Journal of Political Science and Leadership Research E-ISSN 2504-883X P-ISSN 2695 2432
Vol. 12 No.9 2026 www.iiardjournals.org Online version

Corruption and National Development in Nigeria: 1999 - 2024

Opikhara Augustine
Department of Political Science
Federal University Otuoke
Opikharaaugustine8@gmail.com
08039305497

Prof. John Kalama
Department of Political Science
Federal University Otuoke
Kalamaj@fuotuoke.edu.ng
08035432407

https://doi.org/10.56201/jpslr.vol.12.no9.2026.pg29.41

Abstract
Corruption remains a persistent global challenge and a major obstacle to national development in Nigeria. Despite repeated efforts by successive civilian and military governments and the establishment of anti-corruption institutions, corruption continues to be deeply embedded in the country's political and administrative structures. This study examined the effects of corruption on Nigeria's national development and the consequences it has produced for the country. The study was anchored on the Theory of Prebendalism and adopted a qualitative approach based entirely on secondary sources, including academic journals, government reports, official statistics, newspaper articles, historical records, and credible internet sources. The study found that corruption has significantly undermined Nigeria's economic growth and sustainable development, particularly since the return to democratic governance in 1999. Persistent challenges such as lack of political will, weak accountability, limited transparency, electoral malpractice, godfatherism, abuse of office, insecurity, and mismanagement of public resources have contributed to widespread poverty, unemployment, inequality, inadequate education, and poor social infrastructure. Corruption has also negatively affected critical sectors including healthcare, education, transportation, electricity, infrastructure, and security, while encouraging inefficient resource utilization, weak policy formulation and implementation, misappropriation of public funds, and reduced foreign direct investment. The study concludes that corruption remains a fundamental threat to Nigeria's national development and that meaningful progress requires stronger political commitment, transparency, accountability, effective institutions, and sustained anti-corruption reforms.

Keywords: *Corruption, Challenges, Development, National Development, Nigeria.*

Introduction

Corruption is a persistent global phenomenon that affects countries irrespective of their level of development, although its forms, intensity, and consequences differ across societies. In Nigeria, it includes bribery, embezzlement, money laundering, contract inflation, abuse of public resources, nepotism, employment racketeering, fraud, and other forms of misconduct involving the misuse of public or private authority. The abuse of public office for personal gain has undermined the effective utilization of Nigeria's resources, diverting funds meant for essential sectors such as education, healthcare, electricity, transportation, and infrastructure (Sunday & Usman, 2018; Adeagbo, 2015). Nigeria possesses substantial human and natural resources and has the largest population and one of the largest economies in Africa. Despite these advantages, corruption remains a major obstacle to economic growth, effective governance, and sustainable development. Its roots extend from the colonial period into the post-independence era, while patronage networks, ethnic divisions, and the discovery of oil have contributed to conditions that facilitate corrupt practices. Consequently, Nigeria's considerable oil wealth has existed alongside persistent poverty, inequality, unemployment, inadequate infrastructure, and weak public services (Ake, 2024). The country's consistently poor performance in international corruption assessments further reflects the persistence of the problem. Significant public resources have also been lost through embezzlement, misappropriation, oil theft, contract inflation, and related illicit activities. NEITI (2019), for instance, reported substantial losses associated with crude oil theft and pipeline vandalism. Corruption has weakened democratic institutions and undermined Nigeria's development processes by reducing accountability, distorting public policies, weakening institutions, discouraging investment, and limiting the effectiveness of government programmes. It has also encouraged political influence, godfatherism, electoral malpractice, and abuse of office. Previous research has established that corruption contributes to governance challenges and poses a threat to democratic processes in Nigeria (Jacob & Diepreye, 2024). As Obasanjo (2001) observed, corruption is closely associated with selfishness, greed, and the narrow interests of sections of the leadership class, making it a major obstacle to sustainable development and political stability. Since the return to democratic governance in 1999, successive administrations have introduced measures to combat corruption. The establishment of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) in 2000 and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in 2004 represented significant institutional responses. The administrations of Olusegun Obasanjo, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, Goodluck Jonathan, Muhammadu Buhari, and Bola Ahmed Tinubu all declared commitments to fighting corruption, although their approaches and outcomes varied. Despite prosecutions, investigations, asset recovery efforts, and other reforms, allegations of bribery, contract irregularities, financial misappropriation, political interference, and selective enforcement have persisted. Under Buhari, for example, the anti-corruption campaign received considerable attention, yet critics argued that it was selective and that corruption remained widespread (Petrus & Jackie, 2025; Abdul-Aziz & Isah, 2025). Under the Tinubu administration, corruption-related investigations involving senior public officials have continued to generate public concern.

Despite these efforts, corruption remains deeply embedded in Nigeria's political processes, public administration, procurement, elections, judiciary, and oil and gas sector. Its consequences include poverty, unemployment, poor healthcare and education, infrastructural decay, insecurity, weak public institutions, and ineffective implementation of development policies. The persistence of corruption is associated with weak political will, institutional deficiencies, political interference, selective enforcement, weak judicial processes, and inadequate accountability. Thus, the existence of anti-corruption institutions alone has not been sufficient to eliminate the problem.

Although existing studies have examined corruption in particular administrations, sectors, and institutions, there remains a need for a comprehensive assessment of corruption and national development across the democratic period from 1999 to 2024. In particular, limited attention has been given to the changing trends of corruption across successive administrations, its cumulative effects on national development, the factors sustaining its persistence, and the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures throughout the period.

Against this background, this study examines corruption and national development in Nigeria from 1999 to 2024. It focuses on corruption trends, its effects on national development, the factors responsible for its persistence, and measures for strengthening anti-corruption efforts. The study argues that addressing corruption requires not only effective enforcement agencies but also stronger institutions, transparency, accountability, ethical leadership, effective judicial processes, and sustained political commitment to national development.

Research Questions

The study seeks to address the following research questions: What is the nature of the relationship between corruption and national development in Nigeria from 1999 to 2024? In what ways has corruption undermined good leadership in Nigeria? What are the major manifestations of corruption across different sectors in Nigeria? What are Nigerians' perceptions of public office holders and corruption?

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to assess the implications of corruption for national development in Nigeria from 1999 to 2024. Specifically, the study aims to assess the relationship between corruption and national development in Nigeria; examine the ways in which corruption undermines good leadership; identify the major manifestations of corruption across different sectors in Nigeria; and assess Nigerians' perceptions of public office holders and corruption.

Significance of the Study

Corruption remains a major governance and development challenge in Nigeria, affecting institutional effectiveness, public service delivery, economic performance, and citizens' trust in government. This study is significant because it examines how corruption has influenced national development during the Fourth Republic (1999–2024), with particular attention to its manifestations, consequences, and implications for governance.

The study provides useful insights for policymakers, anti-corruption agencies, public institutions, researchers, and civil society organizations in strengthening transparency, accountability, institutional integrity, and ethical leadership. It also contributes to public awareness and scholarly knowledge on corruption and national development in Nigeria and provides a basis for further research and policy interventions.

Political corruption and development

Political corruption has remained a persistent challenge to Nigeria's national development since independence. The early political leadership was affected by self-interest and corrupt practices, contributing to political instability and eventually the 1966 military coup. Since then, corruption has become deeply rooted in the political system, particularly through the looting, misappropriation, and diversion of public resources (Nyoni, 2018; John, 2016).

Political corruption has affected major government institutions, including the legislature, executive, security agencies, and police. Allegations of bribery within the National Assembly illustrate how political interests can influence public decision-making. For instance, allegations were made that lawmakers received financial inducements and other benefits in exchange for supporting favourable decisions (Imoh et al., 2014). Similarly, the Dasukigate scandal demonstrated the diversion and alleged misuse of funds allocated for national security under the Office of the National Security Adviser. Resources intended to strengthen national security were reportedly diverted to political associates, campaigns, and other unrelated activities, representing a serious abuse of public trust (Obinna, 2022). The consequences of political corruption are also evident within law-enforcement institutions. Former Inspector-General of Police Tafa Balogun, who had publicly supported anti-corruption efforts, was later indicted, convicted, and removed from office over allegations of corrupt enrichment involving substantial public resources. His case demonstrates the contradiction that can arise when individuals entrusted with combating corruption become implicated in corrupt practices themselves (Otive, 2008). Political corruption has consequently contributed to Nigeria's persistent underdevelopment. Public resources that should be invested in infrastructure, education, healthcare, security, and other development programmes are often diverted for private or political interests. The protection of politically connected individuals from effective prosecution has also raised concerns about selective enforcement and weakened public confidence in anti-corruption institutions (John, 2016). Overall, political corruption remains a significant impediment to Nigeria's national development. Although anti-corruption agencies have recorded convictions and recovered substantial assets, the continued prevalence of corrupt practices demonstrates the need for stronger accountability, transparency, impartial enforcement, ethical leadership, and institutional reforms. As Okechukwu (2024) observes, unless there is a fundamental change in the manner public offices are perceived and exercised, corruption will continue to undermine Nigeria's development prospects.

Corruption and economy growth in Nigeria

Nigeria's social structure and political architecture have created conditions that allow corruption to thrive, particularly through clientelist and patronage relationships influenced by ethnic divisions. These relationships often encourage the diversion and redistribution of public resources for the benefit of political networks rather than the wider population (John, 2016). Consequently, corruption weakens public institutions, reduces state capacity, destabilizes the economy, and reinforces poverty and inequality (Ake, 2024).

The effects of corruption are evident in Nigeria's poor development outcomes. Misappropriation, embezzlement, and bribery divert resources intended for infrastructure, healthcare, education, and other public services into private hands. This contributes to persistent poverty, inequality, and inadequate social services. Nigeria's low Human Development Index (HDI) ranking has also been associated with infrastructure deficits and institutional weaknesses that limit the state's capacity to effectively provide essential services (UNDP, 2020; Obinna, 2022).

Corruption has further weakened the moral and institutional foundations of Nigerian society. It undermines the socio-economic rights of vulnerable citizens, weakens democracy and the rule of law, and constrains economic growth and development (Segun & Olanrewaju, 2012). The magnitude of public resources lost to corrupt practices is demonstrated by a federal audit report, which revealed that more than ₦23 billion was lost across ten major ministries in 2001 (Okechukwu, 2024).

Overall, corruption remains a major threat to Nigeria's national development. By diverting public resources, weakening institutions, encouraging failed development projects, and contributing to poverty and national debt, corruption continues to impede the country's social, economic, and political progress (Segun & Olanrewaju, 2012).

Corruption and under development

Corruption remains a major cause of underdevelopment in Nigeria, affecting the country's economic, political, and social systems. It manifests through lack of accountability, diversion of public resources, discrimination, ethnicity, incompetence, and institutional inefficiency, thereby weakening public trust and hindering development (Okafor, 2012; Philips, 2025).

A major concern is that some officials responsible for fighting corruption have themselves been implicated in corrupt practices. The Obasanjo administration, despite establishing anti-corruption institutions, faced allegations involving the Transcorp shares controversy and attempts to secure a third term through alleged inducements to lawmakers (Sunday & Usman, 2018; John, 2016). Other cases, including the Halliburton scandal, power-sector investigations, and the fuel subsidy controversy, further demonstrate the damaging influence of political corruption on development (Sadiq & Abdullahi, 2013). Corruption also promotes capital flight, brain drain, revenue loss, and the misallocation of human and financial resources. It discourages investment, reduces productivity, and constrains economic growth (Namo et al., 2024). Consequently, the diversion and mismanagement of public resources have contributed to poor public services, inadequate electricity, infrastructural decay, and ineffective development programmes, making corruption a significant factor in Nigeria's persistent underdevelopment (Okechukwu, 2025).

Corruption and governance

Governance refers to the processes through which public institutions make decisions, manage resources, mobilize citizens, and deliver services to achieve societal and national development goals (Namo et al., 2024). It involves the effective use of authority, institutions, and partnerships to organize social and economic activities and promote the welfare of citizens (Salihu, 2022). Good governance therefore depends on transparency, accountability, effective resource management, and efficient service delivery. Corruption significantly undermines these principles and contributes to Nigeria's underdevelopment. It results in revenue loss, capital flight, brain drain, inefficient use of human and financial resources, and unnecessary bureaucratic procedures that discourage both local and foreign investment (Asobie, 2012; Namo et al., 2024). Consequently, corruption weakens the capacity of government institutions to perform their responsibilities effectively. The case of former Accountant-General of the Federation, Ahmed Idris, illustrates how corruption can undermine public financial management. His arrest in 2022 over allegations of money laundering and misappropriation of public funds, including alleged manipulation of government financial management systems, raised serious concerns about accountability within Nigeria's public sector (Namo et al., 2024).

Despite the establishment of anti-corruption agencies and more than two decades of democratic governance, corruption continues to affect key institutions, including the judiciary, legislature, police, universities, customs, immigration, and the executive. The Goodluck Jonathan administration, for example, faced several corruption allegations involving public officials and government contracts, including the procurement of vehicles by the aviation ministry, security contracts, and alleged diversion of petroleum-sector resources (Sunday & Usman, 2018; The Storey Report, 2016).

Overall, the persistence of corruption demonstrates a significant weakness in Nigeria's governance system. Rather than supporting effective service delivery and national development, corrupt practices continue to weaken institutions, undermine public trust, waste national resources, and hinder Nigeria's progress toward sustainable development

Theoretical Framework.

This study is anchored on **Prebendal Theory**, principally associated with Richard Joseph (1987). The theory provides a useful framework for explaining the relationship between corruption, political power, and national development in Nigeria. It is particularly relevant to understanding how public offices and state resources can be converted into sources of private, familial, ethnic, religious, and political benefits.

The concept of *prebend* originated from the ecclesiastical system, where it referred to a portion of an institution's income allocated to a member. Joseph adapted the concept to explain African political systems, arguing that public offices are sometimes regarded as personal sources of wealth and privilege by political office holders and their associates (Okechukwu, 2024). Within this framework, individuals in positions of authority may perceive access to public resources as an entitlement and use state funds and opportunities to benefit themselves, their families, political supporters, and social networks.

Prebendalism is closely associated with patron-client relationships, where political elites distribute public resources, appointments, contracts, and other benefits in exchange for loyalty and political support. Such practices encourage favouritism, nepotism, abuse of office, and the diversion of state resources, particularly where merit, transparency, and accountability are weakened (Gideon et al., 2016; Ogunode & Shofoyeke, 2021).

The relevance of Prebendal Theory to this study lies in its ability to explain how the misuse and personalization of public office contribute to corruption and underdevelopment in Nigeria. When state institutions are treated as avenues for personal or group enrichment, resources meant for education, healthcare, infrastructure, employment, and other development programmes may be diverted. This consequently weakens institutional effectiveness, public accountability, equitable resource distribution, and the capacity of government to deliver meaningful development outcomes. Therefore, Prebendal Theory provides an appropriate lens for understanding the persistence of corruption in Nigeria by linking political patronage, identity-based interests, abuse of public office, and the misappropriation of state resources. It demonstrates that corruption is not simply the result of individual misconduct but is also sustained by political and institutional structures that enable public resources to be appropriated for private and group interests (Joseph, 1987; Abomaye et al., 2022).

Application of Prebendal Theory to the Study

The application of Prebendal Theory provides a useful explanation of the persistence of corruption and its consequences for national development in Nigeria. The theory suggests that public offices can be treated as avenues for personal enrichment, whereby office holders appropriate state resources for themselves, their families, associates, and political supporters rather than using such resources to promote the public interest (Okechukwu, 2024).

In Nigeria, this pattern is reflected in the patrimonial and neo-patrimonial nature of political relationships, where the distinction between public and private interests is often blurred. Political power becomes personalized, while patronage, loyalty, ethnicity, and personal connections influence access to government resources and opportunities (Abomaye et al., 2022). Consequently, practices such as favouritism, nepotism, embezzlement, abuse of office, and diversion of public funds can become normalized within the political system.

The theory is illustrated by several cases involving Nigerian public officials. For instance, the Senate Ad Hoc Committee on the humanitarian crisis in the North-East indicted former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Babachir Lawal, over an alleged ₦200 million contract involving a company reportedly linked to him (Wikipedia, 2025). Similarly, allegations involving former governors such as James Ibori, Lucky Igbinedion, and Attahiru Bafarawa, as well as former Petroleum Minister Diezani Alison-Madueke, demonstrate concerns surrounding the use of political office for personal enrichment (John, 2016).

These examples demonstrate the central argument of Prebendal Theory: control of political office can provide access to state resources, which may subsequently be appropriated for private or group interests (Okechukwu, 2024). Such practices weaken accountability and institutional effectiveness while diverting resources from development programmes. They also contribute to poverty, unemployment, insecurity, and poor public service delivery.

Therefore, the theory is relevant to this study because it connects the personalization of political power and patron-client relationships with corruption and underdevelopment. It demonstrates that corruption in Nigeria is not merely an individual problem but is also sustained by political structures and practices that facilitate the private appropriation of public resources.

Research Design

The study adopted a single-case ex post facto research design, which is appropriate for examining events that have already occurred and whose variables cannot be ethically or practically manipulated. Since corruption is an illegal and harmful phenomenon, it cannot be experimentally created or controlled. The design therefore allows the researcher to examine the effects and patterns of corruption using existing evidence without interfering with the phenomenon (Oji et al., 2014).

Ex post facto research focuses on analysing existing variables and events after they have occurred, without experimental manipulation or randomization (Nnamdi, 2012). The design is suitable for this study because corruption and its effects on Nigeria's national development have developed over several decades. It therefore provides a useful framework for examining historical evidence and understanding the long-term relationship between corruption and national development.

Methods of Data Collection and Data Analysis

The study adopted a qualitative documentary approach, relying on secondary data from academic journals, government reports, policy documents, newspapers, official records, and credible online sources. Reports from the EFCC and ICPC were also reviewed to examine corruption trends, anti-corruption efforts, and their implications for national development.

The data were analysed using content analysis and qualitative descriptive analysis. Content analysis was used to identify major themes and patterns, while qualitative descriptive analysis helped to organize and interpret the information obtained from the various sources (Oji et al., 2014; Nnamdi, 2012). These methods enabled the study to examine the relationship between corruption, governance, and national development in Nigeria.

Journal of Political Science and Leadership Research E-ISSN 2504-883X P-ISSN 2695 2432
Vol. 12 No.9 2026 www.iiardjournals.org Online version

Empirical Verification

Corruption causes Negative Economic Growth

Corruption has significantly undermined Nigeria's economic growth by reducing public revenue, weakening investment, and diverting resources meant for development into private hands. Bribery, embezzlement, misappropriation, and illicit financial flows have contributed to persistent poverty, inequality, unemployment, and infrastructural deficits (Myint, 2000; Ake, 2024). Evidence of this problem is reflected in the mismanagement of public resources across government institutions. For instance, the ICPC reported that N147 billion in excess funds had been illegally diverted from the 2020 budget by some MDAs, while several health institutions were found involved in budget manipulation (Obinna, 2022). Similarly, corruption has contributed to the decline of major public enterprises and infrastructure, including electricity, telecommunications, and railway services (Abomaye et al., 2022).

The diversion of resources in universities and teaching hospitals further demonstrates the economic consequences of corruption. Billions of naira allocated to public institutions have reportedly been misappropriated, while Nigeria continues to face budget deficits, deteriorating infrastructure, poverty, and unemployment (Nsirimovu & Okwuwada, 2024). HEDA (2021) also estimated that Nigeria loses between $15 and $18 billion annually through illicit financial flows, further weakening the country's economic capacity (Obinna, 2022).

Corruption has equally affected major development projects. The alleged mismanagement of funds allocated to power projects and rural electrification has contributed to persistent electricity challenges and economic underdevelopment (Abomaye et al., 2022). The oil sector, which remains central to Nigeria's economy, has also been affected by corruption, lack of transparency, and abuse of office (Philips, 2025). The Malabu Oil Scandal, involving the controversial $1.1 billion oil deal, illustrates how the mismanagement of natural resources can deprive citizens of resources meant for national development (Florence, 2017).

Transparency International's corruption ranking from 1999 to 2023 alludes to this:

Table 1: Global Corruption Ranking for Nigeria 1999 – 2023

S/N	Year	Score	Position	Number of Countries
1	1999	16	98	99
2	2000	12	90	91
3	2001	10	90	91
4	2002	16	101	102
5	2003	14	132	133
6	2004	16	144	146
7	2005	19	152	159
8	2006	22	142	163
9	2007	22	147	179
10	2008	27	121	180
11	2009	25	130	180
12	2010	24	134	178
13	2011	24	143	184
14	2012	27	139	170
15	2013	25	144	177
16	2014	27	136	175
17	2015	26	136	168
18	2016	28	136	176
19	2017	27	148	180
20	2018	27	144	180
21	2019	26	146	180
22	2020	25	149	179
23	2021	25	149	180
24	2022	24	150	180
25	2023	25	145	180
26	2024	26	140	180

Source: Transparency International (2024)

Corruption Increased poverty and inequality

Corruption remains a major factor contributing to poverty and inequality in Nigeria. The diversion and misappropriation of public resources intended for healthcare, education, infrastructure, and social programmes weaken service delivery and reduce the government's capacity to improve citizens' welfare. It also contributes to unemployment, inflation, fiscal irresponsibility, and the widening gap between the wealthy and the poor (Nnyeneim, 2022).

The problem is further reinforced by the deep-rooted nature of corruption within Nigeria's political and socio-economic structures. Public resources are often directed towards private interests or expensive projects, while essential services such as roads, schools, hospitals, electricity, and rural water supply remain inadequate. Consequently, communities, particularly those in resource-producing areas, continue to experience deprivation despite the country's substantial natural resources (Sunday, 2018; Imoh, 2014).

The scale of financial resources lost through corruption further illustrates its impact on poverty. Sunday (2018) reported that 55 major corruption cases prosecuted by the EFCC between 1999 and 2012 involved approximately N1.354 trillion. Such resources, if properly utilized, could have supported healthcare, education, infrastructure, employment creation, and other programmes capable of reducing poverty and improving living standards.

Corruption therefore deepens poverty and inequality by weakening economic growth, distorting public spending, undermining social programmes, and limiting opportunities for human development. It remains a significant obstacle to improving the welfare of Nigerians and achieving inclusive and sustainable national development (Nnyeneim, 2022; Okechukwu, 2024).

Corruption Weakened Investment

Corruption significantly weakens investment in Nigeria by creating an unstable business environment, increasing transaction costs, and discouraging both domestic and foreign investors. The diversion of public funds also reduces investment in essential infrastructure such as roads, schools, hospitals, and energy, thereby limiting economic productivity and national development (Leena & Tommy, 2025).

The persistence of corruption is reflected in Nigeria's poor performance on global corruption indicators. Transparency International's 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Nigeria 145th out of 180 countries, with a score of 25 out of 100, indicating the continued prevalence of systemic corruption. This environment has contributed to declining investor confidence, with FDI inflows reportedly falling from \$3.31 billion in 2021 to an estimated net outflow of \$190 million in 2022 (Mustapha & Nura, 2025).

Corruption also contributes to the abandonment and duplication of development projects, while practices such as contract inflation and kickbacks divert resources away from productive investment. Examples include abandoned steel, iron ore, paper, and aluminium projects across the country (Okechukwu, 2024). These practices increase the cost of doing business, weaken public infrastructure, reduce investor confidence, and ultimately hinder sustainable economic growth and national development.

Erosion of public Trust and Governance Caused by corruption

Corruption remains a major obstacle to Nigeria's progress and has consistently frustrated the achievement of national development goals despite the country's enormous natural and human resources (Ogbewere, 2015). Although corruption is widely acknowledged as a serious problem in Nigeria, it remains deeply rooted in the country's political, administrative, and economic systems. The diversion of public revenue, investment capital, foreign aid, and citizens' incomes has weakened public institutions and contributed to the deterioration of basic social services (Renna & Raj, 2017). Those entrusted with managing the country's common resources often divert them for personal and political interests, thereby betraying the trust placed in them by the Nigerian people. For instance, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) recovered over N17.7 billion from the former Inspector-General of Police, Tafa Balogun. He was also accused of conspiring with some governors and influential individuals to conceal serious criminal activities (Iyanda et al., 2016). Such conduct is particularly disturbing given the constitutional and professional responsibilities attached to the office of Inspector-General of Police. Similarly, excessive and questionable public expenditure by political and public office holders demonstrates how corruption contributes to the misuse of public resources. For example, the former Managing Director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Gaius Obaseki, was alleged to have incurred hotel expenses of about N155,000 per night, amounting to approximately N4.7 million monthly and N56.6 million annually (Otive, 2018). Such expenditure raises serious concerns about accountability and responsible management of public resources. At the state level, former governors such as Joshua Dariye of Plateau State, Jolly Nyame of Taraba State, and Orji Uzor Kalu of Abia State faced allegations and prosecutions relating to the diversion and misappropriation of public funds for personal and business interests (Segun & Olanrewaju, 2011). These cases demonstrate how public offices can be abused for private and political gains at the expense of national and state development.

The National Assembly, which is expected to serve as an important institution for democracy, accountability, and good governance, has also been associated with allegations of corruption and financial impropriety. Between 1999 and 2019, the institution faced several allegations involving questionable contract awards, excessive allowances, and other financial irregularities. It was reported that about N1.8 trillion was spent on the maintenance of the National Assembly during the period. In 2018, Senator Shehu Sani also alleged that senators received approximately N13.5 million monthly as running costs, apart from other allowances (Okechukwu, 2024).

These practices demonstrate how corruption and poor accountability in the management of public resources can weaken democratic institutions, reduce public confidence, and divert resources that could otherwise be used to promote infrastructure, social services, and sustainable national development.

Conclusion

The examination of corruption and national development in Nigeria from 1999 to 2024 reveals a persistent and troubling pattern of governance failure and developmental setbacks. Corruption has become deeply entrenched within the country's political and institutional structures, weakening public trust and undermining the effective management of national resources. Its consequences extend beyond financial losses to affect the overall welfare and quality of life of citizens. The evidence indicates that corruption has significantly constrained economic growth, infrastructure development, social service delivery, institutional effectiveness, peace and security, and democratic governance. It has also encouraged electoral malpractice, weakened accountability mechanisms, distorted public expenditure, and discouraged foreign and domestic investment. Consequently, Nigeria's abundant natural and human resources have not translated adequately into improved living conditions and sustainable national development.

Although corruption is a global phenomenon, its persistent and systemic character in Nigeria requires a stronger and more coordinated response. Combating it demands genuine political will, institutional independence, effective law enforcement, transparency, accountability, and strict sanctions for corrupt practices. Anti-corruption institutions must also be strengthened and protected from political interference.

Sustainable national development cannot be achieved where public resources are continuously diverted for private and political interests. Nigeria therefore needs a governance system that prioritizes the public interest, responsible resource management, merit, accountability, and the rule of law. Sustained commitment to these principles will be essential for reducing corruption, restoring public confidence, and placing Nigeria on a more credible path toward inclusive and sustainable national development.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed to address corruption and promote national development in Nigeria:

1. **Promote leadership by example:** The fight against corruption should begin with political leaders. Public officials must demonstrate integrity, accountability, and transparency and ensure that their conduct reflects the principles they publicly advocate.

2. **Review the constitutional immunity provision**: The 1999 Constitution should be reviewed to address the immunity granted to certain political office holders in relation to criminal proceedings. This would strengthen accountability, discourage impunity, and ensure that public officials are subject to the rule of law.

3. **Strengthen institutional collaboration:** Effective anti-corruption efforts require cooperation among the executive, legislature, judiciary, media, civil society, private sector, and anti-corruption agencies such as the EFCC, ICPC, and Code of Conduct Bureau. These institutions should operate independently and coordinate their efforts to improve enforcement and accountability.

4. **Increase public participation and awareness:** Citizens should be adequately educated on the causes and consequences of corruption and encouraged to participate actively in monitoring government activities. Public involvement in oversight and reporting of corrupt practices is essential for making the fight against corruption a collective responsibility rather than solely a government function.

Reference

Adeagbo, M. O. (2015). *Corruption: The bane of national development in Nigeria*. International Journal of Economic Development Research and Investment, 6(2), 20–34.

Ake, Modupe. (2024). *Corruption and its impact on sustainable development in Nigeria*. Wukari International Studies Journal, 8(4).

Asobie, H. A. (2012). Conceptual, theoretical and empirical issues on the interface between corruption, governance and development. In H. Mohammed, M. T. Aluaigba, & A. Kabir (Eds.), *Corruption, governance and development in Nigeria* (pp. 2–28). Aminu Kano Centre for Democratic Research and Training.

Chukwuemeka, E., Ugwuanyi, B. J., & Ewuim, N. (2012). Curbing corruption in Nigeria: The imperatives of good leadership. *African Research Review*, 6(3), 338–358. https://doi.org/10.4314/afrrev.v6i3.25

Gideon, W., Ishaku, R., & Modu, M. (2016). *The chemistry of corruption in Nigeria and the way forward*. University of Maiduguri / Taraba State University / Ramat Polytechnic

Hoffmann, L. K., & Hilton, T. (2025). *Corruption in Nigeria: Explainer — Nigeria loses billions and public trust*. Chatham House.

Human and Environmental Development Agenda (HEDA). (2021). Corruption: Nigeria loses over $15 billion to illicit financial flow annually. *Vanguard*, 26 April.

Imoh-Ita, I., & Sampson, G. (2014). Political corruption and development challenges in Nigeria. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 19(6), 10–15.

Jack, M. E. (2022). The effect of corruption on economic development in Nigeria. *Global Journal of Human-Social Science: Political Science*, 22(6).

Jacob, O., & Diepreye, F. P. (2024). Corruption and crisis of governance in Nigeria: A threat to democracy. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Management Research, 10*(6), 47–67.

Ladi, S. M., Daniel, H. E., & Umar, A. (2025). Corruption as a barrier to effective governance in key sectors of Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Sciences*. https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.90400356

Mohammed, H., Aluaigba, M. T., & Kabir, A. (Eds.). (2012). *Corruption, governance and development in Nigeria*. Aminu Kano Centre for Democratic Research.

Namo, I. B., Agwadu, L., & Amakoromo, W. T. (2024). Governance, corruption and underdevelopment in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. *Afropolitan Journal of Politics and Development*, 2024. https://doi.org/10.62154/s1sxsq39

Nyoni, T. (2018). The war against corruption in Nigeria: Devouring or sharing the national cake? *Munich Personal RePEc Archive*. https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/87615/

Obinna, U. (2022). Institutional corruption as the bane of critical infrastructure protection in Nigeria. *Security Defence Quarterly*, 39(3).

Odeh, M. A. (2015). Effects of corruption on good governance in Nigeria. *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, 4(3), 292–307.

Oji, R. O. (2014). *Logic and method of political inquiry: An introductory guide*. Rex Charles & Patrick.

Oji, O. R. (2024). Corruption and national development: A study of Nigeria (2015–2023). *Integrity Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 5(3), 148–160. https://doi.org/10.31248/IJAH2024.172

Ojo, J. S. (2016). Looting the looters: The paradox of anti-corruption crusades in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (1999–2014). *Canadian Social Science*, 12(9), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.3968/8794

Oshewolo, S., & Olanrewaju, J. (2011). From hell: The surge of corruption in Nigeria (1999–2007). *Academic Leadership: The Online Journal*, 9(1). https://doi.org/10.58809/KVXF1755

Philips, O. O., & Eyo, M. J. (2022). The effect of corruption on economic development in Nigeria. *Global Journal of Human-Social Science (Political Science)*, 22(6).

Sadiq, M. Y., & Abdullahi, M. (2013). Corruption as the bane of Nigeria's development: Causes and remedies. *International Journal of Economic Development Research and Investment*, 4(1).

Salihu, H. A. (2022). Corruption: An impediment to good governance. *Journal of Financial Crime*, 29(1), 101–110. https://doi.org/10.1108/JFC-11-2020-0235

Udo, N. U. (2022). Does corruption cause income inequality and long-run poverty? *MPRA Paper*, No. 113588.

Ugwuanyi, B., Chukwuemeka, E., & Ewuim, N. (2012). Curbing corruption in Nigeria: The imperatives of good leadership. *African Research Review*, 6(3), 338–358.

Van Duyne, P. C., & Harvey, J. H. (2025). Corruption in Nigeria: Indifference and neglect. *Trends in Organized Crime*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-025-09574-4

Williams, P. (2019). Extortion practices in government institutions. *Journal of Law and Public Policy*, 14(2), 112–129.

Wikipedia. (2025). *Corruption in Nigeria*. Retrieved from https://wikipedia.org.