUCTION

Njoku (2024) defines a cashless policy as a collection of rules and procedures designed to encourage the use of electronic payment methods and limit the use of actual cash in financial transactions. To combat corruption and revenue loss in the system, the Central Bank of Nigeria implemented the policy in 2012, and the Ministry of Lands implemented it in 2019. Treisman (2000) defines corruption as the hard-to-monitor abuse of public office for personal gain. For instance, government authorities frequently accept bribes in exchange for granting permits and licenses, banning the entry of rivals, or allowing passage through customs. Because corruption presumes that power should fairly advance the public good rather than any form of private gain, it also alludes to deviation from the norm (Pippidi, 2013). Petty corruption, major corruption, and systemic corruption are the three main types of corruption (Ayoola, 2013). Petty corruption involves corruption related to tips or commissions that officers typically solicit from the public in return for providing formal services. Grand corruption, on the other hand, is another term for political corruption, in which politicians pay bribes to those who abuse their position to sway the election results. Lastly, systemic corruption describes a system that is completely corrupt and in which society has come to accept corruption as a means of carrying out everyday transactions (Ayoola, 2013).

The conventional payment system has changed as a result of information and communication technology, sometimes known as ICT, in recent years. Transactions can be carried out in a variety of ways, as opposed to prior means of transaction such as cash or cheques. With this advancement, it is now simple for people to pay for products or services at a counter or online. E-payment, sometimes referred to as cashless payment, is the term for this incredible payment system that doesn't use money (Gholami, Ogun, Koh, & Lim, 2010). The cashless payment trend, which started in the United States decades ago, is now popular around the world. The cashless policy does not imply that the economy is cashless; rather, it means that the proportion of transactions conducted using cash is reduced to a minimum (Ayoola, 2013). In a cashless economy, transactions can be completed using debit or credit card payments for goods and services instead of carrying real cash as a medium of exchange for transactions (Omotunde, Sunday & John, 2013). The economies of several developed nations, including the United Kingdom, France, Canada, and Sweden, have functioned successfully via electronic payment for many years.

The manner in which financial transactions are conducted can have an impact on the level of illegal activity in a certain nation, in this instance, this study focuses on corruption, according to (Mehrotra & Goel, 2011). The reality is that different groups employ a variety of strategies to hide their gains in order to avoid being brought to justice for their crimes and avoid punishment. Since transactions involving cash are harder for law enforcement to trace, it is obvious that they are the most difficult to detect. Each method of financial transaction will have a varying degree of impact on the act of corruption when compared to alternative methods. For instance, it's thought that it's more difficult to track cheques than credit card transactions. Therefore, does the abolition of cash and the introduction of cashless payments lessen corruption? The cashless policy entails the adoption of electronic procedures for recording every transaction, creating an efficient audit trail database. Because money is no longer routed via cash, which is simple to divert, this procedure has the potential to minimize corruption by fostering transparency and accountability (Jatau & Dung, 2014). There has been an increasing worldwide movement to combat corruption, which is not unexpected. In order to combat corruption, the government has lately implemented the cashless payment system (Ayoola, 2013). Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the connection between corruption and cashless transactions in the Imo State civil service.

Objective of the Study

i. To evaluate the impact of cashless policy in promoting transparency in Imo State civil service.
ii. To examine the effectiveness of cashless policy in ensuring accountability Imo State civil service.
iii. To investigate how cashless policy has impacted on the reduction of cash handing in Imo State civil service.

Research Questions

i. Does cashless policy promote transparency in Imo State civil service?
ii. Is cashless policy effective in ensuring accountability Imo State civil service?
iii. How has cashless policy impacted on the reduction of cash handing in Imo State civil service?

Statement of Hypotheses

H_{o1}: Cashless policy does not promote transparency in Imo State civil service.
H_{o2}: Cashless policy does not ensure accountability Imo State civil service.
H_{o3}: Cashless policy has not impacted on the reduction of cash handing in Imo State civil service.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Review

The Concept of Corruption

The subject of corruption has been covered by several writers, including Joseph, Osunyikanmi (2009), Tolu-Ogunro (2012), and Adewale (2011), who have also offered some definitions of the term and looked at its causes and effects. The World Bank and Ngouo (2000) define corruption as the use of public office for personal gain. She also said that the lack of any civic spirit among all classes of civil servants results in corruption and misuse of public funds. Corruption is defined by Akindele (2005) as conduct that deviates from the formal norms of governing the behavior of a person in a position of authority. The term corruption is equivalent to the terms fraud, bribery, settlement, etc., as stated by Osunyinkanmi (2009). In his explanation, the settlement was a euphemism for bribery in Nigeria during the Babangida administration in 1989, using the terminology of corruption perception. In his response to Dr. Antonio MariaCosta's assertion that former President Olusegun Obasanjo (1999–2007) should be praised for promoting the fight against corruption in the nation, Dikko (2011) supported Osunyinkanmi's opinion by stating that, so far, reports from May 1999 to mid-2006 show that the amount of money stolen during the period under review was greater than the combined total of all of our past leaders' thefts from independence to before the handover to his democratically elected government. According to Adewale (2011), corruption is the act of using resources that should have been put to use for the society's development in private or personal endeavors. This concentration of the country's economic resources for private gain had at different times helped the transfer of funds out of Nigeria for illegal deposits abroad. Additionally, he argued that corruption crowds out a nation's progress and development. More concerning is its contribution to poverty and inadequate infrastructure development.

Additionally, certain schools of thought have emphasized the causes of unethical behavior in a community. The USA Secretary of State, for instance, views corruption through the lens of culture in 1995. This perspective holds that corruption is ingrained in Nigerian culture. However, this claim is controversial. For example, corruption is not a cultural thing in the former Soviet Union countries of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Russia, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan, but rather a behavior that transcends culture and tradition. They believe that corruption is everywhere. Akindele (1990) supported this idea by saying that corruption is pervasive and has no geographical or ethnic boundaries.

In addition, Adewale (2011) asserts that the most convincing arguments in this field would appear to be that corruption is inextricably linked to the stage of development and the sort of government that prevails in a society or nation. Government bureaucracies in the majority of the most corrupt nations, such as Nigeria, foster an environment that is conducive to corrupt practices. Some writers, like Rose (1990), Tanzi et al (2006), and Obadan (2001), have pointed out that for political or other reasons, the governments of some nations establish incentives for bribery and corruption and are occasionally directly involved in the corrupt activities. In a few extreme circumstances, the government engages in corruption in order to influence the legislative branches. This practice is widespread in Nigeria.

Numerous writers who have examined corruption have come to the conclusion that it has a detrimental effect on a country's progress and development. Ekpo and Egenedo (1985), Obadan (2001), and Adewale (2011) all claim that dishonest practices intrinsically create distortions in the economy by diminishing hard effort, diligence, and efficiency. It can divert funds intended for societal growth towards personal or private purposes. They argue that corruption distorts prices and prevents fair selection processes.

Forms of Corruption

Corrupt practices might manifest in a variety of ways. Tolu and Ogunro (2012) classified four different forms of corruption as follows:

• Moral Corruption: This can be seen in indecency in attire or appearance, sexual pervasiveness, avarice (particularly in interpersonal interactions), excessive talkativeness (i.e., an uncontrollable tongue that reveals secrets or spreads slander), and a busybody attitude.

• Economic corruption, such as the production of counterfeit pharmaceuticals, the adulteration of beverages, piracy, which is the unauthorized reproduction of another person's intellectual property in order to gain financial gain, and fraud at all levels.

• Bureaucratic and political corruption: The unlawful, immoral, and unauthorized use of one's official or political position to further one's own interests. It concerns public affairs, such as products, wealth, organizations, and resources. As a result, it constitutes corruption against the government or its agencies by someone in an official capacity in order to further their own financial or personal interests.

• Electoral Corruption: This includes election fraud, ballot stuffing, registration of under age, and several other forms of electoral misconduct. Literature describes several forms of corruption, including educational, religious, and family corruption, in addition to the ones listed above.

The reasons behind corruption in the public sector in developing nations

According to Kaufmann (2000), there are a number of reasons why developing nations are more vulnerable to corruption, including: - the prevalence of poverty and low wages in the public sector - the lack of any risk-spreading mechanisms, such as insurance and a well-developed market - the opportunities created by complicated, poorly defined, ever-changing, and insufficient laws and regulations

The Concept of Cashless Policy

The cashless policy of the Central Bank of Nigeria, according to Adurayemi (2016), is intended to offer mobile payment services, break down the traditional barriers to financial inclusion for millions of Nigerians and lower costs, as well as to deliver convenient financial services to urban, semi-urban, and rural areas throughout the nation. There are currently as many as seven distinct electronic payment channels in Nigeria. Other methods of payment that would have an impact on the cashless economy are:

1. Checks: The use of checks will increase significantly. Nevertheless, the cashing of third-party checks over bank counters is not permitted, and all checks made out to a third party must pass through the CBN clearinghouse and have a maximum value of N10 million.

2. Bank Instruments and Bank Drafts: The majority of retailers who handle transactions worth less than N10 million would prefer using bank drafts since, in contrast to personal checks, bank drafts are paid over the counter but are still subject to the CBN's three-day clearing rule.

3. Automated Teller Machines (ATMs): These are utilized more often for a variety of online payments, including utility bills, cable subscriptions, airtime, and data recharges. Banks consistently tell customers to protect their ATM cards (debit and credit) and to never share their ATM card PINs.

4. NIBSS Fund Transfers: The Nigerian Interbank Settlement Scheme (NIBSS) is an interbank online transfer platform that facilitates the exchange of value between clients of different banks. It facilitates the transfer of money between banks for single or multiple beneficiaries for sums up to N10 million and comprises NEFT (NIBSS Electronic Funds Transfer) and NIP (NIBSS Instant Payment).

5. RTGS: Real-Time Gross Settlements is a transfer mechanism used by Nigerian banks to transfer sums over N10 million to the benefit of a single recipient.

6. Mobile Money: This program, which is typically found on mobile devices, allows users to utilize their mobile devices to conduct transactions, make or receive payments, and even check their bank balance by sending a text or code over their mobile network.

7. Electronic transfers: These are electronic fund transfers that are often conducted online using personal computers (PCs), laptops, smartphones, and other internet-enabled devices. Nigerian banks mandate that clients sign up for online banking in order to utilize this service.

8. Point of Sale (POS) Terminals: These are used by retailers in their daily operations. It allows customers to pay using their ATM cards by inserting them into the POS terminal. Since the POS terminals are connected online in real-time to the merchant's bank account, much like the customer's bank cards, the customer's bank account is immediately debited for the worth of the purchases or services enjoyed once payment is successfully made via the POS account, while the merchant's bank account is credited for the same amount. (Oyetade and Ofoelue, 2012).

Benefits of a Cashless Approach

1. It has greatly increased the efficiency of banking services delivery.

2. The transfer of naira bills from one person to another has decreased the risk of bacterial contamination.

3. Since the purchases are now based on the amount of money a customer has in their accounts at any given moment, there has been a notable rise in sales and purchases.

4. By lowering payroll and providing Nigerians with a variety of top-up options, such as the use of credit and debit cards, the cashless system helps to minimize the use of cash and the accompanying security risks.

5. Since it can be easily programmed into the card payroll system and updated regularly to ensure that staff members receive their paychecks in the correct amounts and on time, managing staff entitlements is now much simpler.

6. Because the majority of Nigerians no longer carry cash on their person or at home, the decrease in cash in circulation also lowers the likelihood of armed robberies and other cash-related crimes in Nigerian society.

7. The time it takes for transactions to be completed, both domestically and globally, is shortened by e-banking.

8. Instead of going to the bank branch where their accounts are located, customers can now conduct their banking operations anytime and anywhere thanks to the various options available in the cashless society.

9. The use of alternative electronic payment systems has decreased the necessity for cash transactions because banks are targeted by thieves when handling high amounts of cash.

10. Payments for government services, such as customs tariffs, are now made electronically and directly to the government account, which minimizes leaks and other instances of fraud.

11. Finally, the CBN has lowered the expenses associated with cash management with the introduction of the cashless system.

Challenges of Cashless Policy in Nigeria

Despite the many benefits of the cashless strategy, it also presents its own difficulties, such as:

1. Nigerians, especially the elderly and uneducated population is already accustomed to cash transactions.
2. Certain Nigerian banks are just as cautious as their clientele, and they are hesitant to adopt cutting-edge products.
3. One of the biggest obstacles to Nigeria's cashless policy development is the problem of security.
4. Its efficiency is hampered by issues with the Internet network caused by the expanding telecommunication infrastructure.
5. Electronic contracts and signatures are not recognized or accommodated by Nigeria's existing legislation.
6. Nigeria lacks a strong banking infrastructure. The cashless policy is likely to be hindered by this.
6. Nigeria's political instability, caused by the various upset factions, disrupts the efficient running of a company.
7. Nigeria's power sector is unable to support the seamless functioning of financial operations.
8. Nigeria lacks the necessary financial infrastructure to support a cashless economy. At least 40% of Nigerians should have access to cashless alternatives such as Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), Point-of-Sales (POS) terminals, mobile banking, and other channels.
9. The epileptic power supply in Nigeria and the developing telecommunications links have a significant and detrimental impact on e-banking infrastructure. The frequent system/internet outages in banks, which prevent customers from accessing their accounts, are another significant barrier to a cashless economy.
10. The majority of Nigerian banks would rather employ old e-banking technology than incur the expense of purchasing the newer models.

The Negative Consequences of a Cashless Policy in Nigeria

1. By cutting the workforce requirements, it has raised unemployment.
2. Due to the high bank fees associated with electronic transactions, consumers are discouraged from utilizing it.
3. Fraudsters have deceived many consumers using their ATM cards, particularly those who are less knowledgeable.
4. Since it might take a while to remedy an incorrect debit entry into a customer's account, ATMs are not recommended for use. Occasionally, the issue is left unresolved and the consumer is forced to visit the banking halls in person.
5. The majority of Nigerian ATMs lack security, and the cameras on the ATMs are malfunctioning, allowing criminals to engage in their illicit behavior with impunity.
6. Nigerians are discouraged from thrift savings by the usage of ATM cards since they may use them to make daily withdrawals of up to N150, 000, even on weekends and holidays.

Nigeria's Concerns About a Cashless Economy

The problem of inadequate infrastructure needs to be solved in order to successfully implement a cashless economy in Nigeria. The issue of insecurity is also a major concern, as is the exposure of fraudsters and other cyber-related crimes. The doubts about Nigeria's preparedness for a cashless economy are based on these concerns. These problems can be expressed in the following terms:
1. What infrastructure does Nigeria possess to support the adoption of a cashless economy?
2. How literate is the Nigerian populace, and how familiar are they with ICT?
3. How many Nigerians are able to utilize electronic banking services?
4. When and how will Nigerians' vulnerability to fraud be addressed?
5. Is the system capable of resisting cyberattacks that might bring the entire cashless system to a stop?

Automatic Payment Systems

With automated payment systems, people and companies may move funds between accounts without having to handle cash or use human processing. The electronic nature of these systems allows for nearly instantaneous transaction processing. They are used for a variety of purposes, including paying bills, employee salaries, and supplier invoices, as well as for client purchases. The technology behind these systems uses computers and software to carry out payment instructions when specific requirements are satisfied. For instance, a corporation might establish automated payments for recurring expenses. At predetermined intervals, the method employed will immediately transfer funds to the specified payee.

Major elements of automatic payment systems

Despite the variation among automated payment systems, many of the essential elements are the same:

• Transaction initiation: When an individual or business decides to transfer funds, the payment process begins with the transaction initiation. This may be a one-time transaction, like a customer making an online purchase, or a regular instruction, like arranging a monthly bill payment.

• Payment gateways: Online payments are facilitated through payment gateways. They send the customer's payment information to the payment processor after collecting it.

• Payment processors: Payment processors validate and handle transactions. They verify that the payer has sufficient funds, approve the transaction, and interact with the banks of the client and the firm.

• Banking networks are the systems that banks use to interact with one another. They facilitate the movement of money and information between banks.

• Merchant accounts: These specialized bank accounts are necessary for businesses to accept

payments from credit and debit card transactions. Before being moved to the business's main bank account, money is deposited into a merchant account.
• Security measures: Security procedures protect transaction data and prevent unauthorized access. They include tokenization, encryption, and adherence to industry security requirements like the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS).
• User verification: This requires confirming the identity of the person initiating the transaction. Multifactor authentication, biometrics, passwords, and PINs are some of the techniques used.
• Clearing and settlement: This procedure entails reconciling the transaction details between the payer and payee's banks, moving the cash, and disbursing it to the intended recipient.
• Dispute resolution systems: These systems address any disagreements or problems that may arise, such as unauthorized transactions or errors in the amount transferred.
• User interface: This is the portion of the system that consumers engage with. It must be straightforward, enable customers to enter payment information quickly, and display the transaction's progress.
• Recordkeeping: All transactions are documented by automated payment systems. They are essential for accounting, upholding the law, and giving a transaction history for both clients and companies.
Each component must function in unison in order for payments to be processed quickly, correctly, and securely.

Internally Generated Revenue

The amount of money an organization makes throughout a certain period is called revenue. The money that the government organization got from taxes and fees can also be considered in this way. The government's overall revenue for public usage is the sum of its annual earnings. Its perspective as a portion of the tax-funded revenue. The income for Nigeria's public institutions is the sum of the funds derived from various authorized sources in order to deliver public services to the populace. As a result, it may be argued that the revenue that government organizations get from legally supported sources such as taxes, rates, penalties, rents, fines, duties, etc.

Ekwe and Ihendinihu (2018) and Abiola and Ehigiamusoe (2014) believe that internally generated revenue (IGR) is the money produced by the federal, state, and local governments inside their respective spheres of authority, according to Omodero. Revenues generated from different sources within the jurisdiction of the local government, such as taxes, motor vehicle licenses, rates, and other sources, were defined by Adesoji and Chike (2013) as IGR for local governments. The income or resources that local governments in the Nigerian federation generate on their own, irrespective of their share of revenue from the federation account, are known as internally generated revenues (IGR). According to Asimiyu and Kizito (2014), internally produced income (IGR) is the income that local governments create inside the bounds of their jurisdiction. Revenue that accrues to the local governments from its internal operations without recourse to outside sources is known as Internal Generated Revenue (IGR). The constitution, as stated in the first schedule of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, supports IGR as the revenues of local governments from their local initiatives of local government officials, according to Siyanbola and Olusola (2014). The income produced by various sources inside the legislative framework of the local government is referred to as IGR.

Taxes, fines and fees, licenses, rents on government property, interests and dividends, revenues and sales, among other things, are the various sources of internal income available to state governments, according to Asimiyu and Kizito (2014). Similarly, Siyanbola et al. (2014) stated that taxes from different categories, levies, and funds obtained through the issuing of licenses of various types are distinct from IGR. Local governments' revenue streams are diverse and many, regulated by bye-laws that apply to each local government district.

Some strategies for generating internal revenue were identified by Adesoji and Chike (2013), and they are listed below:

- The addition of new revenue sources.
- Encouraging revenue-generating staff to put in additional effort.
- Frequent raids by officials on the income production.
- Tax collection that is both efficient and successful.
- A campaign for public education that will teach taxpayers the value of paying their taxes on time.

In a similar vein, Olusola and Siyanbola (2014) identified the sources of internally generated revenue (IGR) as taxes, rates, local licenses, fines and fees, earnings from commercial undertaking; rent on local government property; interest, payments and dividends; grants and miscellaneous. Omodero et al. (2018) highlighted the difficulties that local governments face in generating internal revenue (IGR).

- Insufficient data on taxpayers: Taxpayers often do not disclose their income to local government authorities
- Insufficient taxpayer cooperation. In Nigeria, many taxpayers do not view paying taxes or fees as a duty or obligation to the municipal government. The reason for this is the perceived inefficiency in the services offered by the municipal administration.
- Inconsistency in the application of taxes. In the Nigerian tax system and management, the tenets of fairness and equity in taxation are clearly not followed. Consequently, most taxpayers believe they are being unfairly taxed because Nigeria lacks standards for fair tax assessment.
- The incompetence of revenue officers or inspectors. The majority of revenue officials have insufficient training and interpersonal abilities. They treat residents in an uncivilized way, which discourages them from paying their debts. Their selfish and aggressive approach to their work allows the residents to protect his civic rights.
- Corruption: Nigeria's progress has been hampered by corruption in its system. Nigeria's public sector service delivery has suffered as a result of the theft of public funds.

Accountability: The Idea

Calls for greater transparency in the financial system are frequently linked to financial crises. Accountability encompasses the legislative and reporting framework, organizational structure, plan, procedures, and steps taken to help ensure that legal obligations pertaining to their audit mandate and required reporting system of the government budget are met, as well as to assess and monitor their own performance and the impact of their audit. Accountability also suggests that the use of public monies is consistent with the constitution and the civil service laws, as well as with the effectiveness and regularity of their own actions and activities. Patton (1992) made the case that accountability necessitates the disclosure of financial and non-financial data. Non-financial data may be presented using exploratory narratives, while financial information might take the shape of current financial statements. According to Concept Statement No. 1 of the United States Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB), government financial reports should be able to help readers evaluate accountability and make economic, social, and political choices (Patton, 1992). Delegation calls for accountability, and this accountability involves reporting (Romanna, 2012). This study aligns with the idea that financial statements are a critical component in determining accountability and transparency in both business and government decision-making.

The Concept of Transparency

Transparency, which has been widely recognized in several international treaties as a means of combating corruption, is also an effective instrument for dealing with issues in government sectors during times of limited government funding. "Open competition cannot prevail, corrupt dealings can proliferate, and other failings in the Nigerian civil service may be covered up, thereby weakening accountability" in the absence of transparency (Eei, Husain, and Mustaffa 2012). Transparency contributes to preventing a culture of corruption and fostering open competition.

Consequently, transparency refers to the timely, reliable, clear, and relevant public disclosure of information regarding the state of government operations, its mission, plan, activities, financial management, operations, and performance. Moreover, it mandates the disclosure of audit results and conclusions to the public and provides public access to details about government income and spending. When looking at the effects of corruption on firm performance, it is important to distinguish between the direct effects of firm-level corruption (which we refer to as "local") and the indirect effects of economy-wide corruption (or "global"). Shleifer and Vishny (1993) argue that a formal model of how centralized corruption in a bureaucracy may produce superior results for the availability of public goods and economic development than decentralized, uncoordinated corruption. Additionally, Bouvard et al. (2012) argued that transparency is crucial because it promotes the stability of the financial system during crises but has a destabilizing impact in regular economic conditions. As a result, the best course of action for the regulator is to increase transparency during crises.

Managing Money

The term "cash handling" refers to the procedures involved in handling actual cash, such as receiving it, counting it, keeping it, and distributing it in a way that is both safe and productive. Retail establishments, banks, restaurants, and other companies that handle cash transactions rely heavily on this procedure. Good cash handling procedures help to reduce the risk of mistakes, theft, and fraud while maintaining accurate financial records. In order for the government to encourage responsible cash management, the Imo State should implement cashless transactions in all of its commercial interactions.

Lowering the amount of cash handled in the civil service can result in a number of advantages, such as greater efficiency, improved security, and increased accountability.

Empirical Framework

The impact of the cashless policy on the Nigerian economy was evaluated by Adurayemi (2016). The assessment included the introduction of manual and electronic payment options in Nigeria, the effects of the cashless policy (both negative and positive), and the advantages it provides to stakeholders and the economy. The study came to a conclusion with suggestions to the government on how to mitigate the policy's adverse consequences and the changes that needed to be made to its execution. The social and economic consequences of cashless policy on small businesses in Nigeria were studied by Elechi and Rufus in 2016. They believed that the cashless policy would have a detrimental impact on small enterprises and could result in their collapse if all necessary procedures are not implemented and the stakeholders are not brought along.

The impact of the Cashless Policy on the Nigerian Financial System was evaluated by Taiwo et al. (2016). According to the research, the shift to a cashless society raises a lot of questions, and there isn't enough evidence to support its implementation. Jatau and Dong (2014) were excited by the cashless policy, which entails utilizing electronic processes to record every transaction (e-payment), because it will offer an efficient database for maximizing revenue production. Due to the decreased cash flow and the leaks that the process prevents, the research claimed that it is able to greatly lessen financial corruption.

Using survey research, Ezeamama et al. (2014) examined the effects of a cashless economy in Nigeria. Surveys were used to gather the information. According to the research, cashless legislation will help reduce cash-related crimes and corruption, raise the quality of life for Nigerians, lower banks' operating costs, draw foreign investors, and so forth, all of which will contribute to the economy's improvement.

The Nigerian Payment System and Cashless Policy were examined by Nwani, Nwaimo, Kanu, and Eke (2020). Using paired data samples between 2007 and 2017, this study assesses the effect of a cashless approach on the Nigerian payment system. The use of checks, funds transfer channels, and automated teller machines (ATMs) was used as the basis for evaluating the operations of a cashless economy. Data analysis revealed that the volume and use of checks as a means of financial settlement have failed and have been partially supplanted by electronic payment systems. Banks are becoming increasingly involved in the use of interbank fund transfers as opposed to cash settlement. Additionally, it was discovered that the usage of ATMs for financial intermediation is becoming more prevalent. In Nigeria, it is predicted that ATM usage will rise in popularity in the coming years. The introduction of the cashless policy program in Nigeria has been partially justified by the findings of the study.

In 2014, Osazevbaru, Sakpaide, and Ibubune looked at how Nigeria's cashless laws affected the financial performance of its banks. They were dubious and asked right away if banks in the cashless system would continue to be as lucrative as they once were. The study's findings showed that cashless economic policy has a favorable impact on banks' profitability by bringing unbanked people into the banking system and lowering operational costs.

Using a sample of 164 supermarkets chosen using a systematic random sampling approach, Jumba and Wepukhulu (2019) investigated the impact of cashless payment on the financial performance of businesses. The linear regression model used by Jumba et al. (2019) included the volume of cashless transactions as the dependent variable and financial accessibility, innovation, cash handling, and cost of operation as the independent variables. According to the results, the cashless strategy had a beneficial impact on the outlets' performance. The Nairobi County companies should make greater use of alternative methods of payment, according to the study. Internet and electronic banking are two significant elements of cashless policy.

In this way, Susanto (2015) investigated the connection between electronic banking and the efficient provision of services in the hotel sector. The qualitative research design used by the study found that electronic banking products, such as payment cards and point-of-sale systems, have improved customer satisfaction, while cashless payments tend to benefit businesses by expanding their customer base, increasing cash flow, lowering costs, enhancing customer service, and improving their competitive advantage. Using content analysis to analyze his data, Osazevbaru and Yomere (2015) discovered in their study, Benefit and Challenges of Nigeria's Cash-less policy, that banks' revenue was greater in a cash-less environment than in a cash-based one. As a result, the banking industry gains greatly from the cashless strategy. As a result, they advised providing adequate infrastructures and legal assistance to support the policy's religious implementation.

Using an accidental sampling technique to choose a sample size of 520 people, out of whom 468 people, or 90% of those sampled, filled out and returned the questionnaires they were given, Mieseigha and Ogbodo (2013) researched the advantages of a cashless economy for Nigeria's economic growth. The Chi-square was used to test the hypotheses, and the straightforward percentages approach was used to analyze the data. They discover that Nigeria's economic growth is positively impacted by a cashless society. To facilitate a seamless transition to a cashless economy in Nigeria, the research suggests implementing minimum security measures and installing more ATMs.

The Prospect and Challenges of Cashless Policy is also discussed by Abu, Bolarinwa, and Akpoviroro, (2018). Nigeria's Commercial Banks: The Case. Their study focused on Nigeria's active commercial banks. Data was analyzed using inferential and descriptive statistics, and a survey approach was used in the research. The report came to the conclusion that, while certain fees are not entirely bank income, a cash-free policy will have a beneficial impact on the financial situation of banks. It was also found that some fees, like those for COT, over-the-counter transactions, etc., which are connected to a cash-based economy, would no longer exist. To support electronic banking devices, the study suggested installing power and electricity infrastructures, and it also cautioned against e-money competing with demand deposits.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Both primary and secondary sources of data are used in the study, which employs the survey research approach. The population is a recognizable whole or collection of components (such as people, goods, businesses, physical things, etc.) that are accessible or of interest to the researcher and relevant to certain facts and issues. The study's participants are 201 employees of the Imo State Ministry of Lands. The sample size was calculated to be 134 using the Taro Yamane formula. The researcher used simple random sampling by balloting to choose the samples from the population. The primary tools employed to gather the data in this research project were questionnaires. To determine the nature of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables, the data obtained from the questionnaire is analyzed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient and descriptive statistics as statistical instruments. Using the Software Package for Social Science (SPSS), the statistical tools were implemented.

Data Analysis

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H_{o1}: Cashless policy does not promote transparency in Imo State civil service.

H_{A1}: Cashless policy promote transparency in Imo State civil service.

Table 4.2.1: Correlation Result on Cashless policy and Transparency in Imo State civil service

Correlations

		Cashless Policy	Transparency
Cashless Policy	Pearson Correlation	1	.462**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	130	130
Transparency	Pearson Correlation	.462**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	130	130

**Correlation is significant at 0.05level (2-tailed)

Source: Researcher computation using SPSS 23

Table 4.2.1 showed the correlation coefficient for Cashless policy on transparency in Imo State civil service, the result generated indicated that there is positive correlation between the variables with a correlation coefficient of .462.

Hypothesis Two

H_{o2}: Cashless policy does not ensure accountability Imo State civil service.

H_{A2}: Cashless policy ensures accountability Imo State civil service.

Table 4.2.2: Correlation Result on Cashless Policy and Accountability

		Cashless Policy	Accountability
Cashless Policy	Pearson Correlation	1	.504**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	130	130
Accountability	Pearson Correlation	.504**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	130	130

**Correlation is significant at 0.05level (2-tailed)

Source: Researcher computation using SPSS 23

Table 4.2.3 showed the correlation coefficient for cashless policy and accountability, the result generated indicated that there is positive correlation between the variables with a correlation coefficient of .504.

Hypothesis Three

H_{o3}: Cashless policy has not impacted on the reduction of cash handing in Imo State civil service.

H_{A3}: Cashless policy has impacted on the reduction of cash handing in Imo State civil service

Table 4.2.3: Correlation Result on Cashless Policy and Cash Handling Correlations

		Cashless Policy	Cash handling
Cashless Policy	Pearson Correlation	1	.370**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	130	130
Cash Handling	Pearson Correlation	.370**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	130	130

**Correlation is significant at 0.05level (2-tailed)

Source: Researcher computation using SPSS 23

Table 4.2.3 showed the correlation coefficient for cashless policy and cash handling, the result generated indicated that there is positive relationship between the variables with a correlation coefficient of .370.

Discussion of Findings

The study's analysis of tables 4.2.1, 4.2.2, and 4.2.3 demonstrated that cashless policy is a potent instrument for combating corruption in the Imo State Civil Service. Furthermore, it is found that Imo State Government's revenue level has been raised by cashless policy. The results of this research are consistent with those of Mieseigha and Ogbodo (2013); Abu, Bolarinwa, and Akpoviroro, (2018); and Jumba and Wepukhulu (2019), who discovered similar outcomes in this study. Additionally, the empirical studies reviewed in the analyzed research did not contradict the results of this study. In general, the results of this study revealed a tremendous increase in income in Imo State since the cashless policy was put into effect.

Summary

The cashless payment method is a form of innovation that sped up the transaction process and facilitated tracking. This innovation has spread throughout our society among people and companies. As time goes on, more and more people are using cashless payments. The widespread use of cashless payment is also driven by government requirements and the mass media. In their 2016 paper, Tee and Ong noted that cashless payments lower corruption and increase transaction transparency, which is consistent with this result.

Conclusion

In conclusion, cashless policy implementation in Imo State is not without it shortcoming, but it has helped the government to strategically fight corruption, therefor guarantees accountability, and reduced the cost associates with cash handling in the Imo State civil service.

Recommendations

The following suggestions were put out:

1. The Imo State government should make a focused effort to develop an online security architecture to combat online fraud in order to reassure and safeguard the public from cyberattacks and scams.
2. In order to sufficiently safeguard both the system's operators and the general public, there should be sufficient regulations governing all facets of the cashless system's functioning.
3. The government should ask questions regarding any monetary transactions

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