

THE IMPACT OF CORRUPTION ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC

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Abstract

This paper examines corruption and its impact on the socio-economic development of Nigeria with a focus on the Fourth Republic. To achieve this, the paper has benefited immensely from secondary sources of data such as books, journals, Newspaper publications and periodicals to gather information as it relates to the state in Africa vis-à-vis development in continent. The paper finds out that the African state and state actors over the decades have been repressive even as the state has become an instrument in the hands of the ruling class for personal aggrandizement. The paper recommends amongst other things that the state and her actors must make the people part and parcel of the process of development. African leaders must re-evaluate the structure and operation of the post-colonial state which is creation of colonial imperialism by looking inwards rather than borrowing development paradigms from Western Europe and North America. African leaders should therefore introduce radical changes towards democracy and issuing good governance. Since the base determines to a large extent the super structure, leadership in Africa must focus on the economy by making genuine investment in the development of productive forces. Investment should be directed to the real sectors of the economy such as agriculture, energy and industrialization which will stimulate production and inter-sectoral linkages and complementarity that would galvanize Africa's development and make her competitive in the global economy. Furthermore, more powers, responsibilities and resources should be devolved to regional and local authorities who are closer to the people and the people empowered and get interested in holding their local leaders accountable for their actions and inactions while in positions of responsibility. It is by so doing that Africa can chart a course towards sustainable development.

Keywords: Corruption, Socio-Economic Development, Fourth Republic, African Leaders, and Nigeria

Introduction

Corruption, an ethical and moral problem which varies from place to place, time to time, culture to culture and with the level of economic development is a global phenomenon that affects developed, developing and underdeveloped nations and is therefore a global phenomenon (Osah, Ireunmi & Eti, 2015 and Orokpo & Makoji, 2016), resulting to poverty and lack of decent living in

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many countries of the world. In many countries of the world, perception of corruption especially in public places is very high (Transparency International, 2017). This phenomenon has undermined every effort at socio-economic development especially in developing economies for decades (Yecho & Aver, 2014 and Fiase, 2016). The history of Nigeria is rather a sad one especially when the issue of corruption is being examined. Nigeria bountifully blessed with abundant material and human resources for all, yet there is so much corrupt wealth interlocked with such abject and debasing poverty. A country that at independence was referred to in international cycles as the showpiece of decolonization in Africa and as the example of democratic institutions, has for the most part of its history, gone through a vicious cycle of failed development and social chaos. The situation has so deteriorated that Nigeria is now one of the poorest nations in Africa (Ayua, 2001) and as Urama and Iheonu (2019, p. 2) puts it "Nigeria has the highest rate of extreme poverty in the world, with 86.9 million Nigerians living in extreme poverty in 2018".

Specifically, the high rate of corruption in Nigeria after independence is noticeable in various administrations both civil and military, which according to the political bureau (cited in Ayua) is the bedrock of Nigerian's political failure. Commenting on the state of corruption in Nigeria, Obasanjo, (2000) affirmed that corruption has been responsible for the instability of successive governments since the First Republic. Every Coup since then has been in the name of stamping out the disease called corruption. Unfortunately, the cure often turned out to be worse than the disease. And Nigeria has been worse for it. Nigeria's external image took a serious bashing, as our beloved country began to feature on top of every corruption index.

This is why the country has been variously rated by some international organizations as not only been among the top corrupt nations of the world, but also as one of the top most failing states in Africa as can be seen in the high rate of poverty, decaying infrastructure, high criminality rate, insurgency, youth restiveness, herdsmen and farmers conflict amongst others. This perhaps may have informed the former British Prime minister, David Cameron's assertion that 'Nigeria is fantastically corrupt'. All these indices negate socio-economic development.

To discuss this topic, the paper is divided into seven sections. Section one is the introduction, sections two deals with clarification of concepts, the history of corruption in Nigeria is discussed in section three, while corruption in the Fourth Republic is x-rayed in the fourth section, the fifth section focuses on corruption and socio-economic development while the sixth section looks at anti-corruption crusade in Nigeria to the Buhari administration and the last section is conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual elucidation

Corruption

The term corruption is difficult to define to cover the broad range of human actions and as such, the concept defies a consensus definition (Yecho and Aver,

2014: p. 3). This notwithstanding, efforts must be made to come out with a workable definition capable of embracing the various categories of corruption in order to appreciate its debilitating effect on socio-economic development. To this end, the World Bank defines corruption as the abuse of public office for private gains. Public office is abused for private gain when an official accepts, solicits or extorts a bribe. It 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 diversion of state revenues (World Bank, 1997).

This is a conventional definition that looks at corruption essentially from the public sector perspective, leaving out private sector corruption. This definition is therefore not broad enough. According to the International Monetary Fund, corruption is the abuse of authority or trust for private benefit, and is a temptation indulged in not only by public officials but also by those in positions of trust or authority in private enterprises or non-profit organizations (IMF, 2000). This definition captures to some extent, the idea about corruption for if the menace of corruption is to be tackled headlong, both public and private sector corruption, the latter being especially more serious as private businessmen have tremendous wealth and influence on public office holders in influencing policies and decisions.

Furthermore, Osoba (1996) cited in Osah, et al (2015, p. 298) broadly defines corruption as:

As a form of anti-social behaviors by an individual or a social group which confers unjust or fraudulent benefits on its perpetrators, is consistent 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 wellbeing of all members of society in a just and equitable manner.

It can be seen as anti social behaviour conferring improper benefits contrary to legal and moral norms, and which undermines the authorities' capacity to secure the welfare of all citizens. Osoba's conceptualization of corruption largely captures the ideals espoused in this paper and is therefore adopted as a working definition for the study. This however does not in any way, preclude that other definitions as expounded by other scholars are not correct, useful or relevant when dealing with issues of corruption.

Development

The concept of development defies attempts at universal definition. The works of Rodney (1972, p.9), Akwen & Ortindi (2011, p. 27), Amough and Abughdyer (2015) agree that mention of the word development suggests multiple interpretations and this has generally been the case with most, if not all concepts in the social sciences. Hence, Amuwo (2015, p.12) defines development as a

multi-dimensional process involving changes in structures, attitudes and economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty.

Whatever the controversy surrounding the meaning of development, it is pertinent to see it as a process that involves the progress of people in the society. Since people live within some form of social framework, consisting of social, economic and political structures, development involves changes or transformations of these structures. In essence, development involves human, socio-economic and political development encompassing a multi-dimensional and comprehensive transformation of society.

Socio-economic Development

This is the process of social and economic development in a society. Socio-economic development is measured using indices such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), life expectancy, literacy rate and levels of development of a society. Changes in less-tangible factors are also considered, such as personal dignity, freedom of association, personal safety and freedom from fear of physical harm, and extent of participation in civil society. Socio-economic development means the improvement of people's lifestyles through improved education, incomes, skills development and employment. Furthermore, Rodney (1972, p. 10) argued that:

A society develops economically as its members increase jointly their capacity for dealing with the environment. This capacity for dealing with the environment is dependent on the extent to which they understand the laws of nature (science), on the extent to which they put that understanding into practice by devising tools (technology), and on the manner in which work is organized.

Socio-economic is also the process of economic and social transformation based on cultural and environmental factors. Socio-economic development refers to the ability to produce adequate and growing supply of goods and services productively and efficiently, to accumulate capital, and to distribute the fruits of production in a relatively equitable manner (Jaffee, 1998). To Adeyeye and Fasakin (2015, p.111), economic development is "increase in macroeconomic indicators plus consequential positive relationship with its attendant social indicators". To the duo, when the resources of the state are properly managed to generate self-sufficiency in a sustainable manner, then socio-economic development has taken place. Thus, socio-economic development occurs where the totality of the human person as well as his environment can guarantee good life on a sustainable basis.

Theoretical framework

The study adopts the elite theory in explaining endemic corruption in Nigeria. Developed by Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923) and Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941) are

the two pioneer social scientists who propounded the elite theory of power. Pareto (1848-1923) believed that every society is ruled by a minority that possesses the qualities necessary for its accession to full social and political power. According to him, those who get on top are always the best and known as the elite. As Varma (2006, pp. 144-145) puts it "the elite consist of those successful persons who rise to the top in every occupation and stratum of society: there is elite of lawyers, an elite of mechanics and even an elite of thieves and an elite of prostitutes".

Thus, elite is the highest stratum within a society. This stratum is composed of those persons who are recognized outstanding and are considered the leaders in a given field of competence. This class of elite (highest stratum) is further sub-divided into: (i) a governing elite; and (ii) a non-governing elite (Varma, 2006, p. 145). The governing elite comprise individuals who directly play some considerable part in government. They wear labels appropriate to the particular political offices, namely, ministers, legislators, president, secretaries and so on. The non-governing elite are those people not connected with the governmental activities.

Gaetano Mosca, an Italian jurist and political theorist, expounded the familiar thesis that all human societies were always and everywhere ruled by a controlling social class and thus these are always divided between rulers and ruled. He contended that, whatever the form of government, power would be in the hands of a minority who formed the ruling class. Explaining the contentious historical division between the ruling class and the class that is ruled, Mosca explained the rule of minority over the majority by the fact that it is organized and is usually composed of superior individuals. Jibo (2014, p. 17) sees the power elite as those who occupy the dominant positions in the dominant institutions of society (military, economic and political). To him, their decisions or lack of them have great consequences on their country and sometimes beyond it.

This study agrees with Mosca and others that the elite are a tiny minority who out-organise and out-wit large majorities and exploit them, it however differ on the position that the elite have a moral superiority over those they govern. In the case of Nigeria, the elite have not exhibited moral superiority in positions they occupy, hence the prevalence of corruption in country which is perpetrated by this same elite.

The Impact of Corruption on Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria

Corruption is indeed a frightening problem in Nigeria, as it pervades the national atmosphere and has overwhelmed all levels of government (Ayua, 2001, p. 13). Public funds are often arbitrary handled, used for private purposes, and deposited in personal accounts both within and outside Nigeria. Consequently, socio-economic conditions of the people continue to deteriorate. Corruption therefore has negative consequences for the nation's socio-economic development. For instance, corruption adversely affects the stability of government, being an obstacle for greater national cohesion and unity. As a

result, loyalties are divided by thoughts of personal gains and national unity is battered as corruption becomes an instrument for promoting divisive tendencies in the country, undermining relationship and destabilizing the institution of state. Corruption undermines integrity and hampers efficiency of institutions both in the public and private sectors of the economy as decision-making mechanisms are not only slowed down but become incoherent and most often irrational, thereby raising the specter of a failed state (Ayua, 2001).

In like manner, corruption retard economic development as huge sums of money appropriated for development projects are siphoned to personal accounts, with very little return. The effect of this is that critical infrastructure for example, has deteriorated to the extent that they can hardly support any meaningful economic growth while macroeconomic stability has also been seriously undermined by loss of government revenue and excessive spending. This has reduced domestic investment, reduced foreign directed investment and the distortion of government expenditure away from health, education, power and the funding of research. It is clear that the effect of corruption on the economy is indeed devastating. Government contracts including very lucrative oil deals are often inflated, a view shared by Human Right Watch, politics has become an exercise in organized corruption; a corruption perhaps most spectacularly demonstrated around the oil industry itself, where large commissions and percentage cuts of contracts have enabled individual soldiers and politicians to amass huge fortunes (Human Right Watch, 1999).

This undoubtedly weakens the economy and generates political instability. The sad economic situation is further exacerbated as fund embezzled are stashed in foreign bank accounts making them unavailable to the nation for its internal development; thus making the economy to remain static. The contention that there is no proven correlation between corruption and economic inefficiency (Wraith and Sunpkins, 1965) has also been debunked. Recent empirical studies have shown that corruption is inimical to socio-economic development. Shung, (1999) has reviewed the overwhelming statistical evidence that countries with high levels of corruption experience poor economic performance. In confirming the outcome of these findings, the World Bank (1995) avers that, nobody, however, argues that corruption is good for development, and recent research suggests that corruption may be restarting growth even in Asia. What is clear is that the nature and dynamics of corruption vary greatly among countries, making it a diverse and complex phenomenon to address. In Nigeria, the general consensus is that corruption has held back this country for too long, seriously impeding economic growth among other sad consequences. This brings us to the issue of efforts been made in combating corruption in Nigeria.

Anti-Corruption Crusade in Nigeria

The enthronement of popular democracy posed a formidable challenge, that of stopping the rot, and instilling transparency in government, reducing corruption and mismanagement so that national resources can be deployed judiciously to promote socio-economic development. This then raised the

question of criminalization of corruption in Nigeria and the legal question: are the existing laws sufficient to effectively fight corruption and keep it under control? The criminal and penal laws cannot effectively control corruption for the reason that they were not designed for the kind of society we now have, where corruption has become systemic with the institutionalization of corrupt practices among various bureaucratic, political and business elites. In addition, there are problems with criminal justice with all its attendant technicalities.

Apparently drawing inspiration from the Corrupt Practices and Economic Crime (Draft) Decree of 1990, the Obasanjo's administration moved to put in place a legal framework known as the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act, 2000 (Ayua, 2001:20). The mandate was to receive and investigate reports of corruption and where appropriate, prosecute offenders, to examine, review and enforce the correction of corruption prone systems and procedures of public bodies with the view to eliminating corruption in public life, and to educate the public against corruption and related offences with the view of enlisting public support for the fight against corruption.

The bold step taken by the federal government deserve commendation as already looted funds totaling over N84 billion have been recovered from the Abacha family and their associates. The corrupt practices and other related offences Act 2000 has given the federal government more power to wage an organized war against corruption. This however does not mean the commission has no short comings in the execution of its mandate. For instance, the ICPC received a total of 942 petitions. In August, 2003, about 400, of the petition were under investigation, and about 60 were at various states of prosecution (Thisday, August 2003). And four years after its establishment, the ICPC could not secure any major convictions.

In a renewed zeal for the fight against corruption, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) was established in 2003 as a law enforcement agency to investigate financial crimes such as advanced fee fraud and money laundering. While the ICPC targets corruption in the public sector, especially bribery, gratification and abuse of office, the EFCC investigates people in all sectors who appear to be living above their means, and is empowered to investigate and prosecute money laundering and other crimes. The EFCC under its former chairman, Mallam Nuhu Ribadu addressed financial corruption with vigor and in September 2006, the omission had 31 out of the 36 state governors under investigation for corruption charges. However, pundits argue that the two anti-corruption agencies have performed below expectation as many of the cases of financial impropriety against ex-governors and other top government officials and bank executives have not been pursued to logical conclusions. In terms of legal framework aimed at preventing incidence of corruption, these corrupt practices and other related offences Act and the EFCC Act of 2003 are adequate, but whether they can achieve these mandates given to them is still largely a matter of conjecture.

The fight against corruption-the Buhari approach (2015-2020)

The Buhari's administration came into power with the change mantra anchored on three main planks namely to fight insurgency, revamp the economic and fight corruption. The body language of the administration left no one in doubt that the fight against corruption was indeed given the necessary impetus it deserved. Seven years into the life of the administration, it has been a matter of debate between those who feel the administration has done well in the fight against corruption and those who feel otherwise. Recanting the Buhari's achievements in the fight against corruption, the Minister of Information, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, while launching the Anti-Corruption Situation Room (ACSR) in Abuja on December 24, 2017, reeled out the successes recorded in the fight against corruption. He averred that the Buhari government has succeeded in tackling corruption and raising power generation from 2,690 to an all-time high of 7,00MW. Because we are tackling corruption, we are saving 25 billion Naira monthly by cutting unnecessary allowances of officials. Because we are tackling corruption, we have added 500 million dollars to our Sovereign Wealth Fund that stagnated at the 1-billion-dollar that was used to set it up. We have raised our foreign reserves from 23 billion dollars to 38 billion dollars. We have stopped the payment of phantom subsidy of between 800 billion and 1.3 trillion Naira. We recovered at least 43 million dollars and 56 houses from just one official of the immediate past Administration. We have recovered 2.9 billion dollars from looters so far. Our Whistle-blower policy has led to the recovery of 151 million dollars and N8 billion in looted funds from just three sources. Our sincere and full implementation of the Treasury Singles Account, or TSA, has yielded 3 trillion Naira, almost half of the estimated revenue in the 2018 budget. With the elimination of thousands of ghost workers, we have saved 120 billion Naira. We have eliminated the 108 billion Naira in maintenance fees payable to banks, pre-TSA. We can go on and on, reeling out the successes from our fight against corruption. It is noteworthy that we have achieved all these and more without having all the stakeholders fully on board in the fight against corruption. Imagine how far we would have gone if all hands have been on deck (Vanguard, 2017)

In spite of these efforts, the Buhari's administration has been criticized for not been serious with the fight against corruption. Many believe that the administration's fight against corruption is a strategy to hound down perceived political enemies. One of the strongest criticisms of the regime's fight against corruption came from former President Obasanjo. In his letter titled "the way out: a clarion call for coalition for Nigeria's movement" Obasanjo lamented:

I thought president Buhari would fight corruption and insurgency...it would appear that national interest was been sacrificed at the altar of nepotism. What does one make of the case like that of maina: collusion, condonation, ineptitude, and incompetence, dereliction of responsibility or kinship and friendship on the part of those who should have taken visible and deterrent

disciplinary actions? How many similar cases are buried, ignored or covered up and not yet in the glare of the media and the public... (Aziken et al, 2018, p. 41).

This perhaps explains why the corruption rating on Corruption Perception Index continues to dip. In its latest release in 2017, Nigeria ranked 148th position on the corruption perception index chart with a score of 28, from 136th position in 2016 with a score of 27. The index, which ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and businesspeople, uses a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean. Coupled with the fact that the fight against corruption by the current administration has not impacted the common man, pundits argue that the administration still has a lot of work to do in the fight against corruption.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is clear that the anti-corruption agencies will eliminate corruption from our society as tackling corruption is a herculean task. This is more so because corruption in Nigeria has become systematized, with sophisticated techniques to evade criminal culpability. While the establishment of these agencies remains a viable option, bold steps must be taken to change deviant behaviour to a conforming one through ideological indoctrination. It is possible for Nigeria to change. This is because Britain and Singapore have successfully moved from endemic corruption to honest policies and administration while Germany and the USA are other examples of countries that have moved from endemic corruption to moderate corruption and in Italy, major scandals have led to positive changes in electoral and judicial institutions (Johnson 1997).

While laws and law enforcement agencies are indispensable, the sustained reduction of systematic corruption requires committed leadership that solves the socio-economic problems of the people and in turn draws support from the citizens and civil society. This represents the only viable option for Nigeria in the fight against corruption, the enemy within. Following these examples, with committed leadership and genuine followership coupled with concerted efforts towards public enlightenment and value re-orientation, Nigeria may be able to move from endemic corruption which is a bad equilibrium, to that of moderate corruption, a good equilibrium. In a good equilibrium, the institutions of government are strong, the government serves and protects the citizens and by so doing, elicit legitimacy, creating an enabling environment for socio-economic development.

Again, for the fight against corruption intensifies and yields fruit, recovered funds must be deployed to projects and programs with direct bearing on the lives of the common man. A situation where huge sums of money are recovered on daily basis but living standard of the ordinary Nigerian continue to worsen negates the very essence of the fight and governance in the first place.

It is equally recommend deliberate efforts towards de-emphasizing the premium placed on public office in our national life. We can do this by way of

legislation whereby the purpose of public office will be to serve and not for the perks the office affords the occupant.

More so, there should be a drastic and realistic reduction of the emoluments and entitlements of public office holders in order to attract those with genuine intention and capacity to serve while at the same time discouraging those who only go into public office to plunder state resources for personal gain.

The judiciary should also be strengthened with men of probity and given the necessary administrative, political and financial support to deal decidedly with cases of corruption. Those found wanting in the discharge of their duties be jailed to serve as a deterrence to others. The recent conviction of former governors Jolly Nyame of Taraba state and Joshua Dariye of Plateau state are a good starting point. If more convictions of this nature are secured, those in positions of responsibility will turn a new leaf.

Lastly, the citizenry civil society organisations and pressure groups must be ready to speak out against acts of corruption by those in positions of responsibility. The whistle-blower policy of the Federal Government is a good opportunity for the public to utilize. The grey areas, if any, in the policy should be strengthened and all hands must be on deck for the policy to succeed.

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