

# Corruption in Nigeria: Causes, Effects and Control from the Islamic Viewpoint

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## Abstract

This paper examines corruption with special reference to Islamic viewpoint. Different acts of corrupt practices were identified. These include fraud, money laundering, and misappropriation of funds and abuse of office. It was discovered that a lot of reasons are responsible for these acts. These include greediness, self-esteem, under employment, and poor leadership. Their effects consist of inflation, poverty and agony, and bad international image for Nigeria. The solutions to these problems include appropriate penalty, removal of immunity from the 1999 constitution, and designing a course on the evil effects of corruption, to be made compulsory at all levels of our educational institutions. The researcher made use of historical analysis.

**Keywords:** corruption, bribery, assassination, fraud, gratification.

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## Introduction

Nigeria, like other developing countries, is battling with numerous social vices, such as theft, cultism, kidnapping, assassination, political rivalry, tribalism, religious conflicts, examination malpractices, Acquired immune Deficiency syndrome (AIDS), Boko Haram, bribery and corruption. These social vices arise as a result of the misdeeds of individuals, groups including the influential people and those at the helm of affairs in the country. The negative implications of these vices have made the Nigerian Governments, scholars, organizations and international communities to take steps on how to eradicate or minimize the vices in Nigeria. The focus of this paper is to have a critical look at corruption and to join hands to proffer lasting solutions to it.

## Conceptual clarification of major terms

### Nigeria

Nigeria is the largest country in West Africa with the population of 218,255,747 as at Thursday, 17 of November, 2022 (worldometer, 2022). It is widely acclaimed that the British Journalist, Flora Shaw suggested the name “Nigeria” in 1890s and the northern and southern Nigeria was amalgamated by Lord Fredrick Lugard in 1914 (Ezeogidi 2020:9). The country secured its independence from the British Government on October 1 1960 (Haruna 2020, Mohammed *et al* 2020: 1470) and became a Republican in 1963 (Mohmmad 2014:2). Nigeria has 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The country consists of 109 senatorial districts and 360 members of the House of Representatives. 3 senators represent each of the 36 States in Nigeria and one represent the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The House of Representative members are allocated according to the population of each State. Hence each of the States gets different allocations (Akajife *et al* 2020: 1; Nigeria High Commission, London 2009-2022). The country has 774 federally recognized local government area authorities (Independence National Electoral Commission 2020).

### Corruption

Corruption is a global issue that concerns every country of the world irrespective of colour, race, religious denomination and geographical location. Corruption is more in the developing countries of the world than the developed ones (Fodol, 2021:342). Nigeria, being a developing country needs the provision of lasting solution to the phenomenon. Both Academicians and policy makers are of the opinion that corruption is the abuse of public goods for the private gains at the detriment of others (Zakaria, 2018; Tanner *et al*, 2022:1). Ola (2004:209) agrees with this assertion when he says that corruption is all efforts to acquire wealth or power through illegitimate means for private gain at the public expenses, or a misuse of public power for private advantage. Gould and Kolb as quoted by Elemin (2019: 5) explain corruption further by saying that it is the misuse of power for profit, preferment, or for the advantage of a group or class in such a way that it constitutes a breach of law or of standards of high moral conduct.

Two sides are involved in the corruption. These are the giver and the receiver (Enste *et al* (2017). In terms of corruption, Nigeria was ranked 136th in 2015 by the Transparency International. 136th in 2016, 148<sup>th</sup> in 2017,

144th in 2018, 146th in 2019, 149th in 2020 and 154 out of 180 surveyed countries in 2021 (Oluwafemi, (2022)). By this ranking, Nigeria drops backward by five steps. This falling back makes Nigeria to be the second most corrupt country in West Africa. Oluwafemi states further that the organization identified seven major areas that work against the anti-corruption crusade of Nigeria. These are

1. Poor auditing report.
2. Corruption in the security unit of Nigeria.
3. Inability to investigate high profile corrupt cases and unlawful financial transactions.
4. Lack of asset recovery, protection of the whistle-blowers and other legal frameworks.
5. Various challenges in the Judiciary.
6. Inability to curb corruption over the covid-19 issue.
7. The banning of Twitter, declining in the civic space and intimidation of the defenders of human rights across the country.

If Nigeria could rectify these and other related problems, her ranking may be improved in the next ranking. The problem with the Nigerians is that many of them see corruption as a norm. They engage in corrupt acts secretly and openly. Without accepting bribe, your demand may not be attended to by many government officials. Two variations exist in corruption according to Enste (2017: 5). These are Bottom-up corruption and Top-down corruption. Bottom-up corruption involves the collection of bribe by the low level officials and share to the superior officers. By this, the junior officers are protected from being prosecuted if any complaint is made against them. The top-down corruption works in the opposite direction. This occurs when the superior officials fear that their subordinate officials may denounce them when prosecution comes. Also, if the contracts are decided upon superior officials and the inputs of the subordinates are needed, they share part of the bribe with them to motivate them to do the jobs well according to specifications. There is also corporate corruption whereby officials accepted bribe on behalf of the corporate bodies to betray the company's secrets to competitors. Corruption, as could be inferred from these definitions, involves unlawful use of one's position or connection for the sake of getting personal advantage over others. Such advantages include wealth, Position, power and recognition.

### **Acts of Corrupt Practices**

These were extensively dealt with by the Federal Republic of Nigeria in the 1999 Constitution, the Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Act of 2000, the Money Laundering Act of 2004, and Economic and Financial Crimes Act of 2004. The acts of corrupt practices include bribery, looting of fund (fraud), money laundering, misappropriation of public funds, drug trafficking, gratification, abuse of office, nepotism, electoral malpractice and extortion. These will be discussed in turns:

### **Bribery**

Bribery according to Collins English Dictionary, is any act of an individual or group of individuals offering money or anything valuable to somebody or group of people to influence them to do something for you. This may be something you are qualified for without any influence or the one you are not qualified for. It may be an attempt to influence such a person to favour you out of many people that are qualified for such a thing. Bribery is a crime of voluntarily offering, giving promising, receiving, agreeing to receive, or soliciting any amount of money or valuable thing with the corrupt intent of influencing the action of a public officer in the performance of his or her official duties includes improper dealing by or with any person who is connected with the conduct of public affairs either in the legislative, executive or judicial arm of the government (Hirshberg, 2003). Goetz (1988) opines that the actions that constitute bribery are no longer limited to public officers alone but private citizens as well. He goes further to say that before the charge of bribery could be established, element of corrupt purpose must be implied or proven beyond reasonable doubt. Hirshberg (2003) states that the giver commits active bribery while the receiver engages in passive bribery. It is not necessarily for the act in which bribery is offered to be accomplished to actualize before the offence of bribery is completed. Bribery, as could be deduced from the above explanation involves two or more people. It is an unlawful way of influencing the action or decision of other(s) towards one's favour through the use of money or valuable property.

Bribery according to De Waele et al (2021: 1-2) could be macro lens, meso lens and micro lens.

1. Macro lens is needed to explain the differences in bribery across the length and breadth of the world.
2. Meso lens is required in a given organization
3. Micro lens is a factor to understand individual variation in a given country and different organizations. It is a fact that it is not all people that engage in bribery or on equal level.

Waele et al (2021: 2) quoted Heidenhimer (2009) as identified 3 shades of bribery thus:

1. Black bribery: This is an action that is condemned by consensus of public opinion as punishable on the grounds of principle.
2. Gray bribery: This is the action that is condemned by limited number of people, especially the elites.

Many people want the action to be punished while majority of the people are ambiguous about the action.

3. White bribery: This is tolerated by the majority of the elites and the masses, and any attempt to punish anybody on the ground of the action receives the opposition of the people.

Islam frowns at bribery in all ramifications. Allah says in Qur'an 2: 188 thus:

And do not swallow up your property among yourselves  
by false means, neither seek to gain access thereby to the  
judges, so that you may swallow up a part of the property  
of men wrongfully while you know.

Elias (N.D.) states that Abu Huraira who was one of the companions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) reported the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that Messenger of Allah cursed those who offer bribes and accept bribes in judgment.

The above Qur'anic verse and Hadith condemn bribery in all ramifications. The phrase judgment in the above Hadith is just an example out of many areas that Islam frowns at bribery.

### **Fraud**

Fraud, according to Chen (2022), consists of the false representation of facts either intentionally withholding vital or providing false information to another person or party for the purpose of gaining something that may have not been provided without engaging in deceptive act. Ozili et al (2020: 4) opine that there is no universally agreed definition of fraud. He, however, listed the actions that constitute fraud as intentional fraud, deliberate fraud, purposeful act, omission, disclosure of less information, misrepresentation, non disclosure of relevant information, to disguise, cheat, mislead investors and deceive firm owners, regulators, and stakeholders. Fraud is an unlawful acquisition or reception of property or money (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2000).

Islam disallows fraud in totality and recognizes lawful acquisition of property or money (Qur'an 47: 32, 83:1-36, 26:181-183). It equally frowns at unlawful acquisition of property. Allah says O ye who believe! Eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities (Qur'an 4:29). In another verse, He says

And do not eat up your property among  
Yourselves for vanities, nor use as bait  
For the judges, with intent that ye may  
Eat up wrongfully and knowingly a little of  
(other) people's property (Qur'an 2:188)

Imani (N.D.) says that:

The Holy Prophet (S) said: "The person who  
deceives a Muslim believer in buying or selling  
things, is not of us, and, on the Resurrection Day,  
will be raised among the Jews, because they have  
been the most deceitful against Muslims."

The non compliance with these Qur'anic and Hadith injunctions by many Nigerians has led to frequent cases of fraud both in private and public sectors. Ibrahim (2013:448) opines that the following words are used interchangeably to refer to fraud (tadlis or khilaba). These are lesion or misrepresentation (ghabn), gross misrepresentation ((ghabn fahish), deception (shushsh), imbalance (gharar), and trickery (taghrir). She also defines taghrir as the act of deceiving another person by developing misleading way either in form of actions, or words. She divided taghrir into taghrir fi'l (false act and manoeuvres) and taghrir qawli (lying).

### **Money Laundering**

Money laundering, according to Mustafa (2015), is a financial transaction that aims to hide the identity, source and destination of illegal money got through the fraudulence means. He also refers to it as an act that is contrary to the ethics and human value. The Cambridge University Press (2022) sees money laundering as the crime of transporting money that has been acquired illegally through bank or any other means as if it is legally acquired. The off-shoot of fraud is money laundering. This is the reason why money laundering Act of 2004 was enacted by the Federal Republic of Nigeria to prohibit the carrying of Nigeria money about without the process of the law. Despite this prohibition, money laundering is still the order of the day especially among the top government functionaries. For instance, Tafa Balogun, the former Inspector General of Police in Nigeria, was jailed for six months for several offences, one of which was money laundering (Ugheghe, 2005). Dr Diepreye Alamiesegha the former governor of Bayelsa State was arrested in London for money laundering. He jumped bail and escaped to Nigeria (Samuel 2005). He was consequently impeached for the State's House of Assembly. The inability of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission to prosecute many top government functionaries especially the President, Vice President, Governors and their deputies, was as a result of their immunity in section 308 of the 1999 Constitution. A case in point was the attempt by the Commission to

prosecute the Plateau State Governor, Chief Joshua Dariye, whom the court ruled could not be prosecuted while in office (Adesanmi 2005). Cases of immunity have constituted danger of the effectiveness of this commission. Allah says in Qur'an thus:

And do not eat up your property among  
Yourselves for vanities, nor use as bait  
For the judges, with intent that ye may  
Eat up wrongfully and knowingly a little of  
(other) people's property (Qur'an 2:188).

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things), is not of us, and, on the Resurrection Day,  
will be raised among the Jews, because they have  
been the most deceitful against Muslims.

The above Hadith is not applicable only to the Muslims but all human races.

### **Misappropriation of Public Funds**

This could be of two kinds, spending more than necessary on a specific project (extravagant) and diversion of fund for one project to another probably for selfish end. Allah warns Muslims against wasteful spending. He regards the misuse or squandering of private and public funds or extravagancy as ungratefulness (Qur'an 17:26-27). Allah says:

O ye that believe! Betray not the trust of God and  
The Apostle nor misappropriation knowingly things  
Entrusted to you (Qur'an 8:27)

### **Drug Trafficking**

Drug trafficking involves both the developing and developed countries of the world. It is an illicit or illegal trade that consists of cultivation, manufacture, distribution or transportation, and sale of prohibited drugs according to international law or law of a given country (United Nations 2010). Such hard drugs include marijuana, cocaine, heroin and other related prohibited drugs. Drug trafficking has led to a lot of judgments among which is the imprisonment of many people who are convicted for such act.

Allah enjoins the Muslims not to engage in anything that could cause their destructions (Qur'an 2:195). One of the things that could cause problem to one's good health is indiscriminate use of dangerous drugs. Their evil effects consist of lost of sense, imprisonment, and shortage of one's life span. This prompted the Federal Republic of Nigeria to ban illegal production, transaction and consumption of drugs in Nigeria. The laundering of money realized in such illicit transaction is equally prohibited (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2004).

### **Gratification**

This includes money, donation, gift, loan, payment, release, discharge or liquidation of loan, discount, commission, rebate, bonus, employment, contract of empowerment, obligation or other similar advantage demanded, given, promised to be given or accepted with the intention to influencing a person's performance or non performance of his or her official duties (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, 2000)

Allah enjoins all mankind not to consume their wealth wrongfully nor offer it as bribe so as to deny other people their rights (Qur'an 2:188). The hatred of Allah to bribery or gratification as reported by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) makes Him to curse the giver, the receiver of bribery as well as intermediary between them (Doi 1984). When Umar Ibn Khallab was the Caliph of the Muslim Empire, he warned his governors to beware of gifts because they form part and parcel of bribery (Doi, 1984) This implies that the government officials must be careful of demanding or accepting gift because the motive of the giver may be to influence his action or decision.

The modern way of collecting bribery or gratification in form of gift is prohibited by Islam. On one occasion, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) sent one of his companions to collect Zakat (almsgiving) on behalf of the government. The companion remitted the amount he collected as Zakat and retained the one given to him as gift. The Prophet got annoyed and told him that if he had stayed in his father or mother's home, nobody would have come to present him gift (al-Mundhiri, N.D.) This informs Doi (1984) to say that taking of gifts by government functionaries in the process of discharging their duties is forbidden by Shari'ah. He, however agrees that gift may be exchanged among friends and relatives because gift according to Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) remove rancor and increase love and affection.

### **Abuse of Office**

A leader may abuse office in different ways. These include: autocratic or arbitrary rule, wrong policies, intimidation, oppression, suppression and staying in office beyond his term. Allah warns leaders to desist from these acts otherwise the followers may withdraw their loyalty to him (Qur'ān 16:90; 3:159). Allah states further that every soul will be held responsible for his or her deeds (Qur'ān 74:38, 2:283) and that every deed of man is being recorded against his or her name (Qur'ān 17:13, 43:89, 45:28-29)

Allah also says that the good deeds of a man are being recorded in his favour (Qur'ān 21:94) and the bad deeds against him (Qur'ān 18:49, 17:14). He or she will be compensated for the good deeds and punished for the bad deeds if the need be. This makes Prophet Muhammad to warn the wrong doers that Allah will chastise anybody that torments people in this life (Khan, 1975)

### **Nepotism**

This is the giving of special favour in term of employment, appointment or enjoyment of national cake by a person in high position of authority to his relatives. This practice may make the masses to revolt against one's administration. For example, the third Caliph of Islam, Uthma b. 'Afan (644-656. C.E.), Was accused among other things, of favouring his relatives with state high offices. This was distasteful to other tribes. Though he cleared himself of the allegation, yet the crisis that erupted from these appointments was one of the reasons put forward for his assassination in 656 C.E. (Abbul, 1976). In order to forestall peace and tranquility. Allah enjoins justice from the leaders to everybody irrespective of tribe or political affiliation and vice-versa. He frowns at injustice, shameful deeds and rebellion (Qur'ān 16:90, 4:135).

### **Electoral Malpractice**

Nigeria is a country where election is being monetized. There are different slogans in respect of election in the country. Such slogans include vote and make soup, vote and collect money, and I will collect whatever is given to me because I may not get any other thing until after his or her tenure in office. Some do vote twice by using different names to vote for the candidates of their choice. During the voters' registration, some do registered with multiple names in different polling units for the purpose of voting for their choice candidates in different polling units. All these are corrupt acts. Allah warns us in Qur'ān 26: 183 that we should not rub anybody of their things and act corruptly and make mischief on earth.

### **Extortion**

Extortion is the act of getting something from another person by force or threat. This is common to different units in Nigeria. It is happening in governmental and non governmental units in the country. Our focus here is only on academic. The academic here refers to our educational institutions from primary schools to the tertiary institutions. The methods of cheating include body service and collection of inducements. The people that are mostly involved in this act are the tutors and the students or pupils. The parents are not left out in this act because many of them aid this act through provision of money and other incentives for the acts. Islam equally commands us not to engage in the act according to Qur'ān 26: 183 quoted above.

### **Causes of Corruption**

A lot of causes are responsible for corruption in Nigeria. These include:

- i. **Greediness:** Many Nigerians who are in the position of authority are very greedy. As soon as they get to the position where they have access to funds, their major pre-occupation is how to convert such money to their own. This accounts for the inflation of cost of contracts and poor or non execution of such contracts. Greediness is the brain behind false measurements by traders and dealers.
- ii. **Self Esteem:** This is more common to junior members of staff in any establishment. Many of them who are messengers or clerks on grade levels 01 to 06 do pretend to be senior members of staff to the outside world. In order to sustain their self-placed position, they engage in one fraud or the other. Some who do not belong to this category want to acquire money and property like their senior members counterparts. The politicians are not left out in this matter. The negative or constructive criticism of those in power attract different penalties such as assassination, expulsion from the political party and deprivation of getting contract, appointment or aspiration to their desire positions. Qur'ān 4:93 warns us against killing while Qur'ān 5:32 states that the slaying of a soul is like such a person slew all men. They slew person may likely be somebody who would have safe Nigeria from corrupt and other related practices.
- iii. **Under-employment:** This is very common in the private sector. Many of the Nigerian graduates are under-employed in the private sector yet they go to the same market to purchase the same item with their public counterparts. This makes many of them engage in different acts of corruption like inflation of purchase, stealing and a host of others. Apart from under employment, many graduates are roaming about in Nigeria to secure employments which are not in existence. This is causing the country a lot of negative activities

such as Boko Haram, kidnapping, assassination and begging.

The public sector is not left out because the salary being paid to many of them could not meet their daily needs, This is the reason why the Nigerian workers are clamouring for increment in salary and wages to cushion the effects of increased in the price of petroleum which has caused inflation in the prices of goods and transports.

- iv. **Inordinate Ambition to Attain Position:** People engage in acts of corrupt practices to pass examination, to be employed to win election and be retained in the position of authority. A person who refuses to partake in these acts may be denied attainment of his aspiring ambition. The issues of buying the conscience of the electorates by the politicians have become the order of the day. Many Nigerians do vote for the candidates of their choices not because of merit but of the money or other gifts given to them. In some cases, elections are rigged in favour of the candidates of their whim and caprices. If such politics continue, the right candidates may not emerge as Nigerian leaders, and this will be detrimental to the growth of the country.
- v. **Immunity:** The immunity granted to certain individuals in government in Nigeria such as the President, Governors and Ambassadors is a way to allow them to engage on lawful and unlawful acts while in office.
- vi. **Poor leadership:** leadership position is a trust which an individual will account for either on this earth or in the Day of Judgment. Since many of them will not be called to account for their stewardship while on earth, they use the opportunity to dupe their nation or state at the expense of their subjects. You may escape the principle of accountability on earth, but you cannot escape it on the Day of Judgment. (Qur'an 17:15, 2:264, 102:18).

### Effects of Corruption

The effects of corruption in Nigeria include the following:

- i. **Inflation:** Inflation causes increment in every commodity. One of the causes of inflation is corruption. The cost of every commodity has gone up because of the fact that bribes have to be paid out of the production and distribution costs, and incessant increase of commodities.
- ii. **Weakening of manufacturing sector:** Many factories in Nigeria are not able to produce to their full capacity because of the smuggling and importation of foreign goods to the country. Many of the factories will eventually fold up. This could retard the economic development of Nigeria.
- iii. **Low Foreign Investments:** Investors from other countries are exercising fear from investing in Nigeria because of high costs of production, insecurity, theft and other corrupt practices.
- iii. **High rate of unemployment:** The folding up of factories and companies has made many workers to lose their jobs. The young graduates remain unemployed because of the fact that the government has no enough financial capability to create job opportunity for them. The different welfare packages of the Nigerian governments such as Poverty Alleviation Programme, Family Support Programme, and National Directorate of employment, could not solve this problem because of lack of enough funds.
- iv. **Poverty and Agony:** Many Nigerians are adjudged to live below poverty level and the major cause is corruption. Corruption has brought dichotomy between the rich and the poor. The rich becomes richer while the poor becomes poorer. This has caused hatred and lack of sympathy to the rich people. This accounts for theft, kidnapping, teft, Boko Haram, and assassination of many rich Nigerians.
- v. **Bad International Image:** The image of Nigeria in particular and Africa in general is not good as far as corruption is concerned. For example, Nigeria is ranked as the second most corruption nation in Africa and holds 154 positions out of 180 countries surveyed by the Transparency International in 2021.

### Control of Corruption

Allah warns mankind to stay away from shameful deeds (Qur'an 16:90). He says that the condition of a people will not change unless they change it by themselves (Qur'an 13:11). He concludes by commanding the meaningful people to enjoin what is right and forbid the Wrong doings (Qur'an 3:104 and 110). On the bases of these injunctions the following control mechanisms are hereby suggested to curb corruption in Nigeria in particular and the world at large.

- i. Those that corruptly enrich themselves should be made to face the appropriate penalty irrespective of their status in the society. There should be no discrimination in awarding penalty for those who engage in corruption.
- ii. The corrupt officers either political officers or otherwise should not be accorded recognition in Nigeria. The idea of honouring them with awards and chieftaincy titles should be discarded. If they are not recognized in our society, their idea of enriching themselves with public money and wealth will be dropped.
- iii. The immunity granted to some Nigerian leaders in section 308 of the 1999 constitution should be removed. This will give room for sanctioning of any leader who engages in corrupt practices while in office. It is this immunity that is preventing the judiciary and independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences commission to try the corrupt Nigerian leaders who are in offices.

- iv. There should be improvement in the standard of living of the Nigerians. Payment of wages and salaries should be improved upon. Employment opportunities should be created for the young graduates. This will prevent them from joining bad gangs.
- v. Instead of focusing attention only on the penalties for corrupt practices, the Curriculum Development Committee in Nigeria should be empowered to design a course on evil effects of corrupt practices and the benefits of staying away from them. The materials to be used should be taken from the corrupt practices and other related offences Act of 2004, the 1999 constitution, the money laundering Act of 2004, Economic and Financial Crimes Act of 2004, relevant Muslim and Christian injunctions and other related materials. The course should be made compulsory at all levels of Nigeria educational institutions. This will go a long way to minimize corruption among the adolescents and youths who are tomorrow's leaders of Nigeria.
- vi. There should be enough security within and borders of Nigeria to combat different notorious activities. The security officers should be adequately remunerated and paid to time.
- vii. Nigerians should imbibe the habit of self satisfaction like many developed countries. This will go a long way to reduce corruption in Nigeria.
- viii. The foreigners should be encouraged to invest in Nigeria through reduction in the taxation of company and provision of adequate security to them.

### Conclusion

It is discovered from this paper that corruption is a social vices in Nigeria. It has penetrated into the blood of many Nigerians. Both young and old are involved in this activity because of personal advantage over others. Many of the Nigerian leaders are using their privilege positions to defraud the country of huge amounts of money without any penalty.

The negative impacts of corruption are being felt by individual, governments and international community. The eradication of corruption in Nigeria needs the joint efforts of the Nigerian leaders and every citizen of the country. A major culture that needs to be imbibed by all Nigerians is self-discipline in whatever position they find themselves.

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