



The Phenomenon of Corruption: A Summary



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Corruption is a colossal problem in Nigeria. The incidence, preponderance, consequences, control measures and degree of success of such measures have varied over time. What is certain is that corruption has had devastating consequences for political and socio-economic development in the country (Ajie & Wokekoro, 2012) and the measures designed to contain or control it have so far been limited in their success value. Corruption involves a deviation from the rules of conduct and bureaucratic procedures governing the actions of individuals in a position of authority in both private and public sectors for personal or private gains and benefits. It is multifaceted and comes in various dimensions (Usifo, 2017). Some of the dimensions include electoral corruption, bureaucratic corruption, judicial corruption, economic corruption, political corruption and moral corruption. Other corrupt practices include bribery, fraud, embezzlement, diversion of public funds, favouritism, and extortion. Accordingly, it manifests in diverse corrupt behaviours among Nigerians and specific demographics and segments of Nigeria, with similarities and differences with some comparator federations like USA, Germany, Brazil and Nigeria.

The incidence of corruption in Nigeria is system-wide. Corruption has permeated all levels, and strata of government and society, giving rise to its manifestations in virtually every contested space. Several corruption studies and annual corruption index measurements on Nigeria, such as the 2015 National Poll on Corruption in Nigeria, the European Union Anti-corruption project 2017, the Graft Index and Enterprise Survey of the World Bank, Worldwide Governance Indicators Global Corruption Barometer, Ibrahim Index of African Governance, Transparency International, etc. highlight Nigeria as one of the countries most ensnared by the scourge of corruption.

The annual ranking by Transparency International from 2012 to 2021 positions the country as one of the most corrupt, lounging at the lower rungs of the list (Table 1). The recent 2021 ranking shows a significant drop to its lowest ebb while also being ranked as the second most corrupt in West Africa (Transparency.Org, 2021.).

Table 1: Nigeria's Corruption Rank, 2012-2021

Year	Rank
2012	134/174
2013	144/175
2014	136/174
2015	136/167
2016	136/176
2017	148/180
2018	144/180
2019	146/180
2020	149/179

Source; (Transparency.Org, 2021.)

Another study by the National Bureau of Statistics in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime conducted in 2017 revealed that over 400 billion naira is paid annually as bribes to public officials in the country. (NOI Polls, 2017).

A chronological examination reveals that many types of corruption and immoral behavior were prevalent in the autonomous empires, kingdoms, and city-states long before the geographical merger and naming of the entity Nigeria. Similarly, colonialism itself, characterized by oppression, exploitation and a host of other illicit acts are parts of the corrupt practices that this study identifies. The military government, which had seven military heads of state, for a total of twenty-nine years, were also symptomatic of corruption, which further contributed to the decay of the Nigerian state and society. Similarly, the current fourth republic is perforated with severe crisis of corruption and corrupt behaviors, particularly amongst the political class and the citizens, which has become a norm in almost every social and group interaction.

The corruption problem in Nigeria is fundamentally categorized into petty and grand; petty corruption is exhibited by ordinary people and lower- and middle-ranking public employees. It entails dishonest acts, including paying bribes to law enforcement, customs officials, administrative staff of institutions etc. (Pustu et al., 2019). Due to their low salaries, many entry-level and middle-level rely on these rent payments from people in order to support their families. Thus, survival and basic requirements fuel petty corrupt behavior (Gupta, 2017; Dike, 2008). Grand, on the other hand, is prevalent among top government officials who use their position to obtain fortune or pursue non-financial personal interests (Pustu et al., 2019). It also involves illegal activities by the political and business elite aimed at influencing public policies, laws, and regulations for personal advantage, often known as "state capture" (Lugon-Moulin, n.d.). Grand corrupt behaviors result from political elites' activities, which bureaucrats support. Such corrupt behavior is motivated by avarice and involves significant government funding and contracts (Zakari & Button, 2021).

The consequences of corruption on national development are myriad. Corruption inhibits economic performance and development. It breeds low economic outputs. It impedes local and foreign investment as the risks outweigh the potential benefits. Granted that it has been argued that corruption provides both local and foreign investors with the leverage to surmount bureaucratic impediments, yet the number of such successful deals is a far cry from the avalanche of investors stripped off their hard-earned money (Keeper, 2010). With no guarantee that greased officials will keep their side of the deal, and no official cover to fall back on in case of contract breach, the fleeced investor is on his own (Epele, 2006).

According to Balasa (2001), corruption constitutes a "daunting obstacle to sustainable development", a constraint on education, health care and poverty alleviation. Corruption leads to mass poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, decaying infrastructures, insecurity, and inadequate

health facilities, because of the misallocation of resources and mismanagement of public funds. The overall effect is that the country's prodigious wealth, generated largely from selling oil and gas resources, has not translated into improved welfare and development. Corruption has continued to deteriorate the country's development level as public funds that should be channeled towards development endeavours are diverted into private coffers. Corruption threatens the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria.

Over the years, successive governments have tried to combat corruption in Nigeria. Since the Fourth Republic, corruption has stretched to a grotesque scale of national concern, prompting diverse interventions by various administrations with marginal positive outcomes to subdue its tide. In recent decades, such efforts include the enactment of the Recovery of Public Property Act of 1984, creation of Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) in 1979, establishment of the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences commission (ICPC) in 2000 and Economic Financial Crimes Commission in 2002, the creation of the Due Process Office (Year), and more recently, the enactment of the Freedom of Information Act, the Whistleblower policy and institution of the Treasury Single Account (TSA). These efforts at combating corruption have not fully yielded the desired results, in part because, according to Lloyd (2018), they are built on an atomized, individualistic, and legalistic premise, which focuses on the misuse of public office for personal gains, which only captures a part of what constitutes corruption. Little attention has been paid to the reality of corruption as a socio-political and economic process that often has strong support from within the social networks to which public officials belong.

The deficiencies of institutional, legal and other adaptive fixes to curb the menace of corruption in Nigeria, evident in the deepening crises caused by pervasive corruption, creates a vacuum, which this study aims to address. This is through a behavioral approach, which espouses a proactive micro-remedial strategy that aims to reconfigure individual dispositions and psychological attitudes towards corruption. This approach would complement other varied approaches developed and used by government to ensure that corruption control takes a multi-pronged approach that deals with the complexity of the phenomenon, and go beyond punitive measures, which obviously have limited positive effect.



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