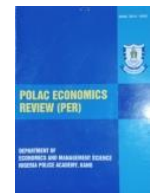




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CORRUPTION AND ITS IMPLICATION ON DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Corruption is a fundamental constraint to Nigeria's development. It is responsible for the alarming rates of poverty, unemployment, and other socioeconomic challenges that confront the country. The study therefore examined corruption vis-à-vis the social, political, economic and all-round development of Nigeria. It reviewed the various categories of corruption which cut across and indeed affect individuals as well as the public and private sectors in the country. Different theories such as the modernization theory, Marxist theory, game theory, agency cost theory and the social learning theory were applied in the study to offer adequate explanations to the causes and effects of corruption in Nigeria. The study revealed common causes of corruption in the country to include greed, inadequate punishment against corruption, high standard of living, and the unequal distribution of the country's resources. The review showed that corruption stifles Nigeria's industrial and infrastructural development, undermine democratic tenets, promotes social and political exclusion and conflicts, and foster poverty and unemployment in the country. The study recommends for the elimination of corruption, which include strengthening of anti-graft agencies to work independently without political interference, implementation of initiatives that realistically address poverty, and conduct of proper enlightenment campaigns to educate citizens on the dangers of corruption on Nigeria's development.

Key Words: Corruption, Development, Nigeria

Introduction

There is absolutely no nation on earth that is completely free from corruption. It is a major development challenge confronting both advanced and developing countries, giving rise to political instability, poverty, unemployment and increased socio-economic crises. The devastating consequences of corruption on the political, cultural, social and economic growth and development are far-reaching so much that meaningful development is hardly achieved in any society in which

it is the order of the day. Corruption constitutes a serious clog in the development agenda of a nation when it is not restrained (Adelabu, 2021; Igwe, 2019; Erunke, 2014; Bassey, Abia, Attah & Bassey, 2013).

Due to the burden of corruption in Nigeria, the country has experienced and continues to witness poor economic growth and reduced quality of life despite the abundant natural resources such as petroleum, natural gas, tin, coal, a fertile land; and an array of human resource of over 200 million people (Adelabu, 2021;

Nigeria Health Online, 2019; National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). It is shocking that with so much natural and human resources, Nigeria was regarded in 2018 as the World Poverty Capital, with about 87 million people wallowing in abject poverty. That was more than India's 73 million (Oluwale, 2022; Okonkwo, 2023). This is after the United Nations Development Programme had reported in 2004 that Nigeria had a high debt profile in 2000, and a per capital income that was 20% lower than 1975 despite earning USD 3000 billion through oil exportation in 1970. Between the years 2005 and 2014, a staggering USD 182 billion that could have been channeled to constructing and equipping world-class health facilities to reduce the exceptionally high rates of maternal mortality, revive the failing educational sector and procure vaccines to control the outbreak of avoidable diseases in the country was unaccounted for in Nigeria due to the menace of corruption (Adelabu, 2021; Nigeria Health Online, 2019; Global Financial Integrity, 2017; World Health Organization, 2015; Anchovur, 2014).

Scholars have acknowledged that corruption is, indeed, Nigeria's greatest problem, as it has permeated all sectors and it is responsible for the country's woes such as militancy and banditry, debt overhang, barrier to democratic elections and is a serious impediment to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (Oluwatobi; 2021; Igwe, 2019; Ribadu 2007 in Anchovur, 2014). According to Odey (2015), the effects of corruption in Nigeria include lack of social and economic prosperity, decay in infrastructure, weak leadership, poor education systems, high rate of unemployment, underemployment, high economic disparity between rich and poor people, electoral violence and malpractice among others. Internationally, the knock-on effect of corruption on the reputation and integrity of Nigeria is in the fact that caution is usually exercised by foreign nationals when transacting with Nigerians. This has weakened the country's economic growth potentials.

Severally, the extent and nature of corruption in Nigeria has led the country to be rated infamously as the most

corrupt country in the world on multiple counts. For example, Transparency International (TI) ranked Nigeria first in 1996, 1997, 2000 while in the years 1999, 2001, 2003 and 2004, the country ranked as the 2nd most corrupt country in the world (TI, 1995-2015; TI, 2022I; Global Financial Integrity, 2017). Even with the slight improvement in the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) today, the rating of Nigeria is still very poor as cases of embezzlement of public funds, award of contracts to undeserving friends and family members, bribery, fraud, nepotism, ethnicity, rigging of elections, extortion, manipulating procurement procedures, misappropriation and diversion of funds through manipulating or falsifying financial records among others remain persistent in the country (Adelabu, 2021). Following the persistent and pervasive nature of corruption in Nigeria and its impact on the country's all-round development, successive governments-initiated policies and programmes with a view to fighting corruption and harnessing the country's natural and human resources to fulfill its development agenda. However, it is lamentable that due to the mismanagement of these opportunities and resources and the high level of corruption in Nigeria, the nation's quest for development is seriously in doubt (Anchovur, 2014). It is against this background that this paper comprehensively examines corruption and its implication on the development of Nigeria.

Literature Review

Conceptual Issues

Concept of Corruption

Different scholars have defined corruption in ways that best suit the context and nature of their discourse. According to Olopoenia in Oluwatobi (2021):

"Because of its nature, it is often difficult to define corruption in a way that is independent of the ethics or the normative values of the observer. This raises a number of problems in the analysis of corruption. Most people would agree that it is undesirable to seek to define the phenomenon in a value free fashion. Yet

ethical definitions of any phenomenon create problems for scientific analysis; people may not agree on the ethical standard to apply; as a consequence, it would be difficult to agree on the causes and effects of the phenomenon. This has constituted a major hindrance to the development of a scientifically analytical discipline in the study of corruption” (Olopoenia, 1998).

In other words, no universally acceptable definition of corruption has emerged. Transparency International conceptualizes corruption “as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain” (TI, 2022). Similarly, the World Bank (1997) sees corruption as abuse of entrusted power for personal advantage. From the perspective of these definitions, corruption is seen different from other forms of crime such as armed robbery and murder, which are abhorred and severely punished in every society because the perpetrators are not empowered to carry out such acts. On the other hand, when a holder of public office embezzles funds meant for projects that will benefit a good number of people or inflates contract sums for personal benefits, he betrays the confidence entrusted in him, because he is obligated to work for the interest of the public rather than for personal gains. So, while the element of betrayal is absent in the armed robbery and murder scenario, it is present in the case of the public office holder.

Ikubaje (2013), opines that corruption is abuse of entrusted property for private, personal and collective gain without being accountable. It is corruption when public properties such as operational vehicles, lands, computers, etc entrusted into the hands of public officials are redeployed for personal or collective benefits of a few people. Adelabu (2021) aver that corruption is the “misuse of power by senior public officials or prominent persons in position of authority.” This view does not consider people from private organizations or the economically disadvantaged groups, or people of low social ranking as corrupt. Adelabu beams his searchlight on politicians, businessmen, celebrities and others in influential positions who utilize such privileges to embezzle public

funds, launder money, grab public land, rig elections, misappropriate government revenue and so on.

A unique point of convergence in the thought of all who have attempted to define or conceptualize corruption is their view of the concept as something negative, bad, regressive and generally inimical to the growth and development of society. Corruption breaches trust, weakens the efficiency of democratic tenets, retards economic development and promotes poverty, inequality as well as social and environmental problems (TI, 2022).

Concept of Development

On the other hand, development as a concept has multi-dimensional interpretations by different scholars. Anchovur (2014), generally regards development as a value word which is used to explain the economic, social and political transformation processes of a society. Development involves socio-political and economic advancement (Sadiq, Usman & Ahmad, 2016). It entails transformation in the state of affairs, usually from a lower to a much higher position. Development is all about the provision of health facilities, clothing, shelter, food and quality education in order to ensure a better living standard for the people. Therefore, where this is absent, it then means that there is no development.

Saliu (2010), views development as the obvious manifestation of advancement in human capital, economy and social upliftment. Seers cited in Anchovur (2014), present certain conditions that are necessary to understanding what development entails. These conditions include the level of literacy, participation in government, and belonging to an economically and politically independent nation. On the whole, development is a product of human efforts which aims at directing the available resources in a nation – human and natural – to improve a people’s living conditions. Thus, development is focused on people who are the most valuable resource in every nation. When a greater portion of people fail to live to their potentials due to

inability to access quality education, healthcare, shelter and infrastructure, the entire nation will not be able to maximize its full potentials. There is therefore need to improve the social, economic, psychological, political, cultural, physical and material wellbeing of people within a nation.

However, Nigeria is still grappling with the issue of lack of development after 62 years of independence from colonial control. According to Adelabu (2021), there is high rate of unemployment, political instability, insecurity and lack of basic infrastructure among others. Importantly, Nigeria's development has been grossly hampered due to the level of corruption which has negatively affected political advancement and distorted the economic life of Nigeria. According to Egharevba and Chiazor (2012), the country is still mired in poverty, infrastructural squalor, abysmal health and educational services and social frustration.

Categories of Corruption in Nigeria

Corruption in Nigeria happens in various dimensions. However, bureaucratic corruption, judicial corruption, corporate corruption, political corruption and moral corruption are the common forms in Nigeria.

Political corruption: Political corruption could imply selling off government properties, using political offices to gain financial favours and to retain political power (Anchovur, 2014). Public office holders and key decision makers in Nigeria are expected to formulate, establish and implement laws for the good of the people. However, they become corrupt themselves and tend to focus on their personal gains. In this case, laws and policies are formulated to suit the desires of politicians and legislators.

Bureaucratic corruption: Bureaucratic corruption occurs on a daily basis in hospitals, schools, local licensing shops, churches, criminal justice systems and in various government ministries in Nigeria (Odeh, 2015). Bureaucrats do not follow standard operating procedures or laid down rules and regulations set by the

state in their dealings with people. Instead, corrupt civil servants bend the rules to their interest, against the interest of larger number of people in the Nigerian state.

Electoral corruption: This is one of the most obvious forms of corruption in Nigeria. It includes rigging of elections, vote buying, ballot box snatching, promise of favours such as contracts or appointments after elections, intimidating opponents, mutilation of election materials and results to favour losers, victimizing and maiming opponents, interference with freedom of choice in election and so on (Odeh, 2015; Anchovur, 2014).

Corporate corruption: Corporate corruption is common between private business organizations and their clients. This form of corruption may also occur within an organization when an organization's resources are diverted by staff for the personal interest, even when it goes against the interest and overall good of the company and shareholders.

Judicial corruption: When officers in the judicial system operate against the standard of integrity, causing the course of justice to be perverted for personal benefits, there is judicial corruption. Judicial corruption basically focuses on intentional abnormalities in the administration, enforcement and dispensation of justice.

Moral corruption: This concerns the behavior between men themselves without recourse to ethical considerations. Anchovur (2014) concludes that moral corruption is immoral, and it is socially and legally unacceptable.

There are other forms of corruption such as fraud, embezzlement, extortion, favouritism, nepotism, bribery and grand corruption (Igwe, 2019; Odeh, 2015), all of which negatively impact the growth and development of Nigeria.

Causes of Corruption in Nigeria

Several factors are responsible for the phenomenon of corruption in Nigeria's public and private sectors. Among these factors, poverty, greed, lack of adequate punitive measures against corruption, high cost of living and unequal resource distribution plays a major role to incidents of corruption in the country.

Poverty: Poverty pushes a lot of people in Nigeria into corrupt practices in order to avert further hardships and able to afford the basic needs of life such as food, housing and shelter. Ulu cited in Sadiq, Usman and Ahmad (2016) states that when an individual fails to have enough resources to cater for his basic needs, he tends to have a negative approach to life that may push him into different kind of illegal acts such as corruption. The high rate of poverty in Nigeria has significantly contributed to increased desperation and frustration among Nigerians who seek to acquire wealth through any and available means including through corruption.

Greed and desire for flamboyant lifestyle: Another major factor responsible for corruption in Nigeria is the insatiable desire of man to own material things. Most people are so greedy and are never content with what they have, no matter how much they have it. Such people in powerful or influential positions see their positions as an avenue to primitively accumulate wealth including for children yet to be born. This is usually done at the detriment of the majority of the people in the country who suffer abject poverty. Closely related to greed is the proclivity of a human being to copy the lifestyle of other individuals believed to have acquired important things in life and society. According to Anchovur (2014), this is another fundamental cause of corruption in Nigeria. Also, most public office holders desire to accumulate wealth in order to set up businesses that bring wealth and income that exceed their needs just so that they can be like other corrupt public officials. This desire for a flamboyant lifestyle has pushed some people to earn wealth through corrupt practices.

Lack of adequate punitive measures against corruption: Despite the many anti-corruption laws initiated by successive government to combat the menace of corruption in Nigeria, it appears the laws have only led to the proliferation of corrupt practices in the country. For public office holders, failure of government to have an effective judicial accountability system has created room for the perpetuation of corruption in Nigeria. Corrupt people are admired, respected and honoured with appointments and chieftaincy titles by religious bodies, social clubs and other private organizations in their communities. These titles are usually given to the "influential" people who have "made it" economically and politically, even when the wealth is gotten through dishonest and fraudulent means. Anchovur (2014), laments that the most painful part of this is that honest and dedicated public servants who have not accumulated wealth by corrupt means are looked down upon and not accorded the deserved respect. These attitudes serve to motivate other public officials to engage in corrupt practices.

High Cost of Living: According to Ulu (2009), the inability of government to ensure the provision of adequate social services that will reduce high cost of living among its citizens may result to corrupt practices as an alternative for sustenance. So, inadequate social welfare services exert pressure on individuals which may eventually force them to behave contrary to the societal norms and regulations. Ngwube and Okoli (2013) argue that without welfare services, the cost of living will be higher and people will be subjected to a lot of hardship which may push them into corruption as an alternative means of livelihood.

Unequal Distribution of Resources: Inequality in how the resources or wealth of a nation is distributed influences corruption in a country. Sadiq, Usman and Ahmad (2016) aver that when the available resources of a nation or state are not judiciously distributed among its citizens, it may be a motive for the involvement in corrupt practices. While agreeing to the notion that unequal distribution of wealth causes corruption in Nigeria, Nduilor (1999) also see it as cause of obsession

with materialism which results in adopting shortcut to affluence and glorification of ill-gotten wealth (Sadid, Usman & Ahmad, 2016).

Theoretical Review

Scholars have propounded different theories to explain corruption in societies. Some of the theories include Modernization theory, Marxist theory, Game theory, Agency Cost theory and the Social Learning theory. Modernization theory argues that the processes by which modernizing societies follow to develop economically and politically tends to cause inequality, political instability and corruption (Igwe, 2019). According to the Marxist theory, production processes, exchange and distribution of goods and services determine a society's material condition and social consciousness. The theory sees corruption exclusively as an elite affair (Adelabu, 2021). The game theory on its part holds that human beings can avoid corruption and find ways to reduce its occurrence when they know that they will not be abandoned to their fate and find they losing out to those who are corrupt (Nagano, 2009). The Agency Cost theory argues that there is usually a conflicting interest between the agent (employees), and the principal (government). This conflict of interest creates corruption (Igwe, 2019). This paper however adopted the social learning theory.

The social learning theory, propounded by Albert Bandura (1963) sees learning as a cognitive process that occurs in social context by way of observation. The theory assumes that people can copy the behavior of others by watching how they behave. Besides observation, the theory proposes that reinforcements such as rewards and punishments commonly influence how people behave and what they emulate (Bandura, 1971). Bandura's theory has three underpinning ideas. The first is that observation is a fundamental means through which people learn. Second is that learning can be internalized, hence internal mental processes are critical to learning. Lastly, learning something new does not necessarily change an individual's behavior (Ikezue & Alawari, 2015).

Generally, human beings learn by observation of the behaviours, attitudes and the outcome of the behavior that other people exhibit. Observation gives one the idea of how to perform certain behavior as it guides their thoughts for future action. Nigeria is replete with different forms of corruption, found in private and public organizations as well as in interpersonal interactions. For instance, politicians in Nigeria are worshipped and revered by highly placed individuals and the poor alike for living opulent lifestyles, way above their pay grade, owning properties in and outside the country and living in palatial homes while their children study in A-List schools abroad. And as man is naturally seeking for pleasure and comfort, such people whose lifestyle is funded by corrupt practices often become models, and their behaviours become a standard for others. More apparent is the fact that when such corrupt people are accused or indicted for corruption, they are defended and brazenly celebrated when indeed they should be condemned and punished. There is thus a tendency for most Nigerians to carry out similar acts in the future.

According to the social learning theory, positive reinforcement of an action may cause it to be repeated. In Nigeria, people suspected of or indicted of corruption have on several instances being rewarded with greater positions and higher responsibilities. There are for example, people who were elected into various positions to attract development in various capacities but ended up embezzling and diverting funds for personal benefits. While one would expect such people to be condemned and prosecuted, they are rather given further assignments to serve as Senators, governors, heads of organizations among others. It is therefore a difficult task for people to avoid being corrupt in the face of such reinforcement and motivation for such acts, and it is perhaps why many a Nigerians will willingly engage in one form of corruption or the next.

The Implication of Corruption on the Development of Nigeria

A lot of evil has been done to Nigeria as a result of the barefaced and prevalent nature of corruption that is fast assuming a legal status in the country. There is no gainsaying that the level of corruption in Nigeria has indeed, impeded the country's development strides. According to Ikezue and Alawari (2015), corruption in Nigeria has stifled the provision of infrastructure and industries in the country. The states of poor electricity, transport and communication channels have made it extremely difficult to transact businesses in the country. There is low quality power supply, terrible road networks, poor facilities for learning and education, inadequate health facilities among others. Anchovur (2014) observes that despite the abundant resources which Nigeria is endowed with, the country is categorized among the poorest nations on earth owing to the level of corruption. The new figures from National Bureau of Statistics indicate that nearly two-thirds of the 200 million people in Nigeria live on less than two dollars in a day. The report adds that over 63% (about 133 million) of Nigerians are "multi-dimensionally poor", meaning they suffer simultaneously from multiple disadvantages, including lack of access to clean energy, housing, healthcare, water and sanitation (Olurounbi, 2022). Indeed, corruption has made Nigerians sad and their frustration is boldly noticed on their faces.

Corruption has retarded the growth of Nigeria and undermined democratic processes and good governance in the country by breaching appropriate official processes. It has contributed to the failure of governance, democratic values, rule of law and the prevalence of poor leadership (Anchovur, 2014). Apparently, there is complete lack of transparency, accountability or trust in the country's electoral processes due to issues of corrupt practices such as vote buying, thuggery, inciting electoral violence, intimidation among others. The Punch Newspaper had quoted Hilary Clinton saying that corruption in Nigeria had prevented the country from being admitted as a member of the G-20 (Group of 20, the club of key rich and developed nations). According to her, the US initially supported Nigeria's candidacy, but hesitated

because of its prevalent corruption (Punch Newspaper, 2009. quoted in Anchovur, 2014).

The problem of conflicts and poor integration which has intensified nepotism and tensed up ethnic balance has been caused by corruption in Nigeria. This has made national integration a serious challenge as conflicts between herders and farmers, armed banditry as well as the problem of terrorism in the North Eastern part of the country continues to escalate. The problem is further compounded by the fact that moral and ethical values which hitherto promoted peaceful coexistence, hard work, integrity, dedication, faithfulness, honesty have been jettisoned for laziness, lack of honesty and distrust between the led and the leaders. As observed by Hoffaman and Patel (2017), corruption tends to foster more corruption, entrenches social injustice in everyday life and creates an environment that weakens values of integrity, and fairness. When people in high positions indulge in corrupt practices with so much immunity, the moral obligation among citizens to adhere to laid down laws that emphasize on honesty or hard work erodes rapidly. In Nigeria, corruption as thus become like a culture. While public officials and politicians loot state coffers, the citizens who complain of corruption also engage in corrupt activities at a lower level by putting pressure on their kinsmen for favours in cash or kind (Adelabu, 2021; Ene, Arikpo, Jeffery & Albert, 2013).

Omotoso cited in Anchovur (2014), contends that the Nigerian elite, with their high propensity for primitive private accumulation, always divert resources budgeted for maintaining public institutions into their private pockets. This is not only causing undue and untold hardships for the citizenry. It is equally making the nation's economy lie prostrate. This is evident in the state institutions such as universities, the judiciary, the police, health, etc. which are suffering neglect due to the problem of corruption. Indeed, corruption which has taken centre stage in the country has caused monumental decay in infrastructure and the general collapse of living standards. Corruption is rampant at all levels of government, crippling basic health and education services and other social infrastructures. State

development is an illusion in a state where corruption is endemic and persistent. It is obvious that the functions of all the institutions of the state are suffering, as their capacities for performing their assigned functions effectively and efficiently have been unduly compromised through corrupt practices by those entrusted with public power (Anchovur, 2014).

The cost of corruption exceeds by far the damage caused by any other single crime. Corruption worsens the investment climate, undermines competitiveness of national economies (Stople, 2008). By implication, corruption's impact on foreign investment is considered to be particularly harmful for a developing economy like Nigeria. This is so because corruption does not only raise the initial costs of investment, but also, by increasing risks and uncertainty, can reduce the incentive to invest. Foreign direct investment is very important to a developing nation such as Nigeria, and it is crucial to provide an enabling environment for investment. Corruption makes it difficult for a low-income country (Nigeria) to establish and maintain trustworthy and consistent economic conditions.

In a nationwide broadcast on the issue of 55-million-naira bribery scam that bedeviled Nigeria's National Assembly, former President Olusegun Obasanjo remarked that corruption constitutes a major problem to the country's development. In his words:

“Corruption brings a nation no good. The resources meant for water supply, roads, education, health and other basic and social services that are captured and stolen by handful of Nigerians through corrupt acts stultify development. When you encourage, cover up or join hands in such acts, you are destroying the nation and our collective future” (Tell Magazine, 2005, cited in Omotoso, 2006; Anchovur, 2014).

From the foregoing, it can be seen that the social, economic, political and other related institutions have been adversely affected by the prevalence, nature and extent of corruption in Nigeria, thus requiring urgent attention to tackle the problem.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The enormous human and natural resources under Nigeria's possession have not been adequately harnessed and utilized for the greater good and development of the country and its people. This is due to corruption which has eaten deep into every fabric of the country, including education, health, politics and economy. This has led to devastating consequences such as the alarming rates of poverty, conflicts, unemployment, immorality, inequality, socio-political instability and a diminished national reputation.

To return Nigeria on the right track devoid of corruption, and save her from total collapse due to the menace, it is imperative to ensure that anti-corruption institutions (agencies) such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Offences Commission (ICPC) and similar agencies are strengthened to work independently and not as tools for political witch-hunt which is it is presently perceived to be. This will reaffirm people's trust and confidence in the agencies and thereby discourage acts of corruption in the country.

Since poverty has been identified as a major cause of corruption, the Nigerian government should address the issue of poverty with sincerity. Policies and programmes should be developed for this purpose. Existing programmes should be improved upon to have a better and lasting impact on the people. Insecurity should be tackled with greater commitment so that farmers, for instance, can access their farms to ensure food sufficiency and reduce the propensity for corruption. Furthermore, people found guilty of corruption in Nigeria should be severely sanctioned so that other people will be deterred. Instances where people accused of corruption are rather celebrated and honoured with chieftaincy titles would only serve to encourage corruption in the country and should be therefore greatly discouraged.

Political and moral education should be intensified in Nigeria. This will ensure that people are aware of the evil and impact of corruption on the country's economic, political and social advancement. Such education will enable Nigerians to imbibe virtues such

as honesty, discipline, and make them to appreciate hardwork. It will cause them to expose corrupt people for punishment. The punishment of offenders will restore confidence of citizens in the government and reduce corrupt practices.

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