

# LEADERSHIP CRISIS AND CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA: A CLOG IN THE WHEEL OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract:** Leadership commitment is essential to the survival and progress of Nigeria. To lead a multi-ethnic society while remaining committed to democratic principles or norms is herculean task. The major reason or Nigerian socio-economic development stagnation is credible leadership problem and corruption. Many scholars at one time or the other have questioned why the country find it difficult to address her perennial problems in spite of abundant human and material resources available at her disposal. Since independence, Nigerian government has parochial uninspiring, attitudinal debauchery and selfish leaders. This paper adopts descriptive approach and content analysis as its methodological orientation. The paper concludes that official corruption which has stagnated Nigeria's developmental efforts emanated from poor and corrupt leadership and for Nigeria to experience any forms of development, responsible, credible and visionary leaders are needed. Nigeria need leaders who will build strong and transparent institutions, as well as leaders who are dedicated to how they will remember for transferring the society rather than instrumental type of leaders.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Visionary leaders, Corruption and Socio-economic and Development.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is instructive to understand that no nation the world over, has achieved meaningful development socially, politically or economically without the input of effective and visionary leadership. Obasola (2002). However, when there is a culture of impunity in any society and there is a wide spread of lack of leadership by example to enthrone transparent and qualitative bureaucracy, degenerated symptoms of underdevelopment continues to manifest as exemplified in all sector in Nigeria. The manifestation of symptoms of underdevelopment does not imply that the country lacks quality and competent human resources to engender development, but the process of choosing leaders is bedeviled with crisis and this does not provide room for morally upright, visionary, competent leaders to emerge.

The leadership crisis partly explains why Esu (2001) queried why Nigeria has not been able to produce a nationally accepted leadership. Some scholars and political pundits have further argued that the heterogeneous nature of Nigeria has continued to pose serious leadership threat to the country. Whatever the argument is, the important thing is that leadership crisis has been a clog in the wheel of progress in Nigeria. It is a fact that the present and past leaders of Nigeria seem to have failed to produce quality leadership capable of addressing numerous challenges confronting the country (Mofoluwawo, 2015). This made many scholars and practitioners in public and private sectors to note that leadership is the most difficult and critical aspect of human endeavour. This is succinct because leadership is often thought of as being primarily personal in character, as being founded upon individual pre-eminence or accomplishment in a particular field of endeavour (Bhagwan and Bhusan, 2007).

Suffice it to note that the success or failure of any society depend largely on the attitude and competency of its leaders. It is no gainsaying that Nigeria suffers from extreme moral depravity and attitudinal debauchery (Ezirim, 2010). Thus, in contemporary discourse, the concept of leadership has attracted a widespread interest as they serve as the pivot on which social, political and economic structures rest. The numerous problems which have been bedeviling Nigeria vis-à-vis

ethnic and communal clashes, increasing crime wave, drug trafficking, unemployment, advanced free fraud and Boko Haram insurgency etc have been blamed on ineffective leadership.

Ogbeidi (2012) reiterated that no nation in the world grew and enjoyed steady development in almost all spheres of its national life without experiencing good and selfless political leadership. The reason may be because qualitative growth and development has constantly been a product of good governance. One way by which the natural resources and human resources in Nigeria can transform into development is by having good, visionary and committed leaders. A leader who has good vision but is unable to mobilize people towards the attainment of that vision is as good as the one without vision at all. Dike (2013) opines further that it is not everybody that has leadership acumen to lead an organization, not to mention a country. Apparently, Chinua Achebe, a renowned novelist attributed the root cause of Nigerian problem to bad leadership. He argues that the trouble with Nigeria

“is simply a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character, there is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land, climate, water, air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to their responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which is the hallmark of true leadership (Achebe, 1984:1).

Ineffective leadership and corruption have impacted negatively on Nigeria’s democratic stability and her economic development (Egbegbulem, 2012). Majority of Nigeria elected office holders are product of political corruption because they got their party tickets through political godfathers and mandate through election rigging. Corruption is used to acquire and sustain political mandate in Nigeria leading to grievous consequences of mass poverty, unemployment and insecurity. Against, this background, this paper examines leadership crisis and corruption in Nigeria as a clog in the wheel of socio-economic development in Nigeria. It further examines the conceptual clarification of leadership and corruption.

### **Leadership**

Leadership as a concept has been defined in so many perspectives by many scholars. Leadership according to Udegbe (1999) is the process of creating the subordinates identification with the group’s mission and creating their desire to achieve the group’s goal. Leadership in the word of Gracy (2005) is defined as a social influence process in which the leader seeks the voluntary participation of subordinates in an effort to reach organizational goals. Ogbeidi (2012) define leadership as a body of people that lead and direct the activities of a group towards a shared goal. This means that the ability to lead or direct and organize a group towards achieving a mutually shared goal. Leadership can also be described as the process of persuasion or example by which an individual induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers (Gardner, 2004). A leader therefore is expected to be visionary, selfless, prudent tract, leveled-headed with good character and must have ability to lead by example. True leaders are selfless and they think more of the next generation. Leadership is not measured by how many people serve you but how many people you serve and impacted positively. No matter how great a leader may have been, if he could not produce a successor, he is a failure. A true leader must be able to mentor those who will succeed him so that his legacy will not be destroyed. True leader do not have seat-tight syndrome.

### **Adeola (2007) argues further that:**

These histories of great nation have been linked to visionary and purposeful leadership, be it in the advanced industrialized countries or developing nations. Such leaders have played significant roles in the socio-economic development and political emancipation of their countries. Closely linked to leadership is ideology, in the absence of visionary leadership, to give a clear-cut ideology, a nation continue to lack orientation and commitment. Consequently, leadership has failed to harness the resources and ingenuity of the people for national development.

It is apposite to stress that leadership crisis manifest in any nation when leaders are myopic, self-seeking, greedy, visionless, mission-less, attitudinal debauchery, unwilling to hand over power, unfair, bias and so on. Leaders make things happen; they are wave makers. A society without talented and committed leaders will retrogress or remain stagnant. That has been the problem of Nigeria. Nigerian leaders are ‘instrumental’ leaders who are mired in the pursuit of selfish personal goals at the expense of national interest (Dike, 2000).

### **Corruption**

There is no universally acceptable definition of corruption. The UN Global Programme against Corruption (GPAC) describes it as abuse of power for private gain. Dike (2000) defined corruption as a behavior which deviates from the

formal duties of a public role because of private gain. It can also be defined as impairment of virtue, moral principle and a perversion or change from the general accepted rules for selfish benefit. Azelama (2002) sees corruption to any action or omission enacted by a member of an organization which is against the rules, regulations, norms and ethics of the organization and the purpose is to meet the selfish end of the members. Corruption is widely known as the bane to socio economic development in Nigeria. This covers grand corruption at senior levels and petty corruption, when junior officials take facilitation payments. The abysmal failure of military rule and previous civilian administration is associated with huge corruption in the state and the economy.

Corruption usually encompasses abuses by government official such as embezzlement, nepotism and cronyism. Another include over-inflation of contracts leading to kickback on contract, as well as abuses linking public and private actors such as bribery, extortion, falsification of financial documents and fraud and so on. In this regard, corruption threatens fair democratic process, good governance sustainable socio-economic development and it drastically reduces the image of Nigerian in the international communities.

### **Causes of Leadership Crisis and Corruption in Nigeria**

**Societal pressure** which society exerts on some of its members is one of the causes of corruption in Nigeria. This is because members under the societal pressure are condition to enact deviant behavior among which is corruption (Merton, 1957). Pressure of polygamous household and obligation to meet the family needs in Nigeria can be attributed to why civil servant involves themselves in corrupt practices. Any societies that has citizens who are achievement oriented, but have relatively access to economic opportunities will face family pressure (Aleyomi, 2013). Any society whose culture stresses economic success as an important goal but nevertheless strongly restrict access to opportunities will have higher levels of corruption (Lipset and Lenz, 2000).

According to Dike (2013) the root cause of corruption in Nigeria could be traced to the **culture and weird value system of the society**. It is possible to see a corrupt free Nigerian because of the deteriorated culture and weak value system of the society. Corruption has taught Nigerians among lessons that it does not pay to be honest, hardworking and law abiding because the culture has legalized illegality in the society (Aleyomi, 2003). The struggle for survival according to Smith (2008) in the society had become a race for everyone and there is no longer room for morality in the society.

In the word of Ndiulor, (1999), excessive greed, urge for shortcut to wealth by the general public plus the absence of a strong sense of national community and giving out of chieftaincy titles to corrupt persons by traditional rulers, are among the causes of persistence corruption in Nigeria.

Another source of corruption in Nigeria is bad leadership and outrageous salaries of the public office holders, most especially the executives and legislature. The major means of living in flamboyant affluence in Nigeria is to hold a political office; many people who hold one political post or the other are just fixed there to chop. Government functionaries in Nigeria often involve in several dubious means to amass wealth which their generation born and unborn cannot finish. Billions of naira is often being misappropriated and looted by our untouchable leaders from public treasuries without anyone to problem them. Bad leadership breed corruption and ineffective taxing system which makes it difficult for societies to track down people's financial activities (Lotterman, 2002).

### **Effect of Leadership Crisis and Corruption on Socio-economic Development in Nigeria**

It is so gainsaying that bad leadership and corruption are the bane of Nigeria's socio-economic development. Corruption has greatly retarded the quest for sustainable growth and development in Nigeria. The most critical obstacle to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is corruption. Ogbeyi (2012) even submits that corruption is a deadly virus that has attacks the vital structures and systems that engender progressive functioning of the Nigeria society.

Corruption and bad leaders poses a serious developmental challenges to Nigeria economy in the observation of the Nigerian political realm, leadership crisis and corruption have undermined democratic values of trust, credibility of government and good governance by subverting formal process (Aiyede, 2006). According to Ebegbulem (2012) leadership crisis and corruption in the electioneering process and the executive and legislative bodies reduce accountability, transparency, integrity and distort quality representation in policy making. He further opines that corruption in judiciary compromises the rule of law, and corruption in public places results in the unfair and inefficient provision of services.

Leadership crisis and corruption in Nigeria slow down the pace of development because it weakens efficiency and effectiveness of public service and discourage us genuine prospective investors. It also reduces the quality of government services and infrastructure, and as well increases budgetary pressure on government (Obegbulem, 2012).

Corruption aggravates poverty, eats up funds that would have been used to rescue a lot of people from the painful starvation and wants as it excessively pulls resources from the national treasuries, placing the money for economic development into the bank account of a few individuals who are powerful politically (Adebayo, 2013). It is a fact to state that corruption and mismanagement of public funds have direct bearing on the Nigeria's collapsing infrastructures, such as good road networks, health facilities, potable water, standard education, employment security, justice and other challenges which are interconnected (Ribadu, 2013).

Leadership crisis and corruption is the cog in the wheel of Nigerian economy that is said to experience growth without development. Nigerian economy growth GDP increases unemployment and poverty. For instance, unemployment rate increased from 12.6 percent in 2002 to 23.9 percent in 2011 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010). The economic growth has not put food on many of Nigerian's table, it has also failed to create jobs for the unemployed and has equally failed to improve the human development indices that make for genuine national development ( Imhonopi and Ugochuckwu, 2013).

Njoku (2007) captures the rate of moral decadence in Nigeria so vividly when he submits that everything about Nigeria is corrupt. He went further to discuss the devastating consequence of corruption which he says is worse than HIV/AIDS, nuclear bombs, armed robbery and terrorism combined.

### The Study

This study employed the descriptive survey research design to collect data from the subjects. The sample for this paper consisted of one hundred and twenty respondents. A systematic random sampling technique was used to select the subjects for this study from two local governments within Oyo metropolis. A ten items questionnaire comprising two sections on general information and leadership crisis and corruption in Nigeria, a clog in socio-economic development was developed and validated. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics of mean and standard deviation.

### Statement of the Problem

Nigeria is richly endowed by providence with human and material resources critical for national development and advancement. History has shown that no nation in the world grew and enjoyed steady development in almost all spheres of its national life without experiencing good and selfless political leadership. This is mainly because qualitative growth and development has always been a product of good governance. This study was designed to find out how leadership crisis and corruption has affected socio-economic development of Nigeria. To this end, the following research hypotheses are germane for this study.

### Hypothesis

1. Leadership crisis has no significant effects on socio-economic development in Nigeria.
2. Corruption has no significant effects on socio-economic development in Nigeria.

## 2. DISCUSSION OF RESULT

The analysis here is based on the two research hypotheses raised for this study. The discussion of the results are presented below.

**Table 1: Chi-Square Analysis of Significant effects of leadership crises on socio-economic development in Nigeria by respondents**

Variable	N	Df	Mean	SD	X <sup>2</sup> Cal	X <sub>20.05</sub>	Asymptotic significant
Effect of leadership crises in socio-economic development in Nigeria	120	2	3.3400	0.50630	52.406	4.88136	0.00

Table one indicates that out of a total of 120 responses, almost all were disposed to the items as against the remaining with mean score of 3.3400 and standard deviation of 0.60634. The findings is in line with Ebegbulem (2012) and Imhonopi and Ugochukwu (2013) who believe that leadership crises in the electioneering process reduce accountability, transparency and integrity and distort quality representation in policy making. It also slow down the pace of development because it weaken efficiency and effectiveness of public service and discourages the genuine investors.

**Table 2: Chi-square Analysis of effects of corruption on socio-economic development in Nigeria by respondents.**

Variable	N	Df	Mean	SD	X <sup>2</sup> Cal	X <sub>20.05</sub>	Asymptotic significant
Effect of corruption on socio-economic development in Nigeria	120	2	3.2213	0.58545	75.668	5.87136	0.000

Table 2 shows only 2 negative responses out of 120 responses with the mean of 3.2213 and standard deviation of 0.58545. The calculated chi-square is 75.668. The finding is in line with Ogbeyidi (2012) and Ribadu (2013) who submit that corruption is a virus that has attack the vital structure and system that engender progressive functioning of the Nigeria society. Corruption and mismanagement of public funds have direct bearing on the Nigeria's collapsing infrastructures such as good road networks, health facilities, employment opportunities and other challenges which are interconnected.

### 3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The problem of Nigeria is not much as lack of wealth but mismanagement due to lack of value based and purposeful leadership. Not many countries are fortunate to have the abundance of natural resources and manpower that Nigeria has. Leadership crisis in the nation reduce accountability, integrity and transparency. Corruption is used to acquire and sustain political mandate in Nigeria and it have impacted negatively on Nigeria's democratic stability and her economic development. Based on this study, the following recommendations are hereby made among others:

1. Leaders that Nigeria need today must be one that would have the courage to confront the ever widening gap between the rich and the poor in the country which in the last sixty years has widened instead of narrowing.
2. Nigeria need the kind of leadership that would have the courage, integrity and ability to address once and for all those factors that have allowed corruption and inequality to be institutionalized in the country and failed to facilitate the infusion of our societal values into the Nigerian concept.
3. Leadership in Nigeria must have the courage to allow the citizens to express themselves and negotiate for all term of existence.
4. The country (Nigeria) needs a leadership with the courage to confront the corruption and inequalities bedeviled the nation through the transformation of the Nigerian society.

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