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# **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

# CORRUPTION AS A MAJOR CHALLENGE TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: THE WAY FORWARD.

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### ABSTRACT

This paper attempted to examine the concept of corruption and sustainable development in Nigeria. It is no longer an assumption that corruption has drastically crept into all spheres of human existence, thus making it obvious that corruption challenges remains a social menance that have proven difficult to be rid off in the society. However, corruption has taken different dimensions and has caused tremendous destruction on socio- economic and political development of both developed and developing nations. The main objective of this paper is to investigate the causes of corruption and assess the nature of its prevalence, gravity and persistency from one government/ regime to another in Nigeria. The paper adopted the conflict theorist by attempting to explain the motivational phenomena responsible for the persistency and unexacting acts of corruption in Nigeria. The position of the paper is that the perspective provided some knowledge into social challenges, as well as the general perception of corruption trend and its devastating impact on sustainable development in Nigeria. The documentary approach was extensively used in conducting the research. The study therefore recommends that steadfastness and spirit of uncompromising zeal that is devoid of sentiment would help to arrest and put an end to the reign of corruption in Nigeria. The process should also involve a holistic approach that require optimal commitment from top to bottom. And policy makers should endeavour to suggest ideas that would be implanted and not ending up in the archives, by signing agreements with government that such policies after being studied would find its way into the society.

# **INTRODUCTION**

Corruption however, has eventually cuts across all facet of the African system as the act has eaten deep into the moral life style of most people without regard to their class or social status. It is certain that corruption is one of the basic reasons why many African countries has not attain a considerable level of development when compared with other developing countries in latin America and Asia. This has also contributed to instability and the eruption of civil wars over resources in a number of African countries such as Southern Sudan, Libya, Nigeria and many others. The outcomes of theses consequences are poor development and destruction of the existing ones. The bitter challenges that some African countries are experiencing is a product of its people's greed and sentiment which obviously show that corruption is a dominant factor in driving fragile countries to state failure. Corruption therefore can lead to, and sustain, violent conflict, in the context of patrimonial regimes that are degenerating under local or regional shocks and pressures for market reform. Le Billon 2003 argues that corruption is part of the social and political fabric of society, and thus, 'conflict may be engendered more by changes in the pattern of corruption than by the existence of corruption itself' for example, by appeasing belligerents in order to buy peace.

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This leads to forms of competitive corruption between different factions, which can result in prolonged violence. It is therefore not surprising that in the post-civil war era and in the wake of globalization and regional, security blocs among others have increased pressure on African countries to contain corruption, to avoid the further erosion of public institutions and the exacerbation of conflict which could obstruct sustainable development and have spillover effects on other African neighboring countries. Corruption is basically an administrative matter, and this has constituted itself as big challenge to Africa's sustainable development. It is a failure of both institutions and the larger framework of social, judicial, political and economic checks and balances needed to govern effectively. When these formal and informal institutional systems are severely weakened by corrupt practices, it becomes harder to implement and enforce laws and policies that ensure accountability and transparency. Thus, according to the UNDP Anti-Corruption Practice Note, corruption undermines the rule of law and leads to the violation of human rights by fostering an anti-democratic environment characterized by uncertainty, unpredictability, declining moral values and disrespect for constitutional institutions and authority, UNDP, 2004. The African Union and other regional organizations for decades past have dared to improve governance and combat corruption as a core requirement to achieve the goals of African development. Africa has agreed to work with a range of institutions to make anti-corruption one

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of its imperatives in improving the governance of African countries, and the lives of African citizens, especially the poor. This shows that it's being realized that success in meeting sustainable development and peace in Africa countries will depend on both the "quality" of democratic governance and the generation and management of financial resources. Corruption no doubt is a very tricky and dangerous epidemic that has gradually ravaged many developing countries. It does not present itself as a threat but appear as a measure that could solve ones immediate needs. And when it get done on its victims it end up destroying vast essential and sensitive structures that are to promote an effective and efficient functioning social system. This is particularly true for developing countries with limited but valuable funds and resources that are initially earmarked for development of industries, hospitals, schools and other infrastructures and are either out rightly embezzled, misappropriated or otherwise severely depleted through kickbacks and over-invoicing by agents of government that hold up the development of this country Nigeria. Corruption has remained a major challenge to sustainable development in Africa. The removal of human rights and disregard for constitutional authority would definitely impede on policy initiated by government to create a conducive atmospheric environment that better the social status and promote harmony in the society. Consequently the effect of corruption in most developing countries like Nigeria is particularly sad, especially when it has to do with capacity building and sustainable development of the country. The fight against corruption by a government in power is usually taking a political or sentimental under tone and has always not being a genuine call or enforcement.

Statement of the problem: Corruption is one human vice which requires immediate tackling. Corruption blocks and frustrates genuine efforts at development. It leaves its victims literally gasping for breath. Given its damaging consequence, it is not a problem whose solution can be put off to another day. That is why most countries have in place institutions charged with the responsibility of tackling the menace. In Nigeria, the challenge of corruption has severally been discussed, examined and dissected at various for a: seminars, high-powered committees, academic gatherings, and in the media Abdul-Ismail, n.d.; Egwemi, 2012; Odekunle, 1986; Ibrahim 2003. All these efforts have been made so that solutions can be found to the problem. And the problem of corruption as we have argued elsewhere seems to have defied solution Egwemi, 2007. This intractability of the problem is captured by Mundt and Aborishade in the following words, "each political regime comes to power promising to eliminate the practice and punish offenders only to fall into the same pattern" Mundt and Aborishade, 2004: 707. The metaphorical allusions like "long leg", "bottom power", "chop chop", "kick back", "scratch my back" are all euphemisms for corrupt behavior. Every government that has come to power has pledged that "there would be no sacred cows" and that it would "not be business as usual" Nwezeh, 2011; Egwemi and Usman, 2010. Such promises have not done much to stem the tide of corruption and the phenomenon seems to have become normal in the country. It is against the above background that this study attempts to come to terms with the problem of corruption with a view to finding a solution to it. The paper is divided into segment with the aim of clarifying the ambiguity surrounding corruption and the implication it has on development. The paper hopes to propose and expatiates on agenda for taming the monster of corruption.

#### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this paper is to understand and investigate the challenges of corruption to sustainable development in Nigeria.

#### Specifically, the paper intends to:

- Determine the causes of persistent corruption in Nigeria.
- Understand the perception of people about corruption.
- Find out the form of awareness campaign adopted by government to end corruption.
- Ascertain the impact corruption has on social economic and politic life of the nation.
- Suggest and propose adequate measures that can be adopted in ensuring that the city is free of corruption.

Empirical Review on Corruption: Corruption is a term that has been perceived in various ways by various scholars. Its conceptualization has attracted in recent past competing and numerous views and approaches. It is therefore seen as a worldwide phenomenon which has long been with every society in the world. It has been identified as the bane of most political and economic problems in societies. Corruption is again considered as an enemy of economic development because of its various vices. A nation that condones corruption is often besieged with a lot of economic, political and social vices. According to Eigen 2001 corruption is seen as a "daunting obstacle to sustainable development", a constraint on education, health care and poverty alleviation, and a great impediment to the Millennium Development Goal of reducing by half the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015.

The World Bank defines corruption as the abuse of public office for private gains. Public office is abused through rent seeking activities for private gain when an official accepts, solicits, or extorts a bribe. Public office 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, the theft of state assets or the diversion of state resources World Bank 1997. A public official is corrupt if he accepts money for doing something that he is under duty to do or that he is under duty not to do. Kaufman 2000, argued that corruption exists within specific conditions in any society, although it is not peculiar, its incidence is more severe in developing countries. In his analysis Gyimah 2002, opine that Corruption is a word that has been defined differently by both practitioners and academicians who study corruption. "It means different things to different people depending on the individual's cultural background, discipline and political leaning" Gyimah, 2002:186. In a related development Destas 2006 is of the view that corruption by most Africans is a practical issue that is involving;

"outright theft, embezzlement of funds or other misappropriation of state property, nepotism and the granting of favour to personal acquaintances and the abuse of the public authority to exact payments and privileges"

In another development, Mulinge and Lesetedi 2002 defines corruption as "a form of antisocial behavior by an individual or social group which confers unjust or fraudulent benefits on its perpetrators, is inconsistent with the established legal norms and prevailing moral ethos of the land and is likely to subvert or diminish the capacity of the legitimate authorities to provide fully for the material and spiritual well being of all manners of society in a just and equitable manner" Mulinge and Lesetedi 2002:52. According to Desta, 2006:19, he defined corruption this way, as a process where the general public is seen as the principal agent and the public officials as the agent. Previous definitions of corruption have largely neglected that corrupt practices occur not only in the public sector but in the private sector as well, as is the case in Nigeria. In Nigeria corruption can be seen from the bureaucratic or systematic, political dimensions. This is so because corruption in Nigeria occurs in different forms with every facet of the society exhibiting the tendency to be corrupt.

This paper therefore adopts the definition of corruption given by Frazier-Moleketi 2007 as: 'a transaction or an attempt to secure illegitimate advantage for national interests, private benefit or enrichment, through subverting or suborning a public official or any person or entity from performing their proper functions with diligence and probity' Frazier-Moleketi, 2007:246. The definition of Frazier-Moleketi takes into cognizance the different forms of corruption that exists in both the public and private sectors of the Nigerian society. Trust is often times abused hence leading to a situation where "public goods" which was suppose to be used for the general interests of the people is usurp as the property of a few political and public official holders. Corruption is a betraval of trust resulting directly or indirectly from the subordination of public goals to those of the individual. Thus a person who engages in nepotism has committed an act of corruption by putting his family interests over those of the larger society Gire 1999. In Asian Development Bank perspectives of corruption as cited by Agbu 2001, corruption is defined as the behaviour of public and private officers who improperly and unlawfully enrich themselves and/or those closely related to them, or induce others to do so, by misusing the position in which they are placed.

Sustainable Development: The Diploma of sustainable development online 2012 refers to the term as the type of economic growth pattern where the use of resources meets the needs of the human population while conserving the environment at the same time. Sustainable development means resources are used in such a way that both current and future human needs can be met. The sustainable development guide online 2012 also describes the term as the development that meet the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. According to Ukaga 2010 ask a sample of people about the term "sustainability" and you are likely to get a variety of answers representing diverse perspectives, experiences and circumstances. This confirms that a "one size fits all" approach to sustainable development is inappropriate, ineffective and unnecessary. He stressed further, scratch below the surface, however, and you will find that while there is a diversity of viewpoints on the concept of sustainable development, as well as specific policy and practice options for achieving it, there is more agreement on some of its core principles such as: meeting basic human necessities fairly and efficiently; preserving options for both present and future generations to meet their needs; promoting community well-being based on broad participation and active citizenship; maintaining that diversity and productivity of nature; managing and utilizing

resources with prudence and precaution; linking various aspects of sustainability i.e. economic, ecological and social; assuring accountability for all; avoiding or at least minimizing waste having a long term view; maintaining a holistic perspective; and fostering cooperation and shared responsibility. Adebayo 2010 also maintains that the concept of sustainable development is the efforts at improving the environment or natural resources for the purpose of improving the quality of human life in such a way that the needs of the future generation are not jeopardized. To this end, sustainable development is the ability to preserve the existing resources of the state for the collective use of the citizens while conscious efforts are made to conserve the resources for the use of future generations.

Corruption Controversy: There is no comprehensive and acceptable definition of the term 'corruption'. However, corruption has been used to describe conducts that reflect abuse of public office for private gain. The notion of corruption as the abuse of public power for private gain could be seen as a conflict between the obligation to exercise a public power on the public interest and self -interest of an individual to use or exploit them for private gain. Alatas 1990 divided corruption into seven distinct types: Autogenic, Defensive, Extortive, Investive, Nepotistic, Supportive, And Transactive. Autogenic corruption is self-generating and typically involves only the perpetrator. A good example would be what happens in cases of insider trading. A person learns of some vital information that may influence stocks in a company and either quickly buys or gets rid of large amounts of stocks before the consequences arising from this information come to pass. Defensive corruption involves situations where a person needing a critical service is compelled to bribe in order to prevent unpleasant consequences being inflicted on his interests. For instance, a person who wants to travel abroad within a certain time frame needs a passport in order to undertake the journey but is made to pay bribes or forfeit the trip. This personal corruption is in self-defense. Extortive corruption is the behavior of a person demanding personal compensation in exchange for services.

Investive corruption entails the offer of goods or services without a direct link to any particular favor at the present, but in anticipation of future situations when the favor may be required. Nepotistic corruption refers to the preferential treatment of, or unjustified appointment of friends or relations to public office, in violation of the accepted guidelines. The supportive type of corruption usually does not involve money or immediate gains, but involves actions taken to protect or strengthen the existing corruption. For example, a corrupt regime or official may try to prevent the election or appointment of an honest person or government for fear that the individual or the regime might be probed by the successors. Finally, transactive corruption refers to situations where the two parties are mutual and willing participants in the corrupt practice to the advantage of both parties. For example, a corrupt businessperson may willingly bribe a corrupt government official in order to win a tender for a certain contract.

**Corruption its Nomenclature in Nigeria:** Corruption is as old as civilization itself and in the particular case of Nigeria; it is as old as the history of the country itself Aluko, 2009. Omotola traces corruption to colonialism. He argues that by all standards, colonialism in Nigeria was built on corruption.

This is to the extent that "because of the colonialist's corrupt disposition to exploit the state for their exclusive benefit, they liquidated social structure against corruption associated with pre-colonial Africa and replaced and or transformed them to their own purposes" Omotola, 2006:217. The colonial era was characterized by allegations of corrupt practices against civil servants and police officers Aluko, 2009. This colonial legacy of corruption was carried into the independence period. Chinua Achebe, the famous Nigerian novelist, has highlighted the incidence of corruption in some of his novels, Achebe, 1960, 1966, 1988. Achebe's literary presentation of corruption indicates the extent and damaging impact of the phenomenon on Nigeria and her people. In Nigeria as indicated above, the incidence of corruption is quite high. Since the return to democratic rule in the country in 1999, the country has either been ranked first or second in global corruption rating by Transparency International. This has been a matter of deep concern for both ordinary Nigerians and the political leadership of the country. Before 1999, there were many attempts at stemming the spate of corruption in the country Faloore, 2010, Igbuzor, 2008.

However, since 1999, there seemed to be a renewed determination to fight corruption. A number of anti-corruption bodies have been set up in this direction. For example the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences ICPC and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission EFCC. In spite of these agencies, corrupt activities have continued in the country almost making nonsense of the activities of these agencies and the war on corruption. This is quite unfortunate because it seems to have become an established pattern. For example, according to Mundt and Aborishade "each political regime comes to power promising to eliminate the practice and punish offenders, only to fall into the same pattern" Mundt and Aborishade, 2004:707. In fact as argued elsewhere, the problem of corruption in Nigeria seems to have defied solution Egwemi, 2009. The crisis of corruption in Nigeria is difficult to tackle because it seems, as some argue, to be part of the culture of the country as in many other developing countries Egwemi, 2009, Igbuzor, 2008, Audu 2008. The argument is usually that: What is regarded as corruption in Africa is a myth because it is expected that a beneficiary should show appreciation for a favour granted him/her. If a government official offers one a job or contract, the beneficiary would be obliged to show appreciation either in kind or cash to the government official just as he would do to a village chief if granted a land to cultivate crops or build a house. Corruption is a myth because in our cultures bribery is another's mutual goodwill in Igbuzor, 2008:9. While the argument that corruption may be part of Nigerian culture is easily dismissed by many see for example Maduagwu, Obasanjo in Igbuzor 2008 it is important to note that the fact that "corruption is very widespread in Nigeria and it manifests itself in virtually all aspects of national life" Ibrahim, 2003:3 tells a lot about the intensity of the phenomenon in the country.

**Corruption a Challenge to Sustainable Development:** Corruption widens inequality, aggravates mass poverty, militates against efficient resource planning and allocation, undermines economic growth by discouraging investment; compromises economic efficiency; results in high governmental expenditures as a result of inflation of contracts and cost supplies. There is no doubt that corruption is poisonous to long term development and democracy Alemika, 2012. The Nigeria's 2011 Corruption Index by the EFCC maintains that Nigeria is certainly not immune to corruption. The damage of the scourge to the economy and the fabric of the society is seen in the schools that are not built, the hospitals without medicines, the roads that are not passable and the failure of our citizens to be inspired. In Nigeria today, the greatest threat to corruption is impunity. Because of its sheer scale and level, corruption is no longer secret, it is celebrated The Nigerian 2011 Corruption Index. According to Alemika 2012, corruption in Nigeria has endangered social, economic and political problems among others. The following are some of the ways corruption has threatened sustainable development in the

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- High incidence of prevalence of conflict, violence, crime, insecurity and instability due to antagonistic competition, inequality, poverty and lack of access to basic necessities of life.
- Erosion of values of hard work and integrity
- Lack of access to productive opportunities and diverting energies of youth to crime, deviance, violence and sundry forms of anti-social behavior
- Low foreign investment because of corruption induced bureaucratic and other obstacles
- Lack of investment in the real sector by both foreign and domestic investors because of high profitability of contracts in service and supplies motivated by corruption.
- Dependence on foreign sources for goods and services resulting in under development of indigenous technological and productive capabilities
- Leakages of national assets to foreign countries through money laundering and conspicuous consumption
- Misallocation of resources towards programmes and projects amenable to corrupt practices
- Perpetuation of patron client relationships that undermine democracy, efficiency in public and private sectors
- High cost of doing business and low investment in productive sectors resulting to widespread poverty and unemployment, high prices of goods, low purchasing power resulting in low capacity utilization by producers and manufacturers which in turn result to retrenchment of workers
- Political ethno-religious and communal conflicts and violence as different groups in the society struggle to control state power as avenue for corrupt enrichment and ability to disperse patronages to their cronies, relatives and associates
- Loss of public trust and legitimacy by the government
- Poor social welfare conditions as indicated in the table below

**Corruption as a Bane for Under-Development in Nigeria:** Nigeria is a nation bestowed with vast human and natural resources with oil exports accounting for about 95% of foreign-exchange income and some 80% of government income, with a population of about 158 million Gbogbo, 2011. Despite its enormous array of resources, the Nigerian economy has witnessed a period of stagnant economic growth. This has been partly blamed on corruption and gross mismanagement of the country's vast resources. Corruption has tremendously

affected the lives and provoked animosity amongst Nigerians. It has eaten so deep into the fabrics of the Nigerian government, the public and private sectors, governmental and non-governmental organizations and has essentially become a way of life and an important source of accumulation of private property in Nigeria Mustapha 2008. Corruption has greatly contributed to the backwardness and failure of good governance in Nigeria. The country has not been able to implement policies which promote good governance and facilitate the development and success of the democratic process due to the prevalent existence of both high Political corruption and low levels Bureaucratic corruption. There is no doubt that this canker of development threatens the moral integrity of the nation and hampers development Mustapha 2008. Over the years especially during the military regimes, little was done to fight this malaise. According to some analysts, even the anti-corruption efforts of governments such as Muhammadu Buhari/Tunde Idiagbon and Olusegun Obasanjo failed to produce desired results Agbu, 2003.

**Causes and Effects of Corruption in Nigeria:** Corruption is not only a western concept. In any society, there is a difference between what happens above board and what is under the table, of what is accepted and what causes outrage. Although different societies have their own notions of corruption, in Nigeria, corruption has become a part and parcel of the society, which corruption appears to be out of control. Scholars such as Anorou and Braha 2005 are of the view that corruption can be growth enhancing in the sense that with the help of corruption efficiency in the economy is improved. This is so because strict measures that are imposed by the government that impede investment and other economic decisions favorable to growth are removed.

Therefore, corruption according to these scholars "greases the wheel" Anorou and Braha, 2005. While scholars such as Murphy 1993, Mauro 1995 on the other hand argue that corruption increases cost and leads to doubt in the intentional spheres. Mauro 1995 finds out that corruption has a negative effect on the ratio of investment to GDP thus affecting economic growth. Corruption causes a serious development challenge, in the political sphere; it undermines democracy and good governance by weakening political processes. Corruption in elections subverts accountability and representation in policy making, in the judiciary it suspends the rule of law and in the public service it leads to the unequal distribution of services Dininio, and Kpundeh, 1999. Corruption discourages investment and distorts the composition of government spending usually to the detriment of future economic growth Mauro, 1997. Mauro 1997 argue that corruption will reduce aids flow particularly to developing countries.

It widened gap between the rich and the poor for instance in countries with high levels of corruption, for example, average income is about three times lower than in less corrupt countries the difference between, say, Nigeria. Corruption also reduces the amount of money the government has to pay good workers and purchase supplies, such as books and medicine. In the international society it tarnishes the image of Nigerian in the international circles. It made foreign nationals to exercise more caution in entering business with Nigerians there by weakening the economic sector of the country Cleen foundation, 2010. According to Dike 2008 corruption wastes skills because time is often wasted to set up anti-corruption agencies to fight corruption and also to monitor public sectors.

#### **Research Methodology**

The paper adopts the documentary analysis of current literature which enhances critical and contextual analysis of issues. Generally, the historical-descriptive method of inquiry was adopted in the study. In this regard, we made reference to foreign and local Nigerian sources. At the same time, we paid critical attention to the diverse views provided by the broad spectrum of the Nigerian society.

#### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Corruption is like poisonous venom that is responsible for the gross underdevelopment of many countries. It is expected that with the high presence of rich human and material resources that Nigeria is endowed and abound in the country, Nigeria by now is supposed to be counted among the league of industrialized nations in the world. It is a fact found in every citizen lip that corruption is evil and has devastating consequence on social and economic life of any country, but this scenario appears to be like a song that is recited and people not reasoning the message. The case is pathetic in Nigeria as is now like a normal way of life and reminds one of the lyrics of a song "suffering and smiling".

It is on this premise that this paper suggest that the country should wake up from its slumber and brace up to good governance. Good governance plays a critical role in ensuring collaborative, peaceful, coexistence and progressive process of democratic culture and socialization. It also attracts investment to a country, improving productivity and competitiveness, promoting political stability and enhances rapid socioeconomic development. However, the inability of various successive governments in Nigeria to cure the country of corruption can therefore be rightly attributed to the flexible and lazier fair attitude of the nation's anti-graft protocols.

There is therefore, a critical link between corruption and leadership. The experience in Nigeria in the present times is a top - down approach. In every direction and segment of government, the scale, manner and impunity of "junior officer" corruption is directly connected to the scale, manner and impunity of the boss or "senior officers" corruption. Therefore, the leaders have a lot of role to play by shunning corruption so that the junior officers too can avoid this. The on-going reform in the public and private sectors should be handled with seriousness and that the anti-graft agencies should not be used as an instrument by the ruling Party against opposition or perceived enemies. Rather, the Commission should be empowered to carry out its constitutional duties without any interference from the government. Furthermore, the focus and the best way to tackle corruption is to prevent it from happening. And this may require a full renaissance of what is obtainable in the African doctrine which upholds morality. We also recommend that all the public loots should be thoroughly investigated and the offenders, once found guilty should be prosecuted and the loots taken back on the face value of what has been stolen. And these recovered loots should have positive impact on the people and society.

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