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**IMPACT OF CORRUPTION ON POLITICAL, SOCIOECONOMIC
AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA (1999-2018)**

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Abstract

Corruption is a phenomenon that bedeviled national development in Nigeria in all ramifications for many decades. The impacts of corruption have led to many negative consequences that stalled the political, social, economic and cultural development of Nigeria. The problem is the way in which the numerous available resources in the country were stolen by the ruling class depriving the general public of enjoying quality social services. The aim of this work is to study critically the way in which corruption leads to underdevelopment of Nigerian state in the political, economic, social and cultural aspects. The paper is a conceptual theoretical paper which used secondary sources for data analysis. Empiricism was used in collecting data from books, journals, reports and internet sources that are relevant to the area of study. The data obtained was presented in a thematic form using analytical interpretations. The research discovered that corruption has reached a level in Nigeria where it has been institutionalised and officialised to the extent that it is seen as a norm rather than the opposite. As a result, the entire aspects of governance and development have been eroded negatively by corruption politically, economically, socially and culturally. The research, therefore, recommends that for corruption problem to be addressed in Nigeria, there is a serious need for social re-orientation, political will, improved social service delivery and reducing the gap of inequality as well as enforcement of legal regime in sanctioning corrupt practices with severe punishment for the offenders without any fear or favour.

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Keywords: Corruption, cultural, development, economic, political, social.



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1. Introduction

Corruption is a cankerworm that is eaten deep into the fabric and garments of the Nigerian society for many decades. The existence of various policies and anti-graft agencies can attest to the highest level in which corruption manifest in Nigeria today. Many scholars like Aina (1982); Ake (1996); Ackerman (1999); Ackerman (2000); Jain (2001); Hope (2000); Ogundiya (2010); Agbiboa (2011), and Mohammed (2012 & Aluigba) and Ajayi (2012); are of the view that, official corruption is the major obstacle against good governance and national development in Nigeria. In Nigeria, the level in which corruption is escalating at alarming rate is a source of worry for any serious-minded government that takes the business of governance as an act of progressive welfare of the governed. For instance, the Gowon Military Regime was chastised of being corrupt for embezzlement of millions of Naira between 1967-1976 (Dike, 2002; Babawale, 2006). The same allegations were labeled against the Civilian Regime of Shagari between 1979-1984. The level of corruption instead of abating increased in the 1990s when Babangida Military Regime was condemned for vanishing N1.9 trillion (\$12 billion) oil windfall money accrued during the Gulf War (Akindele 2005; Bailey 2006; Balboa & Medalla 2006; Amundsen 1997; Bakare 2011). The situation worsened during Abacha's Military Regime in 1993-1998 when he looted N 368 billion (\$1, 848, 784, 160 billion) which was still not recovered to date as the loot was stashed in Swiss Account.

Corruption has taken another dimension in Nigeria with the inception of democratic government that is supposed to be more transparent and accountable. High profile cases of about 160 involving state governors, ministers, senators, representatives, and top civil servants amounting to billions of Naira were recorded by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) from 2002-2014 when the EFCC was established by Obasanjo Civilian Regime (Girei 1999; Ogundiya, 2010). By 2013, the level of corruption had reached the extent of trillions of Naira involving politicians and government officials at all levels. Achebe (2012) lamented that:” From 1960 to 2012, over \$400 billion was stolen by Nigerian leaders from 1960 to date.

The magnitude of corrupt practices compelled Nigerian government to device means of fighting corruption through the establishment of various agencies starting with Code of Conduct Bureau, Public Complaints Commission, Independent Corrupt Practices and related offences Commission (ICPC) and later in 2002 Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) which still remains the main anti-graft agencies in operation up to 2015. This clearly disclosed that, the policymakers recognized the essence of arresting corrupt practices if the nation is to experience progress and development. However, the sincerity and political willingness of the policymakers is the question at hand considering the way corruption is persisting and increasing. A good example is Nigeria ranked as second most corrupt country in the world in 2004 according to Transparency International Report and 70% of this corrupt act was traced to the presidency (Isaiah, 2004). Nigeria was rated 136 in 2014 among 176 countries studied by Transparency International in Corruption Perception Index with a score of 2.7 which is an alarming position and recently 148 in 2017 with a low score of just 27 marks out of 100 (Transparency International 2017; Economic and Financial Crimes Commission 2017).

2. Problem Statement

Corruption is so pervasive in Nigeria that it has turned public service for many decades into a kind of criminal enterprise. Graft has fuelled political violence, denied millions of Nigerians access to even the most basic health and education services, and reinforced police abuses and other widespread patterns of human right violations (Enweremadu, 2010; Human Rights Watch, 2011; Fasakin 2012).

Corruption has lots of consequences for the countries that failed to address it. In the political realm, corruption undermines democracy and good governance by flouting or even subverting formal processes like in the case of Nigerian state. Corruption in legislative bodies reduces accountability and distorts representation in policy making; corruption in the judiciary compromises the rule of law; and corruption in public administration results in the unequal distribution of services. More generally, corruption erodes the institutional capacity of government as procedures are disregarded, resources are siphoned off, and public offices are bought and sold. At the extreme, unbridled corruption n can lead to state fragility and destructive conflict, and plunge a state into unremitting cycle of institutional anarchy and violence (Hoffman, 2002; Atuoai, 2007; Alford 2012).

3. Research Questions

The research questions are as follows:

What are the nature, causes and manifestations of corruption in Nigeria?

Why corruption so pervasive in Nigeria despite all the anti-corruption agencies established to address the issue?

How does corruption affect the political, economic, social and cultural development of Nigeria from 1999 to 2018?

4. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to contribute to knowledge by identifying the area of research that has not been exhausted by scholarly works to fill the gap of research. The study also has the target of practical implications by proffering practically possible solution to the predicaments of Nigeria's pervasive corruption phenomenon.

5. Research Methods

The paper is a conceptual theoretical paper which used secondary sources for data analysis. Empiricism was used in collecting data from books, journals, reports and internet sources that are relevant to the area of study. The data obtained was presented in a thematic form using analytical interpretations.

6. Findings

This section discussed the major issues raised in the research and the findings using the thematic analytic interpretations as mentioned earlier.

6.1. Political Impacts of Corruption

Corruption poses serious development challenge. An observation of the Nigerian political realm shows that corruption leads to leadership crisis and this have undermined democratic values of trust, credibility of government, and good governance by flouting or subverting formal process. Leadership crisis and corruption in electioneering processes, and the executive and legislative bodies reduced accountability, transparency, integrity and distorts quality representation in policy making. Corruption in the judiciary compromises rule of law, and corruption in public administration results in the unfair and inefficient provision of services. Moreover, corruption weakens or erodes the institutional capability of public bureaucracy as procedures are disregarded, resources are siphoned off, and public offices are bought and sold (Ikubaje, 2014).

Corruption in the Nigerian public service increases cost of running governance. In a corrupt regime like that of Nigeria, a nation could lose billions of Dollars into the pocket of national leaders at the expense of national development. Corruption in Nigeria slow down pace of development because it weakens efficiency and effectiveness of public services and discourages genuine prospective investors (Mauro, 1998; Kabir, 2012; Mbaku, 2012).

Obazee (2014) are emphasising the fact that while elections are usually rigged on many occasions in Nigeria, the Judiciary which is supposed to be a guardian of democracy collaborated with the ruling class and manipulate the judicial process to uphold the stolen mandate and deny the people their choice. This made the Judiciary corrupt also. The bureaucratic system corrupted. But, the impact of the public in the process is ignored. Activities of the electoral malpractices are carried out by the people who received money from the politicians and they are mostly shielded by researchers because the corrupt practices perpetrated by the ruling class are more pronounced perhaps, and draw more attention.

Politically, the cost of corruption is damaging. That is certainly the experience of Nigeria since the country returned to democratic rule in 1999. Since access to wealth is guaranteed by elective and appointive positions, political appointments and elections have become do or die affairs. At the economic level, the consequences of corruption, especially in a developing country like Nigeria are not palatable. Indeed, the damaging effect of corruption on administrative development and efficiency can be very extensive and variegated. Corruption has real consequences on the life of Nigerians. More often than not the institutional mechanism for addressing the scourge of corruption has really not resulted in any meaningful outcome on the menace of corruption, as public office holders manipulate and undermine the mechanics for stamping out corruption (Nield, 2000; Fatai, 2012).

Thus, it can be deduced from the above submission that the Broken Windows Theory of corruption is in operation politically in Nigerian context. Since the enforcement agencies and policy makers that are supposed to supervise the laws and sanction offenders are the ones who are caught in the act of bribery and corruption, they open a window, an escape window for the general public and all agencies and ministries to engage in corrupt practices without any sanction. Indeed, they can be complementary in this regard.

6.2. Social Impacts of Corruption

There are many impacts of corruption socially in Nigeria. Nigeria suffers from epileptic power supply, industrial decay and poor road networks. The state of insecurity to lives and properties in the country is cataclysmic. Health infrastructures have collapsed as average Nigerian becomes victim of preventable and curable diseases resulting from political and bureaucratic corruption. The education sector is not even better despite the enormous resources committed to the sector. Over 40% of the adult population is illiterate and only 44% of the children age 12-17 attend secondary school in Nigeria. Corruption is indeed the major explanation for the seemingly insolvable problem of poverty, diseases, hunger and general acute development tragedy in Nigeria (Ogundiya, 2012; Ogbeidi, 2012).

Fatai (2012:279) also links the effect of corruption on Nigeria's development just like Saliu (2012) by way of looking at how corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian society which undermines the enormous socioeconomic gains that will propel economic growth and national development. In another similar but diversionary approach to the study of the effects of political corruption on development in Nigeria, Luqman (2012, p. 412) asserts that the availability of oil in Nigeria escalated corruption in Nigeria in a paradoxical situation of a wealthy nation falling into the abyss of doom and economic as well as socio-political backwardness. Instead of the oil revenue accrued to be utilized for economic and developmental programmes, the country is plunged into the trap of debt, poverty, environmental degradation, low infrastructures, unemployment, poor power supply and overall underdevelopment.

Similarly, corruption in the public sphere is more devastating because it affects the majority in the "commonwealth" and in the long run negatively affects the overall development of the society. In fact, the pervasiveness of corruption has generally arrested the drive for development in Nigeria, in spite of the fact that democracy is not synonymous with development. The little that the people would have benefitted, as the dividends of democracy in the last fourteen years, has been curtailed by the rapacious corruption of the ruling elites in Nigeria. Democracy would have at least provided the veritable environment for the people to enjoy the benefits of nation's enormous resources, because of the apparent features of democracy which allows for openness, accountability, participation, freedom and the rule of law is basically derailed because of endemic corruption (Mahmood, 2014).

Oghi (2013) identifies that political corruption has many negative effects including near total collapse of infrastructure, poor delivery of service, ill-equipped and ill-trained bureaucracy, politicization of the civil service resulting in the manipulation of electoral and judicial process, loss of billions of Naira into private pockets through looting by public officials resulting to low GDP and GNP and, undeveloped economy resulting from sharp practices and poor corporate government due to inefficient and ineffective regulation and supervision by regulatory bodies.

The above disclosed the effects or relativity of the Broken Windows Theory of Corruption in which one aspect of social illness which is corruption led to the outbreak of many social ills in Nigeria such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, diseases, infrastructures, declining standard of education and other social problems which should have been addressed had it been the stolen money through corruption were utilized for their statutory purposes

6.3. Economic Impacts of Corruption

Corruption has real consequences on the life of Nigerians. The Nigerian economy has been in comatose despite its enormous resources and potential for growth and development. For example, the Human Development Report in 2011 shows that about 70% of Nigerians is living below poverty line or less than \$1 per day (Ogundiya, 2012, p. 58).

There are other studies related to the above that examined the impact of political corruption on political and socioeconomic development of Nigeria. Aluko (2008 cited in Asobie, 2012) post it that, there seems to be a correlation between the level of economic development and the incidence of corruption in Nigeria. He further argued that corruption seems to redistribute income in favour of the corrupt class. Asobie (2012) commenting on the above assertion revealed that, wise investments of the proceeds of corruption can contribute to a more rapid rate of economic growth, through higher levels of saving and investment. Therefore, the proceeds of corruption, if invested properly at home, in the country, will generate a higher level of development than if the proceeds are hidden in foreign banks.

Tanzi (1999) also addresses the link between corruption and development. There is a negative correlation between the rate of growth and the incidence of corruption. More corrupt countries tend to be poorer and grow at a slower rate. This is the exact case in Nigerian state although, not every empirical evidence supports this position. China and India for example, appear to be empirical examples that seem to invalidate this theory. The Nigerian example however, validates the theory.

Other studies by Ojukwu and Shopeju (2011); Agara (2012) and Oladele (2014) postulate that the effect of corruption on development becomes predictable. This is more so because the corrupt enterprises and entrepreneurs liaised with corrupt politicians and bend the rule to avoid the competition. This leads to the emergence of poor services delivery and incompetent organisations that could not provide a platform for national development in Nigeria except, perhaps; rent and rent seeking.

Hardly can one discuss the lamentable underdevelopment in Nigeria without reserving a big place for corruption. It is indeed its corrosive influence that has not put the country in the club of BRICS countries. Despite her abundance resources, Nigeria is punching below her weight in virtually all the sectors of her political economy. It can be correctly asserted that the spillover effects of political corruption in under developing the Nigerian state include poverty, unemployment, failure to meet the target for Millennium Development Goals, poor power supply, low infrastructures and international image of the nation (Saliu, 2012:140).

In another similar but diversionary approach to the study of the effects of corruption on development in Nigeria, Luqman (2012, p.412) asserts that the availability of oil in Nigeria escalated corruption in Nigeria in a paradoxical situation of a wealthy nation falling into the abyss of doom and economic as well as sociopolitical backwardness. Instead of the oil revenue accrued to be utilized for economic and developmental programmes, the country is plunged into the trap of debt, poverty, environmental degradation, low infrastructures, unemployment, poor power supply and overall underdevelopment.

Corruption violates the economic and social rights of individuals in the society. It does not only undermine growth and development, it also inhibits efforts at poverty eradication, employment generation, socioeconomic transformation and egalitarian society (Bhayani, 2014). The truth is

unemployment figures by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS 2014) remains a dangerous one to the extent that even countries that witnessed the Arab Spring did not have such high level of unemployment. The national average unemployment is 24%, with an estimated 54% of the younger population jobless. This is the explanation of the Broken Windows Theory as observed above that corruption that is tolerated at minimal level just like a broken part of a window will lead to many other national problems since it can escalate to the level of national underdevelopment and economic problems (Premium Times 2011; Premium Times 2012; Osinbajo, 2016).

6.4. Cultural Impacts of Corruption on Nigeria

Corruption has many negative impacts on the culture of Nigeria. For instance, Nigerian political culture has been that of money politics, vote buying, godfatherism, violence, rigging, manipulation of election results and other electoral irregularities which made Nigerian democratic culture an apathetic one and backward (Aiyede, 2008, p. 49; Olarinmoye, 2008).

Mohammed (2013) mentioned that corruption erodes national values and impedes political and socioeconomic development in Nigeria as manifested in non-institutionalisation of democracy, rule of law, human rights and economic development; high incidences of prevalence of conflicts resulting from poverty and inequality; erosion of values of hard work and integrity; lack of access to productive opportunities; low foreign investment; lack of investment in the real sector; dependence on foreign sources of goods and services leading to underdevelopment of indigenous technology and productive capabilities; leakage of national assets to foreign countries; misallocation of resources and priorities towards projects that are tenable towards corrupt practices; perpetuation of patron-client relationship; high cost of doing business and low investment in productive sectors leading to widespread poverty and unemployment as well as high cost of living; political ethno-religious and communal conflicts and violence as a result of struggle for state power for corrupt enrichment, loss of public trust and legitimacy by the government and poor social welfare conditions (Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development 2012; Subair, 2012; Ribadu, 2013).

No nation can be built progressively or developed positively with majority of her citizens suffering from chronic and pervasive poverty. In Nigeria, poverty is endemic, and it is a result of corrupt practices of the rulers since the country is rich and there should be no logical reason why majority of the citizens should be poor. The theory of Broken Windows here is applicable and self-explanatory that corruption which started from a minimal stage graduated to spread across the entire national values and culture making it an institutionalised and cultural norm tolerated by the policy makers and the general public alike.

7. Conclusion

The study concludes that, corruption is endemic in Nigeria and has permeated all scopes and levels of governance and entire Nigerian society in political, social, economic and cultural aspects. It has also been observed that all the efforts or responses made by the policy makers did not yield the desired results as a result of lack of political will, politicisation of the process and the deep rooted nature of corruption in

Nigeria which made it very difficult for dealing with accordingly. As a result, the study recommends the following:

1. There is urgent need to review policies and institutions of fighting corruption to be stronger and effective in their handling of corrupt cases;
2. Severe and punitive measures should be initiated against any person caught in the act of bribery and corruption irrespective of his status in the country;
3. Civil societies should intensify their pressure and exposure against corrupt practices in public offices;
4. Attention should also be given by intellectuals and academicians on corrupt practices from the part of the governed and not only the public office holders alone and
5. A special court with constitutional powers for speedy trial of corruption cases should be established which should be independent.

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