

# TOWARDS CURBING CORRUPTION IN NIGERIAN SOCIETY

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**Abstract:** The menace of corruption in Nigeria is very pervasive with global implications. So pervasive is corruption in Nigeria that almost every aspect of National life is affected one way or the other (Matthew et al 2013). According to Woodward 2015, psychosocial approach looks at individuals in the context of the combined influence that psychological factors and the surrounding social environment have on their physical and mental wellness and their ability to function. This approach is used in broad range of helping professions in health and social care settings as well as by medical and social science researchers. It is however difficult to provide the exact date that corruption became a subject of national discourse in Nigeria (Matthew et al 2013). The age of corruption in Nigeria however, has affected the socio-psychology of the citizenry as there have been little or no effective measures put in place to curb the menace of corruption. It is also undisputedly true that corruption in the Nigerian society has eaten deep into the law enforcement agencies, political parties, political leaders, judicial system, government and private ministries and parastatals, law makers, etc., and above all, the psycho-social standing of the citizenry is greatly affected. Thus, curbing corruption in Nigeria may seem too daunting to dare but before proffering critical remedies/strategies/recommendations that will help tremendously in curbing corruption in Nigeria, a closer look at some two major factors that have been grossly infected by corruption will be considered. These two factors are carefully selected because the multiplier effects of corruption we see today in Nigeria find their roots in these two factors which are political corruption and judicial corruption. If corruption in these two institutions mentioned is curbed, then corruption in other aspects of life would have been greatly diminished and the slogan “change begins with me” would become more productive in the reduction of corruption as well as conscience upliftment and Nigeria would be in her way forward to a corrupt-free nation.

**Keywords:** corruption.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Corruption in Nigeria could be likened to an endemic parasite to the economy of the country which causes huge wastage of money running into trillions in hard currencies; significant increase in hardship for the masses; increase in poverty rate; insecurity; poor standard of education; poor health care; lack of infrastructural development; injustice; fraudulent electoral activities; thurgery; assassination; distrust in law enforcement agencies; and many more vices. However, for the sake of this research, corruption will be looked into closely at some two major factors that have been grossly infected by corruption. These two factors are carefully selected because the multiplier effects of corruption we see today in Nigeria find their roots in these two factors which are political corruption and judicial corruption

## 2. POLITICAL CORRUPTION

Political corruption holds a pivot position in the Nigerian society. This is due to the fact that most political leaders who hold various important offices especially the electable ones, went in there through rigging, electoral fraud, unethical and illegal means within the political systems and such politicians do not owe the people any commitment hence the looting of public treasury (Matthew et al 2013). Take an instance from the work of Ribadu 2009 that revealed the state of corruption

in Nigeria between 1960 and 1999 and concluded that between 1960 and 1999, Nigerian officials had stolen or wasted more than \$40 billion dollars. That is six times the Marshall plan, the total sum needed to rebuild a devastated Europe in the aftermath of World War II. He further stated that “when you look across a nation that is continuously riddled with poverty and weak institutions; and you think of what this money could have done – only then can you truly understand the crime of corruption, and the almost inhumane indifference that is required by those who wield it for personal gain.”

The sale/privatization of public establishments/infrastructure by government officials is usually done in a fraudulent manner with the ulterior motive of enriching their pockets while at the same time deceiving the entire populace with the presumed dividends that will ensue from the sales. A case study carried out by Matthew et al 2013, reveals the recent senate public investigation on the sales of government companies by the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE). The investigation revealed a lack of due process and the giving away of public enterprises for peanuts. The study further showed that the Delta Steel Company was sold to a company that did not participate in the bid. The Ajaokuta Steel Complex for instance, worth over two hundred billion dollars and was sold for less than one hundred billion naira (about \$10m).

### 3. JUDICIAL CORRUPTION

It is a very disheartening situation that corruption has crept into the judicial system of Nigeria which ought to be the last hope of the common man. In other words, discharge of justice through equity and fair play is hampered by unethical and illegal activities that go on in the judicial system of Nigeria. People have lost confidence in the judicial system and the rule of law which ought to be revered and adored is greatly compromised by corruption in the judicial system. A statement put up by Ogbu 2011, supports the fact that rule of law is compromised by corruption in Nigerian judicial system. These were his statement “the high courts, however, have been a stumbling block in the fight against corruption through the abuse of their power to grant injunctions”

An investigation made by Matthew et al, revealed that in 2001, the senate set up the OyofoCommittee to investigate the alleged cases of impropriety in the awards of contracts by the National Assembly. It was then discovered that the then senate president and four other senators had a hand in the impropriety of the awards of contracts. The indicted legislators resorted to obtaining a court injunction restraining the Attorney General of the Federation, the Inspector General of Police, and Senate from arresting or initiating criminal proceedings against them. This raised so much dust that the Chief Justice of Nigeria had to issue a warning to judges who issued injunctions without due consideration to observe the tenets of fairness, equity, transparency and responsibility.

Matthew et al conclude the absence of these basic judicial tenets or principles shows that there is something wrong with such judicial system (Matthew et al 2013).

Another case study is that of Saraki and Ekweremadu the 13<sup>th</sup> senate president and deputy senate president of Nigeria respectively since independence who were indicted for several criminal offences but the presiding court of justice suddenly suspends the further hearing of the matter for reasons best known and understood by them (the court). Some commoners usually wonder why a person who has been convicted of stealing or embezzling public fund would be asked to pay peanuts from the said money he stole or embezzled as a fine and is therefore discharged and acquitted or more devastating and disheartening is that some cases of gross looting are not even investigated upon at all. A compendium from an online Nigerian dailies and news sites put up by one Oluwole Isaac with the topic “ Top 20 Corrupt Cases and Scandals in Nigeria 2011-2015 reveals the gross looting of public funds and the approach with which the Nigerian judiciary handled or pretended to have handled the cases.

Corrupt practices however, seem to be protected through series of court interpretations. A work done by Ogbu 2011 supports this observation. Excerpts:

“...an Abuja High Court deals a fatal blow to the code of conduct mechanism for fighting corruption when it held without justification that the code of conduct mechanism is subject to the immunity clause”. This ruling by the apex court was quite unfortunate and damaging for the image of the judiciary, Matthew et al concluded. (Matthew et al 2013).

#### 4. PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS CAPABLE OF CAUSING CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA AND THE WAY FORWARD

Let us look at some inherent psychosocial factors that could cause corruption in Nigeria. They are;

- Judicial abstruseness
- Greed in the Political Sector
- Unemployment/poor youth empowerment
- Poverty
- Excessive lucrateness of political and elective positions
- Ethnicism, god-fatherism, and sentiments in job recruitment both in private and public sectors
- High cost of Political Form Purchase
- Fallen Standard of Education

##### *Judicial abstruseness*

The judicial system of Nigeria should be transparent in carrying out their duties. When no reasonable actions are meted against culprits who loot government treasury with impunity, corruption will rather grow deeper taproot system into the rocky stratum of the Nigerian economy and this is the major reason the fight against corruption in Nigeria retrogresses. Until the Judicial system of Nigeria comes out of their shell to clamp down on fraudulent leaders and fraudulent citizens of Nigeria without minding whose ox is gored, corruption will remain a great cankerworm in this country, Nigeria.

##### *Greed in the Political Sector*

Greed reigns supreme in the political sector of Nigeria. It is usually because of greed that political leaders embezzle public funds with impunity.

In Nigeria, most electable positions like that of the senate, house of reps, governor's seat, houses of assemblies, etc., are usually competed by individuals who are 'stinking' rich and who are ready to waste billions of naira in their bid to win these seats. Now imagine what such individuals will do when they eventually win. I think they would want to first recoup the money in hundred folds which they wasted during campaign and this leads to the usual public fund embezzlement which occurs always in Nigeria.

Had these positions not so 'lucrative', these wealthy unscrupulous individuals would not delve into them rather individuals who have the flair to work for the nation. Thus, a strategy needs to be raised to curb the 'lucrateness' of these political positions so that people who have the peoples' problems at heart and who would want to make a good name for themselves will take up these positions. It is only by so doing that a clear line separating the greed and the contented will be conspicuous.

##### *Unemployment/poor youth empowerment*

Unemployment in Nigeria will continue to grow since there are no tangible or effective measures put in place to curb it. Why unemployment continues to mock Nigeria is likely due to corrupt leaders who on their own lack the technical-know-how to pioneer successful measures to reduce the rate of unemployment in Nigeria. Also, policies brought out by the government are usually juicy and promising to the ear but are usually executed on paper. This is why most policies brought out by government to curb the menace of unemployment in the country are usually infested with corruption usually in the form of fund diversion into private pockets. An example of such policies put up by Federal Government of Nigeria is Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). MDGs ought to have been a way out of the high unemployment rate in the country but unfortunately the goals set out in the scheme were entombed by the usual fund diversions and heinous looting by some of the MDGs executives as many were indicted for some fraudulent activities. Furthermore, I think there is paucity of measures in Nigeria to curb the rising growth of unemployment in Nigeria considering the intimidating population of employable individuals in the country. Such policies as YouWinprogramme established by the former president Goodluck Jonathan should be a quarterly programme so as to accommodate more aspiring entrepreneurs. This will be quite helpful as it encourages entrepreneurship. Also, NYSC salary for corpsers should be raised to about fifty thousand naira or more so that a corper could have at least raised a capital for himself/herself to startup a business when

he/she must have completed the programme. By so doing, the government would have succeeded in reducing the pressure hitting on the labour force of the country as many youths would have become more interested in being managers of their own firms rather than being employed.

The agricultural sector is another avenue government can utilize effectively to employ millions of jobless Nigerians. This is true because Nigeria has very large fertile farmlands that can be harnessed properly to curb high cost of food items as well as food shortage and high rate of unemployment. However, if the government of the day can be proactive enough and up-and-doing, this can be achieved. By being proactive is by properly and transparently monitoring the execution of projects as well as funds allocated to such projects especially agricultural related projects so that the purpose of empowering the employable citizens in the agricultural sector can be achieved.

You can also agree with me that the reason why corruption and other accompanying vices triumph in Nigeria especially among the youths is that moral values have drastically reduced. No society can go forward with hazy moral values especially those of financial crimes. There must be fear of justice from the judiciary, there must be fear of jail and penalties, there must be fear of spoiling the family name, and there must be fear of spoiling ones status in the society but where such fears have been replaced with boldness and shamelessness, then the society is on her way to doom. God forbid that Nigeria is on her way to doom. How can the so called leaders who are supposed to be role models to the youths indulge in gross misconduct and are highly corrupt what else do you expect from the young adults? Therefore, I believe strongly that when government makes provisions for the youths by the way of employment, both moral and financial contentment will increase and corruption will speedily diminish.

### ***Poverty***

Poverty can lead to corruption and according to World Bank group, in 2004, 63.1% of Nigerians were poor and in 2010 it increased to 68% (World Bank group, 2013). A poor person can easily take bribe to commit crime and this can be reasoned as to why poor youths indulge in thurgery for Nigerian politicians who eventually dump them after their selfish targets have been achieved. This leaves the poor youths more frustrated and more prone to committing greater crimes within the society. This points back to the importance of youth empowerment in curbing corruption because when youths are engaged in more legal jobs there will be no or highly limited time to indulge in crimes.

When workers are owed up to seven months or even more at a stretch, it is an indirect impoverishment on the workers because for them to survive, they must go borrowing. The devastating thing about borrowing is that one cannot plan well being a debtor and poor planning can be traumatic especially when one is seriously financially handicapped. What do you think will happen when such workers see bribe? They will give in to it since they need to survive, since they need to train their children in school, and since they need to pay their rents and bills. It takes one whose conscience is still alive not to give in to bribe when bribery seems to be the last resort for survival. I think the way out of this mess is for governors, leaders and other government functionariesto curtail some of their frivolous expenditures and shut down every office that does not positively add to the growth of the state and channel these funds to prompt workers' salary paymentas well as infrastructural developments.

### ***Ethnicism, god-fatherism, and sentiments in job recruitment both in private and public sectors***

Most offices today in Nigeria are being occupied by people who have god-fathers that influenced their employment into those offices. The usual output of such workers is low as most of them lack the competency to hold such offices. We believe in oneness, we believe in 'one Nigeria' but unfortunately this is only exclaimed for exclamation sake and not in practice. Most applicants who would have been more productive/competent in their study and respective fields of endeavours or experience are never given the chance as they might either be victims of ethnicism or sentiments or god-fatherism. Merit is no longer the talk of the day rather 'man-know-man' is. This needs to stop if Nigeria wants to go forward. This needs to stop if we must chase out corruption in job recruitment especially in government parastatals or institutions and if we must employ highly committed individuals in the discharge of their duties we must do it aright so that posterity will not judge us wrongly.

### ***Excessive lucrativeness of political and elective positions***

Nigeria waste tremendous amount of money on the very few individuals who are hitherto elected or appointed into offices such as senators, governors, ministers, commissioners, special advisers, personal aides, etc. if these positions can be made

less 'lucrative' there will be drastic reduction in bribery, thurgery, assassinations, unethical and illegal means including illegal electoral manipulations that may herald the quest to hold such offices.

#### ***High Cost of Political Form Purchase***

There should be a reform in all political parties of Nigeria so as to reduce the cost of purchasing form for political positions which at present runs into millions of naira for the House of Representatives and that of the senate as well as that of the governor and the president. Such high costs will definitely discourage individuals who do not have such amount of money but who may have all it takes to revamp the nation's integrity and move the country forward. Rather, people who purchase such forms are very rich and whether they made their money justly or unjustly is not subject of discussion. If the cost of such forms is reduced, it will encourage a more transparent electoral process as it will curtail frivolous expenses in all the electoral processes.

#### ***Fallen Standard of Education***

The standard of education in Nigeria is seriously marred by several forms of malpractices which is spare-headed by examination malpractice which is usually caused by fear offailure, craze for certificate, desire of parents to have their children in choice professions and university, pressure on students to pursue courses which they have no aptitude, pressure on teachers who want to gain favour of student and overcrowded sitting arrangement (Petters and Okon, 2013). There is no single person that can boast of having all the solutions required to curb examination malpractice in Nigeria. However, if examination malpractice prohibition laws are enforced and the examination malpractice Act 33 of 1999 is amended to re-introduce the parts of Decree 20 of 1984 which advocated for twenty one (21) years imprisonment for convicted culprits of examination malpractice without option of fine according to Onyibe et al 2015, then there will be drastic reduction in examination malpractice in the country as this will deter students, invigilators, supervisors, security agents, mercenaries, and every other collaborator of examination malpractice.

### **5. CONCLUSION**

It is quite very sad to know that virtually all aspects of life in Nigeria have been infected with corruption. The law enforcement agencies, political parties and their leaders, judicial system, government and private parastatals and ministries, education system, health sector, INEC, etc, have all received a significant touch of corruption. This may however be largely due to paucity of policy implementation by government or lack of stringent actions against corrupt leaders by the judicial system of Nigeria.

I am yet to see a democratic government that progresses maximally with a huge burden of corruption on her shoulders especially in terms of social relations and in the strengthening of Nigerian democratic rule. Corruption in Nigeria is likely to be as old as Nigeria's independence in 1960 though it is however, very difficult to quote the exact date corruption became a national discourse in Nigeria however, a work done by Matthew et al revealed some earliest corrupt practices recorded in Nigeria.

The fight against corruption is not a one man business. It is a fight by all and for all. All hand must be on deck to bring corruption down to significant level. A good start up to this fight is on the change of our mindset about corruption. We all should see corruption as evil and what must be avoided with all alacrity and culprits should be brought to book and prosecuted by the judiciary without minding 'whose ox is gored'. This will serve as a deterrent to others. Also, the 'immunity clause' placed on some few individuals holding certain government offices should be removed because no one is above the law. This will therefore, curb the menace of corruption in the country and Nigeria will be on her way to stardom.

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