

Corruption and Governance: Examining the Impact on Political Stability in Nigeria

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Abstract

Corruption poses a significant challenge to Nigeria's development and political stability, permeating various sectors of the economy and government institutions. This research explores the intricate dynamics of corruption, governance, and political stability within the Nigerian context. Drawing on secondary data analysis and a qualitative research design, the study examines the root causes, implications, and efforts to combat corruption in Nigeria. The findings underscore the entrenched nature of corruption, its multifaceted causes including poverty and weak institutional capacity, and its profound implications for governance and political stability. Recommendations are provided to address corruption and promote good governance, emphasizing the importance of strengthening institutional capacity, fostering ethical leadership, enhancing civic engagement, and promoting international cooperation. Ultimately, addressing corruption is essential for Nigeria's sustainable development and social cohesion.

Keywords: *Corruption, Governance, Political Stability, Nigeria*

INTRODUCTION

Corruption is a pervasive issue in Nigeria and has been a major hindrance to the country's development and political stability. It has infested various sectors of the economy and has led to a lack of trust in the government, businesses, and institutions. The problem of corruption in Nigeria is deeply rooted and has long been a major concern for both the government and the citizens. Corruption has been identified as a major challenge to national development in Nigeria (Seteolu, 2004). The deep-seated nature of corruption and its drawbacks have earned Nigeria all manner of rankings by the eagle-eyed and whistleblowing global corruption monitoring agency, Transparency International (TI), which once placed Nigeria as the fifth most corrupt nation among 191 countries of the world sampled (T1, 2005). The corruption culture became so etched in the social fabrics that certain catchphrases have entered into the social lexicon of the country. These include “sorting” (2005-date), “kleptocracy” (1990s-date), “settlementocracy” (1980s to 1990s) and “contractocracy” (1960s to 1980s). Corruption in Nigeria is not limited to just a few individuals or a particular sector of society. It is widespread and affects all levels of government, business, and society. From the highest levels of government to the everyday dealings of citizens, corruption has become an accepted norm in many aspects of Nigerian life. This widespread acceptance of corruption has perpetuated a culture of impunity, where those engaged in corrupt practices are rarely held accountable for their actions. The pervasive nature of corruption in Nigeria can be attributed to a variety of factors. One of the primary reasons is the lack of effective enforcement of anti-corruption laws and regulations. Despite the establishment of anti-corruption agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), their efforts have often been hindered by political interference, inadequate resources, and a lack of independence. This lack of enforcement has created an environment where individuals feel emboldened to engage in corrupt activities without fear of repercussions.

The persistent prevalence of corruption in Nigeria has consistently drawn international attention and resulted in negative media coverage. This has prompted successive administrations to implement measures aimed at combating both public and private corruption. Examples of such initiatives include the Ethical Revolution during the Shagari administration, the War Against Indiscipline (WAI) under the Buhari-Idiagbon regime in the 1980s, the War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC) during the Abacha regime in the 1990s, and the enactment of the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act of 2000, which established the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) (ICPC, 2006). Additionally, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) was established in 2002 by the Olusegun Obasanjo administration to address economic and financial crimes, including advance fee fraud (419), official corruption, and money laundering (EFCC, 2002).

One of the most significant impacts of corruption in Nigeria is the negative effect it has on the country's development. The diversion of funds meant for public projects and services into the pockets of corrupt officials and individuals has led to a lack of investment in critical infrastructure,

healthcare, education, and social welfare programs. This has resulted in a decline in the quality of life for many Nigerians, as they are denied access to basic services and opportunities for advancement. Corruption has also taken a toll on Nigeria's political stability. The perception of a corrupt and unaccountable government has eroded public trust in the country's political institutions. This has led to widespread disillusionment and disenchantment with the political process, and has fueled social unrest and conflict. In addition, the prevalence of corruption has created an environment in which rule of law is weak, and where political power is often wielded for personal gain rather than for the public good. Efforts to combat corruption in Nigeria have been ongoing for many years, but progress has been slow and often ineffective. The government has established anti-corruption agencies and enacted laws aimed at combating corruption, but these efforts have been hampered by a lack of political will, weak enforcement mechanisms, and a culture of impunity. Additionally, corruption itself has been a major obstacle to these efforts, as those who benefit from corrupt practices have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo.

This research aims to examine the impact of corruption on governance and political stability in Nigeria. The study will delve into how corruption affects the efficiency and effectiveness of government institutions, as well as its implications for social and economic development. By analyzing the relationship between corruption and governance, this research seeks to provide valuable insights into the challenges facing Nigeria and offer potential strategies for combating corruption and promoting political stability.

METHODOLOGY

This study relies on a secondary data analysis approach, drawing from various sources both within Nigeria and internationally. Employing a qualitative research design, the paper delves into the intricacies of corruption and governance within the Nigerian context, aiming to grasp their underlying dynamics and psychological aspects. Through descriptive analysis, the study investigates the complexities surrounding corruption and the pursuit of good governance in Nigeria. While predominantly based on secondary data such as journal articles, textbooks, and online sources, the paper also incorporates statistical data when necessary to substantiate its arguments empirically. Multiple secondary sources were consulted to enhance the study's reliability and mitigate the potential for errors. The paper critically examines the nexus between the challenges posed by corruption and the quest for good governance in Nigeria, offering insights into potential solutions within the context of identified issues. It concludes with recommendations for addressing these challenges and advancing the state of governance in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Corruption, governance, and political stability are interrelated concepts crucial for understanding the functioning of societies and governments.

Corruption, a pervasive and detrimental phenomenon, remains a pressing challenge globally, undermining the legitimacy and effectiveness of governance systems. At its core, corruption entails the misuse of entrusted power for personal gain, manifesting in various forms such as

bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and patronage. Scholars and organizations have extensively studied and defined corruption, acknowledging its multifaceted nature and far-reaching implications. Corruption is a concept that lacks clear definition universally. Although it is acknowledged as a global issue affecting all societies, there is no consensus on its precise definition. Corruption is recognized as a pervasive problem across nations, regardless of their social and economic development status. It transcends different forms of government, from dictatorships to established democracies. However, the distinction between countries lies in whether corruption is widespread or occasional, indicating whether it is systemic or isolated (ADR, 2005). The historical roots of corruption can be traced back to Europe, particularly in the practices of feudal lords and mercantile bourgeoisie, who viewed the entire realm as the personal property of the sovereign monarch, leading to corrupt practices (Usman, 2001, as cited in Abdullahi, 2015).

The term "corruption" originates from the Latin word "corruptio," which denotes moral decay, wicked behavior, or rottenness (Milic, 2001). The causes, manifestations, and impacts of corruption are diverse and complex. It is universally acknowledged that corruption undermines public administration, erodes democracy, and corrodes the moral fabric of society and human rights. Its detrimental effects are felt across all segments of society, particularly impacting vulnerable groups such as the unemployed, elderly, and youth (Gebeye, 2012). Various authors and organizations have offered different definitions of corruption. For instance, Transparency International defines corruption as the misuse of public power by officials, whether politicians or civil servants, to illegitimately enrich themselves or their associates. Grunner (1999) and Olajide (2000), as cited in Ngwube and Okoli (2013), defined corruption as any systemic wrongdoing within an individual, society, or nation, characterized by favoritism, nepotism, tribalism, sectionalism, unjust enrichment, abuse of power, and the illegitimate accumulation of wealth. On a different note, Otite (2000) categorized corruption into five main groups: political corruption, economic corruption, bureaucratic corruption, judicial corruption, and moral corruption. Moreover, corruption is described as fraudulent, dishonest, and unlawful behavior, particularly among those in positions of authority or power, involving acts obtained through bribery or other forms of payment contrary to societal norms and expectations (Nnonyelu, Uzoh, and Anigbogu, 2013). From the perspective of public officials, Pavarala (1996) defined corruption as behavior deviating from the proper duties of a public role due to personal gain, including bribery, nepotism, and misappropriation.

Similarly, Nye (1967) described corruption as behavior deviating from formal duties for private gains, often involving the abuse of influence. Gboyega (1996) regarded corruption as any action undermining the integrity of individuals in authority or institutions responsible for promoting democratic processes, while Ibrahim (2003) viewed it as the misuse of public office for personal benefit, typically involving bribery. In Nigeria, corruption is predominantly an elitist phenomenon, characterized by its incidental, systematic, and systemic nature. The prevalence of poor ethical standards contributes significantly to this issue, as Nigerian society often prioritizes unearned wealth over ethical behavior (Arora, 2008). Arora (2008) emphasizes the multidimensional impact of ethics on governance, including legality, rationality, accountability, excellence, responsiveness, and integrity, among others. Transparency International, a prominent anti-corruption organization,

defines corruption as the "misuse of public office for private gain". This succinct definition underscores the abuse of authority by public officials for personal enrichment, highlighting the breach of public trust inherent in corrupt practices. Moreover, Transparency International's definition emphasizes the detrimental impact of corruption on public institutions, economic development, and social cohesion. In addition to Transparency International's definition, scholars like Susan Rose-Ackerman and Robert Klitgaard have contributed conceptual frameworks that shed light on the dynamics of corruption. Rose-Ackerman (1999) emphasizes the role of incentives and opportunities in corrupt behavior, arguing that individuals are more likely to engage in corruption when the potential benefits outweigh the perceived risks. Similarly, Klitgaard (1988) introduces the concept of "corruption formula," which posits that corruption occurs when monopoly power, discretion, and lack of accountability converge. According to Klitgaard, corruption thrives in environments where public officials wield unchecked authority and face minimal consequences for their actions.

Corruption, characterized by the abuse of entrusted power for personal gain, remains a pervasive challenge with far-reaching consequences for societies worldwide. Definitions provided by organizations like Transparency International and conceptual frameworks developed by scholars like Susan Rose-Ackerman and Robert Klitgaard offer valuable insights into the nature and dynamics of corruption. Furthermore, theoretical frameworks such as the principal-agent theory and institutional theory provide frameworks for understanding the causes and consequences of corruption and identifying strategies for effective anti-corruption interventions.

Governance

Governance, as a fundamental aspect of societal organization, plays a pivotal role in shaping the functioning and development of nations. It encompasses a broad spectrum of mechanisms and processes through which societies manage their affairs, ranging from the exercise of authority to decision-making and policy implementation. At its core, governance reflects the manner in which power is wielded to allocate and manage a country's economic and social resources for the collective benefit of its citizens. The exercise of economic, political, and administrative power to oversee a nation's activities at all levels is known as governance, according to UNDP (2012). It consists of the structures, procedures, and systems that enable individuals and communities to express their concerns, assert their legal rights, fulfill their responsibilities, and settle disputes.

The institutions and procedures that a nation uses to exercise its authority and make decisions are referred to as its governance (World Bank, 2007). Consequently, public sector management, accountability, the legal foundation for development, and transparency and information are the fundamental characteristics of governance that the World Bank has recognized. According to the IMF, governance is defined as "improving the management of public resources...; supporting the development and maintenance of a transparent and stable economic and regulatory environment conducive to efficient private sector activities." This definition restricts governance to the economic aspects alone. Once more, governance is defined by the DFID (cited in Grindle, 2007) as the manner in which the state's central and local institutions, laws, courts, and armed forces function, as well as its interactions with private enterprise, civil society, and individual individuals.

Governance, according to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in 2005, is the capacity of the state to create an accountable, effective, and efficient public management process that welcomes citizen participation and enhances rather than undermines a democratic form of government.

Central to the concept of governance is the notion of good governance, which embodies principles such as transparency, accountability, participation, and the rule of law. Transparency ensures that decision-making processes and the conduct of public officials are open and accessible to the public, fostering trust and legitimacy in governance structures. Accountability holds those in positions of power responsible for their actions and decisions, ensuring that they answer to the public and are held to appropriate standards of conduct. Moreover, participation allows citizens to engage actively in decision-making processes, ensuring that diverse perspectives and interests are considered in policy formulation and implementation. The rule of law provides a framework for governance by establishing clear and predictable guidelines for behavior, ensuring that actions are consistent with legal norms and protecting the rights and freedoms of individuals.

The World Bank and other international organizations have contributed significantly to defining and promoting good governance as a key determinant of development outcomes. For the World Bank, governance encompasses not only the formal structures of government but also informal institutions and practices that shape the exercise of power and the management of resources. In essence, governance serves as the foundation upon which societies build their political, economic, and social systems. By adhering to principles of good governance, nations can foster inclusive development, promote social justice, and enhance the well-being of their citizens. Effective governance is essential for addressing complex challenges such as poverty, inequality, and environmental sustainability, ensuring that policies and initiatives are implemented effectively and equitably for the benefit of all.

Political stability

Political stability is a cornerstone of societal well-being and progress, denoting the sustained continuity and coherence of a political system over time. It encompasses various dimensions, including the absence of significant disruptions or conflicts, the presence of effective governance institutions, and the establishment of public trust in the political process. This stability ensures the smooth functioning of governments, the protection of citizens' rights, and the facilitation of economic and social development. At its core, political stability is characterized by the absence of political violence, such as riots, civil unrest, or armed conflicts, which can undermine the legitimacy and effectiveness of governance structures. A stable political environment fosters a sense of security and predictability among citizens and investors, promoting economic growth and social cohesion.

Mauro (1995) found a negative relationship between corruption and economic growth, suggesting that corruption undermines governance and hinders development efforts. Similarly, studies by Lambsdorff (2002) and Treisman (2000) highlighted the adverse effects of corruption on political stability, as it erodes public trust in institutions and fuels social unrest. Conversely, other scholars

have examined the role of good governance in combating corruption and promoting political stability. Kaufmann et al. (1999) argued that transparency, accountability, and the rule of law are essential components of effective governance that can help prevent corrupt practices and foster political stability

According to Hill, M. and Box-Steffensmeier, J. "Effective governance institutions are essential for maintaining political stability, as they provide the framework for decision-making, law enforcement, and public administration. These institutions, including the judiciary, legislature, and executive branches of government, play a crucial role in upholding the rule of law, protecting individual rights, and ensuring accountability and transparency in the political process." Public trust in the political process is another critical aspect of political stability, as it reflects citizens' confidence in their government's ability to address their needs and concerns. Trust is built through responsive and inclusive governance, open dialogue between government and citizens, and the promotion of democratic values and principles.

Scholars and policymakers often use a variety of indicators to measure political stability, including the frequency of political protests, the occurrence of coups or revolutions, and the durability of governmental institutions. These indicators provide insights into the resilience and effectiveness of political systems, helping to identify potential challenges and opportunities for improvement. The political stability is essential for promoting peace, prosperity, and progress within societies. By fostering an environment of security, inclusivity, and trust, stable political systems enable governments to address complex challenges and pursue sustainable development goals for the benefit of all citizens.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the principal-agent theory, the principal is the entity that delegates authority to the agent, who is then responsible for carrying out delegated tasks on behalf of the principal. In the context of governance, the principal-agent relationship exists between the citizens or society as a whole (the principal) and the public officials or leaders (the agents) who are entrusted with making decisions and implementing policies on behalf of the principal.

Corruption often arises when the agents, in this case, public officials, prioritize their own interests, such as personal gain or power, over the interests of the principal, which are meant to be the welfare and well-being of society. This can happen for a variety of reasons, including information asymmetry, where the principal may not have complete knowledge of the agent's actions, and weak accountability mechanisms, which fail to hold agents accountable for their actions.

The principal-agent theory also highlights the role of incentives in shaping the behavior of agents. When the incentives for corrupt behavior, such as financial gain or increased power, outweigh the incentives for honest and ethical behavior, corruption is more likely to occur.

This framework can be used to understand and analyze the dynamics of corruption and governance in various contexts, including in both democratic and authoritarian regimes. By understanding the underlying agency problems and incentives at play, policymakers and researchers can develop

strategies to mitigate corruption and improve governance, ultimately contributing to greater political stability and the well-being of society as a whole. The World Bank (2014) states that corruption is a major barrier to both economic growth and the effective administration of the law. Government officials' corrupt practices have a significant impact on the legitimacy of their positions and organizations. Furthermore, environments that are corrupt cannot support responsible political leadership. Economically speaking, corruption diverts financial flows from their intended use, which lowers public funding. It progressively depletes our environmental assets by lessening the impact of development support and providing an incentive to exploit natural resources. It is indisputable that Nigeria's underdevelopment is a result of corruption. Ogbeidi (2002) asserted, therefore, unequivocally, that corruption has destroyed most of Nigeria's once-valuable national virtues and debilitated the country.

Unfortunately, the main perpetrators of this conduct have been the political class who oversee the nation's operations. Since the country's independence, regrettably, one of the most well-known legacies of the military and civilian political administrations that oversaw its affairs at different points in time has been the institutionalization of corruption in all boards, agencies, and government parastatals. This, like a deadly virus, has then spread to the private sector of the nation. (Ogbeidi, 2012). Given this context, Anazodo, Igbokwe Ibeto, and Nkah (2015) assert that the nation's high rate of poverty cannot be refuted. Numerous problems, including underemployment and unemployment, are linked to poverty. It is well known that the global economic crisis, which has had a detrimental impact on the labor market, has had a considerable impact on the nation's economy. It has significantly aided in the widespread layoffs that have occurred in the public and commercial sectors of the economy. Therefore, in order to survive, the typical Nigerian must find another place to fulfill their obligations. Next, he or she seizes the opportunity to embezzle public or private funds, depending on the situation, whenever it presents itself.

Nwodo, Adam, and Okereke (2014) asserted in their analysis of Nigeria's anti-corruption campaign that corruption remains a major challenge facing the nation. Despite Nigeria's status as one of the world's six primary producers of petroleum and the owner of several other natural and human resources, the threat of poverty is said to be one of the key reasons for the country's persistently high poverty rate. The United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC, 2017) states that corruption can take many different forms, from the widespread practice of administrative inducement in routine interactions with public officials to covert major corruption schemes involving the embezzlement of public funds. Similarly, the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime found that 82.3 million bribes totaling Naira 400 billion (or \$4.6 billion in purchasing power parity) were paid in their one-year survey on bribery and corruption in Nigeria. The main purpose of inducements is to speed up and complete administrative processes in order to avoid paying taxes. According to 15% of households with a member who got a position in public administration, bribery occurred during the government official's hiring process, demonstrating the vulnerability of the system to corruption (UNODC, 2017).

In the same spirit, the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS) recently released a report that found that an average citizen pays six bribes annually, or once every two months, based on the accounts

of a third of Nigerian adults who had interactions with local government officials during the assessment period. According to NBS calculations, the total amount of bribes paid to public servants equals \$4.6 billion in purchasing power parity, or 39% of the country's federal and state education budget for the previous year. In order to gather information for the report, 33,000 houses nationwide were asked if they had received requests for bribes between June 2015 and May 2016. The report found that the majority of bribes were paid to expedite bureaucratic tasks, such as obtaining a driver's license or a land ownership permit. They were also frequently used to avoid paying fines (for breaking traffic laws, for example) and to keep access to public utilities (such as the water and power supplies). The study also found that over 70% of bribes paid to public servants were given prior to the performance of a service (Quartz Africa, 2017). The Nigerian government's most recent attempt to combat this threat resulted in the creation of many institutions, including the Independent Corrupt Practices & Related Offenses Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). (Adam Nwodo and Okereke, 2014).

Causes of Corruption in Nigeria

The prevalence of corruption in Nigeria is a complex issue influenced by various factors, with the lack of accountability and transparency within government and public institutions standing out as a significant driver. This assertion is supported by numerous studies and reports that have examined the root causes of corruption in the country. Poverty is seen as the most fundamental force among the others. According to a study conducted on an ordinary Nigerian society (Ogbunwezeh, 2005), acts of corruption have been motivated by either a dread of poverty or a desire to escape it. People in positions of authority don't want to face criticism again after serving. In a similar spirit, some run for public office in an attempt to alter their financial situation or destiny. The nation's poverty rate is rising due to a number of factors, including misuse of funds and poorly implemented economic policies. This causes people to take advantage of opportunities for enrichment out of fear of falling into a situation of mass poverty. Additional behaviors like drug sales, 419s, and money laundering are considered "private" expressions of the impoverished mentality.

According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), Nigeria consistently ranks low in terms of perceived levels of public sector corruption. This indicates a widespread perception among citizens and international observers that corruption is endemic within the country's institutions. The absence of accountability mechanisms and transparency practices within these institutions is often cited as a major contributing factor to this problem (Transparency International, 2021). Moreover, scholarly research has highlighted the detrimental effects of weak institutional checks and balances on governance outcomes in Nigeria. For instance, a study by Oyinlola and Okorie (2019) emphasized how the lack of accountability mechanisms enables public officials to engage in corrupt practices with impunity, leading to the mismanagement of public resources and hindering socio-economic development.

The World Bank's report on governance and corruption in Nigeria underscores the importance of transparency and accountability in mitigating corruption risks. The report emphasizes the need for stronger oversight mechanisms, such as independent anti-corruption agencies and robust auditing

systems, to hold public officials accountable for their actions and deter corrupt behavior (World Bank, 2018). In addition to these institutional factors, cultural and historical factors also play a role in shaping attitudes towards corruption in Nigeria. For instance, the legacy of colonialism and the prevalence of patronage networks have contributed to a culture of rent-seeking and clientelism, where loyalty to individuals or ethnic groups often takes precedence over adherence to ethical principles (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2019).

The lack of accountability and transparency within government and public institutions is a fundamental driver of corruption in Nigeria. Addressing this issue requires comprehensive reforms aimed at strengthening institutional capacity, enhancing oversight mechanisms, and promoting a culture of integrity and ethical governance.

Implications of Corruption in Nigeria

The pervasive nature of corruption in Nigeria has indeed had profound implications for the country, extending across various aspects of its socio-economic landscape. Economically, corruption has been a significant impediment to development, resulting in the misallocation of resources and the hindrance of economic growth. One of the most striking consequences of corruption is the diversion of public funds away from essential sectors such as infrastructure, healthcare, and education. Instead of being invested in projects that could benefit the population at large, these funds are often siphoned off through fraudulent schemes and embezzlement by corrupt officials.

As a result, Nigeria has struggled to adequately invest in critical infrastructure projects, leading to a lack of reliable transportation networks, inadequate healthcare facilities, and a shortage of quality educational institutions. The consequences of this misallocation of resources are far-reaching. Without adequate infrastructure, businesses face higher costs of operation and reduced competitiveness, hindering economic productivity and foreign investment. The lack of quality healthcare services exacerbates public health challenges, leading to higher mortality rates and decreased life expectancy. Similarly, the education sector suffers from underfunding, contributing to low literacy rates and a lack of skilled human capital, which are essential for driving innovation and economic diversification.

Corruption distorts market dynamics and stifles entrepreneurship and small business growth. Businesses often face extortion and bribery demands from corrupt officials, increasing operating costs and deterring investment. This creates an uneven playing field where well-connected individuals and companies gain unfair advantages through illicit means, undermining competition and stifling economic opportunities for ordinary citizens. In the long run, the pervasive nature of corruption erodes public trust in government institutions and undermines social cohesion. When citizens perceive that public resources are being mismanaged and public officials are enriching themselves at the expense of the common good, it erodes confidence in the government's ability to deliver essential services and uphold the rule of law. This can lead to disillusionment, social unrest, and a breakdown of democratic norms, further exacerbating governance challenges and perpetuating the cycle of corruption.

The economic consequences of corruption in Nigeria are profound and multifaceted, affecting everything from infrastructure development to public health and education. Addressing corruption requires concerted efforts to strengthen institutional accountability, promote transparency, and foster a culture of integrity and ethical governance. Only through such measures can Nigeria unlock its full economic potential and ensure a more prosperous future for all its citizens. Furthermore, corruption has eroded public trust in the government and has undermined the rule of law in Nigeria. The perception of widespread corruption has discouraged foreign investment and hindered the country's ability to attract much-needed capital for development. Corruption has also contributed to social inequalities, as those in positions of power have used their influence to amass wealth at the expense of the majority of the population.

Efforts to Combat Corruption in Nigeria

The Nigerian government has indeed implemented various measures to combat corruption, recognizing its detrimental effects on the country's socio-economic development. Among these measures, the establishment of anti-corruption agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) stands out as a significant step towards addressing the pervasive issue of corruption. The EFCC and the ICPC were created with mandates to investigate, prosecute, and prevent acts of corruption within the public and private sectors. These agencies have been empowered with legal authority to probe cases of financial malfeasance, money laundering, and other forms of corrupt practices, and they have made notable strides in their enforcement efforts. For instance, the EFCC has been instrumental in prosecuting several high-profile individuals implicated in corruption scandals, including politicians, civil servants, and business leaders. Through diligent investigation and collaboration with law enforcement agencies both domestically and internationally, the EFCC has secured convictions and recovered significant assets linked to corrupt activities. Similarly, the ICPC has played a crucial role in uncovering and prosecuting cases of corruption, particularly within government institutions and public procurement processes.

Despite facing challenges such as inadequate funding, political interference, and capacity constraints, these anti-corruption agencies have demonstrated a commitment to their mandate and have achieved tangible results in the fight against corruption. Their efforts have helped to deter corrupt practices, promote accountability, and enhance public confidence in the government's commitment to tackling corruption. In addition to the establishment of anti-corruption agencies, the Nigerian government has pursued legislative reforms as part of its efforts to combat corruption and promote transparency and accountability in governance. These reforms have aimed to address systemic weaknesses and institutionalize mechanisms for preventing and detecting corrupt practices.

One notable legislative reform is the passage of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) in 2011. The FOIA represents a significant milestone in promoting transparency and citizen participation in government affairs by granting individuals the right to access information held by public authorities. By providing a legal framework for requesting and obtaining government records, the FOIA empowers citizens to hold public officials accountable and scrutinize government actions.

This legislation has been instrumental in enhancing transparency and reducing opportunities for corruption by increasing public oversight of government activities (Owolabi, 2019). Furthermore, the Nigerian government has introduced initiatives such as the Treasury Single Account (TSA) to strengthen financial management and minimize opportunities for financial mismanagement and embezzlement. The TSA is a centralized bank account system that consolidates all government revenues and payments, allowing for better monitoring and control of public funds. By centralizing government accounts, the TSA helps to prevent leakages and unauthorized withdrawals, thereby reducing the risk of corruption and ensuring that funds are used for their intended purposes (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2017).

These legislative reforms and initiatives demonstrate the government's commitment to addressing the root causes of corruption and promoting good governance practices. However, the effective implementation and enforcement of these reforms remain crucial for their success. Challenges such as bureaucratic resistance, insufficient capacity, and political interference may hinder the full realization of their objectives.

While progress has been made in combating corruption, significant challenges remain, and the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts in Nigeria continues to be a subject of debate. Sustaining momentum in the fight against corruption will require ongoing commitment from government institutions, civil society organizations, and the international community, as well as comprehensive reforms to address the root causes of corruption and strengthen institutional integrity. Additionally, the Nigerian government has also implemented reforms aimed at improving transparency and accountability in public institutions. Efforts to digitize public services and financial transactions have been made to reduce the opportunities for corruption. However, despite these initiatives, corruption remains a significant challenge in Nigeria, and much more needs to be done to address the root causes of the issue.

Governance in Nigeria

Governance in Nigeria has been a subject of intense scrutiny due to persistent challenges related to corruption, weak institutional capacity, and political instability. The country's governance landscape is characterized by a complex interplay of historical, political, economic, and social factors that shape the functioning of its institutions and the delivery of public services. Despite this constitutional provision, as well as the vast financial resources and substantial potential of the nation, good governance remains elusive in Nigeria, according to Dunu (2013), who also posited that, like most other democratic states, Nigeria embedded the ethics of good governance as possible benchmarks for democratic governance that are specified in the 1999 constitution. Oke (2010) claims that the current state of governance in Nigeria has produced a charade of democracy, which is widely recognized as a sign of good governance. The official practice of government has been taken over by proponents of the military to the extent that people now experience deception instead of civility, tyranny instead of the rule of law, political selection instead of elections, agony and premature death instead of long life and high life expectancy, misery instead of faith, and deficiency instead of efficiency. The majority of the so-called leaders have abandoned the constitution, disregarded the standards of polite discourse, and allowed discord to prevail. Nigeria

operates within a federal system of government, with power divided between the federal government and 36 states, as well as a Federal Capital Territory (FCT) in Abuja. This decentralized structure presents both opportunities and challenges for governance, as it allows for greater autonomy and responsiveness to local needs but also poses risks of duplication, inefficiency, and lack of coordination between different levels of government. At the federal level, executive power is vested in the President, who serves as both the head of state and government. The President is elected through a system of universal suffrage and is responsible for appointing ministers, implementing policies, and overseeing the administration of government affairs. However, the concentration of executive power in the presidency has often been criticized for fostering a culture of centralization and diminishing checks and balances on executive authority.

The legislative branch consists of the National Assembly, which is composed of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The National Assembly is responsible for making laws, approving the budget, and exercising oversight over the executive branch. Despite its constitutional mandate, the National Assembly has faced accusations of corruption, legislative gridlock, and inefficiency, which have undermined its effectiveness as a check on executive power. Regarding the Nigerian political system, it appears that Lord Acton's (1834–1902) insightful observation that “power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely” has been disregarded. The judiciary, while constitutionally independent, has also faced challenges related to corruption, political interference, and resource constraints. Judicial corruption undermines the rule of law and erodes public trust in the justice system, hindering efforts to combat impunity and hold corrupt officials accountable. Corruption remains a pervasive issue in Nigerian governance, with detrimental effects on public service delivery, economic development, and social cohesion. Weak institutional capacity, inadequate legal frameworks, and a culture of impunity have contributed to the persistence of corruption at all levels of government and across various sectors of society. Despite these challenges, there have been efforts to strengthen governance in Nigeria through reforms aimed at promoting transparency, accountability, and citizen participation. Initiatives such as the establishment of anti-corruption agencies, the passage of anti-corruption legislation, and the promotion of open government practices have demonstrated a commitment to addressing governance deficiencies and fostering a culture of integrity and ethical leadership. Without a true leader, a nation is inevitably headed toward exploitation, inertia, disorder, and anarchy. The effectiveness and caliber of Nigeria's leaders determine the country's overall standard of living. A nation requires dutiful, dependable leaders who uphold the highest standards of integrity and commitment if it is to prosper. The issue facing Nigerian leaders is that the country is ruled by individuals who brainwash their supporters, embezzle public funds intended for the nation's growth, and keep several bank accounts abroad while the majority of the population lives in poverty. According to Ekundayo (2017), one of the key markers of efficient governance is a corruption-free environment.

This is explained by the fact that good government and corruption are mutually exclusive. It has been found that the two terms are opposites; to have one means to have the other absent. Regrettably, it has frequently been claimed that the majority of Nigeria's presidents since independence are deeply and completely corrupt. It is also commonly acknowledged that if

corruption is allowed to be firmly established and encouraged in Nigeria, there will be no efficient governance there. However, the effectiveness of these reforms remains limited by systemic challenges, including political resistance, bureaucratic inertia, and societal norms that tolerate or even encourage corrupt behavior. Addressing these challenges requires sustained political will, institutional reforms, and civic engagement to build a more inclusive, responsive, and accountable governance system that can meet the needs and aspirations of all Nigerians.

Impact on Political Stability

Corruption has a profound impact on political stability, as it undermines the legitimacy of government institutions, erodes public trust in the political process, and fuels social unrest and political violence. The relationship between corruption, governance, and political stability is complex and multifaceted, with corruption often serving as both a cause and a consequence of political instability.

Relationship between Corruption, Governance, and Political Stability:

Corruption weakens governance by distorting decision-making processes, undermining the rule of law, and eroding the effectiveness of public institutions. When public officials prioritize personal gain over the public good, they compromise the integrity and legitimacy of the government, leading to a loss of public trust and confidence. This erosion of trust can exacerbate social divisions, fuel political polarization, and undermine the social contract between citizens and the state. Moreover, corruption distorts the allocation of resources, leading to economic inefficiency, social inequality, and widespread poverty. When public funds are embezzled or misappropriated through corrupt practices, essential services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure suffer, exacerbating socio-economic disparities and fueling grievances among marginalized communities. This can create fertile ground for political instability, as disenfranchised groups may resort to protest, civil disobedience, or even armed rebellion to express their grievances and challenge the legitimacy of the government.

Conversely, weak governance and political instability can also facilitate corruption by creating opportunities for rent-seeking, patronage, and illicit enrichment. In fragile or conflict-affected states, where institutions are weak and governance structures are fragile, corrupt networks may exploit power vacuums and exploit the lack of accountability to engage in illicit activities with impunity. This perpetuates a cycle of corruption and instability, further undermining the prospects for sustainable development and peace. Numerous case studies from around the world illustrate the detrimental impact of corruption on political stability. For example, in countries such as Nigeria, where corruption is pervasive and governance is weak, political instability is often fueled by corruption scandals, electoral fraud, and elite capture of state resources. The mismanagement of oil revenues, widespread embezzlement, and lack of accountability have contributed to social unrest, ethnic tensions, and violent conflicts in the Niger Delta region and other parts of the country.

Similarly, in countries like Ukraine, corruption has been a major driver of political instability, with entrenched networks of corruption undermining democratic institutions, fostering widespread

disillusionment with the political process, and fueling popular protests such as the Euromaidan movement in 2013-2014. The revelation of high-level corruption scandals involving top government officials, including the former President Viktor Yanukovich, sparked mass demonstrations and eventually led to his ouster from power. Statistical analysis of the impact of corruption on political stability confirms the negative correlation between corruption and governance indicators such as the Rule of Law Index, Control of Corruption Index, and Political Stability Index. Studies have shown that countries with higher levels of corruption tend to have weaker governance structures, lower levels of political stability, and higher risks of conflict and violence.

A study by Treisman (2000) found that countries with high levels of corruption were more likely to experience political instability, as measured by indicators such as the occurrence of coups, revolutions, and civil conflicts. Similarly, research by Reinikka and Svensson (2005) demonstrated that corruption undermines the effectiveness of public service delivery and erodes public trust in government institutions, leading to social unrest and political instability. The evidence suggests that corruption poses a significant threat to political stability and governance, with far-reaching implications for peace, security, and development. Addressing corruption requires comprehensive reforms aimed at strengthening institutional accountability, promoting transparency and integrity, and fostering a culture of ethical leadership and good governance.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this research underscore the pervasive and detrimental nature of corruption in Nigeria, which has been a longstanding impediment to the country's development and political stability. Through a comprehensive analysis of secondary data and scholarly research, several key findings emerge:

Firstly, corruption in Nigeria is deeply entrenched across various sectors of the economy and government institutions. It manifests in forms such as bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and patronage, undermining the legitimacy and effectiveness of governance systems.

Secondly, the root causes of corruption in Nigeria are multifaceted, with factors such as the lack of accountability, transparency, and weak institutional capacity serving as significant drivers. Poverty also emerges as a fundamental force motivating corrupt behavior, as individuals may resort to corruption out of a fear of poverty or a desire to escape it.

Thirdly, the implications of corruption for governance and political stability are profound. Corruption distorts decision-making processes, erodes public trust, and compromises the integrity of government institutions. This, in turn, fuels social unrest, exacerbates socio-economic disparities, and undermines the legitimacy of the government.

Efforts to combat corruption in Nigeria, such as the establishment of anti-corruption agencies like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), have been made. However, comprehensive reforms are needed to address the root causes of corruption and promote ethical governance.

Theoretical frameworks, such as the principal-agent theory, provide valuable insights into the dynamics of corruption and governance, emphasizing the importance of accountability and transparency in ensuring effective governance.

Furthermore, the challenges in governance in Nigeria, including weak institutional capacity and political instability, highlight the need for concerted efforts to strengthen governance mechanisms and promote adherence to democratic principles.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this research, several recommendations emerge to address the pervasive issue of corruption in Nigeria and promote good governance:

- **Strengthen Institutional Capacity:** Implement comprehensive reforms to enhance the capacity of government institutions to promote transparency, accountability, and integrity. This may include investing in training programs for public officials, improving regulatory frameworks, and bolstering oversight mechanisms.
- **Promote Ethical Leadership:** Foster a culture of ethical leadership within government and public institutions by incentivizing integrity and sanctioning corrupt behavior. This may involve implementing codes of conduct for public officials, promoting merit-based appointments, and establishing whistleblower protection mechanisms.
- **Enhance Civic Engagement:** Empower citizens to hold government accountable through increased civic education, awareness-raising campaigns, and participatory decision-making processes. Strengthening civil society organizations and promoting media freedom can also play a crucial role in fostering transparency and accountability.
- **Implement Anti-Corruption Measures:** Continuously strengthen and empower anti-corruption agencies such as the EFCC and ICPC to investigate, prosecute, and prevent acts of corruption. Provide adequate resources, legal authority, and independence to these agencies to effectively carry out their mandates.
- **Foster International Cooperation:** Engage in partnerships with international organizations, donor agencies, and other countries to combat transnational corruption and illicit financial flows. Exchange best practices, share information, and collaborate on investigations to enhance the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts.
- **Promote Economic Diversification:** Reduce the reliance on oil revenues and promote economic diversification to mitigate the risk of rent-seeking behavior and resource mismanagement. Invest in sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and technology to create employment opportunities and reduce poverty.
- **Ensure Judicial Independence:** Safeguard the independence of the judiciary and strengthen the rule of law to ensure impartial and effective adjudication of corruption cases. Provide adequate training and resources to judges and prosecutors, and expedite the resolution of corruption cases to enhance public trust in the judicial system.
- **Encourage Public-Private Partnerships:** Foster collaboration between the public and private sectors to promote transparency, accountability, and ethical business practices. Implement

mechanisms such as integrity pacts, corporate social responsibility initiatives, and anti-corruption compliance programs to prevent corruption in business transactions.

By implementing these recommendations, Nigeria can make significant strides towards combating corruption, promoting good governance, and fostering sustainable development for the benefit of all its citizens.

CONCLUSION

Corruption remains a significant challenge in Nigeria, with deep-rooted causes including the lack of accountability, transparency, and weak institutional capacity. Poverty also serves as a fundamental driver of corrupt behavior, perpetuating a vicious cycle of economic disparity and social injustice. The implications of corruption for governance and political stability are far-reaching, undermining the integrity of government institutions, eroding public trust, and fueling social unrest. Efforts to combat corruption, including the establishment of anti-corruption agencies and the implementation of reforms, have been made, but more concerted action is needed to address the root causes of corruption and promote ethical governance. Moving forward, it is essential for Nigeria to strengthen institutional capacity, promote ethical leadership, and enhance civic engagement to effectively combat corruption. International cooperation, economic diversification, and judicial independence are also critical factors in fostering transparency, accountability, and sustainable development.

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