CORRUPTION: DEFINITIONS, THEORIES AND CONCEPTS

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ABSTRACT
Corruption, some people believe is becoming a culture but this paper admits that it is a culture in Nigeria and in other parts of the world as well. After all, what is culture? Culture is the way of life. By this simple definition of culture and because corruption is found and practiced everywhere and is even entrenched virtually in all segments of the society with many people (if not all) deeply involved in it, corruption then is a culture. Corruption is a global devil that has devoided human intelligibility in its social context. As an anti-social behavior and a plague that has eaten so deep into the entire fabric of the Nigerian society, it confers undue benefits on few people contrary to legal and moral norms of the society. Prior to its contagious and incurable infection, it undermines authorities’ effort to provide welfare for all citizens as the resources to do this are in the hands or at the reach of few of the populace. This paper then examines definitions, theories and concepts of corruption as a ‘die-hard’ phenomenon that has caused terrible retrogression in Nigerian society. The paper therefore concludes by saying that ‘due process’ and ‘fair play’ are the only antidotes that can fight this monster called corruption. The fight must be a genuine one (i.e. act what we preach and preach what we act) if Nigerians desire economic and democratic growth and this can only be possible by a determined, blunt, firm and resolved government.

INTRODUCTION
Corruption is a common word used by both adults and children because it is found in every aspect of Nigeria. This monster called corruption has now been nick named in most Nigerian languages especially in the three major languages! Ndokwu (2004) says: the Igbos call it Igbozu, the Yorubas call it Egunje while the Hausas call it Chuachua. People no longer frown or feel ashamed to engage in corrupt practices! Chuachua/Egunje or Igbozu is now acceptable and it is possible to hear someone openly complaining that there is no Chuachua, Egunjue or Igbozu at his or her place of work and as such a person might quickly resign if he or she finds another work where there is opportunity for Chuachua. It is as bad as that!

Corruption is a global phenomenon. It is not the exclusive preserve of any nation, race or section of the world but transcends national boundaries and frontiers and symbolizes phenomenal universal unwholesomeness politically, Aluko (2009) opined. This menace has led to situations like slow movement of files in offices, police exortion of toll fees, port congestion, queues at passport offices and petrol stations, ghost workers syndrome, election irregularities, among others (Dike, 2005, Ihenacho, 2004, Oliyide and Odeku, 2002 and Oloja 2002 in Aluko, (2009).

Government officials further still corruptly enrich themselves by converting Government money in their custody to their own use, force citizens to pay bribe money, and citizens also induce the officials with bribes to get whatever they want from Government or company offices. Though corruption is found in every society, it is very common in Nigeria, and no one seems to be free from it either as a doer or as a victim.
Corruption Defined

Corruption is a social problem found in various “degrees and forms in all but the most primitive societies”. Staats (1972) noted. Ekiyor (2005) in his broad view of corruption defined it as the unlawful use of official power or influence by an official of the government either to enrich himself or further his course and/or any other person at the expense of the public, in contravention of his oath of office and/or contrary to the conventions or laws that are in force. It is very unfortunate that this menace knows not any time nor period; it happens anytime or period of any nation’s history. According to Gould and Kolb (1964) in support of the above contend that corruption is not a characteristic of a one period in political history nor of any one country…..it is endemic in both authoritarian and party systems of government. Further still as an evidence that the history of corruption is as old as the world, Scott (1972) is of the view that corruption ‘must be understood as a regular, repetitive and integral part of the operation of most political system’. Another view about corruption is that it is intentional. This view was heralded by Brooks in (1970) who believed the corrupt official knows his duties “but it is neglected or mis-performed for reasons narrower than those which the state intends. He went further to say the difference between a corrupt official and inefficient one is that “the corrupt official must know the better and choose the worse (but) the inefficient official does not know any better” (ibid). He further maintained that “in either case the external circumstances may appear to be closely similar, and the immediate results may be equally harmful” (ibid).

Corruption still as a common phenomenon found not only in the so called developing countries and societies, but also in the developed societies such as Europe, America, Japan and the former Soviet Union regardless of their structural and cultural differences. Some authors have argued that corruption is prevalent in third world countries however, evidence has shown that corruption is even prevalent in developed countries and each country be it in developing or developed world devices suitable method to deal with corruption. For instance a U.S Fluor a multinational construction firm according to Minakimes (2009) was quoted to have said that:

*fighting corruption and bribery, CEO Allan Boeckman helped developed a cross-industry sharing program of best practices, along with a set of strict principles to follow. Fluor uses a combination of an ethics hotline for reporting crime, an open door policy to encourage managers to consult with executives for guidance, anticorruption training sessions, a “zero-tolerance” policy for infractions and overall transparency in its operations to minimize inappropriate behaviour.*

The above quotation confirms that a society without corruption would not have put in place an anti-corruption training session. This further proves that corruption does not know boundary, culture, society and that there is no human occupation that is immunized against its practices.

Augustus Adebayo (2004) explains corruption via faulty recruitment of employees exercise in the Nigerian Public service, he says:

*one of the banes of the Nigerian Public Service is the recruitment of mediocre or totally unsuitable candidates in preference to candidates of high merit. The reasons for this ugly situation can be traced directly to nepotism. Corruption plays only a little part and is generally prevalent in the recruitment of every junior employees like messengers and clerks. In this category of recruitment, the recruiting agents are generally officials of*
lower-middle rank who see an opportunity of making some money on the side by collecting little bribes from applicants.

Though this situation is reprehensible, it might not be the heart of the matter, the selection of unsuitable candidates that usually undermines efficiency and lowers performance in the public service occurs in the recruitment of higher grades of staff. However in the above scenario, we see nepotism, a dimension or form of corruption in Nigeria at work in which a special form of favoritism is used by office holders to prefer their kinfolk and family members that may not be qualified at the expense of candidates of high merit. This occurs as Amundse (1997) and Girling (1997) opined, when one is exempted from the application of certain laws or regulations or given undue preference in the allocation of scarce resources.

Corruption we all know does not yield to easy definition, thus writers’ definitions have been varied and divergent. Akinseye (2000) attempts at describing it as ‘mother of all crimes’ and identifies four forms of corruption as bribery, prebendalism, graft and nepotism. EFCC a commission that deals with economic issue through Ngwakwe (2009) defines corruption from economic perspective as follows:

*the non-violent criminal and illicit activity committed with objectives of earning wealth illegally either individually or in a group or organized manner thereby violating existing legislation governing the economic activities of government and its administration*

From the various foregoing definitions of corruption, one can see that there is hardly consensus on the meaning of the term. However, one thing is certain about those various definitions is that they lack precise elements that constitute corruption. Nonetheless they all have enough indicators as to conducts that might be “judged as corrupt and the distinguishing element of such conduct is some moral failing or depravity” (Ibrahim 2003).

**Conceptual Framework of Corruption**

No doubt, corruption is the unethical or illegal advantages procured through official position. Justice Mustapha Akanbi (2003), the distinguished former chairman of ICPC classified corruption in Nigeria into three categories, these are:

I. street level corruption which describes corruption in administration as shown in day to day experiences of the citizens in their interactions with officials.

II. business corruption that occurs among low to medium sized business with or without active connivance of the equivalent public sector official; and

III. high level corruption, which involves huge sums of money in high power centers in finance, public service and administration.

Petty corruption headed is highly visible, pervasive, endemic and in some cases institutionalized. This institutionalization of corruption according to him, is possible because of the poor standard of ethics is of course a function of other social malaise like greed. Stiglitz, J.E (2002) in his own view, argues that corruption is systematic, a continuous cycle of deliberate initiative erected by those in authority and beneficial to politically structured groups. This group authors market liberalization and privatization. This emphasis emanates from ‘ethnographic observation of
transiting economies and natural resources of dependent economies. Stiglitz further maintains that these reforms respond to the vested interests of the ‘corrupt elite’s as this was obvious during Abacha administration in Nigeria (ibid). Stiglitz drowns special allusion to the instrumental bureaucrats who have been compensated at the cost of nation’s revenues (ibid).

Although corruption is systematic Egwakhe Johnson (2007) opined that the institutional agents’ extortive (extractive) corruption contexts are perfectly distinguishable and independent, thus, less difficult to authentically specify the order of casualty or precedent between the perpetuator and the beneficiary (ies). Bureaucratic structure gave birth to extractive corruption. Critical observation reveals that the state or some state agents benefit most from extra-legal transactions in the name of the state. This kind of corruption unfolds when institutional decision-makers exploit the government power they are equipped with, to tailored and sustain their self-interest, power, status and wealth. The agents’ extractive behavior unfolds towards evading the iron cage of the law thereby instituting conditional reciprocity between the agent(s) and the law breaker.

Obasanjo (2004) as reported by Afolabi (2007) enumerated the various forms of corruption to include fee fraud (known as 419), money laundering, unconventional and fraudulent trade practices, misappropriation or diversion of funds, kick backs, under and over invoicing, bribery, false declarations, abuse of office, and collection of illegal tolls. Other contextual meanings include the impairment of integrity, virtue or moral principles, and an unauthorized use of resources for private gain. Adigun Agbaje (2004) by way of contextualizing corruption within the territory of public service listed such factors as pervasion of public rules and misuse of official power for selfish motive, and the frustration of electoral process to make free and fair election impossible. Other forms of corruption to him are the deliberate refusal to declare one’s assets on the assumption and expiration of public office and of course using one’s official status to prevent the administration of justice which is common by the executives (past and present) of different capacities in Nigeria.

In the word of Akinyemi (2004) corruption was described as “the acquisition of that which one (as a member of society not public official alone) is not entitled’. Doig (ibid) in 1996 described corruption to be any use of official position, resources or facilities for personal benefit, or possible conflict of interest between public position and private benefit. This, of course, to him involves offenses of misconduct in public offices and is also covered by a variety of internal regulations….lastly El-Rufia (2003) made corruption to cover:

“a wide range of social misconducts, including fraud, extortion, embezzlement, bribery, nepotism, influence peddling, bestowering of favours to friends, rigging of elections, abuse of public property, the leaking of official government secret, safes of expired and defective goods like drugs, food, electronics and spare parts to the public, etc.”

To round up this conceptualization, the words of Alanamu (2009) will be useful. He says corruption is like a disease that can cause total pathology for an organization and in relation to society corruption can affect the economic, social, political and the moral aspect of the society as it is the case in Nigeria.
THEORETICAL ASPECT OF CORRUPTION

One best way to look at corruption is when individuals act negates the moral principle that guides their official obligations. Corruption thus cannot be devoided from breaching of ethical rules that bind the conduct of official duties. Every official position either in private or public is guided by ethics and these ethics are there to regulate official conduct.

Several factors would make having a consensus on the causes and successful way of combating corruption a bit problematic. Among these factors are according Agubamah (2009) the uniqueness of each society and or country, the dynamic or changing nature of the socio-political and economic interactions within the global community and the differences in the perception of corrupt practices by different academic disciplines.

One of the theories of corruption is the modernization theory. In the word of Huntington 1968, one of the theorist of modernization cited by Adefulu (2007) he observed that: the process of economic and political development in modernizing societies tends to breed inequality, political instability and corruption which may be defined simply in terms of the use of public powers to achieve private goals.

Earnestly worked after the (1955) Bandung Conference of the Non-Aligned movement… modernization theorists explained that: the causes, scale and incidence of corruption and corrupt practices in pre-colonial African states in terms of the logic of patrimonialism, neo-patrimonialism, prebendalism, and patro-clientelism and the main proposition common to all these theories of cooption centers on the view that extractive corruption in African (and elsewhere in developing countries) is one of the unsalutary consequences of grafting modern political structure and processes on indigenous socio-political structures which function on the basis of old values and obligation (ibid).

In spite of the presumed benefits of mixed government pinpointedlyl Sklar (2003) as reported in Adefulu (2007) the incidence of corruption in Africa is seen as an outcome of the behavior of public officials which deviates from the accepted norms, and which also signifies the absence of effective political institutionalization that makes it difficult for these officials to divorce their public roles from private ones, thus prompting them to subordinate their institutional roles to exogenous demands’.

To Adefulu (ibid) Huntington’s way of show casing the orthodox theories of corruption simply pictures the origin of the menace by justifying corruption based on parochial reasons in terms of political under-development and in terms of the inclinations of traditional societies to engage in what Clapham (1985) cited by Adefulu (2007) has described as the private of gift giving which is believed to be almost universal in patrimonial societies. As robust as the argument of the orthodox theories of patrimonialism e.g. Huntington, is to explain and spiral the reason for corruption in African states Nigeria a case study of patrimonialism, that, it breeds inequality, political instability as believed to have caused by faulty process of economic and political development, the concept of patrimonialism failed to tell us meaningful reason about the actual causes and prevalence of corruption. This failure prompted Western liberal analyssts to operationalise another related concept tagged neo-patrimonialism to explain the phenomenon. The basic features of neo-patrimonialism as noted by Clapham (1985) and still reported by Adefulu (2007) were:
Officials hold positions in bureaucratic organization with formally defined powers which are exercised not as a form of public services but as a form of private property relationships of the official with other members of society fall into patrimonial pattern of vassal and lord-lord rather than relational legal one of subordinate superior official behavior is correspondingly devised to play a personal status rather than to perform official functions, the relationship between officials and their clients or underlings is one of personal subordination; state officials treat their posts as personal fiefdom, use them to extract bribes or to appoint relatives; subordinate cannot take official decisions without referring them upwards because to do otherwise would be taken to mean slighting the authority of the boss.

Some of the features mentioned above if not all of them are obviously noticeable in many developing countries and this precisely is why western liberal scholars are quickly concluding that neo patrimonialism, as a defining characteristic of developing states breeds corruption to those countries. But as it could be expected such above conclusion is prone to contention as some or most of the features of neo patrimonialism ascribed to developing nations are as well noticeable in the developed democratic nations like North America and Europe. The theorists of prebendalism another theory of corruption see the phenomenon as the return for loyalty from patronage and groups within the society and for the benefit of personal gain and that of supporters. The benefit could either be political economic or social in nature. Agubamah (2009). Okojie (2005) quickly refer to President Mobutu Seseseko of Zaire (1965-1997), one of the longest ruled African who turned the state into personal property and embezzled 5 billion US dollars while in office.

Causes of corruption

The faculty of social science, University of Lagos recently organized a workshop tagged Democracy, Good governance and Corruption in Nigeria. John Ajodele in his paper presented says that corruption can be blamed on poverty, greed and an insatiable appetite of people to accumulate wealth. This was reported by Onongha (2007). Greed indeed is a major helping hand for the menace called corruption. Wood (2005) as copied by Onongha (2007) described greed as an inappropriate attitude toward things of values built on the mistaken judgment that my well being is tied to the sum of my possession Greed, he continue can take the form of acquisitiveness being inordinately concerned with amassing goods. Doubtless, Onongha (ibid) goes further, this phenomenon is evident in the live of many African leaders as they assume office. Services to their country or community fades into the background while self serving becomes the ultimate pursuit to which they themselves indefatigably.

Olujobi (1999) as reported by Afolabi, (2007) in attempt to state causes of corruption categorized wealth producing resources into two broad areas namely tangible and intangible. The former consists of man, money, materials, and machinery, while the latter are made up of time and information. He referred to man, while citing the work of Drucker and Easton, as both custodian of other resources, and also the only active agent of production. Conversely, man to him is regrettable, the only active agent of thievery of other organizational resources in his custody.
The foregoing, Afolabi (2007) continues, justifies dealing effectively with potential problems of employee theft in an organization. Reviewing the causes of employee theft, he came up with the followings:

a. Motivation: certain habits which predispose individuals to steal include high personal debts, excessive gambling, peer group pressures, excessive use of alcohol or drugs and living far beyond ones’ means
b. Equity: employees who are exploited by way of poor wage remuneration are likely to steal. It can be argued however that corruption cuts across remuneration barriers since among those who started being corrupt early in life, are some who still find it convenient to subsidize their living through fraudulent practices, when they attain higher socio economic positions in life. It is also sad to note that some of the most corrupt individuals in Nigeria are actually the very top public officers who are indeed very well remunerated.
c. Management attitude: if management encourages godfatherism in the work place, or does not respond to crimes promptly and decisively, corruption will thrive in the organization.
d. Societal value system: Nigerian accord a lot of respect to material wealth regardless of how it has been acquired. Little attention is paid to morals, and it is often said that if you cannot beat them, join them”. Little attention is paid to morals since it is generally believed that the end justifies the means. Getting a job is not the question of merit but of connections. The few among the citizenry who get themselves enriched through fouls means, are also always under pressure from their friends, and relations to share out the loot thereby perpetuating the vicious circles

**RECOMMENDATION TO CORRUPTION PROBLEMS IN NIGERIA**

The dangers posed by endemic corruption to the survival of Nigeria as a socio political and economic entity as expressed in this piece, Should compel all stakeholders in Nigeria project to devise more proactive measures to arrest the scourge. Despite the seemingly failure of the institutional approach to combat corruption as it is currently experienced in the country Animashaun (2007) is of opinion that these institutional approaches (EFFC, ICPC, etc) are still the most effective instruments in controlling corruption if they are properly applied without selective, judgment.

To win the war on corruption, Aluko (2009) Obasanjo’s slogan of ‘no sacred cows’ should be put into maximum use by prosecuting all the known corrupt political ‘heavy-weights’ in the society, because they are the major contributors to making the national corruption law inoperable. Thus, corruption which is currently a high profile issue in Nigeria has created a dangerous mixture of celebrity and corruption in the society.

The failure of the institutional approach in Nigeria cannot be located in the approach itself but in its operations by state leadership whose vested interests have sabotaged the effectiveness of the approach. For the institutional approach to be effective to combat corruption, this chapter will consider three issues as identified by Diamond (1999) as found in Animashaun (2007). First a system must be put in place for monitoring official conduct and exposing wrongdoing. Two a credible system be built for assessing charges for wrongdoings and for
punishing convicted wrongdoers and the third is building a framework for insulating institutions of watchdog, exposure and punishment from the control and manipulation of the very state actors they are meant to monitor.

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