

The Mechanics and Social Dynamics of Corruption in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this work is to describe the mechanics and dynamics of corruption in Nigeria. It also examines the causes of corruption. It examines corruption in the church, political offices, petroleum sector and multinational cooperation in Nigeria and the effect of corruption in the State from the top to the bottom. It posits that corruption has its languages; it has the culture and spreading like wild fire to every facet of life. Unborn child is affect in Nigeria in lieu of these; the judiciary, politics administrative offices are being affected with the cankerworm called corruption that eaten up society.

Keywords: *Corruption, graft, development,*

INTRODUCTION

Corruption has its language and culture and spreads like wildfire to every facet of life. Discourse on corruption is often placed within socio-political and economic contexts (Wraith and Simpkins 1963, Smith 1964, Nye 1967, Maus 1973, Brownsberger 1983, Osoba 1996, Jain 2001 and Shehu 2006). Corruption in Nigeria is a style of living in the system of government. When critically viewed, corruption is an alien culture (Okolo & Raymond, 2014). Corruption is a cankerworm that has eaten deeply into the fabric of Nigerian socio-economic policies. The notion about Nigeria is that corrupt practices are endemic and systemic in the public and private sectors. Corruption undermines the country's integrity and security. It has posed a developmental challenge for the poverty of the people.

Corruption is a fundamental malaise that various governmental regimes in Nigeria have grappled with (Sule, 2013). Corruption has become the bane of socio-economic development and the spread of moral values in formal or informal settings, official or unofficial entities, and commerce. According to Transparency International Corruption Perception Index Ratings (2012), the continued failure of successive regimes to reduce the phenomenon to its minimum despite various efforts depicts that there is a fundamental lacuna that exists in theoretical approach and practice in the understanding of the mechanics and the social dynamics of corruption in Nigeria, hence the need to examine the problem.

Public resources meant for the development of all end up in a few hands, and the entire nation pays the price. It has resulted in social amenities such as portable water, electricity, good roads, schools, hospitals, and many others shortage. The public is demoralized and becomes a tool to sabotage the State. It has also led to the extinction of national institutions such as Nigerian Telecommunication Limited, National Shipping Lines, Steel Rolling Mills, Car Assembly plants, and Nigerian Airways (Okolo & Raymond, 2014). Corruption lives with the country's elite in different directions (Emeh 2012).

However, the purpose of this work is to describe the mechanics and social dynamics of corruption in Nigeria with emphasis on the factors of the collapse of traditional social values in the socio-economic development of Nigeria.

Corruption in Nigeria

Colonialism introduced systematic corruption on a grand scale across much of sub-Saharan Africa (Ekeh, 1975). The repudiation of indigenous values, standards, checks and balances, and the preclusions of superimposing western structures destabilized the well-run bureaucratic machinery previously in existence across pre-colonial Africa. The results are conspicuous consumption, non-loyalty to the State, oppressive and corrupt institutions. There are many ways that colonialism contributed to the prevalent corruption across Nigeria.

Indirect rule turned leadership in Nigeria into a corrupted enterprise where the rulers held power in trust for the colonial authorities instead of the people. The government became an antagonistic platform for forcefully extracting obedience from the people. In several instances, the dregs of the society, the rejects, and the ones that hitherto had no say in the community were promoted as warrant chiefs by British authorities. Individuals without etiquette demanded money in exchange for manipulating the Colonial Masters and enthroned corruption at the highest level of governance to avoid punishment for the 'grave crime of being indigenes'; the people saw inducement as the last resort if at all they were to be granted access to their rights (Okolo & Raymond, 2014)

With little or no knowledge of the economic earnings of potential taxpayers, colonial masters imposed that tax known as hut tax on the colonies. The people could see but little benefit in the area of social services. It brought the evolution of a flinty corrupt system devoid of accountability, which pitched citizens against themselves and the ruling class. Police and military engagements with the citizens were on the need to enforce hateful and debilitating colonial laws such as forced taxation, segregation, and quelling an anti-colonial uprising. At the end of colonialism, the newly independent Nigerian governments inherited a culture of citizenship oppression and extortion. The immediate post-colonial police and army were to inflict terror on innocent citizens, and the citizens made a way of buying their way off unwarranted harassment.

According to the Report and Recommendation Vol. 1 of the National Seminar on Indiscipline and Corruption (1993), corruption is common in government institutions and organizations such as the police, customs, judiciary, and public office holders and as a survival strategy. Sule (2013) asserts that corruption is pervasive and ubiquitous and exists in every area of human endeavour. Thus, an attempt to ignore corruption in the informal or unofficial sector of the polity will not allow for a better and proper understanding of the phenomenon and a search to appreciate a panacea to the situation.

CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS

According to Gillespie and Okruhlik (1991), conceptual definitions require two qualities: they must be general enough to allow cross-cultural comparison yet precise enough to be empirically convenient. Corruption, like many other concepts in the social sciences, has no settled meaning. It means there is no straight-backed, generally accepted, or encompassing definition. Corruption is the use/abuse/non-use of power for profit, personal aggrandizement, preferment, or prestige for the benefit of an individual or a group in a way that constitutes a breach of the law - written or unwritten, traditional or modern and a breach of the standard of high moral conduct (Sule 2013). However, many definitions mean different things to different people and even the same people at different times. It is also an inducement from one individual to another to commit a violation of duty, trust, or expectation. Transparency International (2008) conceptualizes corruption as the misuse of entrusted power for private gain. One justification of this definition is that it is adequately pragmatic enough to cover all forms of corruption at every epoch of human history and endeavor (Sule 2013).

Some people see corruption as a conscious and well-planned act by a person or group of persons to appropriate by unlawful means the wealth of another person or group of persons; sanctions usually are attached to corrupt practices which hide the corrupters and give them subtle forms in Nigeria. According to Alii (2001), handling money in the Central Bank of Nigeria is synonymous with what the EFCC describes as "direct stealing" as it concerns how some government officials treated their State treasuries.

Corruption is the process of obtaining material enrichment or opportunities for oneself and or for others through the use of public office (or influence) in ways other than those publicly acknowledged through the rules and procedures of the office. It includes such behaviours as bribery (use of reward to pervert the judgment or actions of a person in the position of trust), nepotism bestowed of patronage by

reasons of inscriptive relationship rather than merit, and misappropriation (illegal appropriation of public resources for private uses) (Okolo and Raymond 2014).

Types of Corruption

Jain (2001) and Shehu (2006) categorized corruption into two types, grand corruption, and petty corruption. Grand corruption is a high-level corruption that involves State officials and the political elite, sometimes collaborating with organisations. Petty corruption involves all other forms of small-scale aberrations subsumed. Konie (2003) identified two types of corruption - vertical and horizontal. Vertical corruption involves managers and decision-makers. It is common in less developed countries. Horizontal corruption involves all the officials, informed and non-informed groups in an entity. Shehu (2006) argued that classifying corruption into grand and petty is misleading because both types have significant consequences (Sule 2013). Again, he contradicted himself when he posited that such classification is justified if it guides the necessary policies and measures to curb it (Shehu, 2006). Having also agreed that the harm caused by corruption to individuals and society needs to be considered, his argument and justification for this classification are seen as flimsy and fail to achieve any policy measures.

According to Johnston (1991), studying corruption is tricky because the concept is controversial and self-serving equivocation. Furthermore, there is a chasm between citizens' perceptions of corruption and the government. As a result of this challenge, there seems to be confusion as to what acts, behavior, and attitude should be considered, designated, and spotlighted as corrupt (Sule, 2013). Hence, Bowles (1999) argued that corruption is distinct and distinguishable from fraud, embezzlement, and extortion. Rogow and Lasswell (1963), Brownsbeger (1983), Gillespie and Okruhlik (1991), and Warren (2004) view it as an act within the formal sector of the polity. Rogow and Lasswell (1963) see corruption as a violation of the public interest, the abuse of public roles or resources. Shehu (2006) sees corruption as the abuse or misuse of public office for private gain. Sule (2013) contends that such definitional conceptualization of corruption that schemes out all



other forms of corrupt tendencies in the private and informal sector from intellectual and government scrutiny could be responsible for why governments in Nigeria seem not to be ‘winning the war against corruption. Sule (2013) further argues that a symbiotic relationship exists between the formal and informal sectors of any polity that influences each other simultaneously.

Corruption reduces the economy, enhances inequalities, and reduces the government's capacity to respond to people's needs. Corruption hinders economic growth in the country. The mismanagement of public resources has rendered millions of people in Nigeria poor, unemployed, and uneducated. All these pass down to fuel poverty in society. Corruption also hinders economic and social development by engendering wrong choices and encouraging competition in bribery rather than in the quality and price of goods and services. Corruption leads to a growing gap between the rich and the poor and deepens poverty by enriching a few at the expense of fellow citizens. Under a corrupt system, the concentration of wealth is in the hands of a tiny minority. Corruption is a systematic vice by an individual, society, or nation that reflects favoritism, nepotism, tribalism, sectionalism, undue enrich men or amassing of wealth, abuse of office, power, position, and derivation of undue gains and benefits. Corruption also includes bribery, smuggling, and fraud. Others are illegal payments, money laundering, trafficking, falsification of records, window dressing, false declaration, and tax evasion.

Causes of Corruption in Nigeria

Many reasons have been put forward as causes of corruption in Nigeria. This ranges from lack of the fear of God, and low level of patriotism.

Church and Corruption in Nigeria: Wealth has gained on the road into the churches. The more a convert can contribute financially to the church, the quicker he will be recognized by the church, and the quicker he will be recognized and elevated to the status of church elder or council member, deacon, deaconess, etc. Nobody

cares to know how a member became rich. Some of them go as far as defrauding innocent members and pastors to become rich.

According to Salisu (2000), corruption is the misapplication of public resources to private ends. For example, public officials may collect bribes for issuing passports or visas, for providing goods and services at seaports, for awarding contracts, or for artificial scarcity.

Political Indices of Corruption: In Nigeria, politicians vying for public office to make themselves occupy the office. They go to make themselves rich and their generation through public funds. They don't have the mind to serve the nation. That is why they kill and maim to get to the office. They exploit all means to get to the office they desire through an election. They do a lot of rituals to get to the office through the innocent blood of the unfortunate citizen. Nigerians are desperate to acquire wealth through any means, and one of these is contesting elections to win by fire by force. A tout from nowhere will come and use dubious means to high jack the ballot box and run away to thumbprint or remove the opponent's votes and allow theirs to remain while security agents watch helplessly and hopelessly. It is also clear that the process of gaining power in Nigeria is either by armed force or the influence of money. The plundering has devastating effects on Nigeria today.

Petroleum and Corruption in Nigeria: Any country that is lucky to have petroleum should not be poor. If possible, the people pay less tax or no tax. In Nigeria, people pay heavy taxes that contribute to them getting poorer. Nigeria is importing fuel despite the enormous crude oil. How could Nigeria import fuel from Ghana, where crude oil has just been discovered recently? The so-called elite who owned oil blocs exported our crude oil to their different refineries to process outside the country only to import it back to Nigeria to sell at exorbitant prices to us. We steal what belongs to us. The Punch Newspaper of November 12, 2012 (Pg 3) reports corruption in a high frequency. People loot billion in Naira during one of the regimes and ascribed it "a mere stealing". The Punch Newspaper of November 25, 2012, also reports how a senior citizen in Ogoni lamented money looted by the elite and politicians.

Ethnicity Injustice and Corruption: Ethnicity has, in contemporary times, eclipsed even classes and elitism as indices of social differentiation, dividing people into geographical regions and tying them to specific languages; they commonly speak, culturally and socially separating and distinguishing them from others. It is now fashionable to talk about majority ethnic and minority ethnicity. There is a socio-political tag of majority and minority which conjures images of indignity or powerlessness and significance or power, respectively. The minority lives in slums and polluted areas or environments bereft of social amenities. The Niger Delta problem in Nigeria is a problem of minority-majority structuring of the Nigerian socio-political land space.

The Effect of Corruption in Nigeria

The attendant negative consequences of corruption in the country are not in doubt. The costs of corruption are classified into four motivating factors that prompt actors to embed their corruption transactions in personal and institutional networks (Granovetter, 2007). Fraud has a chain of mere programmes because it affects social, economic, and political lives. It perpetuates inequality and escalates mass poverty as poor people on the average pay increase proportion of their incomes in bribes. Corruption diverts public expenditure from where it could have benefited the people to the account of its public officials and politicians. Exploitation causes producers of goods to lower the quality of their products. Corruption negates the human rights of the citizens. Corruption- undermines the credibility and legitimacy of government. Those who tried to expose corruption find their early grave (Emeh 2012; Okolo and Raymond 2014). The factors are political, economic, social, and environmental. On the political front, corruption constitutes a major obstacle to democracy and the rule of law. In a democratic system, offices and institutions lose legitimacy when misused for private advantage. Our democracy and political leadership cannot develop in a corrupt climate.

Economically, corruption leads to the depletion of our national wealth. On the social ladder, the people have lost their trust in the political system, institution, and leadership as they have developed nonchalant attitudes and general apathy towards government policies resulting in a weak civil society. Environmental degradation is yet another consequence of corruption in the systems. The non-enforcement of environmental regulations and legislation has led to the pollution of the environment in Nigeria. The exploitation of natural resources, oil, and minerals by domestic and international actors devastating projects give preference in funding because they are targets for siphoning public funds into private accounts (Okolo & Raymond, 2014). Dishonest operators hide risks, and carrying them through successfully involves various costs. While in the case of bribery and extortion, the clients and the brokers who bear the risk in embezzlement and fraud scenarios are the agents or hidden principals.

Monitoring and realizing corruption transactions, obtaining and processing the required information, and the bargaining, decisions, and coercion associated with such undertakings carry substantial transaction costs. The more efficient the institutions are in detecting and sanctioning corruption, the more severe the expected punishment and the greater the negative consequences. There is a correlation between corruption and the traditional microeconomic model of crime (Becker, 1968). These two factors also considerably influence the amount of transactions cost. At the same time, the greater the expectable advantage, the more likely corruption will occur. We assume that the actors in corruption transactions are capable of gauging the risks and estimating the costs and will attempt to minimize these using all means at their disposal, thereby increasing the net profit produced by the transactions.

CONCLUSION

The work described the mechanics and dynamics of corruption in Nigeria. It also examined the causes and effects of graft in the State. It discussed corruption in the church, political offices, the petroleum sector, and multinational cooperation in

Nigeria. Hence, effective action against corruption requires effective sanction, greater political transparency, and eradicating the secrecy under which graft is propelled. Corruption manifested in the political, social, administrative, and economic life of the State and the decaying infrastructure, lack of good medical services, and increased costs of petroleum products in Nigeria as a failed State. The fight against corruption must begin from the top administrative officers to the bottom of our society.

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