

# Corruption as a Bane for Under-Development in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges

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## ABSTRACT

Corruption is widespread in most government in Nigeria not because the people are different from people from other part of the World, but because the society is conducive for it. There are many reasons why this is so. Leadership styles that encourage corruption at all level, the motivation to earn income from among the civil servants is relatively stronger; exacerbated by poverty, under-employment and low wages. In Nigeria, accountability is generally weak, political competitions and civil liberties are often restricted. Laws and principles of ethics in government are poorly developed and the legal institutions charged with enforcing them (ICPC and EFCC) are ill- prepared. On the whole, to shift from practice to result, it is suggested that there is need for improvement in the socio- economic life of the people and leadership by example; punitive measures on corruption practices and value re -orientation as well as independence of enforcement agencies.

## 1.INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a nation bestowed with vast human and natural resources with oil exports accounting for about 95% of foreign-exchange income and some 80% of government income, with a population of about 158 million (Gbogbo, 2011). Despite its enormous array of resources, the Nigerian economy has witnessed a period of stagnant economic growth.

This has been partly blamed on corruption and gross mismanagement of the country's vast resources. Corruption has tremendously affected the lives and provoked animosity amongst Nigerians. It has eaten so deep into the fabrics of the Nigerian government, the public and private sectors, governmental and non-governmental organizations and has essentially become a way of life and an important source of accumulation of private property in Nigeria (Mustapha 2008).

Corruption has greatly contributed to the backwardness and failure of good governance in Nigeria. The country has not been able to implement policies which promote good governance and facilitate the development and success of the democratic process due to the prevalent existence of both high (Political corruption) and low levels (Bureaucratic corruption).

There is no doubt that this canker of development threatens the moral integrity of the nation and hampers development (Mustapha 2008). Over the years especially during the military regimes, little was done to fight this malaise. According to some analysts, even the anti-corruption efforts of governments such as Muhammadu Buhari/Tunde Idiagbon and Olusegun Obasanjo failed to produce desired results (Agbu, 2003).

Some of these policies include: decree no. 5 of 1976 for the investigation of the assets of public officers and supported by the Code of Conduct Tribunals and the Code of Conduct Bureau as prescribed by the 1979 constitution, the Corrupt Practices Decree of 1975, the 1979-1983 Ethical Revolution of Shehu Shagari, the crusade against indiscipline undertaken by the Buhari Idiagbon government, the Corrupt practices and Economic Crimes decree of 1990 and the establishment of a national committee for the fight against corruption and Economic crimes between 1985-1993 by the Babangida regime . However the fact that corruption is still prevalent in the Nigerian society depicts the failure of some of these anti-corruption policies (Agbu, 2003). The biggest challenge for this country is not just to punish those who are involved in these corrupt practices but the education of her populace on the dangers and measures to tackle corruption (Obayelu, 2007).

This word "Corruption" has become a global phenomenon and no country is completely corrupt free. However, corruption is apparent in some countries than others because those countries with less corruption have learnt to manage corruption than others by putting the necessary checks and balances in place and curbing the

opportunities of corruption while others have either not figured corruption out or lack the political will to do same.

The use of public power and resources in a manner that advances individual, factional, ethnic, religious or other limited interests at the expense of more broad based social, national or global needs is corruption because power and public resources are appropriated towards private purposes and gains. Theft, bribery, extortion, patronage, nepotism, and other practices grouped together as corruption. Corruption is so widespread that each country has developed its own terminology to describe these practices; egunje or essu in Nigeria, mordida in Mexico, arreglo in Philippines, baksheesh in Egypt, dash in Kenya, pot-de-vin in France steepening in The Netherlands, tangente in Italy among others (allword.com).

All these phrases or slangs as it were, are used to refer to bribe such as money or a favor, offered or given to a person in a position of trust to influence that person's views or conduct. Corruption is not a novel concern in the world today. Volumes of literature have already been written about this intriguing topic globally and tons of conferences have been and are still been organized to address this menace. It is an everyday occurrence in countries throughout the world, whether developed or under developed.

## **2.OBJECTIVE**

The major objective of this research work is to critically examine the various underlining obstacles hindering the fight against corruption in Nigeria and by extension suggest the way forward

### **2.1CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS**

There is no comprehensive and acceptable definition of the term 'corruption'. However, corruption has been used to describe conducts that reflect abuse of public office for private gain. The notion of corruption as the abuse of public power for private gain could be seen as a conflict between the obligation to exercise a public power on the public interest and self -interest of an individual to use or exploit them for private gain.

Corruption is widespread in developing countries, not because the people are different from people from other parts of the world, but because the conditions are ripe for it. There are many reasons why this is so. The motivation to earn income from among the populace in developing countries is relatively stronger; exacerbated by poverty, unemployment and low wages. In Nigeria, accountability is generally weak. Political competition and civil liberties are often restricted. Laws and principles of ethics in government are poorly developed and the legal instrument charged with enforcing them are ill- prepared (Shehu, 2006).

Kaufman (2000), argued that corruption exists within specific conditions in any society, although it is not peculiar, its incidence is more severe in developing countries.

In his analysis Gyimah (2002), opine that Corruption is a word that has been defined differently by both practitioners and academicians who study corruption. "It means different things to different people depending on the individual's cultural background, discipline and political leaning" (Gyimah, 2002:186).

Corruption according to Shehu (2006) is insidious involving often the bribery and extortion cases, the giver and taker, both of who are unwilling to reveal the occurrence of corruption. It is also complex that our understanding of the extent of its impact especially remains limited. If corruption is a complex phenomenon, then a proper understanding of its impact must not only focus on the perpetrators but also on the specific conditions in which it occurs. Shehu (2006) is of the opinion that corruption can be categorized. Grand or petty corruption is said to be more prevalent in societies with weak observance of the rule of law. Corruption can also be passive or active. No matter the category, it has its circumstantial consequences. Rule of law can be used to describe respect for laws and regulations. It is a complex concept as it could be a manifestation as well as a symptom of corruption.

In a related development Destas (2006) is of the view that corruption by most Africans is a practical issue that is involving

*"outright theft, embezzlement of funds or other misappropriation of state property, nepotism and the granting of favour to personal acquaintances and the abuse of the public authority to exact payments and privileges"*

In another development Jain (2001), the manner in which corruption is defined ends up determining what gets modeled and measured. He argues that a brief definition of corruption is difficult to get. He defines corruption as

“an act in which the power of the public office is used for personal gain in the manner that contravenes the rules of the game” (Jain, 2001:73). Mulinge and Lesetedi (2002) defines corruption as “a form of antisocial behavior by an individual or social group which confers unjust or fraudulent benefits on its perpetrators, is inconsistent with the established legal norms and prevailing moral ethos of the land and is likely to subvert or diminish the capacity of the legitimate authorities to provide fully for the material and spiritual well being of all manners of society in a just and equitable manner” (Mulinge and Lesetedi 2002:52).

Desta, 2006:19). Defined this way, the general public is seen as the principal agent and the public officials as the agent. Previous definitions of corruption have largely neglected that corrupt practices occur not only in the public sector but in the private sector as well, as is the case in Nigeria. In Nigeria corruption can be seen from the bureaucratic or systematic, political dimensions. This is so because corruption in Nigeria occurs in different forms with every facet of the society exhibiting the tendency to be corrupt. This thesis therefore adopts the definition of corruption given by Frazier-Moleketi (2007) as:

‘a transaction or an attempt to secure illegitimate advantage for national interests, private benefit or enrichment, through subverting or suborning a public official or any person or entity from performing their proper functions with diligence and probity’ (Frazier-Moleketi, 2007:246).

The definition of Frazier-Moleketi takes into cognizance the different forms of corruption that exists in both the public and private sectors of the Nigerian society. Trust is often times abused hence leading to a situation where “public goods” which was suppose to be used for the general interests of the people is usurp as the property of a few political and public official holders.

In recent years there has been large body of empirical research on corruption including the works of Obayelu 2007, Rose Ackerman 1999, Stapenhurst and Kpundeh 1999, World Bank 1997). There are different types of corruption. Ovienloba (2007) explains the different forms of corruption in Nigeria.

These include (Systematic or bureaucratic corruption and endemic corruption). He argues that systematic corruption occurs in the public sector and it is also referred to as bureaucratic corruption. In his elaborate analysis he posits that this kind of corruption frustrates the free flow of administrative provisions for development and those who give in to this kind of corruption forget the ideals of good governance and frustrate the system for their private gains and benefits.

He further explains that this kind of corruption is a systematic defeat of good governance given the fact that “good governance relates with effective delivery of services to the public and in the course of delivering these services to the public the bureaucrats behavior should be fair and he or she should posses characteristics such as trust, consistency, mutual respect and impartial decision making” (Ovienloba, 2007:33).

According to Dike (2003) corruption in Nigeria occurs in so many different forms. Political corruption which takes place at the highest levels of political authority and it affects the manner in which decisions are made. Electoral corruption is the buying of votes, special favors or promises of votes. He defines bureaucratic corruption as the low levels or street levels corruption, this type of corruption is what the citizen’s experience in schools, hospitals, even with the citizen’s interaction with the police. Olarinmoye (2008) in his detailed analysis on electoral corruption finds an intimate link between electoral fraud or process and poor governance. He argues that subversion of electoral process leads to the installation of individuals who pursue their private interest rather than the general interest hence this will eventually lead to bad governance, poverty and economic underdevelopment that have plagued Nigeria. He concludes that an understanding of the electoral corruption is essential to combat it and quest for good governance.

Lawal and Torbi (2006) assert that since good governance involves the effective management of resources by the government, improving the well being of the citizens thus the gains of good governance seems to be far from the Nigerians due to bureaucratic corruption hence it is seen as one of the obstacles to good governance in Nigeria.

Mbama coin corruption proper in his article entitled “Corruption-the Monster that has handcuffed Nigeria” identifies many forms of corruption in Nigeria; this includes political corruption, educational corruption, religious corruption and financial corruption. He explains that political corruption exist when an “electoral officer lacks integrity and uses his office for private gains” (Mbama, 2011). Various forms of political corruption

includes; bribery, election rigging, nepotism, mediocrity and concludes that if political corruption can be minimized all the other forms of corruption can be controlled.

Agba (2010) examines the different types of corruption and based on his analysis he concludes that bureaucratic and political corruption weakens good governance. This is so because policy makers become hesitant in taking decisions to reduce corruption or introduce new reforms to combat it. This thesis will focus on bureaucratic, political and electoral corruption. The table below is a summary of the different types of corruption.

According to his model, there is a proliferation of corruption when individuals exhibit monopolistic and discretionary powers over the control of goods or services in a country and with little or no accountability and decides who gets it, and when to get it and how much the receiver gets (Klitgaard,1991). This has been used to explain the prevalence of corruption in Nigeria.

Sachs and Warner (1995) posit that rent seeking behavior is predominant in resource rich countries than in resource poor countries.

Dininio and Kpundeh (1999) posit that from an institutional point of view, corruption arises where public officials have wide authority, weak accountability and bad incentives.

In the case of Nigeria, oil income has presented a great opportunity for corruption and rent-seeking (Salisu, 2000).

The more activities public officials manage the more opportunities exist for corruption and the lower the probability of detection of the punishment the greater the risk that corruption will take place and if the salaries are low, and lack of security of employment the greater the incentives for public officials to pursue self serving rather than public serving ends. The lack of accountability provided a ground for corruption which has been exploited by the dishonest officials in the public sector. According to Dike (2003), poor control system in Nigeria makes it difficult to track corrupt activities and this leads to corruption. The presence of weak institutions is another major cause of corruption in Nigeria. Most of the forces which prevent corruption in the country are often weak and some of the laws enforcing agencies are themselves corrupt (Sowunmi , 2010).

### **3.CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA.**

Corruption is not only a western concept. In any society, there is a difference between what happens above board and what is under the table, of what is accepted and what causes outrage. Although different societies have their own notions of corruption, in Nigeria, corruption has become a part and parcel of the society, which (corruption) appears to be out of control. The former chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, Mrs. Farida Waziri, recently voiced out her concerns at the level of corruption in Nigeria by stating that the “endemic corruption cases in the country has overwhelmed the commission’s workforce”. She said with a population of one hundred and forty million, the commission’s one thousand five hundred operatives finds the task of prosecuting corruption cases daunting. From my experience, research and interviews, I can attest to the fact that corruption in Nigeria is indeed out of control and one of the greatest challenges of our generation, which will not be very easy to tackle (Waziri 2012).

Scholars such as Anorou and Braha (2005) are of the view that corruption can be growth enhancing in the sense that with the help of corruption efficiency in the economy is improved. This is so because strict measures that are imposed by the government that impede investment and other economic decisions favorable to growth are removed.

Therefore, corruption according to these scholars “greases the wheel” (Anorou and Braha, 2005).

While scholars such as Murphy (1993), Mauro (1995) on the other hand argue that corruption increases cost and leads to doubt in the intentional spheres. Mauro (1995) finds out that corruption has a negative effect on the ratio of investment to GDP thus affecting economic growth. Corruption discourages investment and distorts the composition of government spending usually to the detriment of future economic growth (Mauro, 1997). Mauro (1997) argue that corruption will reduce aids flow particularly to developing countries.

Even if you don’t come into direct contact with corruption, corruption affects you. Corruption reduces the overall wealth in a country since it can discourage businesses from operating in such a corrupt setting.

In countries with high levels of corruption, for example, average income is about three times lower than in less corrupt countries (the difference between, say, Nigeria).

Corruption also reduces the amount of money the government has to pay good workers and purchase supplies, such as books and medicine. It distorts the way the government uses its money, too.

The result is that schools, health clinics, roads, sewer systems, police forces, and many other services that governments provide are worse than they would otherwise be. Because of this, infant mortality rates are also

about three times higher and literacy rates are about 25 percentage points lower in high corruption countries than in countries with low to medium levels of corruption.

In addition, corruption is unfair and allows those with money or connections to bend the law or government rules in their favor. They can pay off judges, for example, or divert scarce drinking water to their land. For these reasons, corruption harms the environment and undermines trust in government.

For instance the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has stopped its development support to some very corrupt countries. The World Bank on its part has introduced tougher anti-corruption principles into its lending policies to corrupt countries (Dike, 2008).

Corruption causes a serious development challenge, in the political sphere; it undermines democracy and good governance by weakening political processes. Corruption in elections subverts accountability and representation in policy making, in the judiciary it suspends the rule of law and in the public service it leads to the unequal distribution of services (Dininio, and Kpundeh, 1999).

The effects of corruption in Nigeria have been very significant. From multi-internal effects such as poor governance, misuse of natural resources, mediocrity, high unemployment rates, the even widened gap between the rich and the poor to the international effects such as the tarnished image of Nigeria in the international circles. Due to corruption in Nigeria, foreign nationals exercised caution in entering business with Nigerians there by weakening the economic sector of the country (Cleen foundation, 2010). According to Dike (2008) corruption wastes skills because time is often wasted to set up anti-corruption agencies to fight corruption and also to monitor public sectors. To conclude, corruption diverts scarce public resources into private pockets, it weakens good governance; it also threatens democracy and erodes the social and moral fabrics of a country (Dike, 2008). All these negatives effects keep stressing on the importance of combating corruption.

Nigeria was rated as the most corrupt nation in the world by Transparency International (TI) in 1996 and 1997. In 1999 it was ranked the second most corrupt country while in the year 2000 it regained its position as the most corrupt nation in the world out of 90 countries. In 2001 and 2002, she was the second most corrupt nation out of 91 and 102 countries assessed respectively while in 2005 it moved to position number 152 out of 159 countries. In 2009 the global corruption perception index revealed that Nigeria occupied the 130th position out of 180 countries surveyed (Transparency International).

### **3.1 Approach to Corruption in Nigeria**

Approaches to corruption are basically determined by the prevailing forms of corruption and the trends. There are various forms and manifestations of corruption. Shehu (2006a) identified 17 types and patterns of corruption using United Nation Global Program Against Corruption's (GPAC) categorization.

They are: Grand and petty corruption, bribery, influence - peddling, bribery to avoid liability, bribery in support of fraud, bribery in support of unfair competition, private sector bribery, bribery to obtain confidential or 'inside' information, embezzlement, theft and fraud, abuse of discretion, favouritism, nepotism and clientelism, conduct creating or exploiting conflicting interests and improper political party contributions.

Ayua (2001), believe it is possible to put all the various forms and manifestations into five categories. These are bureaucratic corruption, private sector corruption; political corruption, government corruption and non-governmental association corruption.

Forms of corruption vary, while corruption may facilitate criminal enterprise such as drug trafficking, money laundering and trafficking, it is restricted to these organized crime activities. In Nigeria, corruption is so common that it is expected when ordinary businesses or citizens interact with government officials. The end point of political corruption is literally known as rule by thieves.'

In popular discourse, studies and official statements, it is the consensus that the trend of corruption is an increasing one. According to Odekunle (2001), corruption in Nigeria is characterized as endemic and, its 'consequences for the economy and the society in all conceivable respects' debilitating.

There was an International Conference on Corruption and Money Laundering in Nigeria in 2000. The then President Olusegun Obasanjo declared that the goal of his administration was to reduce corruption in Nigeria to the barest minimum. In pursuing the goal, the government initiated and lobbied for the passage of legislation (1) the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences (Establishment) Act 2000 (ICPC) and (2) the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (Establishment) Act 2004 (EFCC).

The Act led to the establishment of two independent commissions to handle corruption cases (ICPC and EFCC). In addition, the EFCC is empowered by Section 7 (2) Article was also the coordinating agency for the enforcement of the provisions of:

a. The Money Laundering Act 2004;

- b. The Advance Fee Fraud and Other Related Offences Act 1995;
- c. The failed Banks (Recovery of Debts) and Financial Malpractices in Banks Act, as amended.
- d. The Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act, 1991, as amended.
- e. Miscellaneous Offenses Act; and
- f. Any other law or legislation relating to economic and financial crimes, including the Criminal Code and Penal Code.

The EFCC Act also provides for the National Financial and Intelligence Unit Act 2004 (NFIU) as the 'Nigeria arm of the Global Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU). Government and civil society, anti - corruption advocacy and activities are also active in workshops/seminars/conferences while the media has also been active in exposing the corruption.

Nigeria has ratified the ECOWAS, Africa Union and United Nations Conventions, but none has been domesticated. It is important to note however, that MLA agreements (e.g, with Britain, Switzerland ) is not in written form. Thus far, the Nigerian government only seeks the assistance of these countries in writing whenever the need to recover stolen money from Nigeria in foreign countries is needed. These countries have been very cooperative and some of the known stolen money were recovered from foreign banks.

#### **4. Corruption Manifestation in Nigeria**

The various manifestations of corruption in Nigeria are well documented in the numerous reports of commissions of enquiry established by successive administrations. The Forster-Sulton Tribunal (1956) and the Justice Coker Commission (1962) highlighted how politicians of the First Republic used their privileged positions to divert public resources away from state corporations and companies to their various political parties. These politicians were also known to have engaged in embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds, bribery, nepotism, extortion, electoral frauds and other forms of corrupt behaviours. Notwithstanding the fact that corruption during that era was largely restricted to the political class, it greatly contributed to the collapse of the Republic following Nigeria's first military coup on January 15, 1967.

During the 70's, the import licensing system was widely exploited by government officials and their friends in the business sectors for self enrichment. Contracts for public works were frequently inflated, while civil servants rampantly engaged many forms of bribery and extortion. In 1976, 10 out of 12 of the then state military governors were dismissed from office and the military, haven been found guilty of grossly abusing their offices by a judicial probe panel. The probe by the Mohammed regime (1975/76) also extended to other key state institutions, including the judiciary, police, civil service and parastatals, and even universities culminating in the purge of over 10,000 officials, many of them on corruption related offences.

With the return of electoral politics in 1979, under the Second Republic (1979-83), large scale and high level fraud, diversion, embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds either to finance political parties or for self enrichment, and more brazen inflation of state contracts, nepotism, ostentatious display of ill-gotten wealth, stuffing of pay-roll with ghost workers, and electoral malpractices and violence returned to the front burner, after a brief lull.

Succeeding regimes (1985-99), marked by very corrupt and repressive military rule and growing personalization of power, saw corruption spreading to virtually all spheres of society, including the civil society and the private sector, becoming a national culture. The scale of corruption during that era in Nigeria is reflected in the Pius Okigbo Report, which noted that about \$ 12 billion in oil windfall which accrued to the nation during the 1990 gulf war could not be accounted for, by the military regime of Ibrahim Babangida (Amuwo 1995). In 1998, a Panel constituted to facilitate the recovery of funds looted under the Abacha regime (1993-98) also revealed how top military and civilian leaders, including Abacha himself, siphoned billions of dollars in public funds to offshore accounts, while using their positions and public resources to acquire choice properties around the country. In 1999, following return to democratic rule, the Christopher Kolade Panel in a very celebrated report also indicted the last military regime of General Abdusalami Abubarkah (1998-99), for awarding, massively inflated, contracts, licences, awards, etc., usually to firms in which top echelon of the regime had substantial interests, causing a sharp drop in the country's external reserves.

Some of the most rampant manifestations of corruption in Nigeria today (under the Fourth Republic), include the inflation of contracts in return for huge kick-backs, which has also grown in its proportion, fraud and

falsifications of accounts and official records in the public service, forgery or falsifications of vital documents (including educational qualifications, to gain important offices), especially by aspiring politicians and public servants, the ghost worker syndrome, examination malpractices in educational institutions, bribery, extortion and perversion of justices, especially among the police and judiciary, and of course, the various crimes against the state in the private sector, sometimes by multinational firms operating in the country, in such areas as tax evasion, over-invoicing of goods, foreign exchange swindling, hoarding and smuggling. Others are frauds in the banking and finance sector, and of course the illegal acquisition of public assets, such as landed property and a frightening degree of electoral fraud (Newswatch, Feb 24, 2003).

Thus, corruption remains wide spread today, affecting virtually all public institutions, despite the incumbent regime's well publicized move to fight it. For instance, a recent audit report on federal government finances, which covered key institutions such as ministries and parastatals, public corporations, the judiciary, the federal legislature and the presidency among others, authored by the Auditor-General of the Federation, revealed that as much as 23 billion naira, may have been lost to corruption in 2002 alone. The amount represents financial frauds perpetrated by state officials, ranging from outright embezzlement, payment for jobs not done, over invoicing, double debiting, inflating of contract, to release of funds without the consent of the approving authority.

## 5. Conclusion And Recommendations

Corruption is the major obstacle to development in Nigeria and tackling it is essential to the survival and progress of Nigeria. The fight against corruption is everyone's responsibility, the government, the citizen and even the international community; this is as a result of the fact that they are guilty of money laundry for most government officials in the country. But the people's commitment would be difficult to secure if the leaders who are calling on them for sacrifice do not themselves make any sacrifices. To stamp out corruption in the country, Nigerians should always elect or appoint people of probity to manage the affairs of the nation. This group must analyze each situation in the society critically, in order to determine appropriate target of change, which should be involve in the effort, and what method will most likely lead to the desired outcome.

The majority of Nigerians are pleased with the initial policy actions of the civilian administration. Nevertheless, we should keep an eagle's eye on the legislature, because some of them are corrupt. Nigeria still lives in the history of the future. The way our history will be written depends upon the extent to which and the manner in which we - leaders and the people - strive to shape our future. There is a lot of unknown in the society. Though we might not be able to foresee what the remote future has in store for us, we own ourselves the duty and responsibility to stamp out corruption by standing up for a corrupt free Nigeria.

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