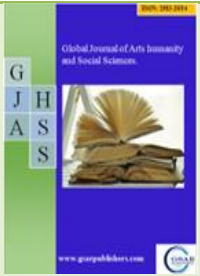
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CORRUPTION IN THE NIGERIAN CIVIL/PUBLIC SERVICE: CAUSES, FORMS, EXTENT, TRENDS AND MITIGATION MECHANISMS

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Abstract

This study reviewed and discussed corruption in the civil /public service of Nigeria: causes, forms, extent, trends, and mitigation mechanisms.. Consequently, literature on the subject matter were assembled from journals, conference papers, magazines, official documents, bulletins etc they were then collated reviewed, and discussed, Corruption was identified as one of the causes of the inefficient and under productive civil service in Nigeria, corruption is said to have eaten very deep into the fabrics of the Nigerian society. It takes place in the low, high, and top echelons of the civil service Corruption was also viewed as a hydra headed problem, that could bring the country on its knees if there is no urgent drastic intervention. The review concluded by stressing the fact that corruption is the main cause of the inefficient and under-productive civil service in Nigeria. The need to fight corruption head on to save the Nigerian civil service and Nigeria as a whole . value reorientation , revival, and strengthening of moral education in schools , the need for leaders at all levels to show good example, reorganizing and strengthening of anti-graft agencies as well as a comprehensive civil service reform focused on corruption eradication were put forward as recommendations

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INTRODUCTION

Transparency International (2020) defines corruption as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain”. In the context of the Nigeria Civil Service, corruption refers to the misuse of official powers, positions, or resources for personal gain or benefit, often at the expense of the public interest (Obayelu, 2007). Corruption in the Nigerian civil/public service is a pervasive and entrenched phenomenon that has hindered the country’s development and effective governance (Adebanwi&Obadare, 2013).

According to the encyclopedia Britannica, the civil service is the body of government officials who are employed in the civil occupation that are neither political nor judicial. In most countries the term refers to employees selected and promoted on

the basis of merit and seniority system which may include examination Ocheja *et al* (2023) reported the sharp increase in corruption in the civil/public service as a result of the 1988 civil service reforms, due to some structural changes, Ejigbo *et al* 2023 also corroborated this view. Some analysts opined that the mass purge of the civil/public service in 1975/76 by the Murtala regime also contributed to the rise in corruption in the civil/public service. As it stands now monumental corruption exists at federal state and local government levels of the Nigerian civil service, cutting across the low, high, and top echelons (Ocheja *et al.*, 2023) Corruption has contributed to inefficiency and underproductivity of the Nigerian civil service, evident in poor service delivery and under development of Nigeria .According to Ejigbo *et al.*(2023) the numerous civil/public service reforms have so far failed to tame



and mitigate corruption. World Bank studies put corruption at over \$ 1 trillion per year accounting for up to 12% of the Gross Domestic Products of Nations like Nigeria, Kenya and Venezuela (Nwabuzor, 2005). Corruption is endemic as well as an enemy within (Agbu, 2003). It is a canker worm that has eaten deep in the fabric of the country and had stunted growth in all sectors (Economic and Financial Crime Commission, 2005). It has been the primary reason behind the country difficulties in developing fast (Independent Corrupt Practices Commission, 2006). This is evident in Transparency International's consistent rating of Nigeria as one of the top threemost corrupt countries in the world (Ribadu, 2003).

In order to get Nigeria on the right track , several administrations came up with different anti-corruption agencies ranging from Public Complaints Commission (PCC), War Against Indiscipline Commission (WAIC), Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB), the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC). In spite of the fight against corruption, corruption still persists in different areas and dimension in Nigeria government and culture. (Adejoh *et al.*,2023a) The negative and damaging aspect of corruption have been its association with agreed and self-perpetuation The prevalence of corruption in Nigeria cuts across the rich and the poor, the young and the old, as well as in the low ,high and top echelons of the civil service, making it a culture and a way of life. (Adejoh *et al.*,2023b). The broad objective of this work was to review and discuss the causes , forms , extent, trends of corruption in the Nigerian civil service as well as mitigation strategies. Specifically, this study attempts to:

- i. Define and explain the concepts of corruption and the civil service
- ii. Review and discuss the causes , forms , extent , trends of corruption in the civil service of Nigeria
- iii. Discuss and review mitigation mechanisms

Future researchers that will specifically embark on the study of this kind will find this literature very useful as a reliable reference material

2.0. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 History of Corruption in the Nigerian Civil/ Public Service

Nigeria's history of corruption dates back to the colonial era, but it escalated during the military rule of the 1980s and 1990s.

2.1.1 Colonial Era (1914-1960):

1. The British colonial administration's exploitation of Nigeria's resources, including the forced labor and land expropriation (Source: "The Colonial Economy" by ToyinFalola)
2. The corrupt practices of British officials, such as the infamous "Lagos Scandal" of 1923 (as documented in the book "Nigeria Under British Rule" by T.N. Tamuno)

1.1.2 Post-Independence (1960-1966):

1. The corruption allegations against Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's government, including the "Cement Scandal" (of "Nigeria's First Republic" by Richard Sklar)
2. The report of the 1962 Coker Commission of Inquiry into corruption in the Western Region ("The Coker Commission Report")

1.1.3 Military Rule (1966-1979, 1983-1999):

1. The 1975 coup against General Yakubu Gowon, justified by allegations of corruption (as captured in the "The Nigerian Revolution" by Ola Balogun)
2. The 1995 report of the Pius Okigbo Panel, which investigated corruption under General Sani Abacha's regime ("The Okigbo Panel Report")

1.1.4 Second Republic (1979-1983):

1. The corruption allegations against President Shehu Shagari's government, including the "Fertilizer Scandal" ("Nigeria's Second Republic" by Richard Joseph)
2. The report of the 1982 Chukwudifu Oputa Panel, which investigated corruption in the Shagari administration ("The Oputa Panel Report").
3. The rice importation scandal involving Umaru Dikko
4. The military coup of December 31st 1983 , had corruption as one of the reasons for the military take over

2.1.5 Abacha Regime (1993-1998):

General Sani Abacha's regime was notorious for corruption, with billions of dollars embezzled.

1. The 1998 report of the Swiss authorities, which froze Abacha's assets worth \$650 million (Swiss Federal Office of Justice)
2. The 2004 report of the Nigerian government's investigation into Abacha's corruption, which estimated he stole \$4.3 billion (my "The Abacha Loot Recovery Efforts")

2.1.6 Fourth Republic (1999-present):

Corruption remains endemic, with high-profile cases involving politicians, officials, and business leaders.

1. The 2006 report of the Nigerian Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), which indicted 31 high-profile individuals for corruption ("EFCC Annual Report 2006")
2. The 2015 report of the Nigerian Auditor-General, which exposed widespread corruption in government ministries and agencies ("2015 Audit Report")

1.2 Examples of corruption in the Nigerian Civil/Public Service

1. Bribery: Soliciting or accepting bribes for services or favors (Omobowale&Akinbode, 2015).
2. Embezzlement: Misappropriating public funds or resources for personal use (Ihemeje, 2017).
3. Nepotism: Favoring family, friends, or associates in employment, promotions, or contracts (Adebayo, 2016).

4. Fraud: Falsifying documents, records, or processes for personal gain (Iyoha&Oyerinde, 2017).
5. Extortion: Demanding money or favors from citizens or businesses (Okorie, 2018).
6. Ghost workers: Paying salaries to non-existent employees (Omobowale&Akinbode, 2015).
7. Padded payroll: Inflating payroll with unnecessary or fake employees (Ihemeje, 2017).
8. Contract inflation: Artificially increasing contract values for personal gain (Iyoha&Oyerinde, 2017).
9. Kickbacks: Accepting payments for awarding contracts or services (Adebayo, 2016).
10. Misuse of office: Using official position for personal gain or to favor associates (Okorie, 2018).
11. Aiding and abetting illegal sales and marketing (Adejoh *et al.*, 2023c)

2.3 Causes of Corruption:

1. Weak institutions and lack of effective oversight (Adebanwi&Obadare, 2013)
2. Poor remuneration and conditions of service (Omobowale&Akinbode, 2015)
3. Cultural and societal norms that condone corruption (Ihemeje, 2017)
4. Lack of accountability and punishment for corrupt acts (Adebayo, 2016)
5. Political interference and manipulation (Okorie, 2018)

2.4 . Effects of Corruption:

1. Inefficient and ineffective service delivery (Iyoha&Oyerinde, 2017)
2. Lack of trust and confidence in government (Adebanwi&Obadare, 2013)
3. Diversion of resources meant for development (Ihemeje, 2017)
4. Undermining of economic growth and development (Omobowale&Akinbode, 2015)
5. Erosion of moral values and societal norms (Adebayo, 2016)

2.5 Anti-Corruption Efforts in Nigeria

A. Legal and Institutional Reforms:

1. Establishment of the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)
2. Passage of the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act (2000) and the EFCC Act (2004)
3. Creation of the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) to combat money laundering
4. Implementation of the Treasury Single Account (TSA) to reduce corruption in government revenue management

B. International Cooperation:

1. Signing of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC)

2. Participation in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)
3. Collaboration with international law enforcement agencies to recover stolen assets(eg Interpol , CIA, FBI, etc.
4. Membership in the African Union's Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption

C. Civil Society Initiatives:

1. Activities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like Transparency International Nigeria and the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC)
2. Advocacy for policy reforms and public awareness campaigns
3. Support for whistleblowers and protection of their rights
4. Engagement in Budget Monitoring and tracking of government expenditures

1.6 Challenges and Limitations:

1. Political interference and lack of political will to combat corruption
2. Inadequate funding and resources for anti-corruption agencies
3. Limited public awareness and engagement in anti-corruption efforts
4. Corruption within the judiciary and law enforcement agencies
5. Pervasive cultural norms that condone corruption

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Relevant literature on the definitions and concepts of civil service, public service, corruption, causes, forms extent and trends of corruption in the civil/public service as well as mitigation strategies were assembled from Journals, Conference papers , Bulletins , government documents as well as the internet , they were then discussed and reviewed

4.0 DISCUSSION OF REVIEW

4.1 Forms/Extent/Trends of Corruption in the Nigerian Civil Service

Corruption in Nigerian civil service, as it stands now can be appropriately termed endemic or systemic. It exists in the low, high and top echelons of the civil service,. Corruption has not only permeated the government and oil fields of Nigeria, it has attacked the entire nation (Haddi, 1999). Corruption and inefficiency are largely responsible for poor service delivery in Nigeria, although private companies seem to perform more efficiently and less corruptly than public enterprises (Amadi, 2004).

Corruption has become so blatant and widespread that it appears as if it has been legalized in Nigeria (Gire, 1999). As Goodling (2003) notes, "since 1996, Nigeria was labeled the most corrupt nation three times: 1996, 1997, and 2003: and placed in the bottom five four more times , fourth from the bottom in 1998, 2001, 2002 and 2003". The 1996 study of corruption by Transparency International and Goettingen University ranked Nigeria as the most corrupt, nation among 54 nations listed in the study with Pakistan as the second highest (Moore 1997). As this was not too bad enough, the

1998 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index (CPT) in a 1999 ranking of 99 countries in order of their perceived levels of corruption with number one being the least corrupt Nigeria at number 98, was only one rank above its neighbor Cameroon. (Lipset and Lenz, 2000) In the 2001 corruption perception index (CPT) the position of Nigeria remained unchanged as the second most corrupt nation in the world (ranked 90 out of 91 countries pooled) with Bangladesh coming first. In October 2003 reports release in London, Nigeria at number 132 was still only one rank above Bangladesh even though the number of countries in the latter poll had increased to 133 countries. (Adejoh *et al*, 2023a). Corruption in the civil/ public service contributed greatly to the above reported embarrassing rankings of Nigeria on the Global corruption scale

Partial/ wrong implementation of government white paper reports was viewed as a form of corruption (Ademolegun, 1986), The super Permanent Secretaries in the Gowons era were reported not to have implemented some aspects of the White paper on the Udoji Public Service Review Commission report that did not favour them, this was viewed as corruption (Ademolegun 1986)

Corruption Mitigation Mechanisms

Combating corruption in the Nigerian civil/public service requires a multi-faceted approach. Below are some recommendations:

A. Strengthening anti-corruption laws and enforcement mechanisms:

- Enact and enforce strict anti-corruption laws, such as the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act (2000) (Adebayo & Ogunson, 2015)
- Establish independent anti-corruption agencies, like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) ("The EFCC and Ezeani, 2017)

B. Promoting transparency and accountability:

- Implement the Freedom of Information Act (2011) to enhance access to information ("FOI Act and Ojo, 2018)
- Conduct regular audits and publish reports, as recommended by the Nigerian Auditor-General ("2015 Audit Report")

C. Enhancing public sector governance:

- Implement the Public Procurement Act (2007) to ensure transparent and competitive bidding (Okoro, 2018)
- Strengthen the Nigerian Civil Service Commission to ensure merit-based appointments and promotions (Eze, 2019)

D. Building a culture of integrity:

- Incorporate anti-corruption education into school curricula (Akindele, 2018)
- Encourage whistleblower protection and reporting (Okeke, 2020)

E. Improving remuneration

Remuneration and conditions of service is crucial to reducing corruption in the Nigerian public service. This can be achieved by the following:

- Implementing a competitive salary structure that reflects industry standards (Salami, 2018)

+Providing benefits and allowances that enhance the overall welfare of public servants (Ogunbameru, 2019)

-Ensuring timely payment of salaries and allowances to reduce the temptation for corrupt practices (Adebayo, 2020)

-Enhancing working conditions, including provision of modern infrastructure and equipment (Ojo, 2017)

-Implementing a performance-based promotion and reward system to motivate public servants (Eze, 2019)

There is need for change in the value system, ill gotten wealth should be questioned and challenged rather than being celebrated, emphasis should be placed on moral values by our elders, teacher, religious leaders etc, the teaching of moral education in our primary , secondary schools and institutions of higher learning, should be revived/ introduced and strengthened The virtues of hard work and dignity of labour should be promoted (Adejoh *et al*, 2023)

Ocheja *et al* (2023) reported a sharp increase in corruption in the civil service after the implementation of the 1988 civil service reforms, which the Allison Ayida review panel report of 1994 to 1997 and implementation could not reverse and recommended another reform to specifically tackle the problem of corruption in the civil and public service. Government should pay a living wage to civil servants. Leaders at all levels must show good example by being honest and hard working.

Heads of all the anti graft agencies in Nigeria should be appointed on merit rather than other pecuniary considerations (Adejoh *et al*, 2023b). All the appointments in the public / civil service should be on merit rather than quota, political, ethnic or religious considerations. The civil service should be insulated from politics. Security of tenure that civil servants enjoy should not be abused by the civil servants themselves and the government. It was opined that the mass purge of 1975/76 by the Murtala regime also contributed to the rise in corruption in the civil[public service..

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Corruption is a hydra headed problem in the Nigeria civil/public service, it exists in various forms and extents and has eaten very deep into the very fabrics of the Nigerian civil/public service .

Corruption is the main cause of inefficiency and poor service delivery in the Nigerian civil/public service

5.2 Recommendations

A civil/public service reform focusing on corruption mitigation in the civil/public service.

Strengthening of anti corruption /graft agencies to carry out their assignments diligently and efficiently and seamlessly Payment of living wage to civil servants should commence without further delay

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