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The Malady of Corruption and the Implications for the Wellness of Nigerian Society

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Abstract:

Given the nature and structure of Nigerian state characterised by intense struggling for state power and resources, blatant disregard for the rule of law, high incidence of politicization of both public and private sectors, and the quest for personal aggrandizement among other vices. In view of the aforementioned, the pervasiveness trend of corruption has become inevitable. In essence, the intense struggling for political power and high premium placed on wielding of such power has led to corruption and impoverishment of the masses. In this paper, therefore, it is argued that it will be difficult if not impossible for a failed state like Nigeria to curb corruption, given the high level of distrust between the government and the populace and the fact that the political stability in Nigeria has been largely sustain through gross corruption. In a sense, other factors like the political will to concede defeat to opposition by the incumbent and smooth transfer of political power from one form of government to another irrespective of corrupt status of the government involved were given more priority than the will to curb corruption and improve well being of Nigerian citizens: as we have witnessed in the 1999 military transfer of power to democratically elected government and 2015 smooth transfer of power by then incumbent government to the opposition. However, this is not an attempt to foreclose that all hopes are lost in Nigeria's efforts to curb corruption, particularly if the government can re-establish a trust network relationship between itself and the citizens through equity, justice, accountability, if the government can strengthen its efforts to reduce poverty, and if the lessons and strategies from the success stories of Singapore and Hong-Kong in fighting corruption could be adopted in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Corruption, wellness, Nigeria, malady, failed-state*

1. Introduction

The failure of Nigerian state purposively orchestrated by its political leaders for personal aggrandizements has accounted for most of the unprecedented pathologies that have bedeviled its existence and functionalities since independence. To many observers of Nigeria political system, the pervasiveness of corruption has been closely linked to the post-independence widespread of patron-client culture particularly, in both public and private sectors with the notion that an average Nigerian either in public or private sectors, home or abroad is generally believed to be corrupt in one way or the other. Although, the trend of corruption have also been observed in South American, Asia and in developing and industrial societies as well as open and close economies which has made corruption to become a global problem. This is the reason UNESCO Courier of 1996 concluded that, the world cannot eradicate corrupt acts but we can improve the system to prevent them.

The phenomenon of corruption is believed to be the major cause of several socio-economic and political misfortunes that has ravage Nigeria since the First Republic. According to Osaghae (2002), Nigeria was regarded in the 1960s as a potential African tiger, but by 1995...it had slipped far behind Malaysia, with which it was roughly on a par in that decade, to a status of one of the worlds' most indebted and fifteen poorest countries. This decline was attributed to mismanagement of national economy, regime instability, disablement of rational planning and deployment of resources by centrifugal politics, primitive accumulationist inclinations of state officials, pervasive corruption and absence or ineffectiveness of institutions of oversight.

To Eigen (2001), corruption is a daunting obstacle to 'sustainable development', a constraint on education, health care, poverty alleviation, and a great impediment to Millennium Development Goal of reducing by half the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015. There is no doubt that corruption is poisonous to long term development and democracy (Alemika, 2012). However, it is pertinent to note that, corruption was never part of indigenous African and pre-independence Nigerian culture, because of the existence of traditional and cultural system of checks and balances which included "naming and shaming" of the family/clan and expulsion or ostracising from the clan for engaging in amoral and corrupt practices. Therefore, the dynamics of corruption which has become a driving force of socialization and norm in Nigeria with its manifestation in term of poverty, unemployment, malnutrition,

ethnic crisis, religion bigotry, underdevelopment and untold hardship on Nigerians have provoked some fundamental questions such as; how feasible is it for the government to curb corruption amidst hunger and abject poverty?, is it possible for the deprived poor masses by the failed state to genuinely support the failed state in winning the war against corruption: when their primary concern is about struggling for daily survival?, and lastly, can corruption curb corruption?

Given the nature and structure of Nigerian state characterised by intense struggling for power and resources, blatant disregard for the rule of law, high incidence of politicization both in public and private sectors, and the quest for personal aggrandizement, among other vices. Thus, the pervasiveness trend of corruption has become inevitable. In essence, the intense struggling for political power and high premium placed on wielding of such power has led to corruption and impoverishment of the masses. (Badmus, 2014: 173). In this paper, therefore, it is argued that it will be difficult if not impossible for a failed state in Nigeria to curb corruption, given the high level of distrust between the government and the populace and the fact that the political stability in Nigeria has been sustain through gross corruption. In a sense, other factors like the will to concede defeat to opposition by the incumbent and smooth transfer of political power from one form of government to another irrespective of corruption status of the government involved were given more priority than the will to curb corruption itself: as we have witnessed in the 1999 military transition of power to democratically elected government and the 2015 smooth transfer of power by then incumbent government to the opposition. However, this is not an attempt to foreclose that all hopes are lost in Nigeria's efforts to curb corruption and to improve the wellness of its entire society, if, the trust network between the government and the citizens can be rebuild, the lessons and strategies from the success stories of Singapore and Hong-Kong in fighting corruption could be adopted and if peoples' lives are adequately value by the government. This paper examine the dynamic causes of corruption in Nigeria, attempt is made to unravel the interplay between widespread of poverty and corruption in Nigeria, the paper also interrogate how feasible is it for a failed state to curb corruption and the implications of corruption for the state survival and overall national development.

This paper is sub-divided into five parts: introduction, clarification of concepts, the nature of corruption in post-independence Nigeria, the interplay between widespread poverty and corruption in Nigeria, the implications of gross corruption for the state survival and national development and lastly, the paper conclude with ways forward on how to curb corruption in Nigeria in order to foster national development and state survival.

2. Conceptual Clarification

Globally corruption has become a buzz-word, however, there are no generally acceptable notions on its definition, dynamics and consequences: to an extent, corruption is seen as another means of wealth redistribution and palliative to government inadequacies to meet basic needs of its citizenry. Therefore, there is need to provide succinct cross-sectional perceptions of scholars and other stakeholders on the phenomenon of corruption. The World Bank (1997), defines corruption as the abuse of public office for private gains: public office is abused through rent seeking activities for private gain when an official accepts, solicits, or extorts a bribe. Public office is also abuse when private agents actively offer bribe to circumvent public policies and processes for competitive advantage and profit. Public office can also be abused for personal benefits even if no bribery occurs, through patronage and nepotism, the theft of state assets or diversion of state resources.

In the same vein, Osoba (1996) also argues that, corruption is an 'anti-social behaviour conferring improper benefits contrary to legal and moral norms, which undermines the authorities' capacity to secure the welfare of all citizens'. In effect, corruption undermine society's capacity to provide opportunities for citizens to meet the basic necessities of life. Corruption has also been describes as a way of using money to pollute the political landscape and suppressing independent thoughts and behaviour, which may also involve physical suppression of all forms of opposition and thereby creating a state of political disorder (Kolawole, 1997). To Bamidele (2013), corruption is principally a governance issue, a challenge to African democratic functioning. It is a failure of both institutions and the larger framework of social, judicial, political and economic checks and balances needed to govern effectively. When these formal and informal institutional systems are severely weakened by corrupt practices, it becomes harder to implement and enforce laws and policies that ensure accountability and transparency.

Transparency International also defines corruption as the misuse of power for private gains. In the same vein, United Nations Development Program similarly defined corruption as the abuse of public power for private benefit through bribery, extortion, influence peddling, nepotism, fraud, or embezzlement-not only undermines investment and economic growth; it also aggravates poverty. In another sense, The BBC world dictionary also described corruption as dishonesty and illegal behaviour by people in positions of authority or power. Corruption is perceived as a cetaceous malaise in all sectors of Nigerian society. It is more noticeable in the public service sector including the Local Government service (Ajayi, 2000). He further observed that, corruption by political and civil official's manifests in various dimensions such as embezzlement of public funds, misappropriation, inflation and indiscriminate re-evaluation of contracts and collaboration with contractors who may later pay kickbacks and percentage commissions to relevant officials and invariably leading to failed contracts and abandoned projects.

According to Quah (2003), corruption in Asian countries has five major causes. The most widely cited factor is the low salaries of civil servants. Second, the expansive role of governments in national development throughout Asia increases opportunities for administrative discretion and corruption, A third cause of corruption in many Asian countries is the low risk of detection and punishment. A fourth factor fostering rampant corruption in Asian countries is culture—in particular, the primacy of the family and Asian traditions of gift giving, and The fifth and most important reason for the extensive corruption afflicting many Asian countries is a lack of political will, combined with ineffective anticorruption strategies. Thus, according to the UNDP Anticorruption Practice Note, corruption undermines the rule of law and leads to the violation of human rights by fostering an anti-democratic environment

characterized by uncertainty, unpredictability, declining moral values and disrespect for constitutional institutions and authority, UNDP (2004).

As rightly observed by Kpundeh (2000), corruption is innately a complex phenomenon: it is rather defined nor explained by dishonest individuals and consequences of their behaviour. It is an intricately woven set of circumstance that occur as a result of actions of domestic as well as international actors within political, economic, and social sectors of a country. Similarly, Dorschel (2000), described corruption as exploitation of a politician's or civil servants' position for personal gain. To him, corruption is an offense which generally takes two, a bribe giver and a bribed person of organization. The contemporary dynamics of corruption is not limited to 'classic' bribery for reward of public contracts. Bribe is also paid for the award of licences and approvals, and the creation or preservation of monopolies. The misappropriation of public funds, the use of confidential information such as zoning plans, obstruction of justice, extortion such as threats of tax inspection, the sale of job or promotion in public services, and nepotism have been identified as other forms of corrupt actions.

3. The Nature of Corruption in Post-independence Nigeria

To have a robust understanding of the dynamics and consequences of corruption on socio-economic well-being of Nigerians and Nigeria as a state, it is very pertinent to underscore the nature and structure of post-independence Nigeria state. According to Ake (1991:62) the crux of Nigeria's problem is over-politicization of social life...we are so intoxicated with politics: the premium on political power is so high that we are prone to take the most extreme measures to win and to maintain political power. According to Osaghae (2002) the character of Nigerian politics has been summarised as a long-drawn out decay or decline, whose empirical elements are political instability, a low level of national cohesion and economic crisis, all of which are mutually reinforcing.

It is noteworthy that the problem of corruption is not particular to Nigeria. In many countries, corruption actually flourishes but in a failed state like Nigeria, the scale at which corruption flourishes is quite destructive. For instance, there are kickbacks and fake tenders on things like construction of bridges, supplies of medical materials, road construction, buying and distribution of textbooks and concession of tourism and there are construction projects going on everywhere which are unnecessary – in many cases not to serve the interest of the masses but mainly to ensure that the rents they generate are maximised. The people in government will ensure that for existent and non-existent activities, licences will be provided and there will be tenacious extortion of the populace and the state. In most of the cases, the loot of the corrupt ruling class will not be invested in their home countries but rather, they will be invested abroad thereby creating jobs for citizens of other countries at the expense of theirs and making the poverty and economic failure of the state more inevitable and pronounced. These people at the slightest provocation dip their hands into the lean and shrinking purse of the state to pay for external services on which the home state has comparative advantages, embark on flamboyantly waste of state resources on overseas travels and payment of estercode, and on privileges which feed their over-bloated ego and avarice.

The military is silenced as they benefit extensively and excessively from the loot of the corrupt state officials. As note by Le Billon (2003) he stressed that the political and social fabric of the society reeks of corruption and the change in the pattern of corruption may lead to more conflict than the corruption itself: examples by buying peace through the appeasing of belligerents. These breeds a form of corruption that becomes competitive between different factions of the society and thereby yielding violence.

Other scholars have also posited that, there are various warring factions contesting the tenses of failed states due to its dangerous and deeply conflicted nature. They have submitted that armed revolts which are led by one or more rivals are battled by government troops in some failed states and that in most cases and quite occasionally, the government of failed states often faces the rise of two or more insurgent groups, plethora of dissent which are directed at the state and groups which are within the states, communal discontent and in many cases civil unrests which are in varying degrees. One important attribute of a failed state is the disharmonies of religious, ethnic, linguistic or other inter-communal enmity between communities in the state. Also, the preying of regimes on constituents and inability of border control and growth of venal corruption, unparalleled economic opportunity for the few privileged class and escalation of criminal violence are all symptoms of a failed state. More so, symptomatic of a failed state is what can be likened to a sarcoma in the political affairs of the state – an abysmal flawed institution, metastasis and continued destruction and or deterioration of social infrastructures, provision of limited quantities political goods which are essential for the survival of the nation, privatization of effective health and educational systems and neglect of public facilities. Thus, the failed states in the past two decades were Sudan, Angola, Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Congo while other modern states were approaching the brink of state failure (Wilder 1995).

The atrophy of the state to perform positively for its citizen is one of the characteristic of a failed state. The consequence of a gradual process of national decay is what leads to the designation of a nation as a failed state. A very good example of a state that can be designated as a failed state is once indisputably strong Zimbabwe which has become very much weakened and is going towards the abyss of total failure. The only reason the country has not joined the ranks of other failed states is because there are no insurgents that are fighting against the government but the country is not totally immune to this, if the deterioration of the country continues unabated and unchecked, it could lead to the rise of insurgents. To Daniel et al., (1998) state failure and collapse is a label for states with severe political crisis which makes it impossible for the state to have authority beyond the capital city as a result of weaknesses in the institution of the central state and this was symptomized by such states as Liberia, Bosnia, Afghanistan and Somalia in the 1990s.

For quite some years now, Nigeria has the reputation of ranking among the world's most corrupt nations. In the 2002-2009 reports of Amnesty International, Nigeria was in 2002, 2003 and 2004 rated as the second most corrupt country in the world in 2002 consecutively. By 2009, the corruption perception index of the country has improved and based on the order of least to the most corrupts nations, Nigeria ranked 113 out the 180 countries that were surveyed. In a sense, Egwaikhide (2009) argues that in Nigeria, corruption manifests in in various forms such as bureaucratic, political, electoral, favouritism, nepotism, embezzlement, extortion,

examination malpractices, bribery, sex for favour, impersonation and several other unholy habits that clogs the developmental wheels of the nation. In Nigeria, corruption has taken and endemic growth and as the economy deteriorates and crime increases, it becomes more ingrained. It is quite difficult to check the pages of newspapers in Nigeria without finding stories of corruption. It is very difficult to freely obtain services to be provided in Nigeria without bribing through. In actual fact, to obtain school admission is many cases; you have to pass through the gate of corruption. Some even pay to get employed.

Since Nigeria's independence, corruption has become pandemic and it cut across every administration from the civilian to the military administrations. For instance, the Justice Sutton report which was published on 16th of January, 1957 indicted Nigeria's first indigenous leader, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe who was then the leader of the of the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC), a political party which was then in control of the government in the eastern region of the country of corrupt practices. It rather becomes saddening that people who have been seen as the faces of Nigeria's nationalism and independence heroes have not been immune to charges of corruption which has continued till date. It is also noteworthy that the revered leader of the western region and sage, Chief Obafemi Awolowo who was then the Premier of the western region of Nigeria and also the leader of the opposition party, the Action Group (AG) was indicted of having diverted public fund of about 7,200,000 pounds from the coffers of the government to the National Investment and Property Corporation which was his private firm (Akude, 2007).

Similarly, during the administration of Alhaji Shehu Shagari, corruption was deemed extremely pervasive and an administration which inherited 2.8 billion naira foreign reserves from his successor and an additional 40.5 billion naira, within a period less than four years his administration left the country indebted to the tune of 10.21 billion naira (Rotberg, 2004), and in order to destroy incriminating evidence, public buildings were set on fire (Sklar, 1997). General Mohammadu Buhari on taking over office from Shagari made it a point of concern to establish a case for the misuse of public funds by the politicians who served in the second republic. The new Nigerian leader, Buhari ensure that many of them went to jail by constituting a military tribunal for crimes. Some Unity Party of Nigeria's governors such as Michael Ajasin, Bisi Onabanjo and Bola Ige were charged with cases of corruption of having enriched the UPN, their party from kickbacks from contracts that were awarded. The tribunal in its decision jailed the then governor of Bendel State, Ambrose Alli and his Commissioner for Finance, Augustine Omoleye for corruption of having collected from the Chairman and Managing Director of Hispanic Construction Nigerian Limited, Babatunde Adeyemi the sum of N983,000 as kickbacks out of the sum of N48.5 million which was meant for the contract awarded his company. The administration of Babangida was however reputed for gulf war oil windfall corruption which was investigated by a Financial Times journalist, William Keeling who was deported on 30 June 1991 by the Babangida regime. According to William Keeling, the Nigerian government under Banagida did not properly account for about the \$12.4 billion receipt from the oil windfall. This position was further sustained by the Pius Okigbo panel which corroborated the position of the journalist (Ojukwu and Shopeju, 2010).

The sudden death of Nigeria's dictator General Sani Abacha revealed graft in a global dimension. According to Igbikiowubo (2004) the series of investigations that were carried out led to the freezing several account containing about \$100 million dollars. Two years later, the Swiss banking commission indicted that Swiss banks failed to follow compliance process in allowing some friends and families of Abacha to have access to an account and depositing of an amount which totaled \$600 million dollars into the accounts. Few months later, more than \$1 billion US dollars were discovered in different bank accounts across Europe (Pallister, 2000). Ever since then, several amount of money have been discovered in different accounts.

4. The Interplay between Widespread Poverty and Corruption in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the moral problems which are associated with corruption can be said to be a contributory factor to the widespread poverty and hunger which pervades the country. There is a very sharp economic and social inequality in Nigerian societies and this trend has created just two classes of people – the very rich and the very poor. The society has become extremely bifurcated such that some are too rich to ever be poor while the majority are too poor to ever dream of becoming rich. Consequently, as a result of corruption most sicknesses in Nigeria are not in any-way related to health issues: for instance, most corrupt rich in Nigerian are sick, because they have too much to eat, while, the poor which constituted the majority are sick not in any-way related to health issues, simply, because they lack access to food. There is a wide acknowledgement that once there is a corrupt political space in the nation, there will be apparent manifestation of poverty, poor health, illiteracy, hunger, violence, bad governance among other vices. Inevitably, these societal pathologies will cripple the economic development and general wellness of the individual and society at large.

In view of the above, pervasiveness and wanton destruction of corruption on both lives and fabric of Nigeria society is no longer news. The reports from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have successively been very consistent in showing the poverty anathema in Nigeria. In 2000, the organization sadly declared that 60% of Nigerians were officially recognised as people living in relative poverty. There were great expectations that the percentage may drop the following years but sadly enough, in 2007 it had dropped only by a meagre percentage to 54.40% and by 2008 and 2009, it had dropped to 52.4% and 51.58% respectively. However, it soared again in 2010 to 62.2% (NBS, 2014). According to Nwabughio (2015) the Vice President of Nigeria, Professor Yemi Osinbajo stated that over 110 million Nigerians live below poverty line which brings the poverty percentage to about 62% despite successive government efforts to reduce poverty in the country.

It is very instructive to state equivocally that the phenomenon of corruption has destructively ravaged the nation, paralysed developmental nerves and destroyed most of the things which Nigerians held and cherished as national values. In various ways, Nigeria has earned the description of being a country with great growth potentials in the African continent and globally. The yearly growth of the Nigerian economy in the past seven years has been pegged at 6%. Unfortunately, despite this avowed growth represented in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), extreme poverty, unemployment and pervasive corruption and gross inequality have continued to soar in the country (UNDP, 2010). In Nigeria, the percentage of people living poverty in modern times is more than

those who were living in poverty three decades ago. For instance, according to a report by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) it was stated that in 1980, 27.2% of Nigerian population were living in poverty and this number increased to 46.3% within a period of five years and by 1992, the percentage dropped again to 42.7% but later increased in 1996 to 65%. Despite government policies on poverty reduction, the poverty rate by 2010 had increased to 69% which implied that about 112.47 million Nigerians were living below the poverty line at the time (NBS, 2012). Despite the wealth of the nation and the natural resources amidst billions of dollars being stolen out of the government coffers, the greatest population in Nigeria languish in poverty. The situation in Nigeria was aptly and succinctly described by Okunola, (2011) as 'thirst in the middle of the sea, hunger in the midst of plenty and suffocation in the open air'.

Corruption and poverty are growing in Nigeria like conjoined twins. The level of corruption in Nigeria is staggering and has attained the level of impunity in the past 25 years with Nigeria being rated by various organizations and civil societies as the most corrupt nation in the world (ActionAid, 2014). Public fund which would have been invested in wealth-creating ventures for the populace have been stolen and taken elsewhere by the privileged class thereby creating unbearable suffering for rest of the population. In addition, corruption has impacts negatively on access to public health, employment opportunities, economic performance and poverty reduction and police services (World Bank, 2010). Beyond the aforementioned negative impacts, corruption is rapidly becoming a way of life for an average person in Nigeria: every benefits, every rewards, employment opportunities, access to public services/facilities, career advancement/promotion, admission into tertiary institutions/model schools, obtaining drivers' licence and passing examinations among others are all tied to corrupt practices, so that it is difficult to survive without engaging in either minor or major acts of corruption. The conventional wisdom deduced according to the World Bank (2010: 102), is that the causes of poverty was not only an outcome of economic process but of interacting social, political and economic forces. In other words, it is an outcome of the responsiveness and accountability of state institutions.

As rightly observed by Ekweremadu, (2013) in Nigeria, poverty remains endemic despite successive governments' anti-poverty programmes and policies. Incidentally, the poverty statistics in Nigeria sharply contrasts the positive macroeconomic performance of the country as the nation's economy is said to be one of the fastest growing world economies with a growth rate put at an average of 6-7% in the past 10 years. Meanwhile, there are prevalence of the major indicators of poverty such as the lack of freedom of action and choice; shelter, adequate food; health and education; vulnerabilities to ill health; maltreatment by public agencies; economic dislocation and exclusion form key decision making processes in the society (World Bank, 2001).

In 2013, the Nigerian economy was rebounded and by the end of the year, the figure of the Gross Domestic Product soared to \$509 billion USD which made Nigeria the 26th Largest economy in the world and the largest in Africa, such rapid GDP growth has although been accompanied positive economic development, the countries per capital income moved from an approximate of \$500 USD in 1999 to \$2,500 at the end of 2013 (Enweremadu, 2013). Notably, by the end of the 90s, the middle class has almost vanished in Nigeria but it is notable that various studies have established that due to this economic progress, the size of the middle class has begun to grow and between 2010, between 16 and 30 per cent of the total population were considered to belong to the middle class. Some scholars argue that there is some correlation between poverty and corruption which is an indirect relationship. As argued, corruption in itself does not produce poverty but it has direct consequences on the economy and governance factors which in turns produces poverty (Chetwynd Eric et al, 2003). Further, Chetwynd et al argues that corruption aggravates income inequality by creating permanent economic distortions which gives some opportunities than others and the distributional consequences are grave as it aggravates income inequality and ensures that lower households pay a higher part of their income as bribes.

When there is corruption, public services which benefits the poor such as health and education are given lower priority compared with the capital intensive programmes because of the rents that comes from the later. This hinders the access of the lower income groups to such services and a general decline in the revenue of government which is occasioned by corruption reinforces scarcity in the public funds which can be used for programmes bordering on poverty alleviation (Gupta et al., 1998). Corruption leads to a reduction in economic growth, capability of the state to deliver and welfare to the citizens and gross inequality and this in the long run creates poverty. If anticorruption programmes are designed to increase economic growth, strengthen governance institution and capacity; create more equitable income distribution; increase public trust in government and improve government services, then it has the capacity reduce the nation's poverty rate.

5. Implications of Corruption for the Wellness and Development of Nigerian Society

The development of Nigeria has largely been undermined by corruption. This view has been pathetically captured by one of Nigeria's most prominent writers, Chinua Achebe that anyone who can say that corruption in Nigeria has not yet been alarming is either a fool; a crook or else does not live in this country. The situation has become bad to the extent that as far back as 1993, keeping an average Nigeria from being corrupt is synonymous to keeping a goat from eating yam (Achebe, 1988). It has been difficult if not impossible for the country to build a strong and enduring economy as a result of corruption. The evil of corruption is seen in every facet of the society as people need to bribe to get their children into school and to remain in school and also to graduate excellently. People who have jobs in many cases pay to get the jobs and in many cases keep paying to keep their jobs and also, ten per cent is charged as kickbacks on contracts. Those who want to evade tax pay the officer a little amount of money and the tax is officially evaded, the sick who want to be adequately cater for particularly in public hospitals, needed to bribe medical personnel in-charge, the same scenarios is applicable in almost all sectors of Nigeria system.

The prevalence of these corrupt practices has serious and tremendous adverse effects on the national psyche of Nigerians and the quality of life of the country as well as the living standard of the people. There is no nation which has prospered from corruption. A handful of Nigerians have continued to steal the resources which are meant for educational advancement, provision of portable water,

health, road networks and other important basic amenities thereby crippling the economy and leading to wanton poverty. A heart wrenching scenario emerged when an Australian national who came to Nigeria affirmed that he was prevailed upon by some of his Nigerians principals who were in government to inflate a contract by the sum of N5.5bn: this portrays Nigerians as those who held down their cows to be milked by others (Ekwueru and Daminabo, 2008).

There are myriad consequences of corruption on the socio-political and economic development of Nigeria. The fundamental consequences of corruption are enormous, particularly, for developing country like Nigeria: it hindered economic growth and development, it discourage foreign investment flows into the country, results into braindrain and economy divestment. In the same context, Eppele, (2006) stressed that serious investors are often wary of having to offer bribes before they are given operational licences and the right to invest. Eppele attributes this to the fact that there is no guarantee that the bribe takers will keep to their own side of the agreement and when this happens the fleeced investor would have offered the bribe at his own risk. More so, foreign investors are prone to make withdrawal of their capital from the nation once they notice that there is a high incidence of corruption in such country because of the risk involved in doing business in corrupt countries which risk outweighs the gains.

In the opinion of Ibrahim, (2003) corruption has remained the stumbling block to the people and this had made it impossible for them to enjoy the fruit of good governance. Corruption affects investment and contributes to inhibition of economic performance in the country; it affects economic growth which negates economic development. In the sense, corruption discourages investment, alters composition of government spending and economic growth as well as sustainable development of the country (SelloTmam, 2004).

Corruption is a fundamental contributory factor to poverty and underdevelopment as it has rendered millions of Nigerians unemployed and wallowing in abject poverty. The report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2001, places Nigeria at number 148 out of the 173 countries that were surveyed on poverty index. By 2003, the situation had worsened such that the country had dropped further to 152 out of 175 countries that were surveyed. This is why Obadan (2001) maintains that it is true mass poverty has remained the viable breeding ground of all forms of violent outbreaks and extremism. While, Saliu and Aremu (2004) have come tandem that corruption in Nigeria has led to decaying infrastructure, falling educational standard, bloated imported bills and public expenditure, inadequate medical services, foreign loans mismanagement, reduction in production capacity and economic distortion as a result of waste and resources misallocation to the tune of billions of dollars.

Kofi Annan, the former Secretary General of United Nations (UN), submits that corruption is inimical to economic development as well as causes serious harm to development by impoverishing the national economies (Webb, 2005). The ways in which corruption affects economic development are diverse. In a corrupt society, despite what the government does to ensure economic development, the benefits of such enterprises will seldom reach the people. In view of the above, Ekong, (1997) argues that, situation in Nigeria is a scenario where the benefits that should naturally go to the people – the end users or beneficiary are being ‘captured’ away by the privileged class at the stage of its development.

6. Conclusion

The foregoing explication on the implication of corruption on wellness of Nigerian society as harnessed in the diverse views portend negative syndrome for Nigerians and Nigeria polity. The position of this paper therefore, is that poor service delivery, inadequate infrastructural amenities, lack of proper management of public enterprises, bad governance, rising of different insurgent groups, crime and criminality, brain drain, rising hunger and economic collapse which is fast leading Nigeria into the folk of failed states can be traced to corruption. It is therefore imperative that for Nigeria to brake the yolk of corruption, there must be social re-engineering directed at facing out wanton poverty through creation of quality education, employment opportunities, provision of enabling environment for industries to grow, investing in agricultural production, embarking on zero tolerance policy for corruption, and re-building of trust network between the government and the govern.

7. Recommendations

Since corruption has been described as one of the major causes threat to wellness human existence and societal development, it is therefore imperative that there is a need to develop a channel through which the problem of corruption can be effectively dealt with so that Nigeria can join other progressive nations in the march towards development and economic growth. It is therefore recommended that:

- There should be re-building of trust network relationship between the government and the citizens through equity, justice, accountability.
- The government should strengthen its efforts to genuinely reduce the scourge of poverty and inequality.
- The lessons and strategies from the success stories of Singapore and Hong-Kong in fighting corruption should be adopted in fighting corruption in Nigeria.
- Civil societies and religious bodies should collaborate and organise seminars on accountability and transparency at all levels.
- It is noticeable that corruption is a symptom of lack of morality therefore parents should ensure that they train their children who will become tomorrow’s leaders quality character and civic education that can lead to national development.
- The Nigerian government and people in governance must ensure they display honesty, accountability, transparency and purposefulness and commitment to the ideals of good governance and the society.
- The Nigerian society should ensure that there is an equitable reward system through which hard-work and commitment to national development can be recognised.
- The shortfalls of the successive governments’ anti-corruption and anti-poverty programmes should be analysed and an effective policy should be formulated which will lead to national development.

- There is a need for a legal framework with severe penalty (such as life imprisonment for people indulging in corrupt practises) especially for those found guilty of corruption and mismanagement of public and private funds.
- There is a need for a radical reform in all sectors of national life in order to strengthen state's institutions to be immune against corruption.
- There is a need for an absolute autonomy of the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) so that corruption cases can be effectively handled without undue external interference.
- There is a need for special anticorruption court which will effectively handle corruption cases and discharge judgement as quick as possible so that a message will be sent to all corrupt and intending corrupt officials that the leadership of the country is serious towards attaining a non-corrupt society.
- There is a need to revive the nation's agricultural sector so that the problem of hunger which is associated with poverty can be effectively taken care of and mass job creation can be made available for teeming unemployed youth through the agricultural sector.

8. References

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