

## **CORRUPTION: THE MAJOR THREAT TO AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION**

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### **Abstract**

*The African continent is endowed with both human and natural resources. It has also attracted development aids and grants from the developed and concerned nations of the world. Despite these, the continent remains undeveloped. Different reasons have been attributed to the Africa's development crisis. The paper pinpoints that corruption is the core reason behind Africa's underdevelopment. Corruption has continued to plague numerous sectors of the African economy. It has been identified as one of the greatest challenges militating against Africa's development. The upsurge of corruption in Africa in recent times is disturbing, pathetic and pitiable. This paper, therefore, is aimed at identifying the causes and how to address the prevalence of corruption in Africa. The study will further examine the extent of the effect of corruption on the development of Africa. The effects of corruption on the continent vary from one country to another. Literature on the effects of corruption in Africa shows the following: high rate of illiteracy, poverty, youth restiveness, discourages investors, increased social evil, insecurity, political instability and so on. Workable recommendations are made, aimed at addressing the identified challenge of corruption facing the continent. Among other recommendations, the paper strongly supports policy reforms (especially economic and legal) in the continent, and recommends a review of the ongoing policies (especially anti-corruption policies) towards ensuring effective control of corruption in the continent.*

**Keywords:** Corruption, development, legislation, anti-corruption, Africa.

### **Introduction**

Corruption is like a cancer. The earlier it is removed the better. It is linked to poverty, violent crimes and extremism, which are major threats to individuals no matter the social or economic status. It has been identified as one of the greatest challenges in pursuing national development. It is a deviation from the set down moral standards to hold society together and these are trust, rectitude, honesty, discipline, right attitude to work, courage, national consciousness (Ighovohah, 1998). The upsurge of corruption in Africa in recent times is disturbing. It seems the menace has defied all previous treatments and the damages it has done to the national life cannot be quantified.

The quest for good welfare and economic development for over fifty years had insignificant success in the African countries as lack of good health facilities and basic amenities, nutritional problems, visionless leadership and bad governance, social and internal insecurity, religion and ethnicity crisis, civil wars, increase in poverty incidence, high level of unemployment, still dominate the continent. The level of development determines the level of corruption and extent of political instability as less developed countries tends to be more corrupt and political unstable compared to the developed countries (Montinola & Jackman cited in Hammed, 2018).

Development is seen as the process by which a positive change is introduced into a system in order to improve social arrangement. It involves a structural transformation of the economy, society, polity and culture of a country. The level and rate of development of any particular society is influenced by so many variables such as the political culture, leadership and patriotism. In Africa, corruption has been at the centre of development an impediment of true and real development in the society. Corruption has ravaged the entire African system, causing the continent to be the most corrupt in the world. The World Bank has identified corruption as one of the greatest obstacles to economic and social development. Corruption is a problem throughout the world. However, it is more widespread in countries with weak leadership and institutions; where citizens poorly represented.

Africa is blessed with human and a variety of natural resources, agricultural products, good weather and climate, and near absence of natural disasters. However, corruption has proven to be more prevalent in certain sectors of society, such as the public sector, the infrastructure sector, sectors utilizing valuable natural resources as well as education industry. Those who suffer most from corruption are the weakest and poorest members of society. Corruption leads to an increased cost of living and limited or no access to fundamental social

services. In turn, this reduces the opportunities to break the cycle of poverty, and those who are already poor risk becoming even poorer.

## **Conceptual Clarification**

### **Corruption**

Etymologically, corruption is derived from a Latin word “*corruptus*” which means to break or destroy. Literally, corruption means to break away or depart from morality, ethics and civic virtues. Corruption has been defined by many social scientists and institutions. According to Lawal (2007) in E, corruption is a term that has been perceived in various ways by various scholars. Its conceptualisation has attracted in recent past competing and numerous views and approaches. It is therefore seen as a worldwide phenomenon which has long been with every society in the world. It has been identified as the bane of most political and economic problems in societies. Corruption is again considered as an enemy of development because of its various vices. It includes for example bribery, forgery, embezzlement and favouritism. Adegbola cited in Adebimpe et al (2010) sees corruption as the use of position to extort something either in cash or kind from the public in furtherance of personal gain, contrary to expected behaviour attached to the position occupied. According to the World Bank (2006), about 25 percent of procurement cost in Africa and other developing countries is wasted in corruption, while the figure could be less than 10 percent in developed countries. To justify this claim, Ezoem (2010) averred that corruption is seen as, among others, the abuse of public office, the abuse of all offices of trust, misappropriation, private and selfish gains, bribing, extortion, earning a wage without working for it, etc.

Obi and Obikeze (2006) described corruption as a situation whereby government officials and private economic agents allow personal interests to override considerations of public interest. Corruption has been so much practiced in Africa that it appears to be part of official policy in public and private transactions. It involves both the high and the low and covers all areas of the people’s life. Radio and television stations, news-papers and magazines are awash with stories about corruption manifesting in cases of illegal acquisition of wealth through public office, misappropriation of public funds, profiteering, gratification and all manners of bribe (Akpochafo, 2010). In a nut shell, corruption in the personalization of public resources.

## **Development**

Development has been one of the most ambiguous terms in social sciences discourse and it continues to generate debate among various scholars. The word development as a concept is a victim of definitional pluralism. Like many other terms in the social sciences, it is subject to diverse definitions or descriptions from different people at different time. Generally, development simply connotes improvement in the quality of anything (include human life). However, attempts have been made by erudite scholars to conceptualize development. Development reflects in the economic, social, educational and political aspects of a nation. Fadeiye (2005) strongly felt that development could be described of those changes or progresses which enhance better quality of life for the generality of the people in the society. According to him, development should involve the active participation of all and sundry so as to bring about concrete and meaningful transformation in the lives of people in the community, state or even the country at large. Concurring with the above definitions, Chrisman cited in Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011) views development as a process of societal advancement, where improvement in the wellbeing of people are generated through strong partnerships between all sectors, corporate bodies and other groups in the society. It is pertinent to state that development is not only an economic exercise, but also embraces socio-economic and political issues and pervades all aspects of societal life. According to Okobia (2018) development is the gradual growth of a people and a society, so that they become better, more advanced, leading to an unfolding of the potentialities of the individuals in that society.

It is pertinent to state that development is not only an economic exercise, but also embraces socio-economic, human capital and political issues and pervades all aspects of societal life. Hence, Gboyega in Oloya and Egbule (2016) captures development as an idea that embodies an attempt to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. Development will bring about improvement in personal security, livelihoods, and expansion of life chances. It entails the conversion of a peasant society into an industrial one, and a change in the whole way of life, in expectations and motivations, and even the physical environments of daily life itself. A more compressive and comprehensive definition of development has been given by Adedeyi cited in Atong and Udo (2014) as a process of socio-economic and political transformation of structures in a society, in such a way that it leads to improvement in the level of living of the people including education, housing, health, nutrition, and other related social

services, decreasing inequality in the distribution of income, urban-rural imbalances, political and economic opportunities.

### **Causes of Corruption in Africa**

A number of factors have been identified as being responsible for corruption in Africa. Some are discussed below:

First, there is the desire in many Africans to fulfill the cultural expectation of their people. A “successful person” apart from marrying and having children, ought to own a personal house, a car, indulge in flamboyant life style, carryout expensive burials, marriages and chieftaincy titles. Inability to do these may be regarded as failure or “having not arrived”. He even argued that the desire to achieve the above has led people into ritual murder and kidnapping.

Two, there is great inequality in the distribution of wealth in African society. Too few own too much while too many own too little. Those who do not have much struggle to meet up with their responsibilities at home and in society. They struggle to provide the basic necessities of life like food, shelter, education, health care, etc. To avoid failure or being ridiculed, the individual resorts to corruption as a way of helping himself to cope with responsibilities.

Third, some political office holders see politics as a quick means of acquiring wealth. This is why they indulge in electoral corruption, which is expensive - they buy votes, prevent voting in some places, arm youths with weapons to intimidate opponents or even kill or maim them and all these cost money. As soon as they get into political positions, they plunder the office and amass wealth for themselves, more so, when there are little or no checks and balances.

Fourth, one of the greatest problems with African countries today is bad leadership (Achebe, 1983). The tragedy of it all is that all the shortcomings of the past governments for which they were either toppled as in military coups or voted out through the ballot box, are hardly corrected; they get worsen in succeeding administrations (Egbule, 2018). Governments of African countries also by its action or inaction create room for corruption to take place. In Nigeria, for instance, between 1999 and 2007, the Federal Government of Nigeria claimed to have spent over \$16billion on integrated power supply, road construction and maintenance and still wallop in epileptic power supply and unimaginable deplorable roads (Obayelu, 2007; Mba, 2010).

Fifth, the supply of basic necessities of life are sometimes of low quality or irregular. Facilities like water, electricity, schools, hospitals, roads and so on are usually provided by government. The provision of these public utilities are either irregular or sub-standard. It therefore puts the responsibility on the worker to provide superior or alternative services to his family. Meanwhile, the worker is either on a low or irregular pay and, worse still, if he is a pensioner, widow/widower and the like. These situations push people to look for extra means of survival and when opportunity comes, they resort to corruption

Sixth, it is also argued that the socio-economic system we practice contributes to corruption. African practice capitalism which is exploitative, materialistic, competitive, egoistic and full of greed. It is a game of "winner-takes-all". Under such an economies system as the one we practice, loyalty, integrity, honesty and job satisfaction are ignored and people are more concerned about economic survival. This leads to plundering and embezzlement of public funds to take care of personal problems.

Additionally, weak legislation fosters corruption in Africa. The fight against corruption and anti - corruption agencies in the continent is very weak. African governments should intensify their fight against corruption, indiscipline, tribalism if the continent must be corruption-free. On their part, the judiciary should stop treating charges of bribery and corruption as political issues, but should adhere strictly to the provisions of the constitution, irrespective of who is involved.

### **Effects of Corruption on the development of Africa**

A nation that condones corruption is often besieged with many economic, political and social vices. Many studies have concentrated on the evils or consequences of corruption. However, this paper had summarized or drawn conclusions as examined below:

### **Labour Migration Brain Drain Syndrome**

Labour migration involves the transfer and flight of technical know-how and skills from one nation to another - for the purpose of securing a better job and establishing a new residence. It has consequences for the individual, the area of origin and the area of destination (Egbule, 2019). It is an indisputable fact that labour migration has adverse effects ranging from social, cultural, political to

economic upon the emigrant's country. Over the last decades, an increasing number of developed countries have put in place different mechanisms to encourage the immigration of only the most talented, skilled individuals from developing countries. A good example is the international visa lottery scheme. This scheme is put in place perhaps because developing countries cannot fully exploit the abilities and skills of human capital, as they do not have enough jobs to offer. Thus, Africa and other developing continents has become a human capital-generating machine for the developed world.

### **Poverty**

Fighting corruption is achievable when there are efforts to improve the living conditions of people living in poverty. Poverty has been blamed on a lack of infrastructure and human capital formation. No poor country has good infrastructure before it emerges from poverty. Infrastructure is financed by prosperity and, with respect to human capital, the West has earmarked billions of dollars in vocational training programs to prepare local workers. African politicians often blame the rest of the world, either because it does not open its borders to African products or because it opens them too wide, and Western products flood its markets. The truth is that the world has not marginalized Africa; it has opened up its markets to it and given it financial means so that, properly managed, it can develop. Because of poverty, many parents are unable to meet up with their financial obligations. Many of such impoverished parents encourage their children into labour, forgetting that they are exchanging their children's future and deliriums.

### **It Discourages Foreign Investors**

It scares foreign investors since bribery and corruption, the culture of late payment, delays or refusal of payment for services already done do not make for a good business environment as cash flow is the life blood of any company. Investors now prefer Eastern Europe to Africa.

### **Citizens' Lack of Confidence on the Government**

It destroys the legitimacy of a government. Many saw the government coming into power through electoral corruption and were unwilling to accord it the

cognition. Corruption has taught the African a dangerous and wrong lesson that it does not pay to be honest, hardworking and law abiding.

### **Loss of Foreign Aid**

It leads to loss of foreign aid as some foreign donors do not give aid to corrupt nations. For instance, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has withdrawn development support from some nations that are notoriously corrupt. The World Bank has introduced tougher anti-corruption standards into its lending policies to corrupt countries. Additionally, according to Kunhiyop (2008), other effects of corruption include:

### **Erosion of moral values**

It perverts a nation's sense of right and wrong. In a corrupt society, the right becomes the wrong and the wrong becomes right.

### **Increased social evils**

It provides fertile soil for tribalism, nepotism, fraud, dishonesty, selfishness, kidnapping, prostitution, human-trafficking, mal-administration, and armed robbery. It may also lead to murder, religious bigotry, civil war and other vices.

### **Lack of transparency**

Corruption encourages those in authority to shun transparency and accountability. Calls for public officials to be transparent and accountable elicit defensive and vindictive responses. Other effects are high level of unemployment, youth restiveness, adequate basic amenities, malnutrition, political instability, ethnic crisis, high rate of illiteracy, etc.

### **The way Forward**

Rather than completely blaming the developed countries and globalization for her human capital flight and underdevelopment, Africa should consider the following options as remedial strategies, in other to benefit maximally from her human resources.

### **Technological Development and Revolution**

Science and technology are twin factors that tend to revolutionize the world today. A country has to be fully integrated into the world economy in order to harness the benefits of such integration. She has to first embark on serious technological revolution such that it will be able to play significant role in the globalization process. Any nation that is not making concerted efforts at technological revolution is doing so at its own peril. This understanding gave Usman (2000) cited in Ikem & Ebegha (2013) the impression that only the nations that embarked on technological revolution can effectively join the globalized world. Science and technology should be made the key to developing countries' developmental efforts and should be seen to be pursued with zeal and zest.

### **Quality and Functional Education**

Education is a veritable tool for any developmental efforts, the world over. Quality education is the education and experience that is able to meet the yearning and aspiration of people. It is the outcome that encompasses knowledge, skill and attitudes, and is linked to national goals of education and positive participation in society (Akporehe & Obielumani, 2013). It should be of paramount importance that the educational system in developing countries is qualitative and functional; laying emphasis on the development of science and technology, as well as skill acquisition (entrepreneurial education). The key infrastructure and facilities for qualitative education should be made available and the human resources should be well trained to competently handle them, such that developing countries' products are highly competitive in the international arena.

### **Free Competitive Economy**

Developing countries also have to adopt a free competitive economy. They have to transit from government regulated market to a free competitive economy; liberalizing its economy for foreign investors. Capitalist economy (competitiveness) is known all over the world as the economic policy that creates wealth and promotes real growth as production is geared towards profit making.

### **Provision of Conducive Working Environment**

Based on the premise that unsatisfactory working environment, owing largely to dilapidated and obsolete facilities, was and is still partly responsible for human capital flight in Africa, it is suggested that urgent and massive overhaul of facilities especially in the universities, hospitals and research centres be undertaken. In the view of Ekundayo et al (2010), apart from the physical working environment, there is also the compelling need to make the psychosocial environment conducive. In this regard, there should be proper appreciation and recognition for intellectual and professional worth. Also, the African government should address and review all the various policies that have triggered the migration stream of intellectuals from universities, and other professionals like doctors, pharmacists, nurses, engineers, etc, from the country.

### **Foreign Investment**

African government have to attract foreign investments both wholly and in partnership with indigenous entrepreneurs in the areas of construction, power generation, oil refining, real estate development, telecommunications, and gas stations infrastructural provision. In concrete terms, foreign investment has been quite staggering. Globalization and indeed its neo-liberalists expansionism in the African space have opened up a wide economic movement and multi-national labour market orientations (Nwankwo & Ofozoba, 2016).

### **Improved Human Resources**

The governments of Africa should develop their human resources to meet up with the knowledge requirements of the globalization process. Most developing countries, has a large chunk of human resources ready to be utilized by foreign firms. Their human resources should be properly developed so that they are able to contribute and participate in national and international economic activities. In the education sector, for instance, the governments of the developing countries should sponsor teachers to attend conferences and seminars both locally and internationally - this will help to update their knowledge on current global issues, especially the application of ICT in the teaching-learning process.

### **Efficient and Effective Economic Management**

No country is poor as far as distribution of natural resources is concern. I believe the main challenge of African countries is the mis-management available resources, both natural and human, as well as money politics. Hence, they should pursue efficient and effective economic management of their resources so as to raise the people's standard of living and overall economic development of the nations. The resources of the nations should not be wasted through high-level corruption, ethnic sentiment, self-centredness and embezzlement.

### **Advancement in Research**

Research is a careful search and systematic investigation towards increasing the sum of knowledge. It is the most important tool for advancing knowledge and relevant skills. Knowledge induces productivity. Without advances in research, human capital development will be at a standstill. In fact, research cannot be divorced from human capital and economic development. Education through quality research is needed to produce knowledge innovations and entrepreneurial skills to achieve overall development. There is ample evidence to show that research and education (especially the higher education) has contributed to the rise and expansion of the world knowledge-based economy

### **Conclusion**

This study evaluates the challenges of corruption in the African society. It is discovered that corruption as a problem to Africa is characterized by economic sabotage, terrorism, kidnapping, armed robbery, human trafficking, prostitution, and the likes, which are responsible for under development in Africa. This paper serves as a clarions call to all democratic institutions, the courts, the law enforcement agencies, the judiciary and the mass of the people to see corruption as an unnecessary and avoidable evil that must be fought and conquer. Africa is dreaded among other continents because of its carriage of corruption in almost all facets of life. In Africa, institutions have been linked seriously with corruption. Corruption is probably the main means of accumulating quick wealth in Africa. Corruption occurs in many forms, and it has contributed immensely to the poverty and misery of a large segment of the African population. Governments implementing anti-corruption measures have to demonstrate seriousness in order to achieve results and to build public confidence.

## **Recommendations**

Having studied the present indices of corruption in Africa, the following recommendations are proffered to ameliorate the phenomenon and to enthrone an ethical space in Africa, compatible with global anti-corruption practices:

There is a need for African countries to develop institutions such as the civil service, parliament and the judiciary, which in turn will create interlocking systems of oversight and self-regulation. All of these institutions have to be free of corruption themselves and active players in the fight against corruption.

The establishment of special corruption courts will be a welcome development that must be nurtured and promoted. It is a strategic and worthy intervention to ensure cases of corruption draw the full attention of law and spur speedy trials. It is a demonstration of commitment to fight corruption in a unique way.

There is need to re-orientate the generality of Africans towards a better value system. Africans requires better attitudes and values in their relationship and workplace, for corruption to be unattractive the norms and values concerning acquisition of wealth should be re-examined. Hard work, honesty, Integrity, moral uprightness should be rewarded while greed, selfishness, ethnicity, favoritism should be condemned.

All anti-corruption agencies in African should be given free hands to operate and as much as possible they should not be appendages of the executive arm of government. They should be well financed to achieve optimum performance.

There is positive correlation between improved workers' satisfaction and reduction in corruption as reported by Chungish (2004). Hence, the paper is recommending enhanced welfare package for workers. In the same vein, honesty, commitment and diligence should be acknowledged and rewarded by giving national honour to transparent officers/workers. A total overhaul of the nation's psyche through ethical and moral orientation programmes. The orientation would provide a new template capable of tilting Africans' outlook to the things that matter in life, self-esteem, self-awareness, self-reliance, self-supporting and self-renewal. A total restructuring of the present system of public governance in Africa to usher in a new ethical paradigm, explaining leadership as a role for those men and women who desire to serve the state and citizenry. When such leaders emerge, corruption shall diminish. The Africa Union should strengthen institutions and establish more, especially a continental anti-

corruption agency to holistically combat the deadly cancer called corruption. Convicts should be jailed and their properties confiscated. Court rulings have to be protected from political interference and judicial independence has to be assured. The Africa Union should maintain her integrity to avoid the humiliating phrase: “toothless bull dog:” often used to describe the AU.

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