

## **Legislative Corruption and Its Sociological Consequences: The Nigerian Experience in Perspective**

By

**Gabriel Favour Eke, PhD**

**Department of Political Science and Sociology,**

**Western Delta University,**

**Oghara, Delta State, Nigeria**

**Telephone: +2348056175436**

**E-Mail: [Ekegabriel favour@gmail.com](mailto:Ekegabriel favour@gmail.com).**

&

**Juliet Ohenokobosare Esiegboma, PhD**

**Department of Political Science and Sociology,**

**Western Delta University,**

**Oghara, Delta State, Nigeria**

**TELEPHONE: 08023305770**

**E-MAIL: [esiegboma@yahoo.com](mailto:esiegboma@yahoo.com)**

### **Abstract**

The paper focused on the dangers of corruption and its effects on the economic and political development of Nigeria. The study is of the opinion that the devastating effect of corruption have manifested in the area of distribution of wealth, malfunctioning or decayed infrastructure and lowered the standard of living and poverty of the greater percentage of the people of Nigeria. The most disturbing aspect of this legislative corruption is that the institutions and mechanisms created to fight this corruption are not free from the corrupt act and also the legislators who are elected by the people, who supposed to fight this corruption have themselves become more corrupt than the average civil servant in Nigeria. The author, employed the new patrimonial theory of Clapham to analyze the work. The study concluded by stating some of the damages this pandemic has done to the image and integrity of Nigeria abroad, since from the available records have shown that Nigeria is now the second most corrupt country in the world (TI) It finally recommended that the whistle blowing policy should be straightened by rewarding the whistle blowers, and secondly anybody or individual found to have stolen above one billion Naira should be executed or killed.

**Keywords: Legislature, Corruption, Sociological Consequences, Transparency International, Political Development**

## **Introduction**

Corruption has become a serious factor hindering Development Programm in Nigeria since Independent in 1960. The country has been battling with this pandemic which also contributed to the Collapse of past regimes in Nigeria, Jerome (2007), the most worrisome aspect of it is that the Nigerian Legislators who supposed to be in the fore front in fighting this problem are deeply involved in this corrupt act. It has eaten very deep into the fabrics of the country. According to Transparency International (TI 2001) Nigeria was ranked the second most corrupt nation in the world out of all countries falling behind Bangladesh. Nigeria was also seen at the bottom occupying the first 10th position in term of Confidence Interval (CI). In 2005, among the 158 countries surveyed by the Transparency International, Nigeria ranked 8<sup>th</sup> the most corrupt, among countries surveyed. In 2012 the Transparency International ranked Nigeria as one of the most corrupt nations in the world. (Oyinola, 2011). In 2013 Nigeria ranked 139<sup>th</sup> out of 176 surveyed countries.

The devastating effects of corruption in the country have manifested in the area of distribution of wealth, malfunctioning or decayed infrastructure and lowered standard of living and poverty of the greater percentage of the masses. The most disturbing situation is that most of the institutions and mechanisms created to fight and combat corruption are not free from these corrupt practices. The Nigerian legislators and judicial officials who are supposed to rise above this plague have been found to be more corrupt than the average civil servant and public officials (Uzochukwu, 2013).

Nigeria has moved more backward than before, ranking from 136 back to 148 meaning that it will be very difficult for the country to get out of the evil effect of corruption (Vanguard News 2018). Toyo (2006:2) sees it to be characterized by act such as fraud, embezzlement, falsification, perversion designed to gain some benefits for self or favorites, bribery and nepotism While Nwabuzor (2003) categorized corrupt practices into two, namely materialistic and non materialistic. The materialistic corruption deals with unjust and fraudulent enjoyment of material benefits due to excessive hedonistic pursuit. On the other hand, the non-materialistic corruption focuses on gratification with non-material benefits due to moral turpitude or stagnation. Both forms of corruption manifest in the everyday public life and spawning social consequence capable of undermining effectiveness of anti corruption laws.

## **Causes of Corruption**

There are two basic causes responsible for corruption in Nigeria. These are the psychological and sociological factors. The psychological factors include greed, drive of an individual insatiable appetite, to have more and the fear of the unknown etc. The culture

of ethical behavior and accountability in government have not only been abused but also neglected. This explains the Neo-patrimonial theory which explains that political elite use their positions, and the authority of their offices to enrich themselves, relations and friends at the expense of the populace and not minding the provisions of the law. The sociological reasons for corruption in Nigeria and most third world nations, include weak institutional structures, cumbersome administrative procedures negative attitude of the bureaucrats, non disclosure of the assets and remuneration which affect the compliance to the rule of law. These make it easier and possible for the procedure not to be fully followed. One wonders why the Nigerian legislators who are to fight corruption have decided to sink themselves in this mess.

The compliance theory, according to James and Olsen (2000:204), maintains that there are certain factors which motivate the individual to obey and disobey laws. The compliance theory maintains that the motivation to commit offence increases and become 'ripe' where the possibility of being caught is remote and sanctions are not evenly applied. In other words, offence increases because of environmental reasons. For instance where the institutions provided to check offences are weak and the punishment for offenders not severe. This will enlarge the numbers of people involved in corruption.

According to Akindele (2005), the manifestation of corruption includes the inflation of contracts and kickbacks, frauds and falsification of accounts in the public service, examination malpractices in educational institutions, including universities. It manifests in the abandonment of project and gratifications.

The objective of this paper is to stress the evil effects of corruption and its consequences to the image and integrity of Nigeria before the outside world, its fruits like poverty, underdevelopment, unemployment and ethnic rivalry.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Corruption has hindered development, it manifests in the abandonment of projects and careless neglect of constitutional roles assigned to public servants in pursuance of personal gratification. The legislators often times make unwholesome laws to escape from being caught in the area of budget approval and debate. Corruption stands direct and manifests itself very transparently. Often times, the Nigerian Legislators would refuse to give the budget a fair hearing unless and until money has change hands (Elendu 2012). Corruption in Nigeria has also been characterized by lack of culture of accountability, inefficiency, weak government structures, excessive concentration of power in the executive arm of

government and lack of transparency. Corruption in Nigeria is so pervasive that it has become a very big enterprise.

In 1996 Transparency International (TI) ranked Nigeria as the most corrupt country among the 54 countries studied with Pakistan as the second most corrupt country. This has not gone well to the image integrity and respect of Nigerians living abroad. Most of them are seen as thieves and corrupt persons wherever they live. In fact most Nigerians are specially searched and roughly treated in most of the advanced and European countries (Uzochukwu, 2013). Most of the institutions and structures established to fight corruption are no longer working or ineffective because most of the officials entrusted with this responsibility particularly the legislators have been found to be corrupt themselves (Oyinola 2011). Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) established in December 2002 has fallen short of the expectation of most Nigerians. For some time now, the Commission has been struggling to clear its name of bad reputation and unsettled records.

This is the reason most of the government-owned institutions have not succeeded.

### **Brief History of Corruption in Nigeria**

Just like every issue has an origin, corruption has its own during the colonial masters, who used tricks and military power to conquer and steal away most of the valuable artifacts and good things in Nigeria. The Nigerian economy was looted and carried to their home country. All through their rule in Nigeria, they were playing game with one region against the other sowing seed of disunity and corruption Mogeed(2010) . The Nigerian elite who took over from them continued with that method. When they left, they handed over power to persons who will continue to make returns to them, they also provided them a safe place and ground where they could keep and hide the stolen money by collaborating with them and showing them way out. (Mogeed Olunmy 2010)

The military regime of General Gowon became noted for high level of corruption (Ikelegbe 2004). It was during Gowon's time, that the statement was credited to him Nigeria had money and did not know what to do with the money. This was the period where we noticed the emergence of super permanent secretaries who were very corrupt and embezzled so much money. It was during this period that Joseph Takar minister for communication, resigned because of corruption allegation and when he left office he was celebrated. General Murtala Mohammed took over from Gowon in a bid to wipe out corruption by retiring and dismissing most of the corrupt officials from office but he was assassinated on 13<sup>th</sup> February, 1976. Obasanjo who took over from him never said anything

about corruption. By the time he handed over power to Shehu Shagari corruption had got wings and was already flying. Shagari regime was the case where individuals could do anything they like without anybody challenging them. Most party members became importers and exporters Osuntokun (2003; 126) The Nigerian money was shared away by party members. The ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN) became a party known for money sharing. The Shagari regime took Nigeria into unprecedented era of debt bondage and economic backwardness (Osuntokun 2003:126). The exit of that regime witnessed the emergence of Buhari-Idiagbon regime as it was called with very draconian laws. The regime wanted to wipe out corruption by all means, but was never allowed to succeed by a very corrupt and wicked military leader, Ibrahim Babangida, who was often referred to as evil genius (Mogeed, 2010). His regime introduced a very wicked and dangerous style of corruption. The nine years of Babangida regime was the period of foreign-inspired Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) which nearly buried the Nigerians alive. The SAP period made most Nigerians to be poor (Abia (2006:249).

The Babangida and Abacha regimes in Nigeria could be regarded as the worst period in the history of Nigeria in terms of corruption. He annulled the June 12 1993 election which most observers recorded as the most free and fair election ever conducted in Nigeria (Osuntokin and Aworayo (2003). After his exit came General Abacha who was regarded as the most corrupt leader that ever ruled Nigeria. He wanted to install himself a life president by killing and arresting anybody found to challenge him. During his time there was this popular statement credited to him "as the one that the cap is most fitted. He wanted to use broom to sweep out completely the whole Naira and economy of the country for himself. In fact the leaders of the country are still recovering and repatriating part of the money stolen by him. NADECO was established to fight his anti-democratic ways. Nigerians are still suffering from the impact of the military regimes in the works Particularly Babangida and Abacha regimes when many innocent citizens died, the Nigeria treasury was thrown open and large sums of money were looted by these particular self imposed leaders of Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Framework of Analysis**

There are many theories for analyzing this study, but the most suited one is the neo-patrimonial theory. This explains the situation where a political leader uses his or her position to enrich himself and his relations, not minding what the law says. This is a replica of the life of most average Nigerian leader. It encourages public corruption as it fails to distinguish acceptable conduct in the public and private sectors/domain National Democratic Coalition (NADECD) lives. Most leaders in Nigeria and other third world countries accept it as normal to use their positions of authority for their own pocket. In fact

even if such leaders do not do it their people will not accept them. They see public office as opportunity to enrich them. Neo-patrimonialism is particularly obvious. According to Clapham (1985:45), the speed with which following supporters gather around a successful politician and the readiness with which abuse of office is accepted as normal behaviour condemned only in so far as it benefits someone else rather than oneself. The concept is mostly pre-eminent in the developing nations of the world especially Africa and Asia (Mehler (1998). Here, the political leader uses his position for personal gains. He considers his personal desires more than what the law says. He uses his office for family affairs (Hansen (2003). In other words, under Patrimonialism, there is no separation of authority in terms of ruler's applications of extent laws and his personal desires; everything was based on his preferences and sentiment rather than the law.

In Neo-patrimonialism, the issue of accountability is out of the question and whosoever questions the attitude of the leader is dealt with decisively. The leader distributes positions and state, at his command. This was actually the reason for the death of most third world economies and the sit-tight-to-position syndrome of which any attempt to remove them from power is highly resisted. It presupposes that the existence of extensive network of patronage of personal relations and systematic clientele undermines the effective action against corruption. Looking at the impact and effect of Neo-Patrimonialism in Nigeria and most third world economics and the extent it fueled corruption in these areas, one would quickly conclude that it is basically an African Phenomenon

### **Sociological Consequences of Corruption**

1. Legislative corruption undermines democracy and good governance by breaking or even subverting formal processes. Corruption in elections and in the legislature reduces accountability and distorts representation in policy making; Corruption in the judiciary compromises the rule of law and results to inefficient provision of service in public administration. It violates a basic principle of republicanism disregarding the centrality of civic virtue. (Ikejiaku, 2013).
2. Furthermore, Lawal (2007) went on to say that the consequences of corruption on the country Nigeria can be analysed from three main perspectives namely; political, economic and socio-cultural perspectives.

However, this section deals more with the socio-cultural consequences of corruption, which are also refer to as sociological consequences of corruption. In Nigeria, corruption has change the social value of a good number of people, and this can be seen in many aspects of life. According to (Lawel, 2002) a lot of people now crazily pursuit wealth, power and social recognition. The country is in a

situation where people no longer appreciate the virtues of moral conducts and practices.

Generally, corruption erodes the institutional capacity of government if procedures are disregarded, resources are siphoned off, and public offices are bought and sold. Corruption undermines the legitimacy of government and such democratic values such as trust and tolerance.

And these have manifested in virtually all aspects of other national life, some of which are highlighted below:

- It will weaken the morals of the public servants.
- It will make the policy of honesty in workplace.
- It will make public servants to exhibit nonchalant attitude to work.
- It will also kill individual talent and creativity within the society
- It will reduce integrity and dedication within the public sector.
- It will led to disrespect and disregard for government officials.
- Lack of faith and trust for government
- Corruption is seen to be legitimize
- Money is seen by the youths as the ultimate aim and will do anything such as, advance fee fraud internal fraud plus or rituals to make money, and of wealth.
- Reckless display by members of public to get political power which can result in Violence and destruction that will undermine the political stability of the nation.

### **Summary**

The problem of corruption in Nigeria has gone beyond the ordinary. This is the reason why the problems of underdevelopment and illiteracy are taking very long time to solve in Nigeria. This is because of the weak public institutions and the individuals responsible to fight corruption are themselves involved in corrupt practices. It is discovered that the government has not adequately punished the culprits of corruption practices. Only a very small number have been punished while majority of them have gone without receiving any form of punishment. According to Mojeed (2010), if the legislature must demonstrate an acceptable level of seriousness in anti-corruption crusade, the fight must device a serious method of dealing with corrupt individuals. Some of the institutions like the EFCC and ICPC must be made effective to prosecute corrupt officials since most of these corrupt officials hide under the judicial processes to evade out of conviction by the law.

Anozie Egole (2012) in Vanguard Saturday June 23 observed that there have been a lot of corruption scandals in Nigeria. He was of the opinions that in most national dailies;

Nigeria has become a joking nation among many diplomats from US and G7 countries of a conference in New Orleans. He was of the opinion that the situations have come to a point where mentioning corruption in millions, trillions and no one is brought to book. According to Egole (1) Nigeria has come to the situation where people commit suicide rather than facing trial, many a times those accused of corruption hire protesters who follow them to court nude or dressed in *easa-ebi* in support of the accused persons. Some specific cases of corruption among persons with big names in the legislative houses in Nigeria could not be investigated because of their power connection. Mojeed Oluyinm and Yinka Fashagba, reported how the chairman of senate committee on power, Senator Nicolas Yahaya Ugbane and Chairman House Committee on power Honourable Nduchi Elumelu in a case at the Federal high court sitting in May 2009, accused of misappropriation of over \$5.2 billion meant for power sector under the 2008 amended budget. Until today nothing came out of that probe. This revealed that most of the Nigerian legislators who suppose to be men of unquestionable character were those who supervise and embezzlement public fund. This act was perpetrated in agreement with officers of the ministry of power. This is the reason why power sector in Nigeria could not survive no matter the amount budgeted for it. Today power is one of the areas that have engulfed a lot of money but nothing to show for it because of corruption. There was also a case in 2009 in Abuja high court involving a permanent secretary of the ministry of power along with nine others over financial improperly ranging to the tune of ₦5.2 billion naira Anozie Egole (2012) however nothing came out of this case because the people involved were people with big names in Nigeria, who are untouchable who have a way to escape in every issues. Corruption has grown wings and flying in Nigeria among all classes of persons, it has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigerian society. Most of them in a very high position of Authority in Nigeria could not clearly satisfy where they got the certificate they parade around. Even today the number one person in this country is battling with certificate scandal. People were of the opinion that he had not both primary six and West Africa School Certificate (WAEC). The case of the former governor of Edo State, Adams Oshumhole, is a case in point because of his case the whole store house of the ministry of education was burnt because he had no certificate or what he parade around with could not be certified. The most outstanding and disgraceful one was the case of the number 4 person in Nigeria. The former speaker of the House of Representative in the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic, Mr. Salisu Buhari who claimed that he got his certificate from Toronto University (Abia (2006: 466). Meanwhile it is a forged and faked certificate. This goes to prove that most of them in very high positions in Nigeria, particularly the Nigerian legislators, are parading themselves with fake certificates.

## Conclusion

Today the evil effect of corruption in Nigeria has reached and touches every facet of Nigerian society. It has increased the level of poverty and inflation. Most Nigerians are now wallowing in abject poverty and hunger in a midst of plenty. The infrastructure facilities are not working at all; most of them are on a point of decay. Most roads, health facilities, power generating and pipe-borne water facilities are at the point of decay. Education in Nigeria is at the stage of collapse because most necessary facilities, like classrooms, laboratories for practical work not equipped. It is even worst in the government institutions. Teachers in Nigerian are in the habit of going on strike because facilities needed for teaching are not there. Upon all these, you see most legislators and government official drive expensive cars and parade themselves in ill-gotten wealth. Corruption has changed the thinking of most youths in Nigeria. An average youth in Nigeria is only thinking how he or she could amass wealth even if it means he would die the next day. Nobody is thinking how to do an honest job rather contemplating on he or she could dupe and embezzle wealth and become rich overnight. These corrupt individuals do not understand and know that corruption undermines development and erode confidence in democratic institution (Port, 2009). The former governor of Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, alleged that 25% of the overhead federal government budget was spent on the National Assembly, quoting figures from the Office of Budget and Statistics for the year 2010. According to him, government overhead was ₦53, 626,849,280 Total overheads of the National Assembly was ₦136, 259,768,112 which is exactly 25.1% of Federal Government overhead. According to Edukugho (2012), the Nigeria government runs one of the most expensive democracies in the world, with 50 ministries, thousands of special advisers, special assistants. Recently, Chief Richard Akinjide (SAN) a former member of parliament and Anthony- General, who was in parliament in the First Republic has said that he had never seen such outrageous allowances, where the salaries of lawmakers in the National Assembly in Nigeria were higher than that of US president stating that what is happening in Nigeria could be described as treasury looting. The irony of what is going on in Nigeria is that most of these highly placed corrupt Nigerians are people with very big and bogus salaries. No individual with very small salary could steal billions, fear will not allow him to do so it is only those with big salaries who are used to big money that have the courage to steal very big amount.

## The Way Forward

We have discovered that most Nigerians convicted of corruption are not ashamed of themselves; rather they are protected with escort and parade themselves with stolen wealth after being released from detention.

1. One of the ways to combat corruption in Nigeria is to establish a free, honest and independent judiciary which will have the courage to sentence those found guilty.
2. Corruption could be reduced if those found corrupt will never be allowed to hold any government positions. The case in Nigeria is that most of them, after serving the jail terms come out to contest again for elective positions.
3. The whistle blowing policy in Nigeria should be strengthened by rewarding the whistle blowers.
4. The issue of accountability should be taken more seriously in Nigeria.
5. Regular assessment, monitoring and evaluation of financial dealing of public official should be necessary introduced.
6. Anybody or individual found to have stolen above one billion naira should be executed or killed.

### References

- Abia, V.B.E. (2006) Understanding Nigeria Government and Politics. Gotaflash Publications. Ltd Maryland, Lagos.
- Akindele, S.T. (2005), a critical Analysis of corruption and its problems in Nigeria. *Anthropologist* 7 (1) 7-18.
- Clampharns C. (2002), the challenges to state in a Globalised world in development and change Vol. 33, No. 5 pp.775-795.
- Elendu (2008), the Lucky Igbiniedion story. *The Terminator* January 17, 2008.
- Ndukugbo, Vanguard Saturday, June 23, 2012.
- Hansen K.F. (2003), the politics of personal relations Beyond Neo-patrimonial practice in work-Cameroon. *Africa* Vol. 73, No.2 pp. 202 - 225.
- Ikejiani, (2013) Political Corruption, Critical Governance Problem Facing the Nigerian State: Comparative Assessment of Various Regimes [https://www.academia.edu/1555571/Political\\_Corruption\\_Critical\\_governance\\_Problem\\_Facing\\_the\\_Nigerian\\_State\\_comparative\\_assessment\\_of\\_various\\_regimes](https://www.academia.edu/1555571/Political_Corruption_Critical_governance_Problem_Facing_the_Nigerian_State_comparative_assessment_of_various_regimes)
- Ikelegbe, A.O. (2004) Issues and Problem of Nigerian Politics Benin City: Imprint service.
- Jerome, A. (2007), "Averting Anarchy in Nigeria practiced proposal for lifting the oil curse" in Wohimuth et al (eds) *Africa commodity Dependence, Resource Curse and Export Diversification* London Transaction publishers, pp. 81-113.
- Kayode et al., (2013). Corruption and service delivery: the case of Nigerian public service. *Woodpecker Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. 1 (1), pp.001-006, July 2013. <http://www.wudpeckerresearchjournals.org/WJPA/puff/2013/July/Kayode%20et%20al.pdf>

- Lawl, G. (2007). Corruption and development in Africa: challenges for political and economic change. *Humanities and social science journal*, 2(1) 01 - 07
- Mohammed, U., 2013. Corruption in Nigeria: A Challenge to Sustainable Development in the Fourth Republic. *European Scientific Journal* February, 2013 Vol. 9, No. 4.
- Mojeed, O. (2010), *International journal of politics and Good Governance* Vol. 1 No.12 Quality p. 27.
- Olsen, J.M. (2000), *the legislative process. A comparative Approach* London Butter Wealth.
- Omotola, J.S (2008), from importer to exporter, the challenging role of Nigeria in promoting Democratic values in Africa. Pretorius (ed) *Africa Politics beyond the third wave of democratization* cape town, Juta and co. ltd pp. 33-51.
- Oyinola, O.A. (2011), *Corruption Eradiation in Nigeria: A Parental Library Philosophy and practice*.
- Toyo, E. (2006) *thirty five theses of corruption, the constitution*, vol. 6 No.4 pp. 1-14.
- Transparency International (2005) *parliament ethics and accountability down loaded from [www.transparency.org/global.printing](http://www.transparency.org/global.printing) corruption politics parliament ethics on 23/2/2009*.
- Transparency International 2013c. *Global Corruption Report Education. [http://www.transparency.org/gcr\\_education](http://www.transparency.org/gcr_education)*
- Transparency International, 2009. *Anti-Corruption plain language Guide*.
- Transparency International, 2013b. *Global Corruption Barometer. [www.transparency.org/gcb](http://www.transparency.org/gcb)*.
- Transparency International, 2014. *Corruption Perceptions Index. [www.transparency.org](http://www.transparency.org)*
- Uzochukwu, M.O. (2013), *challenges in Nigeria and solutions on how to resolve them*.