

## **Corruption as a Bane for National Development in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

Corruption remains a critical impediment to national development in Nigeria, permeating every facet of governance and public life. Since gaining independence in 1960, successive administrations have grappled with various forms of corruption grand, petty, and political that continue to undermine economic growth, infrastructure development, and social equity. This paper adopts a qualitative research design, utilizing secondary data and content analysis to assess how corruption impedes Nigeria's development trajectory. Key findings reveal that corruption leads to infrastructural decay, weakens transparency and accountability, fosters inequality, and erodes trust in public institutions. Despite the presence of anti-corruption agencies, their efforts have been largely ineffective due to political interference and lack of autonomy. The study concludes by proposing policy reforms, including empowering anti-corruption institutions, strengthening civil society engagement, and promoting leadership accountability through credible electoral processes. Ultimately, eliminating corruption is essential for achieving sustainable national development and fostering public confidence in Nigeria's democratic institutions.

**Keywords:** Corruption, National Development, Governance, Nigeria, Transparency, Accountability, Anti-Corruption Strategies

## 1. Introduction

Corruption, a malignant force rooted in greed and power abuse, remains a global phenomenon, ravaging nations and crippling development. Nowhere is this scourge more pervasive and detrimental than in Nigeria, where corruption has deeply infiltrated the political, social, and economic fabric of society (Transparency International, 2023). Since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria's journey toward national development has been persistently obstructed by systemic and institutional corruption (Ogundiya, 2010). Despite various reform programs and anti-corruption initiatives, the country continues to grapple with the non-stop devastation caused by corrupt practices at all levels.

The core problem addressed in this study is the persistent and entrenched nature of corruption in Nigeria, which continues to undermine national development. This has led to major socio-economic and infrastructural deficits, contributing to poverty, insecurity, and weakened public trust in governance.

**Objectives/Aim of the Study:** This paper aims to assess corruption as a bane of national development in Nigeria. Specifically, it seeks to:

- Identify how corruption manifests in various sectors.
- Examine the impact of corruption on national development.
- Analyze the shortcomings of anti-corruption efforts.
- Propose viable solutions to curb corruption and enhance development.

**Significance of the Study:** This study contributes to the discourse on governance by offering insights into the socio-political and economic consequences of corruption. It aims to inform policymakers, civil society, and the general public on effective measures to combat corruption and promote development.

**Scope of the Study:** The focus is on the post-independence era, with an emphasis on the 21st century, particularly examining the effects of corruption on governance, infrastructure, and socio-economic development.

## 2. Literature Review (Conceptual & Theoretical Framework)

**Defining Corruption:** Transparency International (2023) defines corruption as "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain." It can take many forms including grand corruption (high-level political corruption), petty corruption (everyday abuse by low- and mid-level officials), and political corruption (manipulation of policies and institutions).

### Theories of Corruption:

- **Principal-Agent Theory:** Corruption arises when agents (public officials) pursue their own interests rather than the interests of principals (citizens) (Klitgaard, 1988).
- **Rational Choice Theory:** Suggests that individuals engage in corruption after weighing the benefits against the risks or costs (Becker, 1968).
- **Institutional Theory:** Emphasizes the role of weak institutions and regulatory frameworks in enabling corruption (North, 1990).
- **Rent-Seeking Theory:** Argues that corruption is driven by efforts to gain access to unearned

wealth or economic rent through manipulation of the political environment (Krueger, 1974).

**Corruption and Development Nexus:** Corruption distorts economic policies, discourages investment, and leads to misallocation of resources. It undermines social services, impedes infrastructural development, and erodes the legitimacy of state institutions (Mauro, 1995; Kaufmann, 2005), directly affecting human development indices and national unity.

**Previous Studies on Corruption in Nigeria:** Studies have consistently shown that corruption is endemic in Nigeria. Akinyemi (2018) argues that Nigeria loses billions annually to corrupt practices. Despite the existence of institutions like the EFCC and ICPC, effectiveness is hampered by political interference. A gap in the literature remains in exploring how civil society can be more effectively engaged in anti-corruption efforts (Uzochukwu, 2020).

**Conceptualizing National Development:** National development encompasses economic growth, improved infrastructure, quality healthcare and education, poverty reduction, job creation, and political stability (Todaro & Smith, 2015). It implies a sustainable improvement in the living conditions of citizens.

### 3. Methodology

**Research Design:** This study adopts a qualitative research design, suitable for exploring complex socio-political phenomena like corruption.

**Data Collection Method:** Secondary sources were utilized, including academic journals, books, government reports, newspaper articles, and credible online databases. These sources provided comprehensive data for understanding

the dynamics of corruption and its impact on development (Bryman, 2012).

**Methodological Orientation (Data Analysis):** Content analysis was employed to identify recurring themes and patterns in the literature. Data were coded and categorized under major themes such as types of corruption, developmental impact, institutional weaknesses, and anti-corruption strategies (Neuendorf, 2017).

### 4. Analysis and Discussion of Findings

**The Pervasive Nature of Corruption in Nigeria:** From the first republic to current democratic regimes, corruption has been a common thread. Cases like the Halliburton scandal, fuel subsidy fraud, and misappropriation of COVID-19 relief funds illustrate the systemic nature of corruption (Amundsen, 2010).

**Lack of Transparency and Accountability:** Public procurement processes, budgeting, and revenue management are riddled with opacity. The looting of public funds and lack of auditing mechanisms have weakened institutional integrity (Akinyemi, 2018).

**Impact on Infrastructure Deficit:** Corruption inflates contracts and leads to abandoned or poorly executed projects. The Lagos-Ibadan Expressway and Ajaokuta Steel Mill are examples of how corruption disrupts development (Iroegbu, 2019).

**Struggle Towards Socio-Economic Development:** Despite abundant resources, Nigeria faces high unemployment, poor healthcare and education systems, and widespread poverty. Corruption diverts funds meant for social services, exacerbating inequality (World Bank, 2021).

**Undermining National Integration:** Ethnic favoritism and nepotism fuel marginalization, eroding national cohesion. Citizens' trust in government diminishes, leading to apathy and unrest (Ekeh, 1975).

**Critique of Past Anti-Corruption Efforts:** Although agencies like EFCC and ICPC have recorded some successes, their impact is limited by selective prosecution, lack of autonomy, and political manipulation. Campaigns often lack continuity and public ownership (Ogbeidi, 2012).

## 5. Conclusion

**Summary of Key Findings:** Corruption in Nigeria is pervasive and deeply rooted, affecting every aspect of national development. It has led to infrastructure decay, socio-economic stagnation, and weakened governance structures.

**Reaffirmation of Thesis:** Corruption remains a significant obstacle to national development in Nigeria. Its eradication is essential for sustainable progress.

## 6. Recommendations

**Strengthening Anti-Corruption Agencies:** Granting full autonomy to EFCC and ICPC, ensuring secure tenure for their leadership, and increasing funding can enhance effectiveness. Legal reforms should protect agencies from political influence (Uzochukwu, 2020).

**Government-Civil Society Engagement and Citizen Protection:** Strengthening legal frameworks to protect whistle-blowers, journalists, and activists is vital. Civil society must be empowered through funding, capacity building, and collaboration with state institutions (Oluwole, 2016).

**Role of Leadership through Free and Fair Elections:** Transparent electoral processes must be ensured through reforms. Leaders committed to accountability and the public good are essential to dismantle corrupt systems and rebuild trust (Diamond, 2008).

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