

# Corruption: The Bane of National Development in Nigeria

Adeagbo, M. O.

## ABSTRACT

*Corruption in Nigeria has reached an alarming rate that it seems every effort made by successive governments to tackle the monster has been without any result in order to salvage the country's situation and transform the economy; this study examines corruption in perspective of being the bane of National development. The aim is to evaluate its effect on the Nigeria's economy. This study employs a self-designed questionnaire validated by experts to collect required data. The data so collected were analyzed using simple percentage and tabular. Findings reveal that corruption and good governance in Nigeria are two parallel lines that will never meet and that corrupt practices do impede the country's socio-economic development. It is also discovered that taming the surge of corruption will help a lot in transforming Nigeria economy for better. Based on the above, it is recommended among others that empowering the audit office by law to query irregularities from top to bottom with the rule of "no sacred cow" while a mechanism is put in place to protect the audit, melting of stiffer measures along with payback system for corrupt individuals, payment of employment stipends and allowances to young unemployed graduates on monthly basis till they are able to secure gainful employment, among others are proposed.*

**Keywords:** Corruption, Economy, National Development, bad governance

## INTRODUCTION

Corruption is a global phenomenon, and as old as man. It is therefore, common in all countries, irrespective of their stages of development. However, its nature, density and dimensions differ largely from country to country and from one environment to another. Corruption is one of the dangerous social ills of any society. This is because corruption, like a deadly virus, attacks the structures that make for society's progressive functioning, thus putting its very existence into serious peril. This is particularly true of developing countries that have limited but valuable funds and resources. These funds which are initially earmarked for industries, hospitals, schools and other infrastructure are embezzled, misappropriated, or otherwise severely depleted through kickbacks and over invoicing by agents of government.

According to Obasanjo (2001), corruption is still a problem to be continuously dealt with as there are still evidence of persisting attitudes of cynicism, selfishness, greed and narrow mindedness especially among the leadership class. This statement from the elder statesman the (then) president of a country shows that corruption as an issue has become a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabrics of the society. Documented evidence indicates that corruption is a serious problem in Nigeria one is at loss as to where to begin. From the numerous white elephant projects to the bribes received by the police

---

*Adeagbo, M. O. is a Lecturer in the Department of Economics, School of Arts and Social Sciences, Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo, Nigeria. E-mail: oadeagbomathew@yahoo.com*

officer on the road or the clerk in government office, examples abound. Corruption in Nigeria has reached an alarming rate that it seems every effort made by successive governments to tackle the monster has been without any result to the extent that becoming corrupt to an average Nigerian is almost unavoidable since struggling for survival has become the order of the day. It has become a culture that triggers people to stop at nothing in order to clinch to the seat of power so as to swim and bath in the ocean of life of corruption. Most pathetic is the fact that some men and women of God (as claimed) who should keep the menace at wide berth enjoy corrupt practices much more than corruption itself. Despite the fact that corruption was one of the reasons given by the military for overthrowing the first civilian government (1960 - 1966) the succeeding military regimes of General J.T.U Aguyi Ironsi and General Gowon regime itself was seen to be very corrupt. Corruption was one of the reasons given by the coup plotters who flushed him out in July 1975. The successive military regime General Muritala Muhammad was then expected to make better effort at combating corruption. They investigated the sources of wealth of the overthrown regime's State Governors out of 12 only 2 were found not guilty. Those found guilty were forced to forfeit their illegally acquired wealth to Nigeria state while military ones were also dismissed from the armed forces. The regime also established some anti-corruption agencies before they left office in 1979.

The successor Shegu Shagari (1979-1983) launches an ethical revolution, an unbridled corruption become synonymous with his regime hence the military intervene again on December 31, 1983. The military government of General Buhari (1984–1985) launched the programme “WAI” (War Against Indiscipline) to, among others, combat corruption which recorded a remarkable successor. A special military tribunal was set up to recover public property from the erstwhile politicians and those found guilty were handed stiff prison sentences but Nigerians soon started blaming the new discipline order, then the regime was overthrown by Chief of Army staff Ibrahim Babaginda (IBB) who dismantled the previous regime anti-corruption programme hence his successors such as Shonekan, General Abacha and Obasanjo constituted various committee such as War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC), Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC), Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) etc. to fight corruption all of which have little efficiencies.

Corruption has turned down the moral preaching and belief that “honesty is the best policy,” instead many people especially those at the corridor of power the political office holder, have acquired wealth and property both in and outside country through corrupt means. Corrupt leaders tend to cling to power in the knowledge that their activities will not undergo the scrutiny of an open government. This desperate desire for self-preservation ultimately results in very ruthless repression of individuals and groups that advocate for democracy and accountability.

At the individual level, allocation of jobs and the assignment of responsibilities and rewards are not based on merit or potentials but rather on who has the resources and willingness to grease the palms of those in-charge. Some commentators say that corruption is endemic in all governments and that it is not peculiar to any continent, region and ethnic

group. It cuts across faith, religious denominations and political systems and affects both young and old. It was observed that corruption operates both in democratic and dictatorial political, feudal, capitalist, mixed and socialist economies. Christian, Muslim, Traditional, Hindu and Buddhist cultures are equally bedeviled by corruption. Ancient civilizations have traces of wide spread illegality and corruption. According to Lipset and Lenz (2000) cited in Adeagbo and Lawal (2011), corruption has been ubiquitous in complex societies from ancient Egypt, Israel, Rome down to the present. However, this does not mean that the magnitude of corruption is equal in every society; some countries are more corrupt than others. From the foregoing, corruption can be viewed as a global phenomenon, not peculiar to Nigeria alone, however, the nature is pandemic in Nigeria (and in many other African and Asian nations), having serious economic effect which need to be tackled for proper development of the nation. Consequent upon this, the objective of this study is to examine the effect of corruption on the Nigerian economy. The specific objectives include:

- i To examine the meaning, nature, state and causes of corruption with specific regards to Less Developed Countries (LDCs), Nigeria in particular,
- ii To examine if the national economy actually need to be reformed/transformed
- iii To examine if corruption has a negative effect on National development.
- iv To offer suggestions on how to curb the menace and transform the Nation.

Considering the fact that Nigeria as a nation is undergoing political transition which need serious reformation, the researcher sees this study as necessary for national development, therefore. The following hypotheses were formulated for testing.

H<sub>0</sub>1 – Most Nigerians are not ignorant of what corruption is.

H<sub>0</sub>2 – There is no significant relationship between bad governance and corruption in Nigeria.

H<sub>0</sub>3 – Corruption does not seriously impede Nigeria's socio-economic development.

H<sub>0</sub>4 – Taming the surge of Corruption has nothing to do with National development.

### **Corruption in Perspective**

Corruption, due to its age long history and being an international perplexing phenomena in human society, has been defined in various ways by different scholars. Not surprisingly, there is seldom consensus as to what exactly constitutes this concept. Consequently, there is always a danger that several people may engage in a discussion about corruption while each is talking about a different thing entirely. As a result of these, it is pertinent to describe some of the commonly used definitions. Senturia (1968) describes corruption as dishonest, illegal or immoral behaviour by people in position of authority or power. Othman (2007) defines corruption as immoral conduct and dishonest exploitation of power for personal gain and profits. Heidenheiner (1992) as cited by Okojo-Iweala and Osafo-Kwaafu (2007), broadly categorizes social science definitions of corruption into three, thus, public office centered definition, market centred definition and public interest centred definition. Public office centred definitions emphasizes the abuse of power and public trust and official positions and responsibilities for self-serving objectives which are not necessarily for monetary gain. Market centred definition, which is the second category emphasizing the

conversion of public office into an enterprise for the maximization of income similar to the ways in which an entrepreneur seeks to maximize profits from his/her investments. The third category, “public-interest centred” definitions emphasize abuse of power and public trust to serve cliental, cleavage, communal and other interest group objectives which are neither specifically nor necessarily self-serving. According to Lipset and Lenz (2000), corruption entails efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means (private gain at public expense or a misuse of public power for private benefit). In addition, Corruption is a behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private gains regarding personal, close family, private clique pecuniary or status gains. It is a behaviour which violates rule against the exercise of certain types of duties for private gains regarding influence (Nye, 1967). The definitions include such behaviours as bribery, nepotism and misappropriation. From the foregoing corruption has always been seen as a catchword for everything that is constitutionally bad like looting, bribery, giving or receiving of gratification, money laundering, advance fee fraud, counterfeiting, rigging of election, giving undue favour to somebody, over invoicing of contract fund, examination malpractices, slow movement of files in offices, go today come tomorrow, etc. It involves every action by any person geared towards circumventing doing what is morally and otherwise right. For development to take place, this monster need to be trashed and development take place right from the national level. Development is the act or instance of transforming. It is a marked change, as in appearance or character, usually for better. It is the act of rebranding the nation as a whole.

### **Forms of Corruption**

Corruption has been broadly identified under the following forms:

1. **Political Corruption:** This takes place when policy formulation and legislations are tailored to benefit politicians and legislators. It occurs when the politicians and political decision-makers who are entitled to formulate, establish and implement the laws in the interest of the people are themselves corrupt. It is an act of greed as it affects the manner in which decisions are made, as it manipulates political institution rules and procedures, distorts the institutions of government (Amudsen, 2010).
2. **Bureaucratic Corruption:** This occurs in the public administration domain or at the implementation end of politics. It is the common corrupt practices encountered daily at public institutions when one obtains a business from the public sector through inappropriate procedure (Amudsen, 2010). It is usually characterized by the go today come tomorrow, Oga is not on seat, use your head tactics.
3. **Electoral Corruption:** This involves the purchase of votes with money, promises of office or special favours, coercion, intimidation and interference with freedom of election.

Apart from the above, other forms of Corruption include:

- i. **Bribery:** Offer of money or material things by an outside party to secure desired action from governmental officials or others.
- ii. **Fraud:** This involves some kind of trick, swindle and deceit, counterfeiting, racketeering, smuggling and forgery.

- iii. **Embezzlement:** This is theft of public resources by public officials. It occurs when a state official steals from the institution in which he/she is employed.
- iv. **Extortion:** This is the abuse or threat of power in such a way as to secure response in payment of money or other valuable things using force or coercion.
- v. **Favouritism:** This involves biasness in distribution of State resources.
- vi. **Nepotism:** This is a special form of favouritism in which an office holder prefers his/her kinsfolk and family members as close pal.
- vii. Payment of Salaries to non-existent (ghost) workers.
- viii. **Over-Invoicing:** This involves hiking or increasing the cost of a project more than the actual cost so as to gather for the selfish interest of a person or an insignificant few.

### **The Causes of Corruption**

Corruption, not minding the form it takes has been attributed to many sources with the following forming the major roots.

- i. General inequality in distribution of wealth,
- ii. Many Nigerians see political office as the primary means of gaining access to wealth,
- iii. Absence of a strong sense of National commitment,
- iv. Poor reward system,
- v. The fear of premature retirement;
- vi. Weakness of social and government enforcement mechanisms,
- vii. Bad rules and ineffective taxing system,
- viii. Lack of access to economic opportunities,
- ix. Lack of openness and transparency in public service,
- x. Culture and acceptance of Corruption by the populace,

### **METHOD**

This study adopts the survey research design. The population of this comprises all members of the three senatorial districts making up the State. Through stratification, members of the population were randomly selected for the study. The three senatorial districts of Oyo State which are Oyo South, Oyo North and Oyo Central. A total of 300 copies of questionnaire were administered through colleagues from the area used as research assistants and the questionnaire was distributed base on the density of the areas sampled. In Oyo South senatorial district which comprises of Ibadan and Ibarapa, the following areas were sampled: Lanlate 20 copies of questionnaire were used Gate– Ibadan North, Iwo-Road– Ibadan North East, Onireke-Ibadan North West and Mapo–Ibadan South East each with 30 copies. At Oyo Central senatorial district comprising Oyo township and some local government in Ibadan, the following areas were sampled Oyo Town – 40 copies of questionnaire were administered, Akinyele Local Government – Iroko, Iyana offa Ogo-Oluwa –Ajaawa, and Afijio – Fiditi with 10 copies of questionnaire each administered. At Oyo North senatorial district comprising Oke Ogun Environment and some Local Government in Ogbomosho, the following towns were sampled: Iseyin with 20 copies of

questionnaire, Otu with 10 copies, Saabo-Ogbomoso North and Orire Local Government Ikoyi Ile with 15 copies each while Saki – has 20 copies. The questionnaire consisting of 20 items based on 4 – points Likert scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D) was developed base on the nature, causes, effect and solution of corruption bane of national development. The draft instrument was validated by senior colleagues who are experts in the field and the data collected were subjected to statistical analysis using tabular format and simple percentage.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In relation to hypothesis one which states that most Nigerians are not ignorant of what corruption is, table 1 show that 72.2% of the respondents agree that they are ignorant of what corruption is. Therefore, it is not out of place to conclude that most Nigerian are ignorant of what corruption is but as much as it is still rampant in the society, it means that adequate measures have not been taken by government to curb the menace, as a result people in Nigeria still indulge seriously in it. From the table 2, it is stated that there is no significant relationship between bad governance and corruption in Nigeria. The respondents signify that there is a significant relationship between misrule (bad governance) and corruption. In effect, bad governance gives rise to corrupt practices. For a government to be termed good, therefore, it must practically exhibit zero tolerance for corruption. Table 3 similarly presents the null hypothesis three which asserts that corruption does not seriously impede Nigeria’s socio-economic development. Hence, the respondents argue that corruption seriously impede Nigeria’s socio-economic development. Based on this decision, table 4 states that taming the surge of corruption has nothing to do with national development, but the respondents reject the assertion and conclude that taming the surge of corruption will go a long way in transforming Nigeria’s economy towards national development and sustainability. Ailments does not aggravate in a day, therefore, a single dose of medicine might not be able to cure the ailments but continuous treatment. The same is the case with corruption in Nigeria if truly the country needs development. This is evident from the findings of this work. This study confirms that corruption has been a cog in the wheel of the nation’s development and it has become imperative at this juncture to reduce its rate in the country to the barest minimum forming a step to its total eradication.

**Table 1:** Most Nigerians are ignorant of what Corruption is

RESPONSE	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	TOTAL
Agree	45	292	208	244	294	1083
Disagree	255	08	92	56	06	417

*Source:* Survey, 2014

**Table 2:** There is no significance relationship between Corruption and good governance in Nigeria

Responses	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Total
Agree	270	282	226	218	244	1240
Disagree	30	18	74	82	56	260

*Source:* Survey, 2014

**Table 3:** Corruption seriously does not impede Nigeria's socio-economic development.

Response	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Total
Agree	281	187	272	200	280	1220

*Source:* Survey, 2014

**Table 4:** Taming the surge of Corruption has nothing to do with national development

Response	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20	Total
Agree	268	282	282	208	226	1266
Disagree	32	18	18	92	74	234

*Source:* Survey, 2014

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although corruption is an age-long phenomenon in Nigeria which has defiled many antidotes, such as the Public Complaints Commission, Mass Mobilization for Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER), the National Orientation Agency (NOA) and War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC) just to mention but a few. The recent Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP), the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), have not been able to eradicate Corruption in the country. BPP has been able to save a whopping sum of 216.6bn during 2010 appropriation year (Wogu, 2012) from its review of contract process before the issuance of certificate of NO OBJECTION. Despite these ups and downs, the cankerworm, corruption can still be tamed with the under listed suggestions which can bring about national development in the country:

- i Empowering the audit office by law to query irregularities from top to bottom with the rule of "no sacred cow", while a mechanism is put in place to protect the audit office as well as checkmate its activities.
- ii Giving the anti-corruption agencies (ICPC, EFCC, etc.) immunity such that the governments and the politicians as well as other "big-wigs" in the corridor of power should no longer be allowed to influence or threaten them any more.
- iii Payment of stipends or allowances to young unemployed graduates on monthly basis till they are able to secure gainful employment.
- iv Reduction of the huge pay package for the political office holders and introduction of transparency and accountability in government financial dealings.
- v Asset declaration policy by all high level Nigerian office holders, giving approvals to banks (both local and foreign), real estate or investment agents to disclose any personal assets they may hold.
- vi Ensuring stiffer measures with the pay back system for corrupt individuals.
- vii Privatization of some public enterprises with the exercise enjoying wide publicity to educate and encourage people's participation and not allowing only the ruling elite as well as their cohorts to corner public corporations that are being privatized.
- viii Introduction of better pay package for workers and creation of job opportunities to stem the menace of unemployment among youth and graduates.

- ix Commitment to good governance by Nigerian leaders from the Local, State to the Federal level.
- x Adoption of merit system in employment, award of contract and distribution of national resources under the prevailing circumstances.

If the suggested antidotes are taken into consideration, it is believed that the phenomenon, corruption and unethical conduct ravaging and devastating the development of Nigeria will be greatly minimized and national development will take its rightful place.

## REFERENCES

- Adeagbo, M. O. and Lawal, W. A** (2011). Corruption and Public Good output in Nigeria. *Journal of Arts and Social Sciences update*, 4, 1.
- Amudsen, I.** (2010). *Corruption Definitions and Concepts*. Commissioned by Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD).
- Lipset and Lenz**, (2000). *Corruption culture and markets*. In Lawrence E. Harison and Samuel P. Huntington (eds.) *Corruption matters*. New York: Basic Books
- Nye, J. S.** (1967). Corruption and Political Development: A case-Benefit Analysis. *The American Political Science Review*.
- Obasanjo, O.** (2001, October 1). *Hope Rising*. Presidential Speech to mark 31st Independence Anniversary, Guardian Newspaper.
- Okojo-Iweala, N. and Osafo-Kwafo, P.** (2007). *Nigeria's economic Reforms Progress and challenges*. Washington DC: The Brooking Institution.
- Othma, A. T.** (2007). *Know about Corruption*. Kaduna: Amana Printing and Advertising Limited.
- Senturia, J. J.** (1968). *Political Corruption*. Encyclopedia of Social State in a changing world. New York. The End of Communist Power. University of Ibadan XXXIII/1-2 Wallace M. (1994)
- Wogu, E.** (2012). Warning Signals of Rising Youth Unemployment. Retrieved on 25th May, 2015 from <http://www.thisdaylive.com/article/1187341>.