

Chapter 2

An Overview of Corruption in the Context of the Public Sector

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ABSTRACT

Corruption is the Hydra that truncated the potentials of Nigerians and stymied the growth of Nigeria. The full embedding and institutionalization of public sector corruption in the Nigerian culture has accentuated widespread poverty, unemployment, inequalities, crime, destitution, and fading transportation, health, housing, and education amenities. Corruption has been fingered as the main cause of Nigeria's socio-economic quagmires. Nigeria is evidently at crossroads and in dire straits due to its inability to decisively tackle public sector corruption, as all the anti-corruption initiatives from 1999 to 2023 didn't attain the desired results. This chapter will examine the definition, elements, and causes of corruption, and also highlight the implications of corruption. Because the public sector is the engine room of government and is central to public service delivery, the chapter will examine the nature and effects of public service corruption before proffering measures to tackle this virus of intractable strain.

INTRODUCTION

The attainment of independence by Nigeria on 1st of October 1960 was an historical moment for Africa. Nigerians had every reason to look forward to a bright future, but these lofty hopes eventually became a pipe dream as a result of an interplay of factors. While listing colonialism, divisions and oil curse among the reasons for Nigeria's failure to meet its enormous potentials, Jones (2010) omitted a critical factor -corruption. There is a clear correlation between corruption and under development as narrated by Kreck (2019) that Nigeria could have been one of richest countries in sub-Saharan Africa thanks to the billions of dollars which flow into its coffers every year if not for corruption that deprives it of resources it needs to develop. Corruption has been linked with Nigeria's current adolescent socio-economic and political stagnation and challenges assailing it such as poverty (Collier, 2007; Sommers, 2010; ILO, 2016b), unemployment (ICRW, 2011; Ighobor, 2013; ILO, 2016a), healthcare (Nwachukwu, 2021; WHO, 2022)

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and corruption (Uzochukwu, 2022; Obadare, 2022) which has impacted negatively on the quality of life and future prospects of Nigerians after almost 63 years of nationhood.

The cost and prevalence of corruption and related issues in Nigeria is staggering and mindboggling. Nigeria accounts for about 46 per cent of the capital flight on the African continent and 80 per cent in Western Africa (UNCTAD, 2020). It is also ranked 150th out of 180 countries on Transparency International (TI) 's 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) and is the 14th most vulnerable country out of 125 countries on the 2020 Basel Anti-Money-Laundering index. Recently, the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) in Nigeria reported that the country lost an estimated \$10 billion through illicit financial flows in 2020 despite the government's anti-corruption policies, commitment, efforts and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy. This does not come as a surprise to many as the Anti-Corruption Evidence (ACE) SOAS Consortium have suggested that the country is one of the top five African countries worst affected by illicit financial flows, with an estimated \$15-18 billion every year; an estimate that is not far from that reported by the ICPC. However, it is widely assumed that public sector malfeasances by civil servants, government officials and politically connected persons constitute a very substantial chunk of the reported losses. Ribadu (2009) said between 1960 and 1999, Nigerian public officials stole \$440 billion. These are funds that would have been deployed for various sustainable developmental purposes across the nation for the overall benefit of Nigerians. PWC (2018) noted that corruption in Nigeria could cost up to 27 percent of Nigeria's GDP by 2030 if not dealt with immediately. They added that this cost which is equated to about \$2000 by 2030 could significantly improve the lives of many Nigerians.

Corruption's pestilential nature makes it a key threat to societal advancement and a formidable hindrance to growth. It has been depicted as a virus that transcends borders, cultures, sectors, nations and peoples leaving in its wake man-made disasters. Aidt (2010) alluded to the existence of a negative correlation between corruption and growth. He alluded that corruption could place a country on an unsustainable path which can erode its capital base. MFAF (2012) agreed that corruption mostly impacts low-income people and developing countries. Most poor people live in countries with persistently low indicators of the control of corruption (World Bank, 2016). The biggest threat to effective governance and even the continued existence and development of Nigeria is corruption (UNECA, 2016; Smith, 2007). Its corrosive nature and impact extends beyond the culprits and manifests in unfinished, ill-equipped and badly constructed amenities nationwide. If Punch (2016) noted that 2,399 constituency projects were abandoned in 2013 alone, then the total staggering and colossal losses Nigerians have sustained due to corruption over the years can be better imagined, the problem of corruption is thus rooted in the fact that, where corruption is pervasive, principals are also corrupt and they do not necessarily act in the interest of society as a whole but rather pursue particularistic interests (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2011; Persson et al., 2013).

The major objectives of this chapter are to define corruption, outline the elements associated with corruption and identify the root causes of corruption. The chapter will also highlight the implications of corruption on Nigeria's socio-political and economic standing and prospects. Because the public sector is the engine room of governments, is central to service delivery, the enjoyment of rights and benefits and the accessibility to and harnessing of opportunities, the paper will evaluate the nature and effects of public service corruption before finally recommending strategies and measures to tackle this virus of intractable strain.

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