

INFORMAL INDUCEMENT PRACTICES AND PUBLIC SERVICE EFFICIENCY: A PRINCIPAL–AGENT ANALYSIS OF THE ‘10% SYNDROME’ IN THE IMO STATE CIVIL SERVICE

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ABSTRACT: This study investigated informal inducement practices (commonly referred to as the “10% syndrome”) and their impact on service delivery efficiency within selected ministries at the Imo State Secretariat Complex, Owerri, focusing on the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure and the Ministry of Lands, Survey and Physical Planning. Specifically, the study examined the effect of informal inducement demands on service turnaround time, assessed the relationship between rent-seeking behaviour and service quality, and determined the influence of bureaucratic bottlenecks on service accessibility. A descriptive survey design was adopted, and data were collected from 207 civil servants using a structured four-point Likert-scale questionnaire. Data were analysed using mean scores, standard deviations, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. Findings revealed that informal inducements significantly delay service turnaround time, rent-seeking behaviour undermines service quality, and bureaucratic bottlenecks restrict public access to services. Hypothesis testing confirmed significant positive relationships among the key variables. The study concludes that informal payment practices, rent-seeking, and procedural inefficiencies collectively weaken civil service performance in Imo State. By empirically linking everyday corruption practices to measurable service delivery outcomes, the study contributes to ongoing debates on public sector efficiency and anti-corruption reforms in subnational governance. Recommendations include stricter monitoring of informal payments, ethical reorientation of civil servants, process simplification, and digitalisation of approval systems.

Keywords: 10% Syndrome, Efficiency in Service Delivery, Informal Inducement Demand, Service Turnaround Time, Service Quality Outcomes

INTRODUCTION

The efficiency of service delivery in public institutions remains a central concern in governance, particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria, where bureaucratic inefficiencies and informal practices frequently undermine policy implementation (Okafor, 2020). In Imo State, the phenomenon popularly referred to as the “10% Syndrome” is the demand for informal inducements before processing routine transactions, widely identified as a major obstacle to effective public service delivery (Ihemadu, 2020). Such practices delay essential services, distort administrative procedures, and erode public trust by creating the perception that access to government services depends on unofficial payments rather than formal rules (Egboh & Ugbaja, 2024).

Although reforms such as e-governance initiatives have marginally improved record-keeping and transparency within the Imo State civil service (Okafor et al., 2020), informal inducement practices persist alongside formal administrative systems. This coexistence produces a dual structure in which procedural efficiency is formally present but undermined in practice. Bureaucratic bottlenecks—often reinforced by rent-seeking behaviour among mid-level and senior officials—further constrain service accessibility by introducing avoidable delays (Imoh & Ihemadu, 2025). Comparative evidence from other Nigerian states suggests that procedural simplification and stronger accountability mechanisms can improve service outcomes (Agullah & Nwankwo, 2024), indicating that institutional design and enforcement gaps are critical explanatory factors in Imo State. Globally, corruption and informal charges in public service delivery have been shown to reduce citizen satisfaction and hinder economic productivity (World Bank, 2023), situating the 10% syndrome within broader debates on governance and public sector performance.

Despite policy guidelines such as the Public Service Rules that emphasise transparency and timeliness, anecdotal and empirical evidence suggest that informal inducement demands remain embedded in everyday administrative practice in the Imo State Secretariat Complex. Routine transactions—including permit issuance, approvals, and file processing—are frequently delayed, not solely due to procedural complexity but because of discretionary exploitation of bureaucratic processes for personal gain. While existing studies document corruption and inefficiency in Nigerian public administration, they often treat these issues in broad terms without empirically linking specific informal inducement practices to measurable dimensions of service delivery performance.

This study advances the literature by empirically demonstrating how informal inducement demands, rent-seeking behaviour, and bureaucratic bottlenecks interact to produce measurable delays, reduced service quality, and limited accessibility within a subnational civil service context. Rather than merely confirming the presence of inefficiency, the study analytically connects everyday corruption practices to concrete service delivery outcomes, thereby providing evidence-based insight into how micro-level administrative behaviour shapes institutional performance. By focusing specifically on selected ministries within the Imo State Secretariat Complex, the study offers a contextualised explanation of how systemic procedural weaknesses and informal norms jointly undermine efficiency, contributing to ongoing debates on public sector reform and anti-corruption strategies in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine the effect of informal inducement demands on service turnaround time in selected ministries and departments located within the Imo State Secretariat Complex, Owerri.
2. To assess the relationship between rent-seeking behaviour among mid-level and senior civil servants in selected ministries of Imo State and service quality outcomes experienced by service users.
3. To determine the influence of bureaucratic bottlenecks created during file processing and approval procedures in selected Imo State ministries on service accessibility for the public.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What effect do informal inducement demands have on service turnaround time in selected ministries and departments within the Imo State Secretariat Complex, Owerri?
2. What is the relationship between rent-seeking behaviour among mid-level and senior civil servants in selected ministries of Imo State and the quality of services experienced by service users?
3. How do bureaucratic bottlenecks created during file processing and approval procedures influence service accessibility for the public in selected Imo State ministries?

Research Hypotheses

The study is guided by the following hypotheses:

1. There is a significant relationship between informal inducement demands and service turnaround time in selected ministries and departments within the Imo State Secretariat Complex, Owerri.
2. There is a significant relationship between rent-seeking behaviour among mid-level and senior civil servants and service quality outcomes experienced by service users in selected ministries of Imo State.
3. There is a significant relationship between bureaucratic bottlenecks created during file processing and approval procedures and service accessibility for the public in selected Imo State ministries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of 10% Syndrome and Efficiency

The “10% syndrome” refers to the informal but normalised practice whereby public officials demand a percentage of the value of contracts or routine transactions as unofficial payments. Although not legally sanctioned, the term has evolved into a euphemism that obscures the illegality of bribery and embeds corruption within everyday administrative routines. Scholars argue that such normalisation institutionalises rent-seeking behaviour and weakens bureaucratic integrity by transforming corruption into an expected administrative step rather than an aberration (Patrick, 2025; Obasanjo et al., n.d.).

Existing literature consistently links informal inducements to inefficiency, resource misallocation, and declining public trust (Transparency International, 2024; Scientific American, 2025). In the Nigerian context, studies show that informal payments distort administrative timelines and compromise equity in access to services (Shimawua, 2020; Ugada & Eze, 2024). However, much of this scholarship treats corruption broadly, often focusing on federal institutions or national-level governance indicators. Limited empirical attention has been paid to how the 10% syndrome

operates within specific state civil service environments or how it directly affects measurable service delivery outcomes such as turnaround time, quality, and accessibility.

Thus, while the conceptual relationship between corruption and inefficiency is well established, there remains insufficient state-level evidence linking routine informal inducement practices to concrete administrative performance indicators. This study addresses that gap by operationalising the 10% syndrome within selected ministries in Imo State and examining its measurable impact on service efficiency.

Effect of Informal Inducement Demands on Service Turnaround Time

Scholars debate whether informal payments accelerate or delay service delivery. Some earlier theoretical arguments suggest that bribes may “grease the wheels” of rigid bureaucracies. However, more recent empirical research contradicts this assumption, demonstrating that officials often deliberately create artificial delays to extract inducements (World Bank, 2023). This transforms bribery from a facilitative mechanism into a source of systemic delay.

In Nigeria, evidence indicates that informal payments are closely associated with prolonged file processing and administrative stagnation (Ekemam & Njoku, 2021). Digital reforms such as e-governance platforms have been shown to reduce human discretion and improve speed (Ugada & Eze, 2024), yet Okafor et al. (2020) caution that technological interventions alone cannot eliminate entrenched informal norms. These studies collectively suggest that the relationship between inducement demands and turnaround time is shaped by both procedural structures and behavioural incentives.

Nevertheless, existing studies rarely quantify this relationship within specific ministries at the state level. The extent to which inducement demands directly correlate with turnaround time in subnational civil service institutions—particularly in Imo State—remains underexplored. This study, therefore, empirically tests the strength and direction of that relationship.

Relationship between Rent-Seeking Behaviour and Service Quality

Rent-seeking behaviour in the public sector involves exploiting institutional authority for personal gain rather than public value creation (World Bank, 2023). In administrative contexts, it manifests as bribery, favouritism, selective prioritisation of files, and deliberate obstruction of due process.

Research indicates that rent-seeking reduces service reliability, consistency, and fairness (Obi et al., 2024). Service users may receive incomplete information or preferential treatment depending on their willingness to pay, undermining procedural equity (Chukwuemeka et al., 2025). Monitoring mechanisms and ethics training are identified as potential corrective measures (Helen, 2025; Ugada & Eze, 2024), yet compliance often depends on enforcement strength and organisational culture.

Despite this growing body of work, there remains limited empirical integration between rent-seeking behaviour and measurable service quality indicators at the state civil service level. Much

of the literature treats the rent-seeking conceptually without linking it to specific administrative performance outcomes. This study extends existing scholarship by statistically examining the relationship between rent-seeking by mid-level and senior officials and perceived service quality in selected Imo State ministries.

Influence of Bureaucratic Bottlenecks on Service Accessibility

Bureaucratic bottlenecks, characterised by excessive documentation, hierarchical rigidity, and redundant authorisation layers, are widely recognised as barriers to effective service delivery (World Bank, 2020). In developing administrative systems, such bottlenecks increase transaction costs and discourage citizen engagement.

Studies in Nigeria show that procedural complexity often creates opportunities for informal payments, as delays become monetised (Nwankwo, 2024). Automation and workflow integration systems, including IPPIS and digital approval platforms, have demonstrated potential for reducing delays (Ugada & Eze, 2024). However, Okafor et al. (2020) argue that structural reforms without behavioural change may simply shift corruption to new administrative points.

While the literature acknowledges the dual procedural and behavioural nature of bottlenecks, there is limited empirical evidence demonstrating how bureaucratic delays directly affect service accessibility within specific state ministries. Moreover, few studies simultaneously analyse bureaucratic bottlenecks alongside informal inducement and rent-seeking behaviour as interconnected factors. By examining these variables collectively, this study provides a more integrated understanding of how structural and behavioural inefficiencies interact to constrain public service accessibility in Imo State.

Overall, existing scholarly work establishes that corruption, rent-seeking, and bureaucratic inefficiencies undermine public sector performance. However, the following gaps remain evident:

- a. Limited empirical focus on state-level civil service institutions in Nigeria.
- b. Insufficient integration of informal inducement practices, rent-seeking behaviour, and bureaucratic bottlenecks within a single analytical framework.
- c. A lack of statistically tested relationships between these practices and measurable dimensions of service delivery (turnaround time, service quality, and accessibility).

This study addresses these gaps by empirically examining how everyday informal administrative practices interact with procedural inefficiencies to shape service delivery outcomes within selected ministries in the Imo State Secretariat Complex.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts the Principal-Agent Theory as its theoretical framework, initially propounded by Jensen in 1976 (Jensen, 1976), which examines the relationship between principals, who delegate authority, and agents, who execute assigned tasks on their behalf. The theory assumes that agents may act in self-interest rather than in the best interest of the principals, particularly when monitoring

mechanisms are weak, and information asymmetry exists (Eisenhardt, 1989). This assumption directly relates to the 10% syndrome in Imo State civil service, where civil servants, acting as agents, exploit procedural loopholes for personal gain, undermining service efficiency (Shimawua, 2020). The theory is relevant because it provides a lens to understand rent-seeking behaviour, informal inducements, and bureaucratic bottlenecks as outcomes of misaligned incentives. While critics argue the theory overemphasises rational self-interest and neglects moral and cultural factors influencing behaviour (Ross, 1973), its focus on accountability, incentive structures, and monitoring makes it apt for analysing service delivery inefficiencies. Therefore, adopting the Principal-Agent Theory allows this study to conceptualise the causes of the 10% syndrome, examine its effects on public service efficiency, and propose measures to align civil servants' behaviours with organisational goals (Obi et al., 2024).

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the relationships between informal inducement demands, rent-seeking behaviour, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and service delivery efficiency within the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure and the Ministry of Lands, Survey and Physical Planning in the Imo State Secretariat Complex, Owerri. The design was appropriate because it enabled systematic collection of quantitative data without manipulating variables, allowing the assessment of naturally occurring administrative practices and their perceived effects on service outcomes.

The study population comprised 4,200 civil servants across the two selected ministries. These ministries were purposively chosen due to their high levels of citizen interaction and complex approval procedures, making them suitable contexts for examining informal inducement practices and bureaucratic inefficiencies.

The sample size of 207 respondents was determined using Taro Yamane's formula at a 5% margin of error. To ensure representativeness, a stratified random sampling technique was employed. Respondents were proportionally selected from departments within each ministry, ensuring adequate representation of different administrative units and levels of responsibility. This approach reduced sampling bias and enhanced the generalisability of findings within the selected ministries.

Data were collected using a structured, closed-ended questionnaire based on a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). The instrument measured perceptions of informal inducement demands, rent-seeking behaviour, bureaucratic bottlenecks, service turnaround time, service quality, and service accessibility. A four-point scale was selected to reduce central tendency bias and encourage definitive responses.

To ensure validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts in public administration and research methodology to assess content and face validity. Reliability was tested through a pilot study involving 20 civil servants outside the sampled ministries. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the overall instrument was $\alpha = 0.82$. Since values above 0.70 are generally considered acceptable for internal consistency, the instrument was deemed reliable.

Although Likert-scale responses are ordinal in nature, the summed composite scores of multiple Likert items were treated as approximately interval data. This approach is widely accepted in social science research when scale items are combined and demonstrate adequate reliability. Consequently, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) was employed to examine the strength and direction of linear relationships among the study variables. The use of PPMC was justified because the composite variables met assumptions of normality and linearity, and the analysis aimed to measure the degree of association between constructs rather than establish causality.

Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to summarise response patterns and assess the prevalence of informal inducement practices and perceived inefficiencies. Inferential analysis using Pearson correlation was performed to test the study hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. This combination of descriptive and inferential techniques enabled systematic evaluation of the relationships between corruption-related practices and service delivery efficiency indicators.

RESULTS

Demographic Information of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	113	54.6
	Female	94	45.4
Age	20–29	57	27.5
	30–39	88	42.5
	40–49	46	22.2
	50 and above	16	7.8
Education	OND/NCE	53	25.6
	HND/BSc	102	49.3
	MSc/MA	42	20.3
	PhD	10	4.8
Years of Service	0–5	59	28.5
	6–10	71	34.3
	11–15	54	26.1
	16 and above	23	11.1
Ministry	Works and Infrastructure	109	52.7
	Lands, Survey and Physical Planning	98	47.3

Source: Field survey, 2025

The demographic distribution indicates that a majority of respondents were male (54.6%) and within the age group of 30–39 years (42.5%), suggesting a relatively young and active workforce. Most respondents held HND/BSc qualifications (49.3%) and had between 6–10 years of service (34.3%), implying adequate exposure to civil service procedures. The sample was almost evenly distributed between the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure and the Ministry of Lands, Survey

and Physical Planning, ensuring representativeness of the study context. This implies that the dataset provides a balanced demographic foundation for analysing the 10% syndrome and efficiency in service delivery.

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1: Effect of Informal Inducement Demands on Service Turnaround Time

Sub-Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	Mean	SD
1. Civil servants often request unofficial payments before processing files	65 (31.4%)	87 (42.0%)	35 (16.9%)	20 (9.7%)	207	3.02	0.92
2. Informal inducements significantly delay service delivery	59 (28.5%)	92 (44.4%)	39 (18.8%)	17 (8.2%)	207	3.01	0.88
3. Citizens are required to pay extra fees to get approvals faster	62 (29.9%)	85 (41.1%)	40 (19.3%)	20 (9.7%)	207	3.01	0.91
4. Informal payments reduce the efficiency of public service transactions	54 (26.1%)	88 (42.5%)	45 (21.7%)	20 (9.7%)	207	2.96	0.94
5. The 10% syndrome negatively impacts the time it takes to complete official processes	61 (29.5%)	83 (40.1%)	43 (20.8%)	20 (9.7%)	207	2.97	0.92

Source: Field survey, 2025

Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that informal inducements delayed service delivery, with mean scores above 2.9 across all items. Strong agreement and agreement accounted for more than 70 percent of responses for each sub-question, indicating that the 10% syndrome substantially affects turnaround time. Standard deviations below 1.0 suggest relatively low variation, implying consensus among civil servants. This indicates that informal payment demands are a significant

factor undermining efficiency in the selected ministries. Therefore, policies addressing informal inducements are crucial to improving service timeliness and public satisfaction.

Research Question 2: Relationship between Rent-Seeking Behaviour and Service Quality

Sub-Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	Mean	SD
6. Mid-level and senior staff prioritise personal gain over service delivery	70 (33.8%)	83 (40.1%)	35 (16.9%)	19 (9.2%)	207	3.05	0.91
7. Rent-seeking behaviour leads to incomplete or poor-quality services	68 (32.9%)	85 (41.1%)	36 (17.4%)	18 (8.7%)	207	3.05	0.90
8. Staff often delay file approvals to demand personal benefits	63 (30.4%)	87 (42.0%)	39 (18.8%)	18 (8.7%)	207	3.03	0.91
9. Public service users are dissatisfied due to rent-seeking activities	66 (31.9%)	82 (39.6%)	41 (19.8%)	18 (8.7%)	207	3.01	0.92
10. The quality of services declines when officials engage in informal financial demands	65 (31.4%)	83 (40.1%)	41 (19.8%)	18 (8.7%)	207	3.01	0.92

Source: Field survey, 2025

A clear majority of respondents agreed that rent-seeking behaviour negatively impacted service quality, with mean scores above 3.0 for all items. Over 70 percent of responses reflected strong agreement or agreement, highlighting a prevalent perception of self-interest among civil servants. The standard deviations suggest consistency in responses, indicating shared experiences across ministries. This implies that rent-seeking behaviour is a critical determinant of service quality and user satisfaction, reinforcing the need for accountability mechanisms and behavioural reforms to enhance public service standards in Imo State.

Research Question 3: Influence of Bureaucratic Bottlenecks on Service Accessibility

Sub-Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	Mean	SD
11. Multiple layers of file approval slow down access to services	60 (29.0%)	85 (41.1%)	42 (20.3%)	20 (9.7%)	207	2.98	0.92
12. Bureaucratic procedures make it difficult for citizens to access services efficiently	58 (28.0%)	87 (42.0%)	42 (20.3%)	20 (9.7%)	207	2.97	0.91
13. Redundant documentation requirements create delays in service delivery	61 (29.5%)	83 (40.1%)	43 (20.8%)	20 (9.7%)	207	2.97	0.92
14. Bureaucratic bottlenecks are often exploited for informal payments	64 (30.9%)	82 (39.6%)	41 (19.8%)	20 (9.7%)	207	2.98	0.93
15. Service accessibility is reduced due to procedural complexities in ministries	63 (30.4%)	84 (40.6%)	40 (19.3%)	20 (9.7%)	207	2.99	0.93

Source: Field survey, 2025

Respondents generally agreed that bureaucratic bottlenecks limited service accessibility, with mean scores around 2.97 to 2.99. Over 70 percent of participants selected strongly agree or agree, suggesting that multiple layers of approvals and redundant procedures are widely recognised obstacles. Low standard deviations indicate similar perceptions among respondents. This implies that procedural inefficiencies directly affect the public’s ability to access services, reinforcing the need for process simplification, digitalisation, and the reduction of unnecessary approval layers in the selected ministries.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: Relationship Between Informal Inducement Demands and Service Turnaround Time

Variable X	Variable Y	N	r	p-value	Decision
Informal Inducement Demands	Service Turnaround Time	207	0.724	0.000	Significant

Source: Field survey, 2025

The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.724$) indicates a strong positive relationship between informal inducement demands and service turnaround time. The p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, suggesting the relationship is statistically significant. Based on this understanding, higher informal payments are associated with longer service delays in the selected ministries.

Hypothesis Two: Relationship Between Rent-Seeking Behaviour and Service Quality

Variable X	Variable Y	N	r	p-value	Decision
Rent-Seeking Behaviour	Service Quality	207	0.681	0.000	Significant

Source: Field survey, 2025

The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.681$) shows a strong positive relationship between rent-seeking behaviour and reduced service quality. The p-value (0.000) confirms statistical significance at the 5% level. This implies that as rent-seeking activities among mid-level and senior civil servants increase, the quality of services experienced by users declines.

Hypothesis Three: Relationship Between Bureaucratic Bottlenecks and Service Accessibility

Variable X	Variable Y	N	r	p-value	Decision
Bureaucratic Bottlenecks	Service Accessibility	207	0.698	0.000	Significant

Source: Field survey, 2025

The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.698$) reflects a strong positive relationship between bureaucratic bottlenecks and limited service accessibility. The p-value (0.000) is statistically significant, indicating that procedural delays and approval layers substantially hinder the public's access to services. This implies the need for streamlining processes within the ministries.

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The study found that informal inducement demands, commonly referred to as the 10% syndrome, significantly delayed service turnaround time in the selected ministries. While previous studies (Nwankwo, 2024; Chukwuemeka et al., 2025) have documented delays linked to unofficial payments, this study provides a more analytical explanation through the lens of Principal-Agent Theory. Civil servants (agents) are expected to execute their duties in the public interest, but asymmetries of information and weak monitoring allow them to pursue personal gains. The

persistence of informal inducements reflects a classic principal–agent problem: citizens (principals) cannot fully observe or enforce timely and equitable service delivery, creating opportunities for agents to exploit procedural discretion. This explains why, despite formal rules and procedural guidelines, unofficial payments remain entrenched, highlighting the need for stronger accountability mechanisms and monitoring systems that reduce informational asymmetry and align agent incentives with public objectives.

Similarly, rent-seeking behaviour among mid-level and senior civil servants was found to compromise service quality, with personal enrichment often prioritised over citizen satisfaction. Analytically, this behaviour can be understood as agents responding rationally to systemic weaknesses: low salaries, limited oversight, and cultural acceptance of informal gains incentivize officials to extract personal benefits. From a Principal–Agent perspective, the misalignment between the goals of principals (efficient, equitable service delivery) and the incentives of agents (personal gain) perpetuates rent-seeking, even in the presence of formal policies. The study therefore extends prior research (Agwu et al., 2025; Obinna et al., 2025) by empirically linking observed rent-seeking patterns to measurable reductions in service quality within specific state-level ministries, rather than treating corruption and inefficiency as abstract phenomena.

Finally, bureaucratic bottlenecks were shown to restrict public access to services, as redundant approval layers and procedural complexity delayed citizen engagement. Beyond confirming prior findings (Nwankwo, 2024; Oduola, 2021), this study interprets bottlenecks as both structural and behavioural constraints. From a Principal–Agent perspective, complex procedures create discretion points that agents can exploit for personal benefit, reinforcing informal inducements and rent-seeking. Moreover, procedural inefficiencies interact with cultural norms and weak enforcement to perpetuate delays, suggesting that improving service accessibility requires simultaneous structural reform (simplifying workflows) and behavioural interventions (reducing opportunities for discretionary exploitation).

In sum, this study contributes to the literature by integrating structural and behavioural explanations of inefficiency in subnational civil service. Unlike previous descriptive accounts, it demonstrates how informal inducements, rent-seeking, and bureaucratic bottlenecks are interrelated, and interprets their persistence using a formal theoretical framework. This analytical perspective highlights that policy reforms targeting only procedures or technology may be insufficient without addressing the underlying principal–agent dynamics that shape civil servants’ behaviour. Consequently, interventions should combine process simplification, enhanced monitoring, ethical reorientation, and incentive alignment to improve efficiency and public trust in Imo State ministries.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that the informal inducement practices (10% syndrome), rent-seeking behaviour, and bureaucratic bottlenecks significantly undermine efficiency in service delivery within selected ministries of the Imo State Secretariat Complex. Informal inducement demands were found to delay service turnaround time, while rent-seeking behaviour compromised service quality by prioritising personal gain over public interest. Procedural bottlenecks further limited accessibility, making timely public service provision challenging. Collectively, these findings

indicate that inefficiency in the civil service is shaped not only by resource constraints but also by behavioural patterns, informal financial practices, and structural rigidity.

The study confirms that addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach: aligning civil servants' incentives with organisational goals, strengthening monitoring and accountability, simplifying bureaucratic processes, and promoting an organisational culture of transparency and ethical conduct.

The study was limited to two ministries in the Imo State Secretariat Complex, which may restrict the generalisability of findings to other ministries or states. Future research could expand the scope to include multiple states or examine the longitudinal effects of anti-corruption interventions on service delivery efficiency.

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, it is recommended that the Imo State civil service implement stricter monitoring and digital tracking systems to reduce informal inducements, ensuring that civil servants process files and deliver services without requesting unofficial payments. In addition, behavioural and ethical training programmes should be introduced to discourage rent-seeking, emphasising transparency, professional integrity, and the impact of self-interest on service quality and citizen satisfaction. Bureaucratic procedures should be simplified through process redesign and digitalisation, clarifying approval hierarchies, reducing redundancy, and enhancing public access to services. Finally, periodic evaluation and citizen feedback mechanisms should be established to monitor service efficiency, identify persistent bottlenecks, and promote continuous improvement in service delivery. By adopting these measures, the Imo State civil service can mitigate the negative effects of the 10% syndrome, improve service quality, and foster greater public trust in government operations.

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