

IMPACT OF POLICY ON CORRUPTION TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Corruption is a global phenomenon, it is an antisocial behavior conferring improper benefits contrary to legal and moral norms, and which undermines the authorities' capacity to secure the welfare of all citizens. Corruption has become a way of life in Nigeria, one which existing governments neither wish to, nor can control. This paper takes a look at corruption in Nigeria; evaluates its evolution, causes and effects on the Nigerian State. The paper further examines some of the anticorruption policy or practice in Nigeria and its effect and makes a recommendation on the way forward.

Introduction

Pre-colonial Africa, for the most part, was founded on strong ethical values sometimes packaged in spiritual terms, but with the end result of ensuring social justice and compliance. In both centralized and decentralized pre-colonial African communities, governance was conducted with the utmost seriousness. The history of corruption is as old as the world, because ancient civilizations have traces of widespread "illegality and corruption" (Dike, 2005). This does not, however, mean that the incidence and magnitude of corrupt activities are the same in every society. Some countries are obviously more corrupt; yet others have better plans in managing corrupt activities. From all indications Nigeria is not one of those that can effectively handle corruption, despite its unending corruption commissions and all the noise made by every administration on the efforts to transform the nation into a corruption free society. In Nigeria today, there are many unresolved problems, but the issue of the upsurge of corruption is alarming. Corruption is endemic in Nigeria. The damages it has done to the polity are astronomical. This menace has led to situations like slow movement of files in offices, police extortion of toll fees, port congestion, queues at passport offices and petrol stations, ghost workers syndrome, election irregularities, among others (Dike, 2005). Corruption is a cancer that has eaten deeply into the fabric of Nigeria polity. The general global perception about graft in Nigeria is that it is generally acknowledged that corrupt practices are endemic and systemic in both public and private sectors of Nigeria. From the forgoing it is evident that corruption undermines the country's integrity and security. It also poses serious developmental challenge being responsible for the poverty of the populace. Public resources meant for the development ends up in few hands, the nation pays the price. This has resulted to absence of social amenities such as portable water, electricity and good roads. The populace becomes demoralized and become willing tools to be used as sabotages to the state. It has led to the extinction of institutions of national significance and pride such as Nigerian Airways, National Shipping Lines, Steel Rolling Mills, Nigerian Telecommunication Limited, car assembly plants etc. Thus it is believed by many in the society that corruption is the bane of Nigeria. Consequently, the issue kept reoccurring in every academic and informal discussion in Nigeria. This paper further takes a look at some conceptual issues as regards corruption in Nigeria.

What is Corruption

Corruption has been broadly defined as a perversion or a change from good to bad. Specifically, corruption or corrupt behaviour involves the ‘violation of established rules for personal gains and profit’. Corruption is an efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means, private gain at public expense. Corruption, when applied as a technical term, is a general concept describing any organized, interdependent system in which part of the system is either not performing duties it was originally intended to, or performing them in an improper way, to the detriment of the system’s original purpose. For a very long time, corruption has been acknowledged as an obstacle to economic progress and democracy in Nigeria. Corruption is the canonization of fraudulence; the brazen celebration of impunity, which pollutes the ethical hygiene of a society (Ogbunwezeh, 2005). Furthermore, The International Monetary Fund defined corruption as “abuse of authority or trust for private benefit: and is a temptation indulged in not only by public officials but also by those in positions of trust or authority in private enterprises or non-profit organizations”. The Transparency International defines corruption as involving “behaviour on the part of officials in the public sector, whether politicians or civil servants, in which they improperly and unlawfully enrich themselves or those close to them, by the misuse of the public power entrusted to them” The ICPC Act(2000) states that corruption includes bribery, fraud and other related offences. The World Bank defines corruption as the abuse of public office for private gains. Public office is abused for private gain when an official accepts a bribe. It is also abused when private agents actively offer bribes to circumvent public policies and processes for competitive advantage and profit. Public office can also be abused for personal benefit even if no bribery occurs through patronage and nepotism.

Evolution of Corruption in Nigeria

Corruption in Nigeria is as old as Nigeria. It is embedded in the ethos, practices, conduct, beliefs, sayings, culture, idiosyncrasies and heritage of Nigeria (Oliyide and Odeku, 2002). It reflects in the ostentatious way of life of the people, particularly partying, praise singing, squandering of riches. In contemporary Nigeria, corruption in public offices predated Nigeria’s independence. Allegations of corrupt practices against civil servants and police officers predate independence (Oliyide and Odeku, 2002). Nigeria’s post independence history has been overshadowed by the depredations of a series of corrupt, abusive, and unaccountable governments. Also, large-scale grand-style electoral fraud and wanton stealing of public funds characterized the First Republic. No one who has friends, relatives or other associations with Nigeria can deny that the corruption in Nigeria is reaching record proportions. This is consistent with perception surveys as detailed by Transparency International. They have ranked Nigeria over the last few years the worst corrupt nation on the earth, second to Bangladesh (The 2007 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index). In fact, daily low-level corruption is visible on the street, policemen extorting money from motorists to supplement their meager wages. For decades the government has accrued huge oil revenues, yet the country suffers from lack of basic infrastructures, and tens of millions live in poverty. The military putsch in 1966 and the ensuing interregnum of military autocracy were attributed to manifest and intolerable corrupt practices of civil politicians. Paradoxically, however, the military politicians did not fare any

better than their civil counterparts as far as ignoble looting of public treasury and other degrading forms of corrupt practices were concerned. For example, the Muritala Muhammed Administration found ten out of the twelve military governors that served in the Gowon government corrupt. Under Babangida and Abacha regimes, corruption in public offices became so deplorable as to be officially entrenched as the norm. It was unfashionable not to “settle” or give “egunje” to get any service from a public office. Also, systematic emptying of public vaults simply became a normal practice. Under these two administrations, corruption was institutionalized as a tool of political control. As much as US\$ 12.2 billion in oil revenues simply “disappeared” under Babangida’s watch. Abacha alone is believed to have personally stolen between \$1 and \$3 billion in office (BBC News Online, 2002). Both subjected their critics to abuses including intimidation, arbitrary detention, and allegedly murder (BBC News Online, 2001). Even the Shagari and Buhari administrations on one hand and the Abubakar and Obasanjo regimes on the other hand, till the present administration, are not spared.

Categories of Corruption in Nigeria

Corruption in Nigeria is in dimension, which can be described as follow:

- ❖ Electoral Corruption;
- ❖ Bribery;
- ❖ Fraud;
- ❖ Embezzlement;
- ❖ Political Corruption;
- ❖ Bureaucratic Corruption;
- ❖ Extortion;
- ❖ Favouritism; and
- ❖ Nepotism.

Electoral Corruption

Electoral corruption includes purchase of votes with money, promises of office or special favours, coercion, intimidation, and interference with freedom of election. In Nigeria, votes are bought, people are killed or maimed in the name of election, losers end up as winners in elections, and votes turn up in area where votes were not cast (Dike, 2005). Therefore, Nigeria’s first post-independence government, led by Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa, organized general and regional elections in 1964 and 1965. The polls returned the government to a second term office but were characterized by widespread complaints of fraud, violence and intimidation. Protest in the wake of the regional elections, which in some areas had degenerated into a violent exercise in competitive rigging, led to widespread violence and inter-communal rioting that claimed more than 200 lives. This led to the return of the military till 1979. The civilian government under President Shehu Shagari that was elected to office in 1979 was in place for only four years. Shagari’s administration, which initially had the blessing of Nigeria’s military establishment, was blamed for widespread corruption at both the federal and state levels, deepening levels of poverty and internecine political warfare that led ultimately to the electoral debacle of 1983. The elections organized that year were massively rigged in favour of Shagari and his National Party of Nigeria. This led to a serious political chaos and the return of the military, overthrowing Shagari’s government and retaking

control of the country under the leadership of General Muhammadu Buhari. From the above comprehensive historical overview of Nigeria Election, electoral corruption has been a successive practice even till date.

Bribery

Bribery is a white collar crime in which money, a favour or something else of value is promised to, given to, or taken from an individual or corporation in an attempt to sway his or its views, opinions, or decisions. For example, if an electoral candidate offered money in exchange for votes, it would be considered a bribe. Bribery usually requires two participants: one to give the bribe, and one to take. In some countries like Nigeria, the culture of corruption extends to every aspect of public life, making it extremely difficult for individuals to stay in business without resorting to bribes. Bribes may be demanded in order for an official to do something he is already paid to do. They may also be demanded in order to bypass laws and regulations. Bribery is therefore, the payment, in money or kind that is taken or given in a corrupt relationship. These include kickbacks, gratuities, pay-off, sweeteners, greasing palms, etc.

Fraud

In criminal law, fraud is the crime or offence of deliberately deceiving another in order to damage them - usually, to obtain property or services unjustly. Fraud can be accomplished through the aid of forged objects. In the broadest sense, a fraud is a deception made for personal gain. Fraud involves some kind of trickery, swindle and deceit, counterfeiting, racketing, smuggling and forgery.

Embezzlement

Embezzlement is theft of public resources by public officials from the public institution in which they are employed. In Nigeria the embezzlement of public funds is one of the most common ways of economic accumulation, perhaps, due to lack of strict regularity systems. It is outright theft of entrusted funds. It is a misappropriation of property.

Political corruption

Political corruption takes place at the highest levels of political authority. It occurs when the politicians and political decision makers, who are entitled to formulate, establish and implement the laws in the name of the people, are themselves corrupt. It also takes place when policy formulations and legislation is tailored to benefit politicians and legislators. Political corruption is not a recent phenomenon that pervades the Nigerian State: since the creation of modern public administration in the country, there have been cases of official misuse of resources for personal enrichment.

Bureaucratic corruption

Bureaucratic corruption occurs in the public administration or the implementation end of politics. This kind of corruption has been branded low level and street level. It is the kind of corruption the citizens encounter daily at places like the hospitals, schools, local licensing offices, police, taxing offices, etc. Bureaucratic petty corruption, which is seen as similar to

corruption of need, occurs when one obtains a business from public sector through inappropriate procedure (Dike,2005).

Extortion

Extortion is money and other resources extracted by the use of coercion, violence or threats to use force. In Nigeria, the police and custom officers are the main culprits. Payments are usually demanded by these corrupt officials who otherwise threatens to make illegitimate use of State force in order to inflict harm on innocent victims (public transport driver especially).

Favouritism

Favouritism is a mechanism of power abuse implying a highly biased distribution of state resources. However, this is seen as a natural human proclivity to favour friends, family and anybody close or trusted.

Nepotism

Nepotism is a special form of favouritism in which office holders prefer their kins men and family members. This occurs when one is exempted from the application of certain laws or regulations or given undue preference in the allocation of scarce resources.

Causes of Corruption in Nigeria

Many reasons have been put forward as probable causes for the prevalence of corruption in Nigeria. This ranges from non-conformity to tenets, imparted values and ideas alien to our culture, ethnicity which encourages favoritism and nepotism, a weak legal system which is honored in the breach than observance. Other causes of corruption in Nigeria are poverty, illiteracy, get-rich- mania, and wrong attitude to public property, absence of a welfare scheme which cushions effect of unemployment, retirement, large families, and quest for power, double standards and low level of patriotism. All these causes can be examined in these three contexts:

1. Culture and weird value system;
2. Poor reward system; and
3. Poor leadership

Culture and Weird Value System

In Nigeria, becoming corrupt is almost unavoidable, because morality is relaxed in the society, and many people struggle for survival without assistance from the State. Obsession with materialism, compulsion for a shortcut to affluence, glorification and approbation of ill-gotten wealth by the general public, are among the reasons for the persistence of corruption in Nigeria. It has been noted that one of the popular, but unfortunate indices of good life in Nigeria is flamboyant affluence and conspicuous consumption. Because of this, some people get into dubious activities, including committing ritual murder for moneymaking (Ogugbuaja, 2002). The influence or pressure of 'polygamous household' and extended family system, and pressure to meet family obligations, are also some of the causes of corruption. The lack of ethical standards throughout the agencies of government and business organizations in Nigeria is a serious drawback to moral values. According to Bowman (1991), ethics is action, the way we practice our values. It is a guidance system to be used in making decision. The issue of

ethics in public sector and in private life encompasses a broad range, including a stress on obedience to authority, on the necessity of logic in moral reasoning, and on the necessity of putting moral judgement into practices. Unfortunately, many officeholders in Nigeria (appointed or elected) do not have clear conceptions of the ethical demands of their positions. Even as corrupt practices are on the increase, little attention, if any, is being given to this ideal (Dike, 2005).

Poor Reward System

Poor reward system and greed is also another serious factor. Nigerians' reward system is, perhaps, the poorest in the world. Workers are not paid regularly. Nigeria is a society where national priorities are turned upside down. Hard work is not rewarded, but rogues are often glorified in Nigeria. The problem is not that their capabilities are inadequate, but it is that their priorities, which mean their values, are wrong. Also, lack of economic opportunity is a serious problem in a society whose citizens are achievement-oriented, but have relatively low access to economic opportunities, as is the case with many Nigerians. This alone could explain the reason for the upsurge of corrupt practices in the society. For example, many civil servants work for months without getting paid (Abubakar, 2002; Oditta, 2002).

Poor Leadership

Poor leadership is another major cause of corruption in Nigeria. Nigerian administration, both past and present, usually shows an amazing creativity with the culture of aiding and abetting corruption in the nation. These crooked politicians and military brigands, presided over the debauchery of the relevant social sanctions, which would otherwise have been the Waterloo of their thievery. Stolen resources were skimmed offshore, leaving only crumbs in the treasury to finance their deceit of Nigerians (Uko, 2002).

Consequence of Corruption

The cost of corruption can be classified into four factors: 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 their legitimacy when they are misused for private advantage which is harmful to our democracy. Economically, corruption leads to the depletion of our national wealth. It has led to the use of scarce public resources to finance uneconomic high profile projects such as power plants, pipelines that cost billions whereas if these were channelled towards building schools, hospitals and roads or the supply of electricity and water to rural areas which are basic needs of life. On the social ladder, the people have lost their trust in the political system. In its institutions and leadership, they have developed a nonchalant attitude and general apathy towards government policies resulting in a weak civil society. Environmental degradation is yet another consequence of corrupt systems. The non-enforcement of environmental regulations and legislation has led to the pollution of the environment in Nigeria. However, successive governments in Nigeria have put in place policies and agencies to curb the menace of corruption in Nigeria, but these policies and agencies have not been able to bring about the desired solution.

Overview Anti – Corruption Policy in Nigeria

Many successive governments in Nigeria have attempted to fight corruption with various measures. What is worrisome is the fact that most of the Nigerian rulers who came in as physicians have come out as patients. In May 29, 1999, General Olusegun Obasanjo was sworn in as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The resolve to fight and win the war against corruption in Nigeria led to the promulgation of the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act 2000. The Act was the first bill presented by President Olusegun Obasanjo to the National Assembly for consideration at the inception of the democratic administration in 1999. It was passed and signed into law on the 13th of June 2000. The Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act of 2000 established an Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) to prosecute individuals, government officials, and businesses for corruption. The Act punishes over 19 offences, including accepting or giving bribes, fraudulent acquisition of property, and concealment of fraud. Nigerian law stipulates that giving and receiving bribes constitute criminal offences and, as such, are not tax deductible. In 2004, the Obasanjo led government won legislative approval to revise the Anti-Corruption Bill and to tighten the Economic and Financial Crimes Bill. Further, in 2004, the government established the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). The work of the EFCC had been complemented by reforms of the judiciary system and the police. Since 1999, the fight against corruption has been centered on the anticorruption drive of the Economic and Financial Crime Commission, which has not yet yield the required result. Furthermore, the Buhari's administration also introduced a number of policy measures to combat corruption in Nigeria. For instance, on the 21st day of December 2016, the Federal Executive Council approved the Ministry of Finance Whistleblowing Programme that may see individuals, who voluntarily volunteers credible information on stolen or concealed funds, smiling home with between 2.5 per cent and five per cent of the funds when recovered. The primary purpose of the Policy is to support the fight against financial crimes and corruption, promote accountability and enhance transparency in the management of public finances. Other policies introduced by the Federal Executive Council of Nigeria include, Treasury Single Account Policy, Plea Bargaining and Federal Government's Surveillance Programme. The anti-corruption programmes by the present government and successive government in Nigeria only deals on the act of criminality or corruption not the cause of the corruption which has made these policy or agency achieve less result.

Conclusion

Corruption is a global phenomenon and manifests itself in both Petty and Grand forms. In Nigeria, it has become a celebrated way of life that has equally embezzled the future of generations of Nigerian youths. Every government who came with the ideology of fighting corruption ends up a victim of corruption. Different measures and laws formulated by government are yet to yield the desired result, due to many economic, social, political, religious and ethnic challenges in the country. The few recommendation in this paper tends proposed to Nigeria to enhance the existing anti – corruption policy by formulating a structural policy in line with the above mentioned recommendation.

Recommendation

Hitherto, the remedies for corruption in the nation are not working, and the inability of the leaders to report on the effectiveness, or otherwise, of the nation's anti-corruption strategies make the war on corruption appear as a joke. However, any society like Nigeria, faced with the challenges of corruption would continue to find ways and means to solve the problem. This paper therefore recommends:

1. Restoration of Indigenous Values and Institutions: Nigerian indigenous values and systems were for the most part debunked by first, the missionaries, then the colonialists in a much more forceful manner. Indigenous solutions to corruption must once again be explored followed by the rediscovery of indigenous systems of administration.
2. Adherence to Ethical Standards in Decision-Making should be the foundation of the nation's policy on corruption. The nation's public officials are not worried about the ethical implications of their corrupt behaviours. However, armed with ethics and virtue, the nation should reduce personal gains from corrupt behaviour by instituting "effective sanctions" for corrupt behaviour. Preaching the gospel of virtue alone
3. Improvement of The Standard of Living in Nigeria: Poverty breeds vice. Nigeria government should embark on not just the deceptive increment in Gross Domestic Product, but real development in terms of standard of living. Health, education, food security, and infrastructural growth must be given prominence.

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