

Article

Defying Integrity: Philosophical Evaluations of Corruption and Ethics in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper explores the complex interplay between corruption and ethics within the Nigerian context, examining how systemic corruption has undermined integrity at various levels of society. Utilizing a philosophical lens, the work delves into the foundational ethical theories and principles that illuminate the moral dilemmas faced by individuals and institutions in Nigeria. The prevalence of corruption in Nigerian society today is widely regarded as a national disgrace rather than just a topic of speculation. It stands out as one of the primary challenges afflicting contemporary Nigeria. Throughout the nation's history, numerous efforts have been made to address this troubling issue. In light of this article, it is crucial for Nigerians to change their behaviour by adhering to ethical principles. Previous attempts to combat corruption have largely failed, and long-term sustainable growth in Nigeria will depend on effectively tackling this problem. Ethical theories have a significant impact on people's behaviour, as they provide frameworks for moral conduct and perspectives. These theories help develop solutions to the complex challenges faced by both individuals and leaders in their daily lives. By applying ethical principles, one can analyse various hypothetical and real-world dilemmas, highlighting essential elements of a morally sound approach within an ethical framework. Ultimately, this paper aims to contribute to the discourse on ethical behaviour and governance in Nigeria, offering insights into the philosophical dimensions of corruption and the quest for integrity in a fractured moral landscape.

Keywords: Ethical Theories, Philosophy, Corruption, Nigeria

Introduction

Corruption is a global problem and no country of the world is free of its menacing grip. However, it is the level of its prevalence on the one hand and the honest, committed readiness of the people to eradicate it on the other hand that differentiates one country from another in the scale of corruption perception index. Here in Nigeria, corruption has been entrenched in our national ethos, politics, civil society, and public and private sectors of business and commerce. Our educational system, moral preferences and the whole economic machinery of our society stink and ooze with the stench of corruption. Every level of our Nigerian society has been deeply permeated by a pervasive and debilitating culture of corruption. Nigeria has been rated as one of the most corrupt nations in the world. Etymologically, the word corruption comes from the Latin word “corrumpo” which means to decompose, or to disintegrate, to lose value, to become putrid and useless. In other words, corruption simply means to lose purity or integrity. This broad understanding covers both objects and things – animate and inanimate.

However, when applied to human actions, or a free moral agent, the word corruption assumes an added meaning. To Maurice Coker, (2006:91) corruption is the “misuse of power for private benefit or advantage. This power may, but need not reside in the public domain. Besides money, the benefit can take the form of promotion, special treatment, commendation, or the favours of women or men... In ordinary parlance corruption simply means asking, giving or taking a fee, gift or favours as a condition for the performance of one’s legal or assigned responsibility.” The word ‘ethics’ is derived from the Greek word ‘ethos’ which means ‘custom’. It shares an equivalent meaning with yet another word “mores”, which means “customs” or “habits”. Sometimes the two words are used interchangeably to mean “customs, habits and acceptable ways of behaviour of an individual or a community” Uduigwomen, (2006: 1). In the words of Uduigwomen (2006), ‘Ethics is the study of moral values and conduct. It deals with morality, though it is not the same as morality. However, morality is the subject matter of ethics. Morality consists of the standards that an individual or a group of individuals have about what is right or wrong, good or bad. Moral standards themselves are ideals that people try to live up to concerning what is right or wrong, good or evil’. Man is a moral being. His actions, when done out of deliberation and volition carry with them a moral status that makes them either good or bad, depending on whether these actions conform to the natural law or the human positive laws, which have a universal applicability.

Corruption as a human act, done by a morally responsible agent carries with it a moral guilt because it goes contrary to established moral standards accepted generally or by a particular society. The question of corruption then assumes a status of philosophical importance, first because it proceeds from the metaphysical nature of man as a being imbued with rationality and freedom. Since corruption works against the common good, any act of corruption is a war against society and consequently a war against man and the metaphysical fabric of his existence. Ocholor, (2008: 338) underscored this same point when he held that “the practice of amassing wealth through fraudulent means is an act of sabotage against men, women and children and touches on their fundamental rights to enjoy good wealth made through legitimate means”.

The dynamics of human activities, economic, religious, social, political and cultural aspirations in society are characterized by a perennial quest for property and thus recognition. This quest has turned man into wolf towards his fellowman; he enslaves and impoverishes others while seeking freedom and riches for himself. Rousseau thus concluded that society itself is that which makes man greedy and deceitful to try and appease the desire for esteem and recognition that the social bonding itself has awakened and nurtured. Primitive man lived within himself, while man in society did not know how to live except only in the opinion of others. For Rousseau, therefore, it is the society with its capitalistic emphasis on private property that corrupts man. For Rousseau, the primitive man or man in the ‘state of nature’ is the ideal. He has not been contaminated by civil society. He is virtuous,

innocent and good. Though Rousseau idealizes the state of nature, he alludes also to the irreversible process of civilization, which despite its corrupting influence on man, is however necessary and inevitable.

It has to be stated, however, that Rousseau was not completely right to have seen the quest for private property as a corrupting agent. There is in every man an intrinsic desire to own property, especially that which has been gained by his sweat. It is injustice and against his nature to deprive him of this right. What is wrong, however, is to seek for this property in a way that disrespects the rights of others to equally own and use property. This brings us to another very important philosophical implication of the materialistic mentality of modern society and the corruption that has sprung from it. If Marx had built on this presupposition of Rousseau, namely an attack on private property and the overriding need for equality, maybe there would have been nothing wrong with his socialism. However, his undoing was his atheistic materialism that had no place for God in the affairs of men. He also advocated for the complete abolition of private property, which was not only unrealistic but also anti-human.

Ethical Principles Inhibiting Corruption

Governments throughout the world are running campaigns to protect ethics because both public servants and politicians find it difficult to act in a way that demonstrates integrity and honesty. Since its relevance relies on the context in which one desires to narrate, ethics has been a challenging subject to research across a wide range of disciplines, including Philosophy, Law, Public Administration, and Politics (Amundsen et al., 2009). Corruption, unethical behaviour, misuse of power, as well as poor governance and general mismanagement, prevent effective public administration (Mazibuko and Fourie, 2017). To achieve organisational efficiency, effectiveness, and growth, organisational ethics is essential. Additionally, a lot of public and commercial organisations have policies and guidelines that include ethical standards.

Van der Walddt and Du Toit (1997) argue that ethics is a collection of rules for appropriate behaviour, but Tsebe (2011) asserts that every member of the public service has a responsibility to respect the government and uphold public trust in its institutions. Upholding ethics in public administration, according to Sebola (2014), is consistent with the African Union Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Administration, also known as the 2001 Charter by public administrators and researchers. He contends that morality encourages professionalism, political objectivity, and efficient policy implementation. Maintaining moral standards encourages equitable working conditions, reduces the likelihood of corruption, and guarantees that public servants adhere to moral standards and norms when providing goods and services (Thornhill, 2012). In many developing nations, ethics is upheld by the unmuted voices of non-state actors who work to influence policymakers to improve the efficiency of the public sector. Political-administrative conflicts, according to Mantzaris (2017), are common in South African towns and lead to subpar service delivery to communities. Although politicians participate in

policymaking, their moral behaviour is frequently in doubt; for instance, meddling with local government operations is common. Long-lasting conflicts come from this, which hinders the delivery of public services and encourages unethical and corrupt behaviour. Political officeholders in this situation frequently act in a supremacist manner, especially when it comes to political, social, and public accountability. This study contends that in order to sustain ethics in public administration, elected officials and politicians must come to an understanding and adhere to the codes of conduct that apply to each of their respective workplaces. Promoting an effective public administration that can serve the needs of the people is essential.

Accountability

The world has gone so negative in many aspects that one cannot predict what will happen next in our ever-changing society. How do people present their score sheets when they are entrusted with responsibilities no matter how small? How would leaders be rated if there are no means of checking their activities? Many questions arise in various sectors; from the leadership to the lead, every activity must come up with a result. Whether things go on as planned or otherwise, someone needs to be held responsible. But who? That is a key question. And another like it is, how do you determine who answers for what? These poignant and fundamental questions lead us to the concept of accountability. In clear concise terms, accountability is the quality or state of being accountable; especially, the obligation of an individual or organization to account for its activities, accept responsibility for them and transparently disclose the results. A government has accountability for its decisions and laws as they affect citizens; an individual has accountability for his/her acts and behaviours. To be accountable to someone is to be responsible to the person for what was entrusted into your care: funds power, that is authority, persons, etc. It is to explain what you did, why you did it and for what purposes. Accountability is not a virtue for a particular class of people rank or creed. It is an expectation from all persons. According to Makarenko (2007), accountability refers to what happens when the rules of the game are broken. It involves “holding the person(s) concerned accountable” when they engage in unethical behaviour. Because today, another common issue in government ethics is accountability, it is useful to think about a Code of Ethics as a rule book that outlines what is expected of public officials. In essence, it defines the rules that will guide all employees. Accountability therefore is a concept that makes very imperative demands.

Types of Accountability

Stone et al (1989) listed eight types of accountability. Only five shall be discussed for this research.

1. Political Accountability: This refers to government accountability, which involves ensuring that elected or appointed officials – whether civil servants or politicians – are responsible to the public and legislative bodies like Congress or Parliament. In Nigeria’s democratic rule, some public officials have been impeached. A few examples are:

- Governor Balarabe Musa of Kaduna State in 1981 for disagreement over nominations into his cabinet. However, he later said it was because he planned to have the state open small and medium-sized industries, and this wouldn't allow the NPN-dominated House of Assembly members to establish their own enterprises.
- Governor Ayo Fayose of Ekiti State on October 16, 2006, for alleged mismanagement of public funds and serial killings.
- Governor Peter Obi of Anambra state on November 2, 2006, for alleged gross misconduct.
- Governor Joshua Dariye of Plateau State on November 13, 2006, for alleged siphoning of public funds and money laundering.
- Governor Rashidi Ladoja of Oyo State on January 12, 2006, for alleged argument with Oyo State aristocratic power broker, Lamidi Adedibu.

2. Administrative Accountability: It is the total of constitutional, statutory, administrative and judicial rules and precedents and the established practices using which public officials may be held accountable for their official actions. It refers to the formal and specific location of responsibility vested in a person. Responsibility has both personal and moral connotations and is not necessarily related to formal status and power. Administrative accountability is a kind of management control. Control, on its part, is the process of ensuring that actual activities conform to established standards and laid down procedures. It helps managers to monitor the effectiveness of their staff.

3. Public Accountability: In government affairs, public accountability is not a new concept. In the day of yore in Nigeria or better explained, pre-colonial traditional societies, citizens expected their leaders—Ezes, Obas, Emirs, the Royal Cabinet, and other community leaders—to be accountable to them. Even in the present-day context, the same expectation awaits town union leaders. The general idea of public accountability in public administration is that bureaucracy must serve the national interest based on earlier agreement, and afterwards or as and when due, render account of its stewardship.

4. Moral Accountability: This has to do with the consequences of people's moral or immoral behaviour. Moral accountability derives from the voluntary nature of an action, choice, or feeling. Choice has been identified to be voluntary and deliberate and it deals with attainable means to an end of pleasure or minimal pain. People can only be morally accountable for the choices they make because they can voluntarily and deliberately choose the good or the bad.

5. Managerial Accountability: A clear assignment of responsibility to the management of spending agents as defined by Bill Dorotinsky, Sector Manager, World Bank. Here are Examples:

- Operational policies, financial management, and internal controls within their organizational unit.
- Assuring organization uses resources to attain approved ends, through acceptable means.
- Frequently narrowed to focus on adequate financial management and control for planning, programming, budgeting, accounting, controlling, reporting, archiving, and monitoring.
- Clear roles and authority of managers.
- Transparency and sufficient enabling environment.
- Concept could be broadened to encompass organizational results.

Transparency

This is operating in such a way that it is easy for others to see what actions are performed. In every sphere of human life and endeavour—companies, organizations, administrations, and communities, it is practised. It guides an organization's decisions and policies on the disclosure of information to its employees and the public, or simply the intended recipient of the information. The word, transparency also describes a situation where there is a lack of hidden agendas and conditions, which is usually accompanied by making full information available and accessible. Such information is necessary for cooperation and collaboration among staff of an organization, as well as collective decision-making. In transparency, there is a minimum degree of disclosure to dealings and agreements, practices and transactions are made open to all concerned, for verification. It also connotes an essential condition for a free and open exchange whereby the rules and reasons behind regulatory measures bear the hallmarks of fairness and clarity for all persons involved.

In Latin etymology, the word transparency is bipartite, consisting of trans-meaning “across” or “through” —and pareo—meaning “be seen”. In the physical sciences, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a transparent object as having the property of transmitting light without appreciable scattering so that bodies lying beyond are seen clearly. Social scientists have metaphorically adopted this definition to connote the ability of interested parties to see through otherwise private information to understand the intentions of the sender. According to Pirson & Malhotra (2008), recent literature has suggested that transparency and trust are intricately related concepts. However, the relationship between trust and transparency is yet to be empirically examined. Transparency requires understanding so that everybody can put various things into perspective. To build this understanding, plenty of time and effort is needed. Misunderstandings can result in a situation where this is neglected. Though some trust is also required, transparency also creates trust, improves trust and also requires trust. Transparency is a complicated subject (Madhavan, 2000) and there is a general lack of knowledge about its effects on institutional behaviour (Bloomfield & O'Hara, 1999).

Importance of Transparency

Transparency serves as a:

- a. basis for accountability,
- b. check against mismanagement and corruption,
- c. means of achieving public confidence, and
- d. tool for informed participation of citizens.

Transparency brings many benefits, such as:

1. Autonomy which improves overall motivation, speed and efficiency of the organization.
2. Organizations can respond to market changes much faster when they are agile and build on informed, empowered, proactive and thinking individuals.
3. Speed, efficiency and quality of decision-making.
4. Improves engagement as people will better understand the reasons behind choices and decisions.
5. Creates engagement and motivation as people understand the reasons behind their work.

Social Justice-Rawls Approach

Since John Rawls (1999) does not believe that there is a workable general standard of fair relative positions, his theory of justice does not support the justice of equality of outcomes according to any standard of justice. If equality is a requirement for justice in Rawls' view, then that requirement will be a component of the set of laws that defines society as a just "cooperative endeavour for mutual profit" (Rawls, 1999: 73-4). Rawls presents an egalitarian deontological theory of political fairness (Parfit, 1997). According to Murphy (1998), principles of justice for systems of rules and principles of justice for individual conduct belong to different conceptual schemes. In Rawls's case, these conceptual schemes are a freestanding political conception of justice and natural duties and political obligations for individuals. The divergence can be shown in how Rawls and Robert Nozick perceive justice differently. In Rawls' dualist deontic theory, individual holdings are just if they are obtained by or transferred to those individuals in line with the regulations of a just basic structure. When viewed in this light, Rawls' theory is strongly egalitarian since it calls for a relationship of reciprocal respect for competing claims to primary goods. Even though it does not necessarily require any clear equitable pattern of compensation, this equality also places restrictions on unfair results.

Aristotle's Virtue of Justice

In the history of philosophy, justice has been one of the key topics. Justice was viewed by the Greeks as a virtue of the soul and deed. Justice was defined by both Plato and Aristotle as virtue and a willingness to follow the rules. It implied symmetry between rights and obligations. The pinnacle of ideal human connections was justice. Justice was regarded by Plato as one of the highest qualities. According to the Greeks, justice was the motivating force behind men righteously performing their obligations. It was primarily social to encourage harmony and balance in mind and conduct (Dunning, 1996).

Justice, in Aristotle's view, is equality and proportionality in the pursuit of goals on an individual level and in society as a whole (Aristotle, 1953). Treating equals fairly and unequals unfairly, but in proportion to their meaningful differences, is the fundamental test of fairness according to Aristotle's political philosophy. In his book on politics, he asserts that "the goal of all sciences and arts is a good and the highest of all of them is political science, whose good is justice. The common good, to put it another way. All men believe that justice is a form of equality, and they all share our philosophic distinctions regarding ethics to some level. They acknowledge that equality should exist between equals and that justice is a concept related to people. Aristotle distinguished between distributive justice and corrective justice, two different sorts of justice. According to Aristotle, distributive justice, a type of justice, is the most effective legislation to thwart any revolution because it upholds the equitable and proportionate distribution of offices, honours, products, and services to each citizen of a country or state. Politics is mostly the focus of this justice. Every political organisation, according to Aristotle, needs its own distributive justice system. But because there aren't many good people, he rejected democratic and oligarchic standards of justice and allowed offices to only be given to those who have made the greatest contributions to society. According to Aristotle, just a few people should hold the majority of the offices. According to him, corrective justice works to stop one right from obstructing another. According to Aristotle, voluntary and commercial actions like hiring, selling, and providing protection are related to corrective justice. These actions involve assault against freedom, honour, property, and life. In a nutshell, this justice strives for virtue and moral excellence of character, which is why it is known as corrective justice (Sabine, 1953).

Corruption as a Moral Problem

The ugly emergence of political corruption in Nigeria is the dilemma of incessant greed for money, power and glory. The urge for material acquisition is so alarming that those who have wealth become recognized in society while those who have not are abandoned to their fate. Popkin and Stroll (1981) quoted Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* to explain why these selfish desires exist in human beings. Hobbes was cited as saying that: Man is by nature selfish and egotistic. He is motivated by selfish desires which require satisfaction if he is to be happy. For example, all his actions can be explained in terms of the attempt to gratify some desires such as the desire for sex, food, shelter, fame, riches and so forth.

However, Omoregbe (1990) emphasized that injustice in any society results when the equals are treated unequally and the unequals equally; it is what is lawful and as well as what is fair and equal". He says that there is neither lawful nor fairness of deals among Nigerians. Moreover, because of newly acquired social value in which everybody struggles to belong to a recognized class of people in society, things begin to go wrong since the emphasis or what counts in the society no longer bears on merit and honesty but rather "achievement" or "success" in whatever form, either by crook or foul means. Society has no option but to hail and glorify whoever has recorded more achievements. Morality has for long been thrown to the dogs; people have come to embrace and applaud in the wrong way of the Machiavellian

principle. In his work, Machiavelli (1995:56) stated clearly that: "In the actions of all men, and especially of prince, where there is no court of appeal, one judges by the results. So let a prince set about the task of conquering and maintaining his state, his methods will always be judged honourable and will be universally praised." The common people are always impressed by appearance and results.

Therefore, the malady and agony of political corruption manifest their ugly scar on political circles, governments, and institutions; and cause a lot of worries and woes for all and to all concerned Nigerians. Morality is an integral part of societal development and progress. Hence, a morally corrupt nation is in all ramifications dwarfed and incapacitated in all aspects of human and national development. It can neither develop nor attract development from foreign investors. It will consistently maintain a low per capita income and permanently be grouped among the poorest countries in the world and its citizens will continually wallow in abject poverty. This is why Omoregbe (1993: x) wrote that:

An immoral society is also a sick society. By an immoral society, we mean a society permeated with corruption, dishonesty, fraud, **selfishness**, embezzlement of public funds and other immoral acts, such a society is sick and cannot be in sound order. Its organs cannot function properly because they are not in sound health conditions. Life in such a society becomes increasingly difficult, insecure and unhappy. Something has to be done to save the situation.

However, the immoral ways of life among Nigerian politicians have not only affected the development of the country but also greatly affected individual development concerning their psyche, learning and social environment. Odey in Ugwu (2002) highlighted the nature and causes of corruption in Nigeria in the following statements: The trouble with corruption, the reason why it lingers on, nay the reason why it has become such a huge industry in Nigeria, is that it has taken so many years to condition our minds for it, to imbibe it, to nurture it, to sustain it, and even to defend it as virtue as long as it helps us to achieve our end no matter what.

Corruption as a Breach of Formal Justice

It is a matter of immense pertinence in our quest to understand how corruption can be a breach of formal justice to understand what corruption is. An intrinsic definition of corruption is conceived by Ekiyor to be 'the unlawful use of official power or influence by an official of the government either to enrich himself or to further his course and/or contrary to the conventions or laws that are in force.' To have an adept appreciation of how corruption can be a breach of formal justice there is a need to distinguish between formal and substantive justice. The ideology of Rawls concerning justice is generally from the viewpoint of substantive justice. Jong-Sung You, (2021) Substantive justice has as its basic tenets the principles of,

‘equal liberties’, ‘fair equality of opportunity’, and ‘difference principle.’ Formal justice on the other hand is the impartial and consistent administration of laws and institutions. Institutions as conceived by Rawls are a public system of rules that define offices and positions with their rights and duties, powers and immunities and the like (Rawls, 1999). The strict application of formal justice is a way of ensuring the limitation of discretion and arbitrary decision-making which in turn ensures that there is equality before the law. The concept of formal justice entails that laws and institutions should apply equally to persons. This is in line with the tenets of the rule of law thus making formal justice rule of law when it is applied into a legal system. It then becomes imperative that for an institution to be considered just then the authorities must of necessity be impartial and must not be swayed or influenced by personal, monetary, tribal and other such considerations in handling matters.

Even though Rawls's averment was in the direction that substantive justice is about rules, it is my submission that substantive justice is not just about rules but also about outcomes. This is so because substantively just rules do not necessarily guarantee just outcomes because unfair or corrupt administration of just rules will produce unjust outcomes. However, it is worthy of note that fair and consistent administration of just rules does not always guarantee substantively just outcomes, although it is very likely in most cases to produce just outcomes. Rawls opines that ‘even where institutions are unjust, it is often better that they should be consistently applied’ Bo Rothstein, (1998) the reason for this is that although the institutions are unjust, the people who are subject to them will at least know what is demanded and then try to protect themselves accordingly. Whereas, there is even greater injustice if those already disadvantaged are also arbitrarily treated in particular cases. It is still better in particular cases to alleviate the plight of those unjustly treated by departures from the existing rules. The concept of formal justice may be applied not only to law-implementing processes but also to law-making processes. The process of enacting laws or rules can be unfair and irregular. An unjust law can be enacted through a fair process and a just law can be enacted through an unfair process.

There are essentially four types of corruption depending on where in the political process formal justice is violated. Formal Justice may be violated in the electoral, legislative, administrative, or judicial process. Political corruption includes both electoral corruption and legislative corruption.

Procedural justice is a key component of Substantive justice and the highest levels of procedural rules are contained in the constitution. Formal justice should not be confused with procedural justice. Formal justice requires impartial, consistent administration of both procedural rules and distributive rules. Formal justice as the rule of law requires that cases are treated alike. Formal justice is about the actions of the individuals and Rawls presented three principles for individuals: 1) obligations of fairness and fidelity, 2) natural duties to uphold justice, mutual aid, mutual respect, not to injure, and not to harm the innocent, 3) Supererogatory

virtues such as beneficence, courage and mercy. The principle of fairness accounts for all requirements that are obligations as distinct from natural duties. A person is required to do his or her part as defined by the rules of an institution if the institution is just and one has voluntarily accepted the benefits of the arrangement. Formal Justice is violated when the relevant individuals such as politicians, bureaucrats and Judges do not follow the principle of fairness. George Klosko (1994) believes that strong political duties of citizens to follow the laws cannot be explained as natural duties and that the citizens' political obligations arise from the benefits of essential public goods provided by the state regardless of voluntary acceptance of the schemes. Hence, citizens also have political obligations based on the principle of fairness. It is imperative to question whether any private action that does not affect the exercise of public power can be called corruption.

This is because sometimes corruption takes place purely within the public sector without the involvement of the private sector such as embezzlement and corrupt deals between high-level officials and low-level officials surrounding promotion. Formal Justice may be extended to private relations where the principle of fidelity applies to the individual. We acquire obligations by accepting positions of authority. The principle of fidelity is but a special case of the principle of fairness applied to the social practice of entering into covenants or contracts. Breach of formal justice may occur in private relations as well. It is however not uncommon to call the breaking of a promise in private relations for private gain 'fraud' not 'corruption.' Thus, we must ask the question, when does fraud become corruption? To interpret corruption as the abuse of 'public power' is too narrow and may sometimes be misleading. The power of private institutions can affect the public, and purely private power such as monetary resources owned by private actors can be used to buy power that affects the public. We can define corruption as the abuse of power for private gain that is a breach of formal justice by public officials and private actors, and that involves the violation of fairness and the betrayal of public trust.

Anti-Corruption Campaign

The Ethical Reorientation Campaign of Shagari's Second Republic, the war against indiscipline (WAI) of the Buhari/Idiagbon regime, Babangida's committee on corruption and other economic crimes, and the war against corruption are just a few of the anticorruption measures and strategies that Nigeria's various governments have implemented (Diamond, 1991; Bello-Imam, 2004). Other initiatives include the creation of inquiry commissions, tribunals (such as the Failed Bank Tribunal) to prosecute corrupt persons and probe panels. To support investigation panels and tribunals, laws including the Money Laundering Act 2003, Advance Free Fraud and Fraud Related Offences Act of 1995, Foreign Exchange Act of 1995, and Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act of 2000 were also passed. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) was founded in 2003 to support the administration of Obasanjo's anti-corruption campaign. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission Establishment Act created the anti-

graft organisation (2004). The EFCC is required by the Act to fight against financial and economic offences. The Commission has the authority to prevent, look into, prosecute, and punish economic and financial crimes. It is also tasked with upholding the requirements of other laws and regulations pertaining to such offences, such as Money Laundering Act of 1995, Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act of 2004, Advance Fee Fraud and Other Fraud Related Offences Act of 1995, Failed Banks (Recovery of Debts) and Financial Malpractices in Banks Act of 1994, Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act of 1991, and Miscellaneous Offences Act are the laws that govern financial crimes. Following are some examples of how media participation in the fight against corruption affected both the public and private sectors of the economy: Governmental and public anti-corruption initiatives and legislation Public procurement, whistleblowing, private anti-corruption initiatives: information network, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB), the Office of the Ombudsman, the Auditor General, the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), the Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit (BMPIU), electronic government, the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC), and the NEITI.

Institutional Frameworks for Fighting Corruption in Nigeria

Njoku (2005) argued that anti-corruption efforts became a mere cosmetic issue because all previous administrations adopted the operational base and social superstructures of post-colonial politics and public life in their struggle against corruption and corrupt practices. A few of the efforts at stemming corruption include Muritala Mohammed's attack on corrupt practices among public officers in Nigeria; Buhari-Idiagbon's prosecution of notorious and corrupt politicians that served in the previous administration; Abacha's fight against financial crimes in all strata of the nation's life; Musa Bamaïyi's arrest of bank, business executives and practitioners of advanced fraudsters; and lastly Nuhu Ribadu's humiliation through arrest of many corrupt politicians.

Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC)

The rationale for creating ICPC was not different from that of EFCC According to Akanbi, (2005) the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) emerged as a policy response from the Federal Government to fight and curb corruption that has tragically assumed monstrous proportions and permeated all levels of the society, corroded its moral fabric, eroded its economic base and threatened its stability. The Obasanjo administration therefore established the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) in September 1999 and warmly enacted the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act in June 2000. The mandate of ICPC in line with the Act setting it up was to prohibit and prescribe punishment for corruption, fraud, embezzlement, bribery and forgery perpetrated by Nigerians at home and abroad with impunity.

The ICPC Act 2000 brings under its purview all Nigerians, in the private and public sectors and even those political officeholders with constitutional immunity.

The Provision of Section 6 (a-f) of the ICPC Act 2000 sets out the duties of the Commission as paraphrased in the following:

- i. To receive the investigate complaints from members of the public on allegations of corrupt practices and in appropriate cases, prosecute the offenders.
- ii. To examine the practices, systems and procedures of public bodies and where such systems and corruption, to direct and supervise their review.
- iii. To instruct/advise and assist any officer, agency or parastatal on ways by which fraud or corruption may be eliminated or minimized by them.
- iv. To advise heads of public bodies of any changes in practice, systems or procedures compatible with the effective discharge of the duties of public bodies to reduce the likelihood or incidence of bribery, corruption and related offences.
- v. To educate the public on and against bribery, corruption and related offences.
- vi. To enlist and foster public support in combating corruption.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)

The need to curb the trend of corruption and lack of accountability by those occupying positions of authority in Nigeria necessitated the establishment of EFCC in 2003 by President Olusegun Obasanjo. This patriotic move became imperative in response to pressure from the international community which named Nigeria as one of the notorious 23 countries that did not cooperate with the fight against money laundering. The government later promulgated the EFCC Act 2004 to give legal backing to the watchdog agency. Ribadu (2006) noted that Nigeria's target concerning financial accountability and mismanagement of the commonwealth is zero tolerance for corruption.

The EFCC hope to actualize through diverse strategies, viz:

- i. Promulgation of law against graft – Independent Corrupt Practices and (Other Related Offences) Commission (ICPC) Act, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Act, Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act 2004.
- ii. Strengthening of anti-corruption and other economic crime institutions for effective law enforcement.
- iii. Prosecution and conviction of high-ranking administration officials.
- iv. Tracing, seizing and confiscation of all proceeds of crime.
- v. Institution of the Due Process Mechanism in public sector procurements.
- vi. Privatization of failing public institutions and creating an enabling environment for effective private-public partnerships.
- vii. Monthly publication of distributable revenue from the Federation Account to the different tiers of government.

viii. Institution of transparencies in the oil and gas sector through the work of the NEITI.

Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI)

In line with the above strategies, the EFCC is empowered by law to investigate, prevent and prosecute offenders who engage in “Money laundering, embezzlement, bribery, looting and any form of corrupt practices, illegal arms deals, smuggling human trafficking and child labour, illegal oil bunkering, illegal mining, tax evasion, foreign exchange malpractices including counterfeiting of currency, theft of intellectual property and piracy, open market abuse, dumping of toxic wastes, and prohibited goods” (section 46, EFCC Establishment Act, 2004).

The Commission is also responsible for identifying, tracing, freezing confiscating, or seizing proceeds derived from terrorist activities. EFCC is also host to the Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU), vested with the responsibility of collecting suspicious transactions reports (STRs) from financial and designated non-financial institutions, analysing and disseminating them to all relevant government agencies and other Financial Intelligence Units all over the world. In addition to other laws relating to economic and financial crimes including the criminal and penal codes, EFCC is empowered to enforce all the pre-1999 anti-corruption and anti-money laundering laws. Punishments prescribed in the EFCC Establishment Act range from a combination of payment of fine, forfeiture of assets and up to five years imprisonment depending on the nature and gravity of the offence. A conviction for terrorist financing and terrorist activities attracts life imprisonment (Ribadu, 2006).

Strategizing to Reduce Chances of Corrupt Activities

- a. The Executive Arm of government in conjunction with the National Assembly need to come up workable framework for harmonizing and strengthening the role of ICPC and EFCC in order to forestall recklessness and abuse of the principles of accountability and corporate governance in public and private sector organisation in Nigeria.
- b. Public and private sector organisations should be enjoined to take a closer look at their financial operations and as a matter of policy decline to provide tolerant environments for corrupt financial dealing. Accountants who come across corrupt financial transactions during their professional duties must not be a party to it. Rather, they should report such transactions to the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission, the EFCC, the Code of Conduct Bureau and other organizations saddled with the task of eradicating corruption in Nigeria.
- c. The EFCC, ICPC and other organisations saddled with the task of eradicating corruption in Nigeria should earnestly beam their searchlights on political office-holders, executive directors, banks et cetera being possible conduit pipes for corrupt financial flows.
- d. Accountants in both public and private organisations specifically should be compelled by ICAN and ANAN always act under professional ethics of Accountancy,

extant laws and ethical standards. Management should be made to look inward and rid their rank and file of thieves and other dubious persons possessing criminal instincts.

e. EFCC should strengthen its vigilance and monitoring mechanisms over the nation's ministries, commissions, private sector organisations, banking and financial industry, universities et cetera to forestall poor accountability corrupt and violation of corporate governance ethics with impunity.

The Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB)

The Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) is the pioneer anti-corruption agency set up by the Federal Government of Nigeria. It has the primary responsibility of checking corrupt practices in the Nigeria Public Service and has been doing so since 1989. Mandate: CCB and Tribunal Act CAP 56, LFN 1990- The Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) and its twin sister the Code of Conduct Tribunal are Extra- Ministerial Departments set up by the Federal Government under the Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal Act, Cap 56, LFN 1990. This Act gave the Bureau the mandate "to establish and maintain a high standard, morality in the conduct of Government Business and to ensure that the actions and behaviour of Public Officers conform to the highest standard of public morality and accountability.

Constitutional Mandate of the CCB-Bureau's constitutional mandate as provided for in 1999 Constitution is to:

- Receive declarations by public officers made under paragraph 12 of part 1 of the Fifth Schedule to the 1999 Constitution.
- Examine the declarations in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Conduct or any law.
- Retain custody of such declarations and make them available for inspection by any citizen of Nigeria on such terms and conditions as the National Assembly may prescribe.
- Ensure compliance with and where appropriate, enforce the provisions of the Code of Conduct or any law relating thereto.
- Receive complaints about non-compliance with or breach of the Code of Conduct or any law in relation thereto, investigate the complaint and, where appropriate, refer such matters to the Code of Conduct Tribunal.
- Appoint, promote, dismiss and exercise disciplinary control over the staff of the Code of Conduct Bureau in accordance with the provisions of an Act of the National Assembly enacted on that behalf.
- Carry out such other functions as may be conferred upon it by the National Assembly.

Ethical and Moral Implications of Corruption

Corruption as a human act has moral and ethical implications and so can be analyzed from ethical and moral perspectives. We can achieve such analysis

against the background of the three dominant ethical systems – Deontology, Teleology/Utilitarianism or Consequentialism and Contractarianism.

Deontology as an ethical system holds that some acts are naturally obligatory and binding on us. The natural and universal obligatory dimension of such acts gives them their moral status. An act is moral if there is a universal sense of duty or obligation attached to it. To do it makes one morally good and to refrain from it is morally bad, e.g. the act of sharing one's bread with the hungry. This is on the positive side. On the negative side, some acts naturally carry with them negative obligations like acts of adultery, cheating, lying, giving or taking bribes, embezzlement of public funds etc. We have a natural obligation not to do them. To do them makes one morally bad and to refrain from them makes one morally good. Concerning this ethical system one, therefore, sees that corruption is a morally bad action or an immoral act. It goes contrary to the right reason that one should appropriate what is meant for the public to assuage one's private interest or that one should use his position as a public servant for self-aggrandizement or private gain, at the detriment of the common good.

The teleological system predicates the goodness or badness of an act on the effect or consequence of that action or the utility value of the particular action. Another name for it is Utilitarianism. It holds that an agent performs a morally right action if such an action will maximize good and minimize evil, in terms of the number of people who benefit from that particular action or the degree of pleasure the particular action causes people. In other words, if an action gives happiness to the greatest number of people affected by it, it becomes morally right, Uduigwomen, (2006). Even here too it is easy to see how corruption goes against the principle of morality. Corruption, as we can see, has bad effects on society, jeopardizes the common good and ultimately inflicts pain on a very large number of people, if not the whole nation. In this regard, it is also pertinent to note that corruption, no matter the temporary benefits it brings to the individual and those around him, can neither constitute nor contribute to man's *summum bonum*. There has never been a time that man was completely satisfied or happy because of his wealth. The very rich also have other desires which keep them anxious. They are not even satisfied with the amount of money they have. Given the opportunity, they will still embezzle more. Because corruption is a morally depraved and condemnable act, it can even jeopardize man's attainment of his *summum bonum*, that is, his highest good.

Contractarianism or the justice system, predicates moral responsibility on acts that are based on rational choice, done with empathy, without any hint of partiality and motivated by a sense of justice and fairness towards the other person. Our actions are good as long as they respect the rights of others and maintain the cohesiveness of the social contract on which society is based. If we go by the simplest understanding of justice as giving someone his due, then we will easily see that since corruption deprives people of their due, their due in terms of the good roads and

other facilities the money corruptly embezzled would have provided for them, then corruption is morally wrong. Corruption does not, in any way, promote social cohesion or the social contract that binds people together, but rather threatens it. Corruption does not allow one to be fair in one's dealings with others, (going by the Rawlsian definition of justice as fairness). On all these counts, therefore, corruption is morally bad. It is, therefore, the prerogative of ethics or moral philosophy to establish normative principles that not only make corrupt practices morally bad but also command people to desist from them.

Conclusion

This research highlights that political corruption—defined as the misuse of one's official or political role for personal gain, violating ethical or social standards—is a pervasive element of governmental operations across cultures. Despite widespread disapproval, corrupt practices are prevalent and demand a thorough explanation. Notably, the moral dimensions of corruption are often overlooked, yet morality is central to understanding this issue. Consequently, the core challenge of political corruption is fundamentally moral in nature. While strengthening political systems and enforcing anti-corruption laws may reduce instances of corruption, these measures have inherent limitations. Moreover, achieving a flawless system devoid of defects seems unlikely. Political corruption arises from the moral failings of public officials and citizens alike, who too often prioritize personal gain over the welfare of the community. To combat this issue, open discussions about integrity, honesty, and character are essential—both for public officials susceptible to corruption and for citizens seeking favors that may entice officials into unethical behavior. Strengthening the moral resolve of both public and private individuals is crucial to preventing political corruption.

The persistence of political corruption calls for a deeper exploration of its roots in moral failure and the societal structures that enable corrupt practices. Understanding political corruption as a moral issue means examining the values and principles that guide individual behavior within the political arena. It involves acknowledging that corruption often stems from a lack of accountability and transparency in governance, which breeds an environment where unethical behavior can flourish. When individuals in power prioritize personal benefits over public service, the integrity of the entire political system is compromised. As such, it's essential to cultivate a political culture that emphasizes ethical principles, ensuring that public officials remain accountable for their actions.

Moreover, the role of societal norms and expectations cannot be underestimated in the fight against political corruption. Many communities may have developed a resigned attitude toward corrupt practices, viewing them as inevitable or even acceptable. This normalization of corruption can perpetuate a cycle of unethical behavior where individuals believe that engaging in corrupt acts is a necessary means to an end. To counteract this mindset, public education campaigns and grassroots movements aimed at raising awareness about the negative consequences of corruption can be effective. By fostering a culture that values integrity, citizens can be encouraged to hold their leaders accountable and demand higher ethical standards.

The challenge of combating political corruption also necessitates a collaborative effort between government institutions and the public. Reforming political systems to incorporate mechanisms for greater oversight and transparency is crucial. This can include implementing stringent anti-corruption laws, establishing independent bodies to investigate corruption cases, and promoting whistleblower protections. However, these institutional measures alone are insufficient if the underlying moral framework remains unaddressed. Engaging in open discussions about the importance of honesty, character, and ethical governance can empower citizens to actively participate in the political process, promoting a collective commitment to integrity.

Ultimately, the fight against political corruption hinges on fostering a shared moral vision that transcends individual interests. By encouraging both public officials and citizens to reflect on their values and consider the broader impact of their actions, society can work towards creating a political environment that prioritizes the common good. This holistic approach requires sustained effort and vigilance, but it is essential for cultivating a governance system grounded in trust, accountability, and ethical responsibility. As communities unite to combat the moral challenges of political corruption, they not only strengthen their political institutions but also reinforce the fundamental principles of democracy and social justice.

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