

## An Overview of Corruption and its Challenges to Nigeria's National Development

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### Abstract

Corruption is a prevalent challenge to most organisations and countries of the world. Although its practice and prevalence are relative, it has been one major inhibiting factor for any state, societal development and humankind generally. Nigeria has been one of those worst hit it impeding and her national development since her independence with many and multi-faceted effects against national development. This study makes an overview of corruption, its practice, prevalence, causes and the stakeholders in Nigeria. The study is qualitative and uses secondary sources of data. The theory of prebendalism is used to build the theoretical basis. The paper focuses on public corruption and highlights the major causes, the stakeholders, the high-profile corruption cases, as well as identification of the major culprits of corruption in Nigeria, especially in the public sector and the major national development plan, programmes and projects which all suffer as a result of corruption. The paper advances the argument that Nigeria has economic potentialities capable of achieving the highest level of national development. However, incessant corruption that cut across all sectors of the state has been inhibiting achieving national development. Some key recommendations, including stiff penalties, synergy among anti-corruption agencies, extensive and intensive education and enlightenment, and genuine political will and commitment to fight corruption in order to achieve meaningful and sustainable national development in a least corrupt Nigerian state.

**Keywords:** Corruption, corrupt practices, national development, Nigeria, prebendalism.

### Introduction

Nigeria is one of the strongest economies in Africa endowed with both human and material resources capable of transforming the life of all her citizens and the nation into one of the most developed on the globe. Nigeria as a country has huge potentials based on its available human and material resources – a population of over 200 million, vast and diverse endowment material - solid and liquid resources; vast land for agriculture, oil and gas, among others. Nigeria is a major world oil producer with a large deposit of gas resources, a regional power, and continental political and economic power. As a regional economic power, the Nigerian economy represents about 55% of the entire West Africa's Gross Domestic Products (GDP) and also accounts for 64% of its GDP based on Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) valuation of the fifteen-member countries in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) within the sub-region (Edo & Ikelegbe, 2014:3).

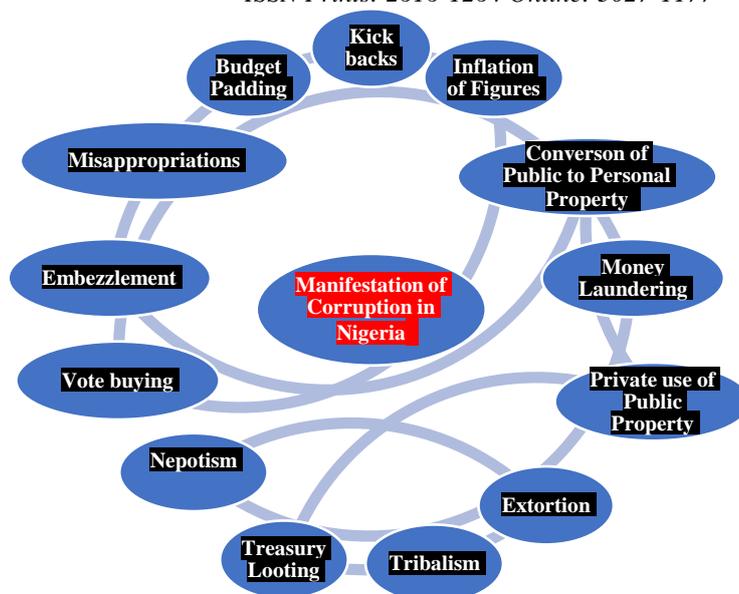
To be precise, Nigeria has in abundance, every human and material resource required to achieve any desired national development. However, rather than development, Nigeria is experiencing some major setbacks and has over the years not been able to actualise national development which would have been achieved but for some factors, including corruption which has over the years hindered her national development (Sarkodie-Addo &

Chinoperekweyi, 2023). This is partly because Nigeria and Nigerians have been wading for development amidst poverty, hunger and diseases and unemployment, among others. Various explanations have been offered on the above trend and there seems to be a consensus of idea in political economy and social sciences in general that the common explanatory phenomenon which stands as a tied-thread to all other explanations is corruption. Although no country is corrupt free (Agumagu and Jaja 2023; Dang, Nguyen and Tran 2023), this corruption has in Nigeria become so prevalent that almost all governance crises, maladministration, power abuses, injustice, economic disasters and development predicaments are attributed to it. In view of the gravity of corruption in the country, United Nations (2002) reveals that one major feature of corruption in Nigeria is the regular transfer of looted public funds to abroad. Much of the estimated \$350 - \$400 billion siphoned by Nigeria's political class is believed to be in foreign accounts and in different countries mainly Western.

Thus, from 1960s, corruption has been drowning the destiny of the Nigerian nation, and has always been part of the Nigerian government (whether military or civilian regime). Consequently, the Nigerian nation is characterized by massive infrastructural decay - lack of access to portable water, poor health care services, poverty and hunger, malnutrition and unemployment, which when combined together perpetuate the problem of national development. Accounts on national development have been very poor in Nigeria as the drive for the development is negatively hit from all sectors and sub-sectors by corruption from both the low and the high levels of governance and amongst the leaders and the led (Dike, 2005).

Issues relating to corruption in socio-economic and almost every aspect of human lives, especially the public sector, are so complex and perplexing that Shakespeare (1994: Lines 41-44) in his poem laments that: 'O, that estates, degrees, and offices Were not derived corruptly, and that clear honour Were purchased by the merit of the wearer! How many then should cover that stand bare! How many be commanded that command!' In that respect and as tip on iceberg, for example, \$2.1bn was approved for purchase of arms, but diverted for the PDP 2015 elections campaign by the then ruling party, PDP; and another 2.2bn Office of the National Security adviser (ONSA) corruption scandal involving many traditional rulers, civil society groups, business community, professional groups, Muslim and Christian religious leaders and organisations.

Explicitly, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) provides that 'A public officer shall not put himself in a position where his personal interest conflicts with his duties and responsibilities; the receipt by any public officer of any gifts or benefits from commercial firms, business enterprises or persons who have contracts with the Government shall be presumed to have been received in contravention of the said sub-paragraph unless the contrary is proved; a public officer shall only accept gifts from relatives or personal friends to such extent and on such occasions as are recognized by custom' (1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Code of Conduct for public Officers). This paper makes an overview of corruption vis-à-vis Nigeria's drive to national development.



**Figure 1** Manifestations of Corruption in Nigeria  
 Source: Authors' Construct (2024); Agumagu & Jaja (2023:138)

Accountability, which Kühn and Sherman (2014) maintain denotes that ‘governments (including government-owned/controlled institutions), individual officials, and companies and their executives and agents must be accountable for the execution of their duties and for decisions and actions taken in their area of responsibility’. While transparency on the other hand, depicts ‘the characteristic of governments, companies, organisations and individuals of being open in the clear disclosure of information, rules, plans, processes and actions. As a principle, public officials, civil servants, the managers and directors of companies and organisations, and board trustees have a duty to act visibly, predictably and understandably to promote participation and accountability and allow third parties to easily perceive what actions are being performed’ (Transparency International 2021). Both are key to every corrupt-free state and society or check on corruption, but generally condoned, promoted and celebrated in Nigeria.

Anti-corruption policies have been part of most Nigerian governments, but have defied everything being done not because of weaknesses in such policies, unwillingness to fully implement policies and enforce laws relating to such. On the other hand, the 2014 APEC Declaration of Beijing notes that sustainability and development, social security and fairness, public accountability, rule of law and public trust are altogether impeded by corruption (APEC, 2014). In the public sector, corruption fades out public trust and confidence in leadership, weaken the rule of law, damages the socio-societal establishments and structures, and undermines the state-citizens social contract (Hoy, Thuy & Thanh, 2023; Barometer 2017; Schneider & Buehn, 2018). Also, it results in poverty, insecurity and impeding international development, corruption is done everywhere – states societies, public and private (Bîzoi & Bîzoi, 2022).

Corruption erodes any nation’ socio-economic and political values, legitimacy and inflicts all facets of human life and endeavours (Agumagu & Jaja, 2023:138). Corruption is broad and entails any form of dealing, undertaking or relationship (public or private), financial, economic, religious, diplomatic, and social which contravenes/violates the standardly established rules, laws, conventions, norms of a group, state and or society. It also involves other forms such as wrong doing, including mixing the good and the bad, hoarding, twisting facts for personal and other gains, manipulating processes to suit favourable circumstances or

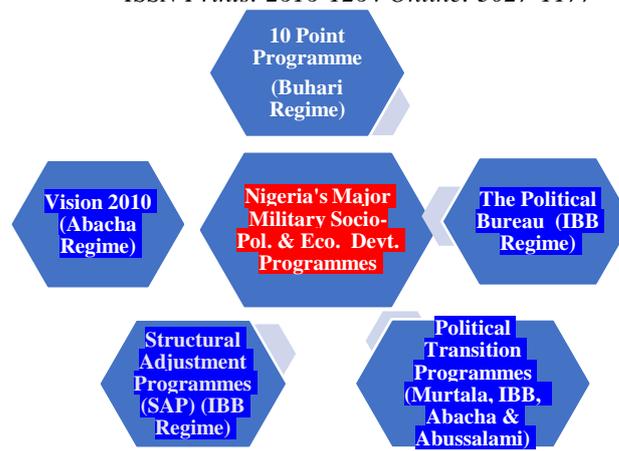
achieve some favourable gains, diverting funds and or other resources (human and or material) for personal gain, use and or advantage. Corruption can be at public and or private levels involving individuals, within or among family, groups, societies, states and or the international groups, states and organisations.

Thus, brazen theft of money, manipulating scales and measures, breach of contract terms and conditions, diverting funds or other things for personal use and advantage, production of sub-standard goods and services, tax evasion, sex for marks, admission racketeering, overcharging goods and services, inflating prices, under and over-invoicing, undeserved conferment of titles, refusal to attend to one's responsibilities and obligations, undue appointment to positions and offices, alteration and manipulation of records, jumping queues, subversion of justice, are among others all corrupt practices. Generally, corruption entails doing, aiding anything wrong in or with the state, society, including moral, material, and spiritual, among others.

### **National Development**

In view of these conceptions, national development denotes positive changes that result in producing more and better food to eat, healthier and happier individuals, better living accommodation, improved transportation and communications system, sound education and enlightenment among the populace, and generally, more money floating around. Thus, national development centres on people and their quality of lives in the society, meaning whatever kind of changes being witnessed in the various sectors of the society should have positive impact on the people, including all aspects of the life of an individual and the nation. It is a process of reconstruction, empowering and development in various dimensions of a nation and human development (Shehu & Buba, 2016). National development in this context refers to advancement, progress, transformation, positive changes and or improvement in the conditions (socio-economic, political, environmental, etc.) of both people and areas of jurisdiction in a multi-ethnic, religious and geo-religious set up (Tandu, 2014; Joseph, Jamabo & Ajie-Nelson, 2023) – Nigeria in this context.

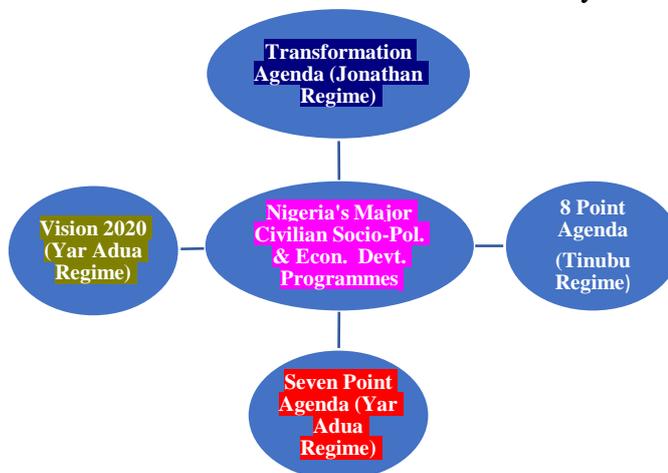
It (national development) includes full-growth and expansion of industries, agriculture and education, social, religious and cultural institutions. Hence, it is all-round and balanced development of different aspects and facets of the nation and its populace - political, economic, social, cultural, scientific and material. The most all-encompassing goal of development is the progressive exploitation and harnessing of abilities and talents of each citizen and enhancement of such for the good of the community and the nation. Generally, states and societies with less corrupt practices are better off in terms of development and in measurement of Human Development Index (HDI) just as a study by Aidt (2003) shows that countries with more education have better records in terms of corruption index. Where there are strong institutions to ensure accountability, corruption and corrupt cases are less likely to occur and through monitoring and strict punishments, corruption can be fought and reduced to a certain and lower level of practice (Aidt, 2003).



**Figure 2** Nigeria’s Major National Socio-Political and Economic Development Programmes  
 Source: Mohammed, Aisha & Saidu (2018: 138, 198, 200); Authors’ Construct and Compilations (2024).

In the history of the colonial, Federation, and the Federal Republic of Nigeria, corruption in the public sector blew open with prominent cases of the Foster-Sutton Inquiry (1957) on the NCNC national leader, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and his conducts with Barclays Bank; The Cooker Commission which investigated the financial deals of the Western Regional Government of Awolowo/Akintola; the Joseph Sarwuan Tarka Swiss Bank Accounts controversy and his immediate resignation from Gowon’s Cabinet; the Gowon era multiple corruption allegations, charges and controversies, including the Armada Cement scandal and the subsequent probe of same by a Panel established during the Murtala/Obasanjo regime under the Chairmanship of Justice Alfa Belgore; the Joseph Deichi Gomwalk corruption scandals which were investigated by the Justice Alfa Belgore Panel.

Gowon’s regime 12 Military Governors corruption charges involving all the Military Governors, their retirement and forfeiture of assets as found guilty by the Federal Assets Investigation Panel, excluding Brigadiers Mobolaji Johnson and Oluwole Rotimi. There is also the involvement of most Gowon’s regime top officials in accumulating wealth for themselves, especially with the Indigenisation Decree and through ownership of shares of foreign companies, including Femi Okunnu, F. A. Ijewere; likewise, when the Gowon’s Cabinet (Federal Commissioners) were investigated by the same Federal Assets Investigation Panel, only Shehu Shagari and Shettima Ali Monguno of the Finance and Petroleum Ministries were neither indicted nor made to forfeit any assets.



**Figure 3** Nigeria's Major Civilian Socio-Political & Economic Development Programmes

Source: Authors' Construct (2024)

Then came the Shagari regime prominent mercantile ministers and other key government officials, including Umaru Dikko, Bello Maitama Yusuf, Adisa Akinloye, Senator Uba Ahmed, among others and their massive and corrupt importations. The regime of Muhammadu Buhari (1984-1985) tried and convicted most of the Second Republic politicians under Military Tribunals and sentenced most of them to various prison terms for theft, corrupt enrichment and illegal possession of cash; that was followed by the \$12 billion Gulf War oil windfall which Nigeria got in excess as a result of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent Iraqi/Allied forces war in 1991, but the money was largely mismanaged by the Babangida regime; then Abacha alleged and controversial lootings and money launderings followed.

In the recent from 2015, the NNPC/subsidy scams which have cost Nigeria more than \$10 billion; the \$2.5 billion Dasuki Arms Procurement diversion; the billions of Dollars vanishing in the name of security votes at both states and national levels; the Covid-19 Funds mismanagement; the emergency, disaster/relief and humanitarian affairs financial scandals; the Nigerian state owned national Refineries (Kaduna, Port-Harcourt and Warri) turn-around maintenance corruption. All the refineries have a total workforce of 1701 while about N68 billion is annually spent on their salaries. Between 2010 and 2020, the Nigerian government spent over N11.3 trillion on turn around maintenance of the three refineries, yet no product has been refined over that period. Similarly, between 2020 and 2022, the refineries have lost an average of N136 billion; the nation-wide Schools Feeding Programmes, Social Investment and Empowerments Programmes, among others (Braji, 2014:116-117; The Guardian, August 25, 2022, pps. 1 & 6; Daily Trust, October 4, 2023, p. 19; Daily Trust, October 4, 2023, p. 19; Daily Trust, September 8, 2022, p. 24; Daily Trust, August 31, 2022. P.5; Mohammed, et al., 2018; Garba, 1987; Brandler, 1993; Shagari, 2001:181; Dudley, 1982:117-118; Yar 'Adua, 2004:102-109).

### **Methodology**

This paper is used qualitative/non-numerical method because of its flexibility, wordiness, discursive, explorative and dynamism (Tuckman, 1999; Yin, 2009; VanWynsberghe & Khan, 2007; Yin, 2003). The paper also collected data from secondary sources – journal articles, books, working documents, Reports from International Governmental and Non-Governmental organisations, among others as obtainable in qualitative research (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Summers, 2011). Literature was reviewed with conceptualisations on corruption and national development. The paper then overviewed corruption viz-a-viz Nigeria's national development with focus on Nigeria's human and material potentialities, causes and trends of corruption in Nigeria and its effects on the nation's overall national development. The paper also identified key and high-profile corrupt cases in Nigeria as well as some of the prominent politicians and other renowned personalities, groups and firms involved. The Authors also made some compilations and constructs with info-graphic images to showcase both data and contexts of the study.

### **Potentialities of Nigeria towards National Development**

Nigeria is one of the largest oil producers in Africa and the world Nigeria. In addition, it has tremendous potentials for other solid mineral resources. Nigeria's oil and gas production per day stood at about 2.03 million barrels and 2.5 billion standard cubic feet, respectively, by 2000. Total crude oil and natural gas proven reserves stood at 27 billion barrels and 120 trillion standard cubic feet, respectively during the same period (Edo & Ikelegbe, 2014: 9-10). However, despite the enormous wealth that Nigeria is blessed with, it has been ranked as a country with poor human development record. For instance, in 2016 Nigeria was ranked 152<sup>nd</sup> among the 188 UN member states in the Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI, a

composite statistics of life expectancy, education, and per capita income indicators, is used to rank countries into four tiers of human development. Nigeria's HDI value for 2016 which ranked it at 152<sup>nd</sup> of 188 countries placed the country on Low Human Development (LHD). The report, however, showed a positive outlook for the country as Nigeria's HDI increased from 0.466% to 0.527, a 13.1% increase in the last 10 years under review between 2005 and 2015. This represents a three-point increase over what the nation had between 2005 and 2014, when Nigeria HDI's value increased from 0.467% to 0.514%, an increase of 10.1% in the HDI Report (2016).

Regrettably, in the same period, Transparency International (TI) (2018) placed Nigeria on Corruption Perception Index (2017) ranking as 148 out of 180 and scoring only 27/100. Nigeria has once had one of the finest political classes in both Africa and the world whose potentialities and qualities of leadership, professionalism, expertise and skills are capable bringing whatever any nation requires to move fast in the train of national development. On professional, skilful and expertise terms, Nigeria has the best set of medical doctors, academics, engineers, medical scientists, bankers and financial experts working and excelling all around the world. Those have contributed towards national development of the various countries they reside, especially the United Kingdom, Canada, United States, Germany, Malaysia, France and China. However, issues revolving around corruption, corrupt activities and matters there related have either driven those contributors out of Nigeria or made them to seek greener pastures outside, but at the expense of Nigeria's national development.

Nigeria has various mega national development plans including the 1962, 1975, 1980); the National Rolling Plan (1990-1992); economic and industrial development projects such as those of Ajaokuta and Katsina, and other steel and Aluminium companies; four oil refineries; Electronics industry; bicycles industry; pipes, cables and wire manufacturing; the once flourishing oil sector and Petro-Dollar; home fittings industry; rubber production and processing industry; cocoa production and processing industry; tobacco industry; railway; aviation; shoes, leather and textile industry; hydro and gas electricity generation, transmission and distribution; small arms manufacture; local automobile industry; once bouncy educational sector; medical and scientific industry, among others. However, corruption has devastated all these and many others that could have for long actualised national development vis-à-vis the country's potential human and material resources (Dauda, 2022).

Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) defines corruption as the 'abuse of public office for private gain'. The index categorises corruption into three parts: grand corruption - which involves acts committed at a high level of government that distort policies or the central functioning of the state, enabling leaders to benefit at the expense of the public good; petty corruption - involves everyday abuse of entrusted power by low and mid-level public officials in their interactions with ordinary citizens, often trying to access basic public goods and services; and political corruption - involving manipulation of policies, institutions and rules of procedure in the allocation of resources and financing by political decision makers, who abuse their position to sustain their power, status and wealth.

Similarly, Okolo and Raymond (2014:35) itemize the following as most common forms of corruption in Nigeria are: giving and receiving bribes; Inflating of contracts; 10% Kick back and payment upfront; Abuse of public property; Lodging government fund in private accounts; Examination malpractices; adulterated food or hazardous drugs; misappropriation and embezzlement of fund, money laundering by public officers; using proxy names to buy property; fake results, illegal acquisition of public assets (landed properties, businesses); oil bunkering; frauds and falsifications of accounts and official records or documents, ghost worker syndrome; examination malpractices in schools, sorting, sex-for-marks); bribery &

extortion, especially by the Police and other security agents; bank fraud and 419, criminal diversion of depositor's funds; electoral malpractices (vote buying), among others.

On that note, Edo (2006) argues that the most dangerous form of corruption is political corruption. While corruption is also rampant at national, state and local governments levels, those involved in it are ironically celebrated, and in most cases, rewarded with traditional titles and other local and national recognitions by their people (Ekpo, et al., 2016). Corrupt officials are, except on few occasions, neither arrested nor tried and punished. The stain (fight back) of corruption in Nigeria does not spare anti-graft agencies as all the former Chairpersons of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), for example, left that office unceremoniously and without completing their tenures – Nuhu Ribadu, Ibrahim Lamurde, Farida Waziri, Ibrahim Magu and Abdurrashid Bawa (Okonjo-Iweala, 2018; Adeyemi, 2016).

Some of the chairpersons were themselves, apart from political and fight back effects, accused of involvement in the corrupt practices (Mike, 2018). High and low profile cases of corruption are so obvious and too many in Nigeria. Most prominent hotspot corruptions include those of non-accountability of security votes, Police Pension scam, Poverty Alleviation Programmes, Fuel Subsidy payments, NNPC non-remittances and or accountability of billions of Dollars, Arms procurement, money laundering, roads, railways and Power Projects. In the recent, other hotspots also include emergency, relief and disaster management, Schools Feeding Programmes, and Covid-19 Palliatives Funds distribution (Authors' Compilations, 2024; Daily Trust, August 24, 2007, p.32).

In another development, Nigeria Corruption Index (NCI) (cited in Ajie and Wokekoro 2012) presents the nationwide corruption survey based on what it described as sectoral distribution, in which it identifies the Nigerian Police as the most corrupt organization in the country, closely followed by the Power Holdings Company of Nigeria (PHCN). Corruption in the Education Ministry was found to have increased from 63 per cent in 2005 to 74 per cent in 2007, as against 96% to 99% for the Police during the corresponding period. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), was the only new organization identified as corrupt among the 16 organizations on a list which included Joint Admission and Matriculation Board, the Presidency, and the Nigerian National Petroleum Commission (NNPC).



**Figure 4** Highest Prevalence of Corruption among Nigerians

Source: Authors' Construct (2024); Institution for Economics & Peace (2017); International Police Association Report (2017); International Security & Police Index (2017); National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), (August 2017); United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (July 2017); Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) (2024).

### **Corruption and Nigeria's National Development**

Currently, Nigeria ranks 150<sup>th</sup> with 24/100 scores among 180 countries studied by the Transparency International (TI) (Transparency International [TI], 2023). The magnitude of corruption in Nigeria has for long been fatal (Achebe, 2012). Corruption has permeated every sector of the Nigerian public and also the private life – economy, politics, religions, social services, infrastructure, education, health care and services, among others (Egbo, Nwakobi, Onwumare & Uche, 2012; Oarhe & Aghedo, 2010). Corruption is also practiced among both the educated, moral and immoral, adult and young, parents and children, rich and the poor, politicians, traditional and native rulers, administrators and students, employed and unemployed.

Series of studies and survey in 2017 for example, reveal that: officers and men of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), the Judiciary and judicial workers rank highest among the corrupt public officials. In the same context, Nigerians are so used to and embroiled in corruption that over 28% of their income earnings are spent in paying bribes in one form or the other. Similarly, 34.6% of the corrupt activities involve persons between the ages of 25 and over 37% of all corruptions involve Nigerians with tertiary education levels.

Furthermore, insurance firms, doctors and other medical workers, teachers are also the highest categories engaged in corruption (Institution for Economics and Peace, 2017; International Police Association Report, 2017; International Security and Police Index, 2017; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNODC, July, 2017; National Bureau of Statistics, NBS, August, 2017). Corruption has a major cause of poverty in Nigeria, despite its oil wealth and abundant resources. Owing to corruption, Nigeria remains one of the poorest countries in the world with many Nigerians live below the poverty line by diverse rankings.

Those shouldered with the responsibility of public trust are those who first abuse such trusts. For example, by February 2016 and not long after President Buhari assumed office, some former governors and senators and or just elected senators came under full trial of corruption, diversion of funds and money-laundering charges, including Bukola Saraki, Ahmed Sani Yerima, Danjuma Goje, Abdullahi Adamu, Abdul Aziz Nyako, Joshua Chibi Dariye, Ike Ikwerenmadu, Kashamu Buruji and Godswill Akpabio (Paden, 2016:190-191). The 4 most high-profile cases of corruption include those of Diezani Allison-Madueke; Mohammed Bello Adoke and petroleum funds; Tompolo and others money laundering; and the probe of some 9 Senators (Paden, 2016:188).

Recently, A UNODC survey shows that 20% of all those who had contact with the Nigerian judiciary in the relation to judicial service were requested to offer bribe for such services (Aljazeera, March 22, 2024, p.3). In such public corruption saga, the administration President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan spent over N2.2bn on 'prayers' in order for his government to win the fight against Boko Haram insurgency. It was thus admitted as Paden (2016:201) notes that through the Office of the National Security Adviser (NSA), Goodluck administration disbursed over N2.2b cash for national prayers on a verbal and mere proposed contract. There were two broad syndicates involved (Paden, 2016:200-203).

The Military Procurement Audit Committee in investigating 'the Military Procurement Corruption Scandal' under president Jonathan administration recommended the probe of 17 former and serving military officers as well as 21 companies in the 'Armsgate Scandal'. The serving and retired officers recommended for probing included among others, AVM J. A. Kayode-Beckley, AVM J. B. Adigun, AVM T. Omenyi, AVM T. Oguntoyinbo, AVM A. M. Mamu, AVM A. G. Idowu, AVM A. G. Tsakr (rtd), AVM I. A. Balogun, Major General E.

R. Chioba (rtd), Air Marshal A. N. Amosu (rtd), Air Marshall M. D. Umar (rtd), and Air Chief Marshall Alex S. Badeh (rtd) (Paden, 2016:188 & 201).

According to World Bank Report (2005), Nigeria is one of the poorest countries in the world. This poverty status results from the acts selfish individuals engaged in diverse, networked and syndicated corrupt acts, thereby brazenly stealing, misappropriating, and diverting funds and other resources needed for national development. As one form of corruption, it is on record that more than \$400 billion was stolen from the Nigerian state treasury by Nigeria's leaders between 1960 and 1999, while the country's GDP per capita fell from US \$1,010.00 in the early 1980s to US \$300.00 in 1999 (Okaduwa, 2007).

Thus, British Department for International Development (DFID) maintains that poverty persists in Nigeria because of corruption found in all, especially the public sector which have impacted negatively with dreadful consequences on national development (DFID in Okolo & Raymond, 2014). On the political front, corruption constitutes a major obstacle to democracy and the rule of law. It flouts or even subverts formal processes, undermines the legitimacy of government and democratic values, including trust, confidence and tolerance. Specifically, lack of legitimacy creates enabling environment for diverse forms of insecurity (Okaduwa, 2007).

Although corruption is everywhere in Nigeria and across all the sectors – public and private, regimes – military and civilian democratic, and religions among others, corruption among politicians has been the most re-sounding. This is substantially due to their brazen nature of carrying out the corrupt acts, especially by direct and large sum theft of public fund.

For the pre-independence, and the First Republic politics and politicians, the level and number of politicians involved in corruption and corrupt cases was insignificant compared what obtained during the Second Republic. For the First Republic politicians, cases of corruption involved few and some were during the pre-independence, including Dr. Azikiwe's 1957 Foster-Sutton corruption case of the Barclays Bank.

The Foster-Sutton Commission of Inquiry Report into the financial allegations against Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was published on 16<sup>th</sup> January, 1957 by the colonial government. This Inquiry investigated the financial allegations against Nnamdi Azikiwe at the Barclays Bank. In the Report, the Commission of Inquiry found and concluded that Dr Azikiwe's conduct in respect of the Barclays Bank was below the 'expectations of honest, reasonable people ... [unbiased by their political opinions]'. However, his political party, the NCNC while replying against the Commission's Report, not only dismissed the Report, but also ironically maintained that the Commission's Report was itself, below the 'expectations of honest reasonable people uninfluenced by the very nature of their appointment' (Coleman, 1986:374-375); Awolowo's illegal receipts of party (AG) funds and attempt to build 'financial empire', Awolowo's agency for the Leventis & Company, Mrs. Awolowo's massive illegal and importation while her husband (Awolowo) was a Federal Commissioner during the regime of Yakubu Gowon, and the 1983 Guerrilla Camps and UPN/NPP partnership.

There was the Cooker Commission which was set up to and investigated the financial affairs of the Western Region Government Corporations; Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh's questionable wealth, among few others (Mohammed, 2018: 127; Mohammed, et al., 2018; Udoji, 1995: 82-83; Richard, 1987:34; Oyediran, 1979:15; Authors' Compilations, 2024; Mohammed, Aisha & Saidu, 2018:70; Hotline, August 8-21, 1988, pp.37; Citizen Magazine, October, 1990, pp. 14-19); there was also the issue of Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh's controversially acquired wealth. Festus Okotie-Eboh was adjudged the richest, most flamboyant and bountiful minister of the First Republic. Okotie-Eboh had a lot of money and displayed it. He was killed together

with the Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa during the night of 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1966 (Mohammed 2018: 127); there was also the 1962/1963 Census exercises in which most regional politicians. Likewise, the Second Republic politicians were also involved in corruption and corrupt practices more than those of the First Republic. The Second Republic of Shehu Shagari had such enormous corruption cases involving politicians, including Transport Minister Ummaru Dikko, Bello Maitama Yusuf, Uba Ahmed, Adisa Akinloye, Alex Ekwueme, Bisi Onabanjo, Abubakar Tatari Ali, Aper Aku, Abubakar Rimi, Sabo Bakin Zuwo, Melford Okilo, Adamu Tafawa Balewa, Yunusa Kaltungo, Sam Mbakwe, Solomon Lar, Jim Nwobodo, among others (Mohammed, Aisha & Saidu, 2018:124-125; Authors' Compilations, 2024).

The Third Republic and post 1999 politics and politicians had worst cases of corruption and corrupt politicians which involved several Fourth Republic (from 1999) politicians. In the history of Nigeria, there have been hundreds of corrupt cases involving high profile public corruption with politicians, public servants and the general public in connivance with private individuals and firms involving Nigerians and others. These and many other personalities are involved in public corrupt cases of different dimensions and perspectives amounting billions of dollars, other non-financial corrupt practices in high profile corruption cases, including those of oil bunkering, Social investment Programmes, Disaster & Humanitarian Affairs; foreign exchange allocation at parallel/black market, unification and racketeering; medical and health services, equipment procurements and delivery; drugs dealing, pushing, trafficking; fertilizer procurement, subsidy and distribution.

National Integrated Power Projects, Nigerian Railway System Rehabilitation, fraud, non-remittances (notably the NNPC/NNPCL), money laundering, embezzlement, fraudulent award of contracts, abuse of offices, theft, financial inducements, misappropriation, diversion of funds, arms procurement, security, National Social Investment Programme, Poverty Alleviation Programmes, Schools Feeding Programme, various roads constructions (notably the several times re-awarded contracts of Abuja-Lokoja which has been under construction even before 1999, but not yet completed at this moment 2024), the Mambilla power project with the most scandalous May 2003 award of contract for 'Construction of 3,960 megawatt Mambilla Hydro-Electric Power Station on build, operate and transfer basis to Sunrise Power and Transmission Co. Ltd.' under the Olusegun Obasanjo administration without any budgetary allocation and approval nor cash backing, ineptitude at work, poor administration and low productivity, among others.

In a democratic system, offices and institution lose their legitimacy when they become vulnerable to corruption as democracy and development cannot develop in a corrupt atmosphere. The case of Ajaokuta Steel Company (ASCL) has been one of the most embarrassing and long-lasting public corruption in Nigeria. The Ajaokuta age-long corruption syndicate involves Nigerians on one hand, and Russia, Britain, United States, India, France and Germany on the other (Hotline, August 8-21, 1988, pp. 26). From the economic perspective, corruption encourages capital flight out of Nigeria and foreign investors become reluctant to invest in Nigeria for fear of losing their money to corrupt practices, including corrupt governments and investment policies. These altogether hinder Nigeria's national development with job loses, declining investments, unemployment, overemployment and underemployment.

Socially, up and down the social ladder, Nigerians have no trust and confidence in the social and political system and have developed non-challant attitude and general apathy towards the public policies resulting in a weak civil society (Okolo & Raymond, 2014, p 35-36). Nigeria's and Nigerians credibility and images its image has become damaged before the regional,

African and international community and may cost her about 37% of total GDP by the year 2030 (Centre for Democracy and Development [CDD] Report, 2021; PWC Report, 2016).

### **Conclusion**

There is limited conception of public corruption to mean only theft of public resources and or exchange of money for benefits/services in Nigeria. While the war on corruption is old and continues, corruption is daily and ironically becoming more prevalent, complex and acceptable in the Nigerian public domain. Although corruption is everywhere and, in every state, and society, the case of Nigeria, especially its public sector has become so pervasive and critical that national development has stagnated. Given the magnitude of corruption and how it has permeated into every segment of the Nigerian state and citizens, public and private lives, as well as the enormity of the negative consequences, corruption and its related practices have become structural barriers to Nigeria's national development, thereby resulting in so many other negative consequences.

While national development is imperative for every state and society, it is not achieved on platter of gold. It also is not achieved in an environment characterised by high level of corruption. The increase and frequency in the level of corruption portends a greater danger and threat to Nigeria's national development. Hence, there is urgent need to stop the negative trend of corruption before it kills Nigeria. Stopping corruption in Nigeria has however, proved to be both dangerous and difficult. Several and multi-dimensioned actions from different stakeholders would have to be genuinely taken in a harmonious atmosphere with the strongest political will and commitment to significantly reduce the occurrences and intensities.

### **Recommendations**

In view of the findings, summary and conclusion of this study, the following policy recommendations are made as: political will, wherewithal and commitment to fight corruption, ; truly independent, but well monitored judiciary; truly autonomous anti-graft agencies; review of corruption and corrupt practices laws to reflect the magnitude of the corruption escalating cases of commission; avoidance of selective justice sacred cows; general improvement in the standard of living of the people in order to truly fight corruption; credible assets declaration by all the civil and public servants as required by the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB); extensive and intensive enlightenment among the general public and inculcation of moral education in schools; good governance, transparency, accountability and the rule of law should be the watchdog of all; imperative strong, sustained and functional cooperation and harmony among the state authorities, civil societies and others; strict adherence with established financial policies, rules and regulations such as those of Public Procurements, budgetary policies and regulations, extant financial rules and regulations; tactical and functional synergy among all the anti-graft establishments.

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