

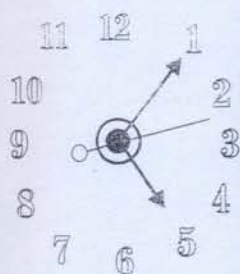


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Contributions are invited from all over the world, and especially from scholars and practitioners working on literacy, adult education and development in general in Nigeria, and other African countries in particular. Book reviews and notes on organisations and agencies as well as research projects and reports of recent conferences are also welcome.

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The Editor

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Anatomy of Corrupt Practices in Nigeria: Implications on Workers and The Economy

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Abstract

Corruption though a universal phenomenon has some peculiarities associated with developing countries. Widespread corruption is a symptom of a poorly functioning state, and a poorly functioning state will invariably, lead to a low economic development and poor workers welfare. Within the context of a developing nation, the paper examines the social, cultural, political and economic factors that encourage corruption and corruptive practices in Nigeria. Since corruption breeds poverty, impoverishment of workers and the economy, the study investigates the detail by exploring the types of actions, conditions, structures and/or practices that are robustly related to corruption such as a democratic system that is corrupted by special interest and selfish motives, no free press to expose corruption, weak accountability, lack of a vibrant anti-corruption agency, ill-prepared legal institution, no educated electorate to remove unethical leaders, etc. The role of occupational social workers in the education about the effect of corruption, emotional and psychic therapy of both the giver and receiver of bribe was looked at. The study extends the literature on corruption in several directions.

KEY WORDS: Corruption, Workers, Welfare, Economy, Nigeria

Introduction

Corruption is often portrayed as a serious illness, as a cancer and as AIDS to democracy. It is spreading relentlessly from official to official, agency to agency, undermining institutions leading to the collapse of the political system (Johnston, 1999). However, Corruption does not stand on its own as a bad phenomenon, it should be seen in the context of interrelated variables within the society in which it arises and operates. It is a symptom of deeper difficulties (Rose-Ackerman, 1997) such as reduction in economic growth (Mauro, 1997), reduction in investment, poor institutionalization of government (Knack and Keefer, 1995), low level of social interaction and weakness of the rule of law (Cooter, 1997), poor economic competitiveness (Ades and di Tella, 1994), deep ethnic divisions and conflicts (Easterly and Levine, 1996), weak protection of civil liberties (Isham, Kaufmann and Pritchett 1995, 1996) and low educational attainment (Mauro, 1997).

Over the last few years and recently too, the issue of corruption has been renewed and has attracted serious attention to itself. The attention to corruption is locally, nationally, and globally emphasised. Corruption scandals have topple governments in both major industrial countries and developing countries (Gray and Kaufman, 1998). Survey of more than 150 high-ranking public officials and key members of the civil society, from more than sixty developing countries, ranked public sector corruption as the most severe impediment to development and growth in their countries (Gray and Kaufman, 1998).

The issue of corruption is not peculiar to a sector of the world economy, it is a universal problem. Girling (1997) contented that corruption does not disappear as countries develop and modernize, instead it takes new forms. For instance, the multi-million Euro contract bribe scandal involving communication giant, Siemen AG showed 1.3 billion as suspicious transactions in different parts of the world between 2003 and 2006 (Oderemi, 2007). Transparency International, a well-respected non-governmental organisation monitoring corrupt practices worldwide, pointed out that there are First World giver of many Third World bribes (Klitgaard, 1993). Transparency International's Corruption

Perception Index and Bribe Payers Index (2008) showed that bribe taking and giving in many developing and transition countries, Nigeria inclusive, is extensive, primarily because of low public sector salaries, senior public officials and politicians' de facto immunity from prosecution and greed. Klitgaard further buttressed the universality of corruption when he said:

In Belgium and the United Kingdom, Japan and Italy, Russia and Spain, and other countries, allegations of corruption play a more central role in politics than at any time in recent memory, p.3.

The universality of corruption is further buttressed by the existence of local dictionary on corruption. For instance, in Venezuela and France, local dictionary of corruption exists (*Diccionario de la corruption en Venezuela, 1989; Gaetner, 1991*). Lipset and Lenz (2000), confirmed the age-long presence of corruption and its universality by saying that corruption has been ubiquitous in complex societies from ancient Egypt, Israel, Rome and Greece down to the present. The international nature of corruption can be reduced to an equation for easy and universal calculation, and can be seen as a system within which it exists (Klitgaard, 1993). The equation is illustrated thus:

$$C = M + D - A$$

Where: C = Corruption

M = Monopoly

D = Discretion

A = Accountability

Simply put, this means that corruption equals monopoly plus discretion minus accountability. From the above equation, be it in developed or developing economy, public or private enterprises, non-profit organisations, rural settings, corruption will exist when an organisation or person has monopoly-power over a good or service, has the discretion to decide who will receive it and how much that person will get, and he is not accountable. Therefore, corruption is the abuse of power, most often for personal gain or for the benefit

of a group to which one owes allegiance (Stapenhurst and Shahrzad, 1999).

Despite the universality of corruption, some peculiarities are associated with developing countries, Nigeria inclusive. This is so not because people living in developing countries are different from people living elsewhere, but because certain conditions like motivation to earn income is extremely strong. This is exacerbated by poverty, low and declining civil service salaries, followed by risks of illness, lack of risk-spreading, accidents and unemployment in developing countries (Gray and Kaufman, 1998). They further emphasized some other peculiar features that encourage corruption in developing countries: weak accountability, poorly developed laws and principles of ethics in government, ill-preparedness of the legal institutions charged with enforcing the laws. For instance, the watchdog institutions like the press, statutory organisations that are suppose to provide information on which detection and enforcement are also weak. The discretionary powers given to many public officials are also too broad in developing countries. This paper, therefore, examines the concept of corruption in relation to Nigeria as well as the impact of corruption on the economy and workers welfare in Nigeria.

Concept of corruption examined

People tend to think of corruption as something limited to government circle alone. However, it also exists in the private sector. Indeed, the private sector is involved in most government corruption. The term corruption comes from the Latin verb "*rumpere*", to break, implying that something is broken. Tanzi (1995) sees corruption as the breaking of social code of conducts and administrative rules. Once the rule is broken, the official who breaks the rule derives some recognisable benefits to himself, his family, his friends, his tribe or party, or some other relevant group. This is in line with the view of Lipset and Lenz (2000) that corruption is efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means – private gain at public expense; or a misuse of public power for private benefit.

To the economist, corruption occurs where rents exist and public officials have discretion in allocating them. Mauro (1996)

cites government restriction resulting in rents and rent-seeking behaviour through the use of import quota and other licenses which civil servants give to users who are willing to pay bribes as an economist corruption. Furthermore, Klitgaard (1998) defines corruption as the misuse of office for unofficial ends. He catalogues the corrupt acts to include bribery, extortion, influence peddling, nepotism, fraud, the use of "speed money" (money paid to government officials to speed up their consideration of a business matter falling within their jurisdictions), and embezzlement.

The view of Klitgaard was amplified by Gray and Kaufman (1998) that corruption is the use of public office for private gain. This include: bribery and extortion, which usually involve, at least, two parties, the mis-appropriation of public assets for private use, embezzlement of public funds by politicians and high-level officials and other types of malfeasance that a public official can carry out alone, including fraud and embezzlement. Gray and Kaufman view above corruption gave rise to the following complex observations:

- (a) there must be evidence that a particular rule has been broken. This implies that all rules are precisely stated, leaving no doubt about their meaning and that no discretion is allowed of public officials. However, the excess of rules create a fertile ground for corruption. This is so, because if rules are too rigid, they can create obstacles to the functioning of the given system or organization thereby aiding corruption.
- (b) social and personal relations, most times, breed corruption. However, social and personal relations should not affect official duties, otherwise corruption occurs. For example, if social relation tends to be close and personal, it becomes difficult to establish a direct link between an act that could be assumed to reflect corruption and a payment for it. An employee who uses his official position to favour acquaintances may be compensated with an immediate or explicit payment (clearly a bribe). The payment may be delayed in time and, when made, it may appear completely unconnected with the favour received.

- (c) that bureaucratic principle checks corruption because there will be no place for personal relations or cronyism. Therefore, there should be no confusion of public with private interests. However, this is not practicable in real life. Social norms, sometimes, prove more powerful as guides to behaviour than new and often imported rules based on arm's-length, impersonal, and universal principles. This explains why some reforms relating corruption adopted in developing countries, promoted by foreign advisors and which may implicitly require or assume arm's-length relationships, often do not survive the test of time.

Tanzi (1995) gave a list of situations that can encourage corruption thus:

1. administration of government regulations; e.g. the issuance of licenses and permits; zoning and other sorts of regulations that may have great economic value;
2. fines for alleged or actual violations of legal norms;
3. control over government procurement contracts;
4. control over public investment contracts that can favour some areas or contractors over others;
5. tax incentives, subsidized credits, and multiple foreign exchange rates;
6. controls over hiring and promotions;
7. control over the assignment of entitlements and other benefits (disability pensions, scholarships, subsidies);
8. controls over access to under-priced public services (such as electricity, telephone, on water); and
9. tax administration decisions (auditing, determination of presumptive income, etc).

The control of these situations accords government employees great power, which may allow them to extract large financial advantages for themselves or for their families and friends. In brief, corruption can be fuelled by the following:

- (i) abuse of discretionary power;
- (ii) poor civil servants salaries and poor working conditions, with few incentives and reward for efficient and effective performance;
- (iii) lack of transparency, inadequate strategic vision and weak monitoring mechanisms;
- (iv) cultural norms. When corruption become the norm, when corrupt citizens are given recognition, the longevity of such practice is guaranteed.

Smith et al. (2003) cited by Laurance (2004), gave two forms of corruptions that are politically based. They are: collusive and non-collusive corruption. In non-collusive corruption, a government official demands a bribe for a legal activity, such as obtaining permit for mining, importation, etc. In this situation, the bribe given is being coerced by the official, and the cost of the bribe is added to official costs levied by the government (such as taxes, royalties and export fees). The implication of this is that the prices of articles/goods involved are increased i.e. non-collusive corruption increases the price.

Collusive corruption occurs when the bribe giver and the government officials conspire (collude) to rob the government of revenues. The bribe is essentially an insurance policy taken out to avoid paying penalties for illegal activities. For example, in return for a bribe, a government official might allow bunkering of crude oil, over-logging of its forest, overlook tax evasion, etc. Therefore, collusive corruption, a defrauding system, reduces the costs of things removed by the payer and, sometimes, promotes over exploitation. It should be noted that collusive corruption is more difficult to detect and eradicate because both the giver and the taker have an incentive not to report or protest.

Transparency-International-Bribe-Payers-Survey(2008) showed the ranking of institutions in Nigeria that are affected by corruption in a descending order thus: Police, Political Parties, Custom, Parliament/Legislative, Registry and Permit Services, Utilities, Tax revenue authorities, Education system, the Military, the Judiciary, the Media and Medical services. Police is seen to be the most affected

by bribe taking. 40% of respondents surveyed in Nigeria by Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer (TI), (2007) paid a bribe to obtain services. A further look at services by TI showed that, in general, the impact of corruption on the populace, are that the poor, whether in developing or highly industrialized countries. That bribery is also a considerable problem for the judiciary, registry and permit services, education and medical services as well as electricity providers.

Transparency International (TI) criticized both the rich and the poor nations, on how Governments and Political Leaders failed their people and the environment by pointing out that corrupt *political* elites and unscrupulous investors kill sustainable growth in its tracks through the corruption perception index. Shah (2002) quoted TI as saying that political elites and their cronies continue to take kick-back at every opportunity; hand-in-glove with corrupt business people thrive while nations are in poverty and hampering sustainable development.

Corruption: The Nigeria Experience

Corruption is fuelled in Nigeria due to the following reasons: the motivation to earn income is very high among civil servants due to poverty and low civil service salaries. Also, absence of risks insurance at the workplace encourages corruption (civil servants always claim to accumulate wealth in lieu of such risks like illness, accidents and unemployment). Coupled with poor reward, in term of salaries, and the greed venture and societal expectations among Nigerians, Onalaja and Onalaja (1997); Harrison (1995) expressed how peer, community, and extended family system had placed pressure, in less developed societies, and inadvertently encouraged embezzlement and bribery on civil servants. Laurance (2004) argued that poor pay for government officials, particularly when officials control valuable natural resources such as timber, oil, minerals, etc., encourages corruption.

Because the economy of Nigeria is regulated, corruption is brewed. As earlier pointed out, monopoly rents are higher at regulated economics. From the corruption equation earlier stated, discretion power of many public officials are so broad and poorly

defined, some are varied regularly; there is poor dissemination of rules and regulations which subsequently breed bribery and corruption .

Stemming from regulated economy, is the problem of ineffective tax system. Votterman (2002) stated that bad rules and ineffective tax system makes it difficult to track down people's financial activities hence, corruption. In Nigeria, ineffective tax system is a serious problem. People are not able to explain their *source(s) of income through end-of-the-year income tax filling. Also,* anti-business tax or ban encourages corruption. For example, the placement of manufacturing year on car to be imported has forced businessmen to bribe corrupt custom officials (to allow the cars in), causing the country to lose the needed tax revenue (Dike, 2002).

The brazen display of wealth by public officials is another major cause of corruption in Nigeria. Many public officials, before being elected or appointed into offices had little or modest income. However, as soon as they get into these offices, they begin to amass wealth in and out of the country, to which they are unable to explain the source(s). This points to how the office has corrupted them, and they are subsequently and publicly acknowledge in the society with traditional titles and honours (Ndiular, 1999).

Accountability in Nigeria is weak. Institutions that should prosecute offenders are inefficient. The two major agencies fighting corruption in Nigeria: the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Crime and Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) are tremendously incapacitated by their slow rate of investigation and sometimes lack of forth-coming of petitioner to prosecute the cases before the court of law. They are sometimes gagged by their political masters that they dare not investigate some corrupt government officials. When and where they do investigate, they are frustrated by the power that be. For instance, politicians who saw EFCC too powerful during Obasanjo's regime (1999-2007), ganged-up to weaken it after his tenure. Obe(2008), quoting the Financial Times of London, stated how a secrete plot by some hawks, in Nigeria political circle in 2007, castrated EFCC by removing the fire-brand chairman, Nuhu Ribadu, and replaced him with a plucked from

retirement police officer. Furthermore, the agencies lack the power to prosecute by the edict that establishes them that they cannot prosecute without recourse to the Attorney General of the Federation (AGF). AGF sometimes slow down the effectiveness of the agencies.

Furthermore, corruption is substantially fuelled in Nigeria by Political corruption because individuals abuse public offices for financial or other private gains and capital flight. Weak political institutions, poorly developed checks and balances among different government agencies, and widespread nepotism and political patronage promote corruption (Laurance, 2004). Capital flight as been a source of corruption in Nigeria (Ribadu, 2009).

Corruption has effect on labour standard in Nigeria. Some companies whose owners have bribed government officials make such bribed officials to turn their look the other ways when the rights of workers are been trampled on. For example, a lot of companies owned by Lebanese in Nigeria do not allow their workers to have freedom of association (Unionism), nor do they allow them the right to collective bargaining. Some violate the Child Rights Laws by allowing their organisations practice Child Labour. Some evade minimum labour standards while labour inspectors who are aware of these practices look the other way because they have been bribed.

Implications of Corruption on Workers and the Economy in Nigeria

Social relations that make employees use their official position to favour acquaintances reduce income to government coffers hence, reduction in provision of amenities and lower workers productivity. For instance, tax inspectors who favour tax payers are able to reduce payers tax liabilities thereby causing government to loss income and function less efficiency in all other spheres of the economy. The action of this tax officers lead to poor sanitary condition, poor health condition of citizens, loss of man hour at work and reduced productivity due to dwindling government income.

Improper use of regulatory rules on importation, zoning and order permit, due to corruption, can lead to distortion and

ineffectiveness of infant industries that they were intended to assist. The implication of this action is reduction of employment rate, redundancy in companies, folding-up of companies, etc. which are inimical to both the government and the employee. For instance, the ban on certain aged vehicle importation into Nigeria has enriched neighbouring countries and created employment therein (Dike, 2002).

In line with the view of Tanzi (1995), the allocation of public works or procurement contracts to enterprises that win contracts, not because they can do the job at the lowest cost but because of their connections and the bribes they had paid, lead to problems of wrong allocation of resources in the economy and have further implications on citizens' welfare in form of poor delivery of expected services.

Corruption and arbitrary hiring and promotion of individuals (who would not have been selected or promoted on the basis of fair and objective criteria), damages the economy through such client taking poor decisions and incurring higher number of mistakes at work thereby jeopardising productivity and encouraging injustices. It also discourage the employment of more able and competent staff that are less well-connected.

Corruption leads to higher cost of capital for-firms. This is so because greater share of management time by enterprise involved in bribery are spent with bureaucrats and public officials negotiating whatever they wanted. Such high cost of capital has negative impact on labour through turnover and reduction of employees if break-even is to be achieved.

Corruption reduces economic growth by lowering incentives to invest (for both domestic and foreign entrepreneurs). This is because, it increases cost which will not be beneficial to investors. The-after-effect is denial of employment opportunities for citizenry and where they are already established, collapse is likely to occur and workers will suffer for it through retrenchment.

Corruption will also reduce growth by lowering the quality of public infrastructures and services, thereby causing employees to engage in rent-seeking (bribe) rather than productive activities. Lipset and Lenz (2000) noted this by saying that corruption affects

economic growth by reducing level of investment due to addition of investment risk. Mauro (1997) stated that countries rife with corruption have less of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) going into areas critical to development, such as education, and experience lower growth rates.

Corruption has impact on labour standards. Corruption in labour standards takes the form of rent-seeking that generate monetary gain to the ruling elite class. Once bribed, the ruling class turn its eyes against illegal labour practices, violation of social security laws by companies, and even the rights to collective bargaining or freedom of association. Thus corruption elicits unfair and illegal labour practices and this usually threaten the existence of the workers and the economy.

Suggestion for Reduction of Corruption in Nigeria

The fight against corruption in Nigeria became evident in 1999 with the election of President Olusegun Obasanjo as the president. He proposed fighting corruption through a number of initiatives and best practices, including economic reforms and deregulation, civil-service reform, police-service reform, establishment of investigative and prosecuting agencies (EFCC and ICPC); due process and debt management officers, as well as sensitizing the public on giving and receiving bribe. The following suggestions are made, in this paper, to reduce the rate of corruption in Nigeria.

The use of discretionary power by public officers in the allocation and spending of fund has to be carefully regulated and checkmated. To prevent corruption there is need to create precise and rigid rules in form of protocol, the establishment of offices like Debt Management; Due Process in all the state of the federation. However, it is noted that excessive rules can create fertile ground for corruption and non-implementation of policies that can have adverse effect on workers-for instance, in 2008 only 25% of the budget was spent causing unemployment with the country, due to unspent fund on capital projects that did not pass the due process test- but it has succeeded in checking corruption by not allowing unspent fund to get into wrong hands.

In line with the view of Klitgaard (1998), the strategy of "frying a few big fish" can discourage corruption. This is when a

number of major corrupt figures, probably from the ruling party, are convicted and punished. This might have informed President Obasanjo's action, while in government, trying a minister and others for corruption on National Identity Card contract. However when the case became inconclusive, other looters started their own looting leading to Halliburton scandal, Universal Basic Education Commission's fraud, etc.

Another suggestion is the involvement of social workers in diagnosing corrupt system and officials. If social workers are used as source of information about where corruption is occurring, the established anti-corruption agencies will know who are involved and how to deal with them. This might have informed ICPC formation of anti-corruption clubs at local levels, including schools, tertiary institutions, ministries and public establishments in order to assist in the fight against corruption. The nation's fight against corruption will always be futile unless every Nigerian joins the anti-corruption agencies and government to eradicate the scourge (Makinde, 2009).

In a society like ours, where public officials cannot maintain the arm's-length relationships (i.e. disengagement from personal relations and official duty) because of the nature of the culture, the control which government has over the economy is reduced. Occupational social workers should sensitise officials about non-relationship of culture and corruption. Social worker should recommended that the scaling down of government roles in the economy will reduce corruption.

Social relations take time to develop, therefore, for civil servants or employees that are likely to be corrupted over time due to their long stay at a point or station, it is recommended that such officials should periodically moved so as to reduce bureaucratic corruption. If the income of employees, on a general term, is unimaginably low that a family cannot survive on a typical official's salary, corruption will subsequently flourish and family discontentment heightened. Therefore, the industrial social worker should ensure that income/salaries of public officials are commensurable *to their* input so as to dissuade them from looking somewhere else for income that can brew corruption also family therapy will calm nerves of

dependants of workers. Poor pension scheme also ignite corruption, social workers should mediate between employer and employees to guarantee adequate provision for retirees.

In line with the view of Mauro (1998), reforms that will eliminate corruption should be sudden, forceful, and supported at the highest levels of government because entrenched corruptions are already engrossed and become difficult to get rid of if systematic approach is applied. There is the need for international cooperation to fight corruption in Nigeria. Many of the looters in Nigeria stockpile their loots in foreign accounts. Such funds should be disclosed to the home country and the money be repatriated into the home country. Also, officials involved in international corruption should be disclosed to the Nigeria Government for prosecution.

Conclusion

Combating corruption is such a difficult task because it is sustained by the system and the political leaders. Stemming from the earlier corruption equation, combating corruption require a good working system where monopolises must be reduced or carefully regulated. Official discretion must be clarified to forestall skewness towards the official operator. Transparency must also be maintained and enhanced. The probability of corrupt officials being caught should be high and the penalties for engaging corruption (for both givers and takers) should be made very severe. Therefore, countries (government) should liberalize their economies, terminate off-budget operations to ensure budget transparency.

Political will to fight corruption should be cultivated by leaders. Leaders should set good examples by making systemic improvement in the fight against corruption in key agencies or in areas noted for endemic corruption. This is because, for the rule of thumb to be credible, an anti-corruption campaign must achieve tangible success within six months. Finally, international cooperation is required to fight corruption since some givers reside outside the country. The role of social worker in making both employer and employee realise and have the knowledge about corruption will assist sustainable development of the workplace, workers welfare and economic sustenance in all the major areas of the environment, the economy, and the society.

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