



CORRUPTION AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: PROBLEMATIQUE, NEXUS, CONSEQUENCES AND WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

The phenomenon of corruption has no doubt become monstrous and pervasive in the Nigerian state, such that it has threatened the very foundation for her rapid development in socio-economic and political trajectory. Given its innumerable manifestations, corruption has permeated all spheres of life and institutions of governance. More worrisome is the fact that successive governments continue to battle with this endemic scourge, all to no avail as it keeps increasing by leaps and bounds. This paper, therefore, argues that corruption is responsible for the state of underdevelopment in Nigeria and Africa by extension because there exists, a clear nexus between corruption and underdevelopment. The paper further imports the basic tenets of prebendalism as a theoretical construct to understanding corruption and the reasons why it is prevalent. Complementing this theoretical analysis is the utilization of the documentary and desktop analytical approach and/or information cum personal experiences in the articulation of the causes and effects of corruption on the society. The paper therefore concludes that though corruption is pervasive and global, it is antithetical to development in all facets. Hence, it requires a holistic and an unsentimental approach to conquer it, the paper recommends institutionalization of legal frameworks, stringent punishment like capital punishment as well as improvement in salary and wage structures of bureaucratic officials as probable and workable solutions to minimize corruption to its barest minimum.

Keywords: Nigeria, corruption, development, underdevelopment, political

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1. Introduction

There is arguably no doubt that corruption has permeated the fabrics and structure of the Nigerian state and has made development in a multifaceted dimension non-achievable and at worst illusive. Nigeria, despite being magnanimously endowed with vast material and human resources, is struggling at the bottom of the development ladder (Dike, 2008). The subject matter of corruption and underdevelopment no doubt has dominated the spectrum of academic discourse (Omotoye, 2003, Bala, 2001, Agbiboa, 2010, Mustapha, 2008). This is so because of the negative implication of corruption on the overall development and advancement of a nation. Suffice therefore to say that corruption is the cankerworm and cog in the wheels of Nigeria's progress in the post-independence era especially in the fourth republic where it is waxing stronger.

Nigeria got her political independence from Great Britain in 1960 and one would have thought that with the vast material and human resources at her disposal, as well as the massive wealth accruing to her from the legendary oil boom era in the early days of independence, the country would have rapid development in all sectors. Regrettably, more than five decades after independence, over 75% of her population is wallowing in abject poverty, infrastructural decay is at its peak, unemployment is rising at a geometric progression and the country tops the list of high-ranking nations with corruption prevalence (Transparency International, 2017). This is clearly captured in Agbiboa, (2010) when he noted that between 1960 and 1999, Nigerian officials have stolen more than \$440 billion. The amount according to him is six times the Marshall Plan, the sum total needed to rebuild devastated Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War, this is legendary and quite monumental.

Perforce to observe from the onset that corruption is not only peculiar to Nigeria alone, it is prevalent in other climes though in varying degrees and parameters. This was corroborated by Onu, (2003) when he posited that although corruption has been attributed to the third world countries including Nigeria, it is a global phenomenon that obstructs progress and development culminating in weak institutional and/or structural advancements. In fact, corruption is directly responsible for underdevelopment of third world countries in the post-independence period.

According to Adelowo cited in Omotoye (2010), he observes that Nigeria is experiencing myriads of unstable situations including but not limited to poverty, unemployment, decayed and moribund infrastructures, ethno-religious strife, and all of the above-mentioned anomalies are variables of underdevelopment, with a direct bearing on corruption, the prevalence of corruption hinders progress and development in a multidimensional trajectory. As Smith (2007) aptly observes that of all the challenges Nigeria is facing, corruption remains the main obstacle to her development because of the increase in abject poverty and inequality. Little wonder the renowned novelist was at pains to stress that the trouble with Nigeria is that its political leaders use the instrument of power to commit and maintain corruption (Achebe, 1982).

It is against the backdrop of the foregoing that this paper seeks to underscore the nexus of corruption and underdevelopment, with rapt attention on its meaning given its complexities and to also explore the extent to which corruption has hindered development of the country. This will be gleaned from the historical perspective with focus on the fourth republic and the early independence period at a glance.

1.1 Problematique/Conceptual Issues of Corruption and Underdevelopment

a. Corruption

Given the complexity of the subject matter and its global prevalence, a number of studies are undertaken, yet there is no universally accepted definition. Although there exist common variables and denominators that constitute the act of corruption. This according to Omotoye (2009) is classified into four (4) groups of; corrupt acts, fraudulent acts, collusive practices and coercive practices. This classification is very evident in the definition advanced by Ikhlae in Agboa, (2009) where he sees corruption as the undertaking of corrupt practices such as offering, giving receiving or soliciting directly or indirectly anything of value to influence the action of a public official in his selection process or in contract execution.

However, the word corruption is derived from the Latin word 'corruptus' which means corrupted and in legal terms the abuse of a trusted position in one of the branches of power (executive, legislative and judicial) in a political or other organizations with the intention of obtaining material benefits which is not legally justified for itself or for others (Summah, 2018:1).

According to Bala (2003) corruption implies all forms of bribery, unwarranted exercise of power, intentional neglect of a recognized duty and all forms of favour done with the motive of gaining some advantages. A succinct definition is advanced by the Transparency International (2017) a global watchdog of nations with corruption perception, according to the agency corruption is the misuse of entrusted power for private benefits. Alгоре cited in Nwabughio, (2016) argued that corruption is a cold, vicious, often sacrifice of citizen's security for a narrow, greedy, private personal profit on the part of a crooked official. In his exposition Joseph, Nye (1967:419) view corruption as a behavior which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of a private-regarding (personal, close, family, private, clique), pecuniary or status gains. He went further to state that this behavior includes bribery (use of reward to prevent judgment of a person in a position of trust), nepotism, (bestowal of patronage by reason of attachment and relationship rather than on merit) and misappropriation (illegal appropriation of public resources for private-regarding uses). However multidimensional and multi-faceted the definition of corruption appears; a common feature is discernible and apparent which is the abuse of office and failure of separating the private realms from the public realms and this keeps reverberating in all definitions. Clearly therefore, as a working definition, corruption is the perversion, distortion and abuse of an official office and power for private or pecuniary benefits or gains at the expense of the rest of the society.

b. Underdevelopment

For a better appreciation and situational analysis of the term 'underdevelopment', it is instructive to understand the meaning of the term 'development'. Development as a concept is all-embracing a multi-dimensional concept. Rodney, Walter (1969) was apt when he observed that development has a many-sided process both at the individual and at the societal level. For Todari and Smith (2012), development as a multi-dimensional process involves changes in social structures, popular attitudes and institutions as well as acceleration of economic growth, reduction of inequality and the eradication of poverty. Therefore, it could be deduced that development refers to all the activities geared towards the re-orientation, re-organization and re-establishment of the entire economic and social system. It involves the process of improving human standard and living condition.

A juxtaposition of the above, underdevelopment could mean a relatively low economic level of individual production and standard of living. This is aptly captured by Edame (2010) who sees underdevelopment as the incidence of poverty, ignorance and disease caused by uneven distribution of income, administrative incompetence and social disorganization. Popularized and dominant images of undeveloped states include those that have less stable economies, less democratic political regimes, greater poverty, malnutrition, poorer health care and education system. Edame (2010) further clarified that underdevelopment is not the absence of development, and as such countries cannot be categorized as developed and undeveloped based on the availability of natural resources, population explosion and sectoral dependency. Notwithstanding, there exist certain variables that reflect that a certain country is underdeveloped. These variables include but not limited to low per capita income, low standard of living, high rate of population growth, illiteracy, technical backwardness, capital deficiency, high level of unemployment, weak institutional framework. Albeit, the above variables of underdevelopment are acceptable except for high population which begs the question, if China is taken into consideration, with her a high population is on the ladder of development. The foregoing again explains the relativity of the concept of underdevelopment. It is important also to note that underdevelopment sustains and reinforces absolute poverty. Suffice to say that underdevelopment and absolute poverty go hand in hand.

According to Daniel (1980), underdevelopment refers to the state of an economy of a satellite economy characterized by low real income, per capita in comparison to those of North America and Western Europe. Such economies as Daniel drives further are characterized by illiteracy, poverty, overpopulation and disease. This definition to a large extent supports the submission of the dependency scholars and schools of thought who view underdevelopment as a relative event posed by external factors like slavery, colonialism and imperialism other than internal factors as being responsible for underdevelopment. Within the context of our discourse is the absence of the variables of development in all its sense and the prevalence of abject poverty, poor health and educational system.

On the other hand, underdevelopment does not mean the absence of development. As a concept, underdevelopment makes sense only in comparative terms. Hence, the unanimous assertion by prominent scholars in the field of underdevelopment / dependency theorists such as Andre Gunder Frank (1978) and Walter Rodney (1972) that development and underdevelopment are two sides of world historical movement between the First World nations and Third World nations. Thus, these underdevelopment theories viewed underdevelopment in Third World countries as the outcome of the centuries of unequal relationship between the center (First World nations) and the periphery (Third World nations), which resulted in the development of the First World and the underdevelopment of the Third World. In Nigeria, while the periphery is represented by the masses, the center is represented by the ruling class. As a result of the unequal relationship deeply entrenched in Nigeria, the country has witnessed the exploitation of the masses by the few who show no interest in the development of the country, except in areas that benefit their elitist interest. Therefore, unequal relationships in Nigeria have been sustained by corrupt practices because corruption thrives on it. In a nutshell, underdevelopment means backwardness in all spheres of a country's national life, which results from the inability of a country to deal with its environment. It is also characterized by lack of indigenous industries, inadequate production of food, unscientific agriculture, etc. No doubt, Nigeria fits into this category of nations.

2. Theoretical Framework

There is no comprehensive theory that explains holistically the scourging effects of corruption on development. This poses the challenge of having a theoretical model that completely fits into any discourse. Nevertheless, researchers (Agbibo, 2009, Onu, 2003, Richard, 1987) have relied on prebendalism as a theoretical framework because of its explanatory and predictive potency. Therefore, the direct import of prebendalism as an explanatory tool to understanding the relationship of corruption on underdevelopment on one hand and the effect of corruption on development in Nigeria is not out of place. Nevertheless, prebendalism refers to the political system where elected or appointed officials and government workers feel they have a right to a share of government revenues and use them to benefit their supporters, co-religionists and other ethnic brethren (wikipedia.com). However, Richard (1987) is usually credited as the first to use the concept in describing patron-clientelism or neopatrimonialism in Nigeria. According to him, public office is considered as prebends that can be appropriated by office holders who use them to generate material benefits for themselves and their kindred. As a result of this patron-client and identity politics, Nigeria has oftentimes not been one of the lowest ranked nations for political transparency (TI, 2016).

One of the seminal contributions of Richard's brilliant work was to place the destructive dynamics and tendencies of Nigeria politics in a deeper historical and theoretical perspective that engage these basic questions of political order. According to Richard (1986) the problem of Nigeria was not just endemic corruption but profoundly

systematic prebendal character of it. With prebendalism in practice it was expected that state offices would be acquired and used for the material benefit of the office holders, its cronies and kinsmen rather than the society at large (references).

Furthermore, in the pre-revolutionary monarchical system of France, it meant the position of authority (prebends) could be purchased from the ruler as licenses to loot in the republican and pseudo-democratic context of Nigeria it meant that electoral struggle was not aimed at capturing state power for the authoritative allocation of resources as Easton propose but rather to acquire rents (unearned income) through the exercise of power at the national, state or local level. The problem is that prebendalism can represent a tenacious and self-reinforcing equilibrium when there are enough resources to sustain it by one means or another.

As Wale and Ebenezer (2013) rightly observes that prebendalism represents a dead-end trap developmentally, when it reaches its full, natural, plundering logic, prebendalism robs a country of the promise of economic development. This is so because the logic of governance in a prebendal structure is not to generate public goods for developing an effective transportation system, a workable educational system, electricity, public health and sanitation but rather private goods for the office holders and his family, a certain group of his clients and supplies (ref). In the light of the foregoing, potentially rich country like Nigeria can squander her many resources. Prebendalism has literally killed Nigeria and has been responsible for her present state of underdevelopment because the system is of benefit to an infinitesimal proportion of the population at the expense of the large part of it. As corroborated by Wale and Ebenezer (2013) the system of prebendalism serves a minute fraction of the political class and its enclaves while the rest of the society hang in the cocktail of its politicians trying to catch the crumbs from the table. In analytical terms, prebendalism as a theory seeks to x-ray and shed light on the nitty-gritty of an ideal bureaucracy in the civic public thereby rendering the Nigerian political structure a site of mere struggle for power and sharing rights.

Prebendalism denotes the prominence attached to the struggle to control and exploit offices of the state (Joseph 1987:1) because the state occupies the central position in the economy, providing access to material goods, wealth and power, it becomes attractive for competitive access through which the zero-sum game entitles the winner(s) to the exclusive rights to exploit the state office. This corroborates with Moris Szetel (1982) in Wale and Ebenezer when he refers to the use of the state as "*a resource in itself*". Perforce to observe that the Nigeria modern democracy was built on the foundation of pre-colonial traditional institutions under the British indirect rule system, these traditional systems are deeply embedded on patron-client relationship, eventually with evolution through independence the former system overshadowed the modern Weberian bureaucracy which existed side by side to produce institutions which may not consistently function according to legal principle but serving as spaces for collaboration between social position inherited from past (Bayeh, 1993:169). The resulting pseudo-modern institution of the Nigerian state captures perfectly the intricacies of prebendalism

as put forward by Joseph (1987:67) thus: *“a prebendal system will be seen not only as one in which the offices of the state are allocated and the exploited as benefit by office holders but also as one where such a practice is legitimated by a set of political norms according to which the appropriation of such office is not just an act of individual greed or ambition but concurrently the satisfaction of the short term objective of a subset of the general population”*.

According to Iyare, (2008) a particularly intriguing thing about prebendalism as a theoretical construct is the fact that it is considered to satisfy short-term objectives of a subset of the general population and this is legitimated by political norm, thereby informally making illegality legal and there appears to be a consensus. This however has proven to have a ruinous consequence for economic development and democratic consolidation (Awojobi, 2014). What makes prebendalism an enduring theory of understanding the chronicle of corruption in Nigeria is its insightful analysis of his prebendal system has gained acceptance in the wider political spectrum both in written legal codes and unwritten normative practices. With the import of terms like zoning and federal character, revenue allocation formula is legally designed to share the state in terms of recruitment of personnel into the civil service, military and paramilitary services, appointment of heads of parastatals, admission to universities and other institutions. One clear violation of Weberian ideals is that meritocracy is sacrificed on the altar of mediocrity for the candidates to fill the above positions. To make matters worse, each individual holding state's office is constantly aware of his route of ascension to such position and in most cases, primordial interests supersede national interest in decisions that should be taken on their merits. Therefore, to what extent does prebendalism relate to corruption and how corruption impeded economic development and democratic consolidation? This is the focus of the next section of the paper.

3. A Chronicle and Nexus of Corruption and Underdevelopment in Nigeria

There is no doubt that corruption is responsible for the precarious nature and stagnated growth in Nigeria. This is so because the billions of dollars allocated yearly in the budgetary allocations for development driven policies and programmes are being looted by corrupt government officials and their cronies at the corridors of power at the expense of the common man occupying the greater portion of Nigeria's population.

According to Emmanuel (2009:10) in 2006 the then Nigeria anti-corruption chief Mallam Nuhu Ribadu revealed that the leaders of the country stole about \$380 billion of its oil revenue between 1960 and 1999). In a similar development, the information minister Mr. Lai Mohammed equally reported that over 1.3 trillion naira of public funds was stolen between 2013-2016 (Premium Times, 2016). The corruption scale in Nigeria keeps increasing by leaps and bounds irrespective of how disciplined and financially honest its government claims to be. This no doubt has a devastating and debilitating effect on the economy, infrastructure, health and education system. Albeit, it is important to note that corruption is not only traceable to the post-independence era as Balogun (2003), opined that the emergence of corruption practices is traceable to the colonial

system whereby only those identified with politics and patronage of the colonial administrators were successful in accumulating finance capital.

Moreover, the first high profile case of corruption was against Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe the Premier of Eastern Nigerian government (1954-1959) who used his privileged position to divert government resources into his private bank – African Continental Bank. He was investigated by the Foster Sutton Tribunal of Enquiry (1956) and was made to forfeit all the assets of the bank for the regional government, the same was the case in the western and northern region of Nigeria. The demise of the first republic was also attributed to corruption wherein the leader of the coup Kaduna Nzeogwu declared in his speech on the coup day thus:

“Our enemies are the political profiteers, the swindlers the men in high and low places that seek bribes and demand ten percent, those that seek to keep the country divided permanently so that they can remain in office as ministers or VIPs at least, the tribalists, the nepotists, those that make the country look like big for nothing before the international circles, those that have corrupted our society and put the Nigerian political calendar back by their words and deeds.” (Nwabuzor, 2005).

Sadly, the above reasons are always put forward as rational for military takeovers in subsequent years, but then corruption keeps increasing by leaps and bounds, as Ogundiya (2009) noted many of them who came as physicians would later leave as patients. The return and transition to democracy in May 29th1999 marked the beginning of the fourth republic which was greeted with a lot of optimism and expectations as the right path to economic recovery, rule of law, transparency, accountability, respect for the human rights and other variables of good governance and economic development. Unfortunately, the above dreams are elusive because of corruption in all facets of state operations. A few cases of corruption under the four presidents so far in the fourth republic will give credence to the foregoing assertion.

The Obasanjo administration (1999-2007) though made efforts to forestall corruption by establishing the anti-graft agencies like The Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). This notwithstanding, nearly all the state governors had corruption charges against them and because of immunity, they could not be charged (Ocheni and Nwankwo, 2012). Also, Tafa Balogun, the then Inspector General of Police (IG) in Nigeria was charged with mismanagement of the police budget, tried and convicted on plan bargaining, forfeited assets worth 2.2 billion naira to the government and served 6 months jail term (Audu, 2008). Also, the Haliburton scandal involving the bribing of the contract to construct the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) to a tune of \$182 million as Adebawwi (2012) reported the officials in KBR involved in the scandal have been tried and found guilty and convicted, but those of the Nigerians counterpart are working freely because the cases are under investigation.

Furthermore, the emergence of Yar'Adua in 2007 was short-lived by imminent illness till he eventually passed on in 2009 prompting Vice President Goodluck Jonathan to take over leadership after a momentary constitutional leadership crisis. The cases of corruption were in no way reduced as state actors engaged in corruption with impunity. During this regime, there was a case of 20 billion dollars unremitted crude oil sale receipts whistle blown by the then Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Governor Lamido Sanusi, who was late suspended and dismissed from the office (BBC, News Africa 20/02/14). Other cases were the Stella Odua N255 million worth purchase of bullet proof cars for official use in the aviation ministry and also Diezani Madueke, a former petroleum minister was also accused of spending 10 billion naira of government funds to maintain a private jet and a probe was immediately ordered. However, she applied for a court injunction which was granted and the probe suspended (Eniayejuni and Evans, 2015).

Prior to the 2015 general election, there was general disenchantment and Nigerians were generally disgruntled at the spate of looting of government funds by government officials. Yet there was no visible prosecution as they used their political influence to suppress the proceedings and judgment for those in the good books of the president. Hence, the emergence of Muhamadu Buhari in the 2015 polls was predicated on his stance to fight corruption headlong as this is the only way development could be guaranteed and democracy consolidated. One of the efforts of the Buhari-led government on assuming office in May 2015 was the reactivation of some of the high profile cases already before the courts and ensuring the cases were ongoing. One of those cases was the 'Dasukigate' - the corruption case against Col. Sambo Dasuki, Nigeria's former National Security Adviser who was accused of diverting 2.2 billion dollars meant for the procurement of arms to fight against insurgency in the country. A list of beneficiaries for this largess was made to known to the public and the trial continues.

More worrisomely, a close scrutiny of the 2016 budget submitted by the Buhari administration was a stunning revelation which perhaps was a major setback to its pursuit of a corrupt-free Nigeria. The budget was exposed to have included frivolous expenditures, over-estimated contracts, repeated expenditures amongst others. Although the president sacked top officials in the budget office, it was not a good sign of progress. According to public outcry, Buhari's anti-corruption fight is lopsided and selective as observed by Olu Falae, a prominent politician and former Secretary to the Federal Government of Nigeria, when he said "*Buhari's anti-corruption war is selective and getting out of hand*". The foregoing notwithstanding, the administration has some credit externally as they pledge support for Buhari's anti-graft war. Quintessentially, the UK Minister for International Development assured the government that the UK is fully committed to helping Nigeria under the current dispensation to increase security, stability and prosperity and also continue to provide capacity building, technical and investigative support to Nigeria in order to help tackle corruption. It is worth mentioning here that The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) announced that six hundred and three (603) Nigerian figures had been convicted on corruption charges since Buhari took over office in 2015 and also for the first time, judges and top military officers

are being prosecuted for corruption. Again, under the watch of Buhari Code of Conduct Tribunal has convicted a former Chief Justice of Nigeria Walter Onoghen for failure to declare publicly his asset and although this were alleged to have had some political undertone (references)

However, the Buhari administration is credited for fighting corruption but popular opinion as captured in the “Nigeria Anti-Corruption Performance Assessment Survey” by Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project proves otherwise as the report believes that the corruption level remains the same and would increase because according to them the government’s approach to corruption is not holistic and convincing. The fight against corruption is an unending odyssey and it demands a holistic and a state-level approach as what we are witnessing is an individual approach to fighting corruption. There has to be commitment from all state actors to fight corruption headlong as this scourge is inimical to development in every sense (Svenson, 2005).

4. Causes and Consequences of Corruption

According to Klitgard (1998) corruption will occur if the corrupt gain is greater than the penalty multiplied by the likelihood of being caught and prosecuted, so the tendency of not being cut and less penalty will likely increase the prevalence of corruption. For instance, in Nigeria, with the spate of convictions, no serious penalty like capital punishment is enforced on the culprits to act as a deterrence to others. Therefore, corruption will continue to be on the increase. Although, corruption differs from country to country, it is possible to identify some of the key common driving forces that generate it and Stevenson (2005) agrees with the facts above as he submitted that corruption cannot be assessed unambiguously since there is never only one phenomenon that is responsible for the occurrence and the development of corruption as the phenomenon is highly influenced by political and economic environment. The more the economic activity in the country is regulated and limited, the higher the authority and the power of officials in decision making and the greater the possibility of corruption since individuals are willing to pay or offer payment in order to avoid restrictions.

Clearly, Dimant (2014) expatiated on the causes of corruption when he stated that the level of efficiency of public administration determines the extent to which corruption can find fertile soil and sprout and where this bureaucracy is non-existent or not strongly embedded the propensity for corruption is high. These factors are highlighted below:

a. Weak Institutions of government and a culture of affluence

The desire to get rich quickly which has become a part of public officials coupled with the extended family pressure, village and ethnic loyalties and unbridled competition between and among the ethnic groups and a dysfunctional system.

b. Lukewarm attitude of the law enforcement agencies

This has encouraged some officials to be corrupt because they believe they could go unpunished and get away with their unwholesome acts. This is true because so many

corrupt leaders and politicians are being recycled in the incumbent administration and they keep holding on to power with impunity and immunity.

c. Cultural and institutional factors

These could lead to corruption, as ethnicity and nepotism are linked to the feeling of entitlement and obligation. This is very common in Nigeria where ethnic sentiments and prejudices are considered more important than public accountability or national interests. Consequently, as these individuals rise in the public sector, they are expected to share the resources therein amongst their associates and accomplices.

d. Poor reward system

Low remuneration among public servants and greed, materialism as well as high cost of living, open the leeway for corrupt practices as individuals struggle to survive and the society expects so much from them. Hence, corrupt acts become the alternative means to achieve their objective and make ends meet because they cannot depend solely on their meagre salaries (Obuah, 2010).

e. Bureaucratic bottlenecks

Another cause of corruption is bureaucratic red-tapism and bottlenecks as some firms and individuals experience challenges and unwarranted procedures due to excessive bureaucracies. Some are likely to pay ransom or spend money in order to facilitate faster processing of their applications and will most likely pay money to avoid delays.

On the other hand, the effects and consequences of corruption on development is negative, debilitating and devastating. As Osoba (1996) observes, corruption inherently perpetuates social, economic and political inequality and thus aggravates mass poverty as people on the average pay a higher proportion of their incomes in bribes. Little wonder that misappropriation and mismanagement of public resources by successive regimes has rendered millions of Nigerians poor, unemployed, uneducated and even led to untimely death. This is so because millions of dollars allotted for these purposes are being looted by corrupt government officials who constitute a small fraction of the society leaving a greater number in devastation and utter rejection.

According to Audu (2008), corruption diverts public expenditure from sectors that benefit the poor the most, away to the sectors and projects where kick-backs can readily be obtained by public officials. In effect, they are distorted and misplaced priorities as well as public diversion of resources owing to the fact that they are no kick-backs and leakages and this can result in an imbalance of the composition of public expenditure from social services which are very important to lifting the masses from abject poverty.

Again, corruption affects negatively the mobilization of human and material resources as it causes the human resource to withdraw its services from lack of not being motivated and also try to withdraw and in most cases leave to elsewhere for greener pastures. This explains the brain drain as many Nigerians believe it is profitable to work outside the country. Corruption hinders foreign direct investment as potential investors consider a highly corrupt place not being safe to invest huge amounts of money, for fear of losing out on investment to corruption and this has a resulting negative impact on economic growth and development in the country.

Furthermore, corruption has a negative impact on human rights of the citizenry. A country with a corrupt government will have no regard for people's fundamental human rights as guaranteed in the constitution. Hence, it desecrates the rule of law and distorts the entire decision making process and it causes political decay, results in conflict and violence as competing groups vie for state power which is the source of distribution of resources and other amenities in the country.

5. Solutions and Way forward

Having understood the hydra-headed monster 'corruption' from its conceptual foundations, its nature, consequences as well as effects on social, economic and political development, this section of the paper is dedicated to advocating a way forward to reducing corruption to its barest minimum. The following are the suggested recommendations that are pragmatic and proactive;

A. Institution of a stringent legal framework

There is need for an aggressive approach to tackling corruption beyond the conventional forfeiture of assets. As earlier espoused, all high profile corruption cases have not gotten the expected result because the corrupt officials seem to be untouchables. In order to make it difficult for corruption to thrive the offence of corruption has to go with a capital punishment and banishment from active politics in the country, this way the politician will understand that there is a change to the tune of the music.

B. Moral and value reorientation

There is a need to cultivate and develop moral and value reorientation programmes across all levels from the basic being the family unit, and the need to de-emphasize materialism. Hard work must be encouraged and the 'get rich quick syndrome' must be frowned at. The source of wealth for individuals must be thoroughly investigated. The need for value reorientation must not be overemphasized as people must begin to look at the qualities and abilities of people and what they can offer to the society instead of the amount of money they have, which in most cases are ill-gotten.

C. Astute and unwavering leadership

As Chinua Achebe (1987) rightly stated, the problem with Nigeria is nothing other than leadership. Nigeria is still searching her light for the right leaders - leaders that will rise above prejudices, primordial sentiments and ethno-religious dichotomy and do the right thing irrespective of whose ox is gored. When this brand of leadership emerges, only then will the problem of corruption be half solved.

Government must go beyond the mere pronouncement of anti-corruption policies. It should rather provide good governance and an enabling environment for democratic ideals to thrive.

The government must as a matter of relevance introduce an equitable wage and incentive system and improve other conditions of work so that the level of poverty could be reduced and the quality of life improved. This will inevitably reduce civil servants'

vulnerability and susceptibility to corruption, and this must go hand in hand with prompt payment of wages.

D. Independence of anti-graft agencies

There is need for autonomy and independence of the anti-graft agencies like the EFCC/ICPC for effectiveness, and for them to work without any political pressure or influence from the state actors who are culpable. This may require amendment of existing acts for operational effectiveness and efficiency.

Above all, there is need for an honest and transparent leadership, a re-oriented public service, a vibrant and an independent judiciary, a vocal civil society and there must exist a corresponding synergy and collaborations among the state and non-state actors in the fight against corruption; because if we don't end corruption, corruption will end us.

6. Conclusion

The prevalence and obvious manifestations of corruption in a multifaceted and multidimensional section cannot be overemphasized. Corruption is pervasive and it leads to underdevelopment because it has a devastating effect on the socio-economic and political development of the country. In fact, the hydra-headed monster is inimical to development. In order to break free from this scourge, there is need to ensure accountability and transparency. One of the many reasons why individuals engage in corruption include but not limited to the fact that society emphasizes more on materialism, to the extent that less attention is given to the sources of wealth, meritocracy is being sacrificed for mediocrity, as well as low wages and compensation system, which makes individuals to become vulnerable to taking bribes. The effect is alarming and calls for an immediate paradigm shift if any meaningful achievement is to be made. There is no doubt Nigeria is in a state of precipice owing to inept and wayward leadership which has not only made development unattainable but illusive. Therefore, there is need for a vibrant and informed civil society.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

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