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## LEADERSHIP, CORRUPTION AND PUBLIC GOVERNANCE: THE CONTENDING ISSUES.

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### Abstract

*There is a widely held belief that leadership is one of the factors that determines the level of success of any human setting. This paper X-rayed the contending issue on the leadership, corruption and the public governances with descriptive analysis. It was found out that corruption has eaten deep into the fabrics of our leaders and their governance with the aim of transforming the economic growth, reduction of poverty and unemployment, improving accountability, reorientation values and retrieving the good image of the country. Despite all the above, it is on record that since 1967 during the military rule and the recent democratic governance much has not be done to cushion the effect of corruption. Hence, this work recommended the following. Training and equipping the agencies that is fighting corruption, sound public polices on anti-corruption, introduction of citizenship, political and sociology education in our institutions etc this will reduce corruption level in Nigeria.*

**Key words:** Leadership, Corruption and Governance.

Nigeria faces the challenge of trying to build a stable and united state out of a society that is divided along ethnic, religious, and economic lives in which corruption has become a way of life. The legacy of colonialism could once be blamed for its problems, but Nigerian government have made matters worse by failing to build a sense of national unity, by failing to tap into the country's wealth of oil and people, by failing to build successful civilian political institutions, and by allowing incompetent leaders to

become the hallmark of the bureaucracy. The cumulative effect has been a story of unfulfilled dreams and missed opportunities, where narrow agendas have undermined the larger goals of building a stable and successful society McCormick, (2004).

Since leadership is the ability to influence people to willingly follow one's guidance or adhere to one's decisions. What makes a leader is his ability to obtain and influence followers in setting and achieving objectives.

Government is a social contract; leaders are expected to execute the contract agreement by providing for the people social security and social services. But in Nigeria, leadership ineptitude has been a major challenge. The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership, (Achebe 1998) in Olayiwola (2013). The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness of the leaders to rise to the responsibility to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership, McCormick (2007).

Many of the leaders have tended to plunder, defraud, embezzle, corrupt, mismanage and in the process envy one another with impunity and relish. The leaders and their administrations/governments/regimes were deeply engrossed in excessive acts of corruption, impropriety, mismanagement and squander mania. In addition, all available means were employed by Nigerian politicians (leaders to 'grab' power including the blatant rigging of elections, manipulation of census figures, violence, thuggery, arson, vandalism, gangsterism, corruption, religious bigotry, regionalism, tribalism, and acts of brigandage, Olayiwola, (2013).

Corruption in public governance is a persistent cancerous phenomenon which bedevils Nigeria. It has been acknowledged in many quarters that corruption is Nigeria's worst problem and largely responsible for its woes, such as the instability in the Niger Delta, the debt overhang, barriers to democratic elections and impediment to flow of foreign direct investment (FDI) EFCC, (2013). A typical example was the recovery of N90 Billion EFCC, (2007) images how much this money would assist the unemployed for Nigerians if it was invested in industries.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Throughout history, paradigms have been adopted as mirror to prevailing patterns of political behaviour and public governance. In this context, the theory of social contract has been adopted as the explanatory tool. The theorists (John Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau) believes that governance is a voluntary agreement made amongst individuals through which an organized society or state, is brought into existence, (Heywood 2002).

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In this context, therefore good governance implies a situation where government strives in all its policies and actions to provide a better life for the majority, where social inequities are minimized, where all stakeholders respect the rule of law and where the conduct of government is transparent and accountability is institutionalized said by Abubakar (2008). The Nigerians contract to the legislators, Governors, President through election to represent them in government and to provide social security and services to the citizens. Therefore, leadership in public governance is a social contract which requires accountability and responsibility both on part of the leaders and followers. The social contract obliges citizens to respect and obey the state; ultimately in gratitude for the stability and security that only a system of political rule can deliver (Heywood, 2002).

**Leadership** is inspiring oneself to inspire others. A person is a leader not necessarily because he or she possess power or ability to coerce others into doing what they would not necessarily want to do, but when that person can inspire and motivate others to see a vision they never thought possible.

**Corruption:** to be précised behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private regarding. (Personal, close family, private cliques) pecuniary or status-gain, or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding behaviour (Nye, 1999).

**Public Governance** is about the ways and means a country is governed and those in authorities respond to the legitimate aspirations of its citizen, including the existence and proper functioning of institutional processes and the quality of democratic representation, judicious and transparent management of resource and respect for human right. (Federal Republic Nigeria, 2010).

The most challenging problems of Nigeria government and people are – corruption and leaders attitude to public governance. Leadership in our country is seen as rare opportunity to amass wealth and up keep patron-client relationship. Nigeria has arguably fallen behind its potential to significantly improve on its human development and achieve the millennium development goals. The prevailing situation is due partly to challenges of governance stewardship responsibility, A state is characterized by the leaders who displays firm commitment to peace, harmony, and the public good, who possess extraordinary political skills; and who exhibit practical wisdom. In addition, in times of crisis these men and women provide crucial leadership necessary for a nation’s survival, (Thomas, 2006. Statesmanship leader Connotes a (person) whose mind is elevated sufficiently above the conflict of contending parties to enable him to a course of action which takes into account a great number of interests in the perspective of a longer period of time.

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Many of the leaders have tended to plunder, defraud, embezzle, corrupt, mismanagement and in the process every one another with impunity and relish. They have also been possessive, egoistic, selfish, individualistic, callous, greedy and secretive. The leader and their regimes/ administration/ governments were deeply engrossed in excessive acts of corruption, impropriety, mismanagement. In addition, all available means were employed by Nigerian political leaders to 'grab' power including the blatant rigging of elections, manipulation of census figures, violence, thuggery, arson, vandalism, gangsterism, corruption, religious bigotry, regionalism, tribalism, ethnic sentiments and act of brigandage Olayiwola, (2013).

The world bank (2003) asserted that reverberation effects of the failure of leadership corruption and bad governance are being felt across all sectors and the whole world as in the case of Nigeria which includes Nigeria-unemployment, insecurity, crude oil thefts, dearth of infrastructures, problems of education, health services. Nigerians has 10 doctors and 40 nurses for every 100,000 people compare with nearly 280 doctors and more than 830 nurses in U.S. Transportation, accommodation, communication, medication and etc.

According to Michaels (2011), Nigeria socio-politico-economic history has revealed that many of its leaders over the years have been using the Iron law of Oligarchy which explains the triumph of the leaders ambition for office over the membership's revolutionary goals Michaels, (2011). Good governance implies a situation where majority say is respected, where government strives in all its policies and actions to provide a better life for the majority, where social inequalities are minimized, where all stakeholders respect the rule of law and where the conduct of government organization business is transparent and accountability is institutionalized (Abubakar, 2008).

The bare outline of government over looks many of its important nuances, and theory and practice do not always coincide. The success of Nigerian government must ultimately be measured in terms of its ability to balance the conflicting demands of many groups – Niger Delta, Boko Harams – Jukun – Igala – Tiv, etc in Nigeria society, to steer a careful course through the minefield of ethnic and religious divisions, and to control corruption and opportunism, (McCormick, 2007).

Leadership in public service in Nigeria has been engaged in reckless use of government properties which most at times involves in corrupt practices (wasteful spending and looting). Consequently, the cost of governance has continued to escalate beyond imagination, arising mostly from the burden of providing basic amenities to public servants. The expenditure to these effects in 1997 was recurrent expenditure of

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N258,563 billion, 2003 was N984,270, 2004 was N1.2 trillion and 2005 was N1.11 trillion. While capital expenditure was N269,651 billion; N309,015 billion; N498,027 billion, N239,450 billion; N438,700 billion; 321,378 billion, 241,688 billion; 407,362 billion, 582,201 billion respectively during the same period.

While recurrent expenditure had steadily remained on the increase, the capital expenditure had not only been erratic but remained far lower. There is no doubt that the greater percentage of revenue ends up in recurrent expenditure at the expense of capital expenditure, which is the bedrock of a meaningful development. Even at that, the extra looting through resource procurement and capital projects are unimaginable (Ekeatte, 2004).

A Survey Report on Corruption (2003), observed that poor public ratings of various organs of government and the political leadership with general perception of high levels of corruption. The report noted that Nigeria has weak corruption reporting mechanism and weak systems for registering complaints about service delivery. Corruption is damaging if only for the simple reason that it distorts choice.

In recent times corruption in public governance both in high and low positions is seemingly high. Abdu (1998) and Lopenia (1920) identified the following: among others, as forms of corruption in Nigeria: bribery (kickbacks). Nepotism, misappropriation; the use of contrived security threats to the state, extra-budgetary allocation for personal enrichment of public officers charged with the maintenance of public order, the exploitation of privileged relationship with key public sector managers for the purpose of acquiring competitors' business assets, auto-corruption; extortion and employment patronage.

### **Challenges of Public Governance in Nigeria**

1. Wide perception of pervasive corruption that undermines the integrity of the development process and hinders developmental investment in the country.
2. Arbitrariness in compliance with constitutionally sanctioned procedures governing the electoral process undermines confidence in the rule of law.
3. Inadequate or partial enforcement of rules and regulations and an inconsistent justice system.
4. Continuing poor public service delivery etc.

All these challenges hinder the performance of government essence in the lives of the citizens of Nigeria. It is noted that good leadership team would tackle all these challenges if public oriented policies are formulated and implemented.

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**Trends in Leadership, Corruption and Public Governance in Nigeria**

Nigeria formed 1914 by Lord Lugard, got her independence in 1960, had the first civilian administration 1960–1966 when the first military take over took place. For most of the period after 1967, corrupt military regimes ruled Nigeria. Despite large state owned oil reserves that produced a steady flow of export revenues, Nigeria's economy sank deeper and deeper into the morass and the vast-majority of Nigeria's population was forced to live from hand to mouth. The average per capita income in Nigeria, paltry \$386 in (2004) and poor service delivery.

Why! Quite simply, bad government and leaders are the main cause. Corrupt military regimes ran the country, almost continuously after 1967-1999 (30 years). Nigeria's generals were so corrupt, brutal, and the bloated bureaucracy so venal that the country became an embarrassment to its strategic allies and trading partners in the West (Thomas, 2006).

Political corruption is not a recent phenomenon that pervades the Nigerian country. Since the creation of modern public administration the country, there have been cases of official misuse of resources for enrichment. Nigeria is ranked 139 out of 176 countries in Transparency International's 2012 Corruption perception index (Transparency International (2012).

Historically, from pre-independence and post independence corruption has been, but it was not at alarming rate as it is in the contemporary times.

**Examples:** Azikiwe and African Continental Bank Lagos in 1944, Robert, (1993), Gowon's 1975 and importation of cement. Turnver, (1976), (1975) Murtala Mohammed sacked a large number of government officials and civil servants for misuse of power, Olajide, (1977).

Shagari Administration: Corruption was pervasive during his administration. A few federal buildings mysteriously went on fire, Leon, (1983). Babangida administration is seen as the body that legalized corruption.

(1) Refusal to account for Gulf War windfall; which is estimated to be \$12.4 billion. He annulled a democratic election in Nigeria on June 12, 1993. A glance at these records indicate corruption index in the past and the records presently as reported transparency international is high. The consequence of corruption is enormous, this calls for a quick decisions, measures and actions to check corruption before it would bring a total collapse to the country. Below tables shows the corruption level of Nigeria from 2010 – 2013.

**Table 1**  
**Corruption Perception Index 2010**

<b>Nigeria</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Score</b>
2010	134	2.4
2011	143	2.4
2012	139	2.7
2013	144/177	2.5

[www.transparency.org/cpi2011](http://www.transparency.org/cpi2011)

### **Causes of Corruption in Nigeria**

- Colonial legacy, Nigerians were not trained for formal government (Public Administration) since Nigeria was conglomeration of different people, culture and language and emerged together by British government. For this reason, for the past 50 years Nigerians are still learning the white man government.
- The lack of transparent financial institutions in an economy can make a larger part of the population dependent on corruption.
- Bank failures and take over's due to corruption and money laundering. (EFCC, 2007).
- In the sales of government goods and services and distribution of subsidiaries. A private firm may want to bribe a government official for the purchase.
- Corruption may also arise where firms and individuals want to avoid the cost of delay. For example business are likely to pay, speed money in order to facilitate faster processing of application or documents. Individuals frisked at police check points in Nigeria for avoidance of delay (Give, 1999).
- Irregular salary/remuneration payment.
- Low motivations at work places.
- Unemployment, insecurity and frustration by government institutions such as; – Police, Electricity Distribution Company Nigeria etc.
- Nepotism etc.

### **Effects of Corruption and Why It Persist In Nigeria**

Unemployment, low GDP, insecurity, poverty and underdevelopment, lack of infrastructures, high rate school drop out, inadequate health care provision, etc.

### **Why Corruption persists in Nigeria, Some Contending Issues:**

- (1) Corruption index, (high incidence)
- (2) Poor leadership.
- (3) Weak policy measures
- (4) Plea bargain.

- (5) Challenges of EFCC, ICPC, Police, Code of Conduct and all the Agencies for Crime Control.

**Corruption Index:** Nigeria remains one of the most corrupt nations in the world, according to the latest Report by Transparency International. In the group's corruption perceptions Index 2013, Nigeria ranked 14<sup>th</sup>, out of 177 nations in the world, scoring 25 points out of a possible 100 points.

**Poor leadership:** Poor leadership is another factor contributing heavily to corruption in Nigeria. This is so because our leaders are full of deceits, insincerity, and double standard. In this stance, the position and offices of our leaders have always been used to cover their corrupt practices in their respective positions. (Olayiwola, 2013).

**Plea bargaining in litigation:** This method whereby corrupt officer is discharge or bail because he/she accepted his/her involvement accomplishing a crime declares how to pay back the said money. What a joke?. Obviously, if not check corruption would be higher in the proceeding years.

**Policy measures:** Inconsistent and weak policies by the constitution and law enforcing agencies such as EFFCC, ICPC, Code of Conduct. When a stringent measures are spent out in papers, constitution, edicts, it will reduce corruption in Nigeria. (Achebe, 1998), Nigerians are corrupt because the system under which they live today makes corruption easy and profitable; they will cease to be corrupt when corruption is made difficult and inconvenient.

Challenges of the crime/corruption control agencies, a typified example is EFCC.

- (1) Immunity from arrest and prosecution of class of public officers (President, Governors/their deputies).
- (2) Delays in litigation, (the slow pace of court proceedings).
- (3) Inadequacy of the existing procedural laws in Nigeria.
- (4) Instability and continuity in leadership. (EFCC, 2004).

All these are contending issues that Nigerian leaders and government need to tackle speedily to reduce corruption and its scorching heat on the people.

## **Conclusions**

The trouble with Nigeria “Wrote Chinua Achebe, is simply and squarely a failure of leadership.” Most of our past leaders and some in contemporary Nigeria are not trained leaders. Some of them are emergent/situational leaders born out of patron-client relationship-not by merit or charismatic leaders, so no vision, especially in public governance.

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The consequences of this bad leadership during untold poverty on the citizens and other vices such as; unemployment, insecurity, corruption, kidnapping, high rate of school drop out, low quality education, low health care, and low GDP.

The issue of corruption is endemic in Nigeria and prevalent in all sectors in Nigeria. The study trace the trends of corruption in Nigeria from the first republic and found out the basic reason was our leaders were not trained in art of public governance before independence and still now are need to imbibe the spirit and training of good leadership to overcome corruption. Why corruption persist despite of all measures were; weak policy measures; plea bargain, organizational agencies challenges (EFCC, ICPC, Police, Code Conduct Bureau etc inconsistency in leadership; delays and high cost of litigation, immunity clause etc.)

### **Recommendation**

- **Ethnicity:** For Nigeria to work together they will have to be a fundamental transformed in the way they relate to one another, and set aside ethnic cleavages belief in the Nigeria project.
- **Economy:** Nigerian should move from oil dependency to boarding the source of its income, and moving away from the tradition of monopoly and incompetence that characteristics its state-owned business as in the current state of crude pricing which are in urgent need of privatization and diversification.
- There must be consensus among the Nigeria political elites to avoid turning governance into perpetual contentious enterprise (Osuntokun, 2000).
- **Security:** There should be training and equipping the law enforcement agencies; police, army, EFCC, ICPC, Code of Conduct Bureau, National Bureau of Statistics etc. to meet with demand of security and accountability in Nigeria.
- **Election:** There is need to conduct a Free and Fair election that would produce credible and charismatic leaders.
- **Loyalty and patriotism:** Transformation of Nigeria leadership depend on final analysis on the willingness of the citizens to engage in extra ordinary acts of self-sacrifice and believe in the absolute truth provided by a comprehensive political doctrine.
- There is need to develop African Concepts of development based on our cultural-economic and social paradigms (in all sectors of Management in Nigeria).
- **Education:** Government should introduce citizenship, political and sociology education from Nursery to University levels.
- **Government Policy:** Strong public policies of anti-corruption should be enacted and implemented to cushion the effect of corruption on the people.
- The present government should create strong access to information systems, and rules governing the behaviour of those in public positions, while lack of

accountability across the public sector coupled with ineffective public institutions hurt these perceptions.

- There is need to create opinion poll centres at all levels of government in Nigeria, these centres should be free from constraints.
- There should be a legislation banning any corrupt officer from returning to power.
- **Non-interference by the authorities:** ICPC, EFCC, INEC etc, should be given independence to operate as autonomous bodies in order to achieved the stipulated goals of the establishment.

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