



## **Corruption and Nigeria's National Development: Perspective from Staff Members of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission**

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**Abstract:** *This study investigated the effect of corruption on Nigeria national development through the perception of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (FCC) staff. A sample of 150 staff of the commission participated in the study. The questionnaire was used as instrument for the collection of relevant data while descriptive and inferential statistics were used in analyzing the data gathered. From the findings, EFCC staff perceived corruption to have impacted negatively on the development of Nigeria in terms of lack of medical facilities, incessant power shortages, bad roads, dilapidated schools and poor water supplies etc. EFCC staff also believed that corruption diminishes the image of the country in the perception of international communities and corruption creates mistrust between the government and the populace. They also suggested that individuals with exemplary and corrupt free leadership should be celebrated, honesty and integrity should be rewarded, and defaulters should be punished in accordance with relevant statutory provisions.*

**Keywords:** Corruption, Socio-Economic Development, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, Social Mistrust.

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## **1. Introduction**

One of the greatest threats to socio-economic and political development of any nation is corruption. The challenges of corruption have had devastating consequences to Nigeria since the colonial period, and corruption has become a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabric of our system. Ndubisi (2009) described corruption in Nigeria as endemic and Egonmwan (2002) considered corruption as a sub-culture in Nigeria. Thus, the socio-economic and political problem in Nigeria today is as a result of corruption. From the collapse of our traditional institutions, failure of public enterprises, decay and inefficiency of our public service, to the failure of private enterprise are all considered as consequences of corruption in the Nigerian society.

The menace of corruption has been tackled at different levels, yet this ugly practice keeps surviving in all facets of our endeavours. For instance, in year 2000, the Guardian, one of the leading newspapers in Nigeria, conducted an opinion poll about the obstacles to Nigeria's development. Respondents were asked to choose from a list including corruption, bad leadership and unemployment. Of the 1080 respondents, 70% picked corruption as one of the worst problems that hinders Nigeria's development (Igbuzor 2008). Consequently, the extraction of billions of dollars in corruptly acquired funds has cost Nigeria dearly. It has been argued that Nigeria's past corrupt leaders stole and deposited about US\$400 billion in foreign banks from the first military government in 1966 to civilian rule in 1999 (Ayttey, 2002).

Similarly, the former chairman of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Mallam Nuru Ribadu was noted to have observed that Nigeria's former leaders had misappropriated approximately US\$507 billion from public coffers which, when compared with the proposed 2008 budget of N2.456 trillion, translates into 26 years worth of public spending (Igbuzor 2008). This, therefore, described Nigeria as a money laundering haven according to report by the Financial Action Task Force of 2001 (Ochefu and Chima, 2008).

Corruption differs widely in its forms, pervasiveness and consequence; it occurs in monarchy, democracies and military dictatorships; at all levels of development and in all types of economic systems from open capitalist economies to centrally planned economies (Faloore 2010; Egwemi 2012). In developed countries, the effect may be less severe, while in developing countries, particularly the African continent, it may hinder the development of the overall economy. In Nigeria, corruption affects every facet of human development, little wonder, the Transparency International (TI), global corruption barometer survey rates Nigeria 27 percent in corruption index and ranked it 136 out of 175 less corrupt countries (Transparency International, 2014). The futile attempt by the

governments to fight the cankerworm stems from the fact that government itself is greatly infected with the virus and an average Nigeria is seen as corrupt in most parts of the world (Odofin and Omojuwa, 2007).

Scholars have attributed the causes of corruption to factors such as colonialism, ethnicity, poverty and military intervention (Amundsen 2009; Ninalowo, 2004; Olurode, 2004). Colonialism is the threshold through which corruption crept into most African countries. The main objective of the colonialist was to source raw materials for the growing European Industries, therefore, imperialism was important to actualize this dream, and Nigeria was one of the African countries that became a prey to European Colonial Strategies. An account provided by Olurode, (2004) exemplify the above assertion.

*The redistribution of Nigerian land by the colonial masters was an act of corruption, the encouragement of large-scale cultivation of cash crops thereby neglecting the production of food crops, through partnership and labour force were capitalist strategies*

Colonialism, therefore, laid the foundation of corruption in the country due to the nature of exploitation and uneven distribution of societal wealth (Ninalowo, 2004).

Corruption, whether in Nigeria or elsewhere could come in different types and shades, and are discussed in this paper. Akindele, (2005) identified five major types of corruption in Nigerian society: Political Corruption; Economic Corruption; Bureaucratic Corruption; Judicial Corruption; Moral Corruption. Political corruption manifests in activities connected with election and succession, and the manipulation of people and institution in order to retain power and office (Fawole, 2005). Corruption in this manner involves struggles and competitions in an unhealthy ways for limited political posts or privileges, vote buying during election, the use of extra legal means, and the use of office to ensure continuity (Power of incumbent) and unlawful attempt to amend the constitution.

Economic corruption, which is the effort to gain favors or access to a certain opportunity is prevalent among business men. The pursuit of economic gains and favour in an unsolicited and illegal means always ties down and retards economic development. Businessmen have been known to bid for favour to any level provided the economic cost of such favour does not exceed the returns and the value made possible by such corruption (Eqwemi, 2012).

Bureaucratic corruption involves buying favours from bureaucrats who formulate and administer government economic and political policies (Ogunde, 2008). The areas chiefly involved are the acquisition of foreign exchange, import licences, industrial establishment, avoidance of tax and the like (Amundsen,2009).

Corruption also manifests itself even in the judiciary setting. Allegations of corruption are rife against law enforcement agencies and the courts (Akindele, 2005). The Nigeria police is a typical illustration in this sense, and the court in some instances, judges have been accused and some have been compulsorily retired because of allegations of corruption. In addition, the contemporary society is witnessing the problem of moral decadence; the relationship in the society coupled with the nature of man to dominate and exploit his fellow man has worsened the morality level of the people. This constitutes moral corruption.

In spite of the crusades of anti-corruption in Nigeria, its magnitude appears to be on the high side as corruption continues to permeate and pervade every facet of national life in Nigeria (Akindele, 2005). In the pursuit of the anti-corruption fight in Nigeria, the need to have proper understanding of how the staff members of the Economic and Financial Crime Commission perceive corruption and its role in Nigeria's development has become crucial. Having the insiders' perspective would assist in gauging the agency's readiness to combat corruption and aid in making creative suggestions on ways of achieving a corrupt free nation. Against this backdrop, this study examined the perception of EFCC staff members with respect to the causes, types and effects of corruption on Nigeria's development.

## **2. Research Questions**

The study attempted to provide answers to the following research questions

- (i) What in the perspective of EFCC staff members, constitute the main causes or factors that promote corruption in Nigeria?
- (ii) What is the perception of EFCC staff members on the effects of corruption on Nigeria's development?

## **3. Methods**

The descriptive survey design was adopted in this study. This involved the use of questionnaire as the research instrument to gather data from a relatively large population. According to Sekaran (2001) a descriptive survey design is suitable for studies involving field enquiries by collecting data within a specific period of a time. The target population of this study consisted of all categories of staff at the Lagos office of The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in Ikoyi, Lagos South-Western Nigeria. Accessible record from the official web page of the organisation as at the time of this study revealed that aggregate population size of employees was 450, made up of 330 males and 120 females.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) is a Nigerian law enforcement agency that investigates financial crimes such as advance fee fraud (419 fraud) and money laundering. The EFCC was established in 2003, partially in response to pressure from the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF), which named Nigeria as one of 23 countries non-cooperative in the international community's efforts to fight money laundering. The economic crime fighting outfit is currently headed by Mr. Ibrahim Magu. The choice of the organisation was based on its role as the foremost government agency statutorily saddled with the responsibility for enforcing anti-corruption laws and policies in Nigeria. Hence, 150 staff members of EFCC were randomly selected to participate in the study.

This study employed both primary and secondary sources of data; primary data were obtained from employees of EFCC Nigeria through the administered questionnaire. Secondary data were obtained from the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) (2001-2014) published annually by a renowned international assessor- Transparency International. This was necessary to further augment respondents' opinion obtained primarily through questionnaire, and therefore enhance reliability of findings in this study. Data collected were presented and analyzed using percentage distribution.

#### **4. Results**

##### **Respondents' Socio-Demographic Information**

Data in Table 1 show the frequency distribution of responses according to respondents' socio-demographic background. As indicated, Table 1 showed that the total number of respondents was 86, constituting 57 (66.3%) males and 29 (33.7%) females. Thus, it could be deduced from the result that the views being expressed in this study are representative of both male and female respondents with male respondents in majority. Among the respondents, 30(34.9%) were single and 56(65.1%) were married. This implied that the study had more married respondents than single respondents. On the basis of educational qualification, respondents consisted of 12(14.0%) SSCE/WASC Certificate holders, 38(44.2%) OND/NCE diploma certificate holders, 22(25.6%) HND/B.Sc./B.A graduates, and 14(16.3%) were masters degree holders. This simply suggested that most respondents were well educated to understand the issues at stake.

The percentage distribution of the respondents according to age group were 14(16.3%) below 30years, 24(27.9%) were between 30-40years, 36(41.9%) were between 41-50years, and 12 (14.0%) were above the age of 50. Thus, the majority of respondents were between 30-40 years old. In addition, Table 1 also reveals that 23(26.7%) respondents had less than 5 years of working experience, 22(25.6%) respondents had worked for between 6-10years, 26(30.2%) respondents. From this result, it could be

inferred that the majority of respondents had over five years of working experience with EFCC. Thus, respondents were likely to be knowledgeable on the subject matter of this study and are expected to respond appropriately to the items on the research instrument.

**Table 1: Respondents' socio-demographic profile (N=86)**

<b>Demographic Distribution</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	57	66.3
	Female	29	33.7
<b>Age of Respondent</b>	Less than 30 years	14	16.3
	31-40years	24	27.9
	41-50years	36	41.9
	Over 51 years	12	14.0
<b>Working Experience</b>	1-5years	23	26.7
	6-10 years	22	25.6
	10-15 years	26	30.2
	16 years and above	15	17.4
<b>Highest Qualification</b>	SSCE/WAEC	12	14.0
	OND/NCE	38	44.2
	HND/B.SC/B.A	22	25.6
	MSC/MBA	14	16.3
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	31	36.0
	Single	55	64.0
<b>Religion</b>	Christianity	67	77.9
	Islam	19	22.1

*Field Survey, 2016*

### **Nature and Types of Corrupt Practices Prevalent in Nigeria**

Table 2 shows EFCC staff members' responses on the nature and types of corrupt practices prevalent in Nigeria. It is clear from the table that 44.19% of the respondents strongly agreed that elections and political activities in Nigeria were being manipulated; an indication that electoral fraud, rigging and political arm-twisting constituted major forms of corrupt practices in Nigeria. On the other hand, only 10.46% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.

Similarly, 41.86% of respondents strongly envisaged bribery and kickback as common corrupt practices in the public sector, while 1.23% strongly disagreed with the assertion. Table 2 also shows that 46.51% of the respondents strongly claimed that stealing/looting of public treasury by political leaders is very high in Nigeria public sector government, and another 45.98% of respondents were strongly of the opinion that tax evasion was a major form of corruption in Nigeria.

**Table 2. Respondent's perception on corrupt practices prevalent in Nigeria.**

S/N	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	U	D	SD	% of Agreement
1	Election in Nigeria is manipulated.	38 44.19%	24 27.91%	3 3.49%	12 13.95%	9 10.46%	72.1
2	Bribery and kickback is common in the public sector	36 41.86%	28 32.56%	13 15.12	8 9.20%	1 1.23%	74.42
3	Leaders loot public funds	40 46.51%	24 27.91%	1 1.23%	13 15.12%	8 9.20%	74.42
4	Tax avoidance and evasion is a major form of corruption	40 46.51%	20 22.99%	16 19.5%	8 9.20%	2 2.30%	69.5
5	There is widespread Human right violation	36 41.38%	28 32.18%	14 16.1%	7 9.20%	1 1.23%	73.56
6	project and contract price are inflated	40 46.51%	24 27.91%	1 1.23%	13 15.12%	8 9.20%	74.42

*Field Survey, 2016*

In addition, it can be observed that 41.38% of respondents strongly agreed that human right abuses, child trafficking and pollution and environmental degradation are forms of corruption in Nigeria, while 46.51% claimed strongly that inflating project contracts and supplies prices are rampant in Nigeria public sector.

It can be deduced from the above analysis that this study identifies electoral fraud, bribery and kickback, stealing/looting of public treasury, manipulation, evasion of taxes; human right abuses, child trafficking and pollution and environmental degradation; and inflation of government contract prices as the major forms of corrupt practices in Nigeria.

**Sources/Causes of Corruption in Nigeria Public Sector Organizations:**

Table 3 shows respondents’ opinion on sources/causes of corruption in Nigeria’s public sector organizations. It can be observed that 48.8% of the respondents strongly agreed that self-centeredness and greed among political leaders is responsible for high rate of corruption in Nigeria, while 5.81% strongly disagreed with the statement. Similarly, 48.3% of respondents were strongly of the opinion that the urge for political power and relevance promotes corruption in Nigeria. However, 5.81% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 3 also reveals that 47.4% of the respondents strongly agreed that political ‘godfatherism’ and insincerity among public officers promotes corruption in Nigeria, while 19.5% strongly disagreed with the claim. Similarly, 46.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that corruption is caused by multinational exploitation and foreign collaboration, and 2.30% strongly disagreed with the statement. In like manner, 46.5% of the respondents strongly claim that lack of adequate institutional and legal framework aids corruption in Nigeria.

From the analysis of respondents’ opinion so far carried out, it can be infer that corruption in Nigeria originates from the following sources: self-centeredness and greed among political leaders; unflinching quest for power and political relevance; political ‘godfatherism’ and insincerity among public office holders; foreign exploitation and collaboration; inadequate institutional and legal framework; and feeling of impunity by perpetrators.

**Table 3: Respondents’ opinion on Sources/Causes of Corruption in Nigeria Public Sector Organizations.**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	% of Agreement
1	Self and greed among political leaders	42 48.8%	20 23.3%	12 13.9%	7 8.14%	5 5.81%	72.1
2	The unusual quest for political power and	41 48.3%	12 13.9%	8 9.2%	20 22.9%	5 5.81%	62.2



	relevance.						
3	Political 'godfatherism'.	36 47.4%	20 23.3%	10 11.5%	4 4.6%	17 19.5%	70.7
4	Multinational exploitation and foreign collaboration.	40 46.5%	20 23.3%	16 19.5%	8 9.2%	2 2.30%	69.8
5	Lack of adequate institutional framework.	40 46.5%	24 27.9%	1 1.23%	13 15.1%	8 9.20%	74.4

*Field Survey, 2016*

### Effects of Corruption on Nigeria's Development

Table 4 shows distribution of respondents on the effect of corruption on Nigeria's development. It can be seen that 35.6% of the respondents strongly believe that corruption diminishes the image of the country in the perception of international communities, while the opinion of 12.6% of respondents differs on the above statement. Table 3 also revealed that 37.9% of the respondents strongly agreed that corruption creates mistrust between the government and the populace.

In the same vein, 41.4% of the respondents strongly opined that corruption in Nigeria leads to poverty, 47.4% strongly agreed that Corruption in the public sector can encourage criminality among the populace; 46.5% strongly opined that high rate of corruption fuels ethnic conflicts, militancy and civil war, and 44.2% claim that Corruption discourages foreign investment into Nigeria and hinders macro-economic development. From the aggregate of opinions analysed on the above issues, it is clear from the findings that corruption in public sector has tremendous on the adverse effects on the economic development of the nation.

**Table 4: Respondents response on the effects of corruption on Nigeria's Socio Economic Development.**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	% of Agreement
1	Corruption promote negative image.	31 35.6%	23 27.6%	4 4.6%	17 19.5%	11 12.6%	63.2

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2	Corruption breeds distrust between the government and the governed.	33 37.9%	31 36.8%	11 12.6%	7 8.1%	4 4.6%	74.7
3	Corruption leads to poverty	36 41.4%	28 23.2%	1 1.2%	14 16.1%	8 9.2%	64.6
4	Corruption encourages criminality among the populace	37 47.4%	20 22.9%	10 11.5%	4 4.6%	17 19.5%	70.3
5	High rate of corruption is responsible for ethnic conflicts.	40 46.5%	20 23.3%	16 19.5%	8 9.2%	2 2.30%	87.8
6	Corruption discourages foreign investment.	38 44.2%	24 27.9%	3 3.49%	12 13.1%	9 10.5%	73.1

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## 5. Discussion of Findings

The study investigated the perception of EFCC staff members on corruption and how its impact on the development of Nigeria. Findings showed that electoral fraud, bribery and kickback, embezzlement of public treasury, manipulation, evasion of taxes; human right abuses, child trafficking and pollution and environmental degradation; and inflation of government contract price among others were the major forms of corrupt practices in Nigeria.

The study also revealed that the corruption in Nigeria manifests in many other ways and it has become so widespread that it sometimes appears as if it has been legalized. For instance the findings reveal that corruptions also manifests in the area of human rights abuse which involves environmental degradation and human trafficking. According to Igbokwe (2010) Investigations have also shown that public office holders have trafficked

Nigerian children to Mecca and the Vatican City in Rome under the guise of religious pilgrimages.

Findings showed that bribery and extortion manifests mostly in law enforcements agencies like the police, immigration and custom officers. According to Akindele (2005), customs officers extort money from importers by establishing illegal task force for the collection of outrageous fees from the importers. Extortion also occurs in the police force where a car is stopped by the Nigerian police at every strategic point on most roads to collect N50 (less than a dollar equivalent). Security and government officials are bribed to avert justice. The former EFCC chairman was offered a \$15 million bribe to drop a fraud case (BBC 2009).

Findings showed that corruption has several adverse effects on the development of Nigeria. Corruption has not only robbed the nation of the finances that should have been used for development that will benefit the poor, but has led to the plundering of funds meant for the poor by the privileged class, and hindered the availability of basic amenities to the poor thereby denying the poor the opportunity to grow out of poverty. This finding is supported by Ogunde, (2008) and (Anele, 2010) who noted that corruption has held back state reforms in Nigeria because wealthy and influential Nigerians use their money to bribe lawmakers thereby undermining the power of anti-graft agencies and reducing the effectiveness of official policies.

Corruption has led to unemployment especially among the Nigerian youths because of the diversion of funds meant for industrialisation. High unemployment rates and poverty has bred anger and despair which manifests in the youth's unrest and violence tendencies which is no recipe for long term stability. Moreover, the widespread corruption in the country has made Nigerian young people to be apprehensive on the one hand and instruments of violence on the other. This justifies Shaxson's (2007) assertion that corruption has engendered 'generational divide' in Nigerian politics as young people are only used by the ruling elites as 'campaigning foot soldiers' and hired 'political thugs'. This is a cruel abuse and waste of the human capital which could instead have contributed to the nation's economic development.

Corruption has contributed to the migration of young talents, labour and wider brain drain. In this sense, Tgbafe and Offiong (2007) noted that potency of underdevelopment in Nigeria as caused by corruption which brings a sense of hopelessness and disillusionment and is reflected in the long queues of young and old at foreign consulates in the quest for visas to escape the certain ills that corruption has and will produce (Tgbafe and Offiong 2007).

Corruption has led to inefficiency in government institutions. For example, PHCN has led to loss of life, the destruction of property and poor service delivery and this has put an economic strain on citizens because of the denial of funds needed for development projects to schools, hospitals and welfare services. Moreover, consistent power outages provide a convenient cover for criminal activities ranging from armed robbery, vandalism of government properties and burglary.

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The phenomenon of corruption and its impacts on development have been examined and analysed in this research. Reforming government and ensuring corruption-free government mechanisms will be a subtle and difficult task that cannot be achieved with non-transparency of government processes, inefficiency and a repressive state apparatus, especially when Nigeria has sunk so deep in the swamps of corruption. Despite the efforts of anti-graft agencies and government legislation, corruption is still pervasive. In the absence of good governance and committed leadership, Nigerian citizens have lost both their constitutional and fundamental human rights, and become instead the victims of poverty and autocratic governmental exploitation.

It is true that corruption can only be eradicated in a just and egalitarian society (or at least one in which all citizens have equal access to the opportunities available), a society devoid of tribal sentiments, a society free from the violation of human rights and deprivation, a polity of leadership by example and true democracy, and a political economy that impacts positively on the local people and curbs the excesses of large corporations and multinationals. However idealistic, that ought to be the aim of Nigeria's rulers. Good governance that entails discipline, motivation and a sense of national purpose is a *sine qua non* for sustainable development.

In conclusion, the war against corruption in Nigeria should be part of a societal transformation where the citizens are empowered in the fight against corruption. It should be a fight against inhumanity and for the re-orientation of values. It should be a fight where systems of governance which are implicated in the promotion are challenged; a fight that attempts to free the society from mediocrity and makes it difficult for corrupt and unworthy millionaires from taking part in the political process and holding public office. The following recommendations are suggested for the reduction/eradication of corruption in Nigeria to promote the economic growth of the nation.

- (i) The activities of the anti-corruption agencies in Nigeria such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Related Offences Commission (ICPC) should be strengthened.

This can only be possible if interference by political office holders is checkmated.

- (ii) The rule of law must be upheld to instill sanity in the administration of justice. Equal treatment of corrupt officials is a necessity. There should be 'no sacred cows' there should be no exceptions to the rules as the law is no respecter of persons.
- (iii) Leadership position in Nigeria should be manned by honest and incorrigible people; men of high integrity.
- (iv) Nigeria's legal and judicial system should be reviewed and restructured to handle swiftly the cases of people that are engaged in corrupt practices.
- (v) Those who have demonstrated exemplary and corrupt free leadership should be celebrated by rewarding honesty and integrity as a way of checking corruption in Nigeria.

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