Model for Curbing Corruption in Nigeria in the 21st Century

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Abstract

This paper focused on Model for Curbing Corruption in Nigeria in the 21st Century. The paper looked at the meaning of corruption, nature of corruption in Nigeria, forms of corruption, effects of corruption and causes of corruption. The authors considered Utilitarian-Hedonistic Theory of corruption as relevant theory for the study. It was discovered that corruption is seen in all spheres of life in developing countries of the world. Corruption affects negatively the quality of product and services of any organization. The paper is of the opinion that management of corruption can be based on the following model: accountability, transparency, compliance to standard, punishment, use of guarantors, corruption trials, prevention mechanism, judicial proceedings bottleneck, banishment, citizen education and curriculum development. It was recommended that corporate business community must be involved in the fight against corruption in organization, workers in the organization should be trained or educated on the evils of corruption, corruption detection and deterrence; the traditional means of corruption management such as oath-taking in the shrine; banishment and use of guarantor should be re-emphasized and amplified; corrupt practices and trials should be straight-forward without any form of corrupt proceeding or sentiment; Curriculum developers should enshrine corruption in the school curriculum to specify dangers and management of corruption.

Key words: Corruption, Model, Management, Business, Organization, 21st Century


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Introduction

Corruption has become household word in Nigeria and has increasingly decreased the realization of noble ideas despite Nigeria’s enormous natural and human resources. Gbenga (2017) revealed that corruption exists everywhere in the world. Onu (2022) pointed out that act of corruption is not peculiar to Nigeria as it could be found in virtually every human society and its institutions. For the past years, transparency international has consistently ranked Nigerian among the top ten...
most corrupt nations of the world (Ezeh and Etodike 2016). Its existentiality has created an indelible mark on the performance of public sector organization in Nigeria (George 2020). Therefore, corruption as observed by Mustapha (2010) is the misuse of public funds for personal use which indicates that something has gone wrong in the management of the state. Corruption is a cog in the wheel of progress of development process in Nigeria and has constantly frustrated the realization of the nation’s development goals despite its enormous natural and human resources (Manjo 2024).

Corrupt behaviour involves the violation of established rules for personal or group gains and profit. Corruption is an effort to acquire wealth or power through illegal and illegitimate means. In other words, corruption is concerned with obtaining private gain at public expense or an issue of public power for private benefit (Leedy and Ormrrod 2010). Also, corruption is a behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public officer, because of private gains such as personal, close family, private, clique, pecuniary or status gains. It is a behaviour which violates rules against the exercise of certain types of duties for private gains regarding influence (Odemba 2010).

Organizations that engage in corrupt practice vary in their degree of involvement. This degree of involvement in corrupt practice pertains to the intensity, scale and hierarchical scale of corruption. This has given rise to different types of organizational identities pertaining to the extent of corrupt practices in organizations. The intensity scale of corruption deals with the quality and gravity of corrupt practices in any organization. The hierarchical scale of corruption in organizations deals with the levels in organizations such as group or team level, function or departmental level, division level and corporate or head office level which are involved in corrupt practices. But the intensity scale and hierarchical level of corruption show the degree of corruption prevalence in organizations. Intensity scale of corruption shows the degree of the incidence of corruption while the hierarchical level of corruption shows the height or level of involvement of organizational units in corrupt practices.

In the main, organizations operating in developing economics, such as Nigeria, are affected by many environmental factors such as political instability, policy inconsistency, deficient
infrastructure, and acute competition, among others. These environmental factors created unfavourable effects on the operations of organizations. Some decision-makers in such organization devise managerial practices that are seemingly unethical in order to cope and survive in their operations. Besides, some organizational employees engage in unethical practices in their organizations. It may therefore, be stated that both organizational managers and organizational employees engage in some form of corrupt practices to make end meet.

Problem created by corruption should be of serious concern to researchers, policy makers, employees, corporate executives, donor agencies, academics, students, etc. This is because corruption adversely affects growth and development in most economies, including Nigeria.

Corruption is one of the greatest challenges facing private and public organizations in contemporary times and it is a major hinderance to sustainable development.

Nature of Corruption in Nigeria

Atelhe and Agada (2014) traced origin of corruption to the beginning of public administration in Nigeria. Whereas Agbiboa (2012) maintains that the commencement of corruption in Nigeria started with the colonial rulers through their policy of indirect rule. Corruption may be conceptualized as change from good to bad, right to wrong, acceptable or unacceptable. Corruption is involved with the abuse of office, power and/or procedures for personal or group needs. It is concerned with the violation of established standard rules, practices and procedures for personal and/or group interests. Action exhibited towards acquiring wealth, power, authority, influence, or relevance through illegal means is corruption. Corruption usually exists in profit and non-profit organizations, government establishment and civil society, educational institutions and religious organizations. It seems that corruption is a universal phenomenon which changes from one country or the other.

Corruption is not peculiar to any continent, region, ethnic group, faith, political system, age group, gender, though it varies from one country to another, or organization to organization. Corrupt practices include the following: bribery (gratitude’s, ‘PR’ kick-backs, sorting, brown envelop, appreciation and so on), fraud, extortion and favourtism. Ojaide (2000) in Gbenga
(2017) listed the following as forms of corruption: bribery, smuggling, fraud, illegal payments, money laundering, drug trafficking, falsification of documents/records, window dressing, false declaration, evasion, underpayment, deceit, forgery, concealment, aiding and abetting of any kind to the detriment of another person, community or nation.

**Forms of corruption**

Forms of corruption according to Gbenga (2017) include the following:

(1) **Ghost Workers Phenomenon** – Ghost workers form of corruption is a practice where the management of a public organization deliberately inflates payroll by adding fictitious names to get more salaries from released subvention. The excess is siphoned by the members of management in connivance with some members of governing councils or boards (Azelama 2005). Every office has its responsibility and role to play towards the achievement of the organization’s vision and mission. Corruption negates inputs and affects growth and development (Oluwatosin and Kalu-Mba 2020).

(2) **Procurement scam** – Procurement scam refers to over-invoicing of government contracts or corruption related to purchases. In this case, the purchase price of an item is inflated to the extent that the difference between the inflated price and actual price is shared between the person who does the purchasing and the sellers (Azelama 2005). Gbenga (2017) citing the case of Nigeria Port Authority stated that this procurement scam has become a cog on the wheel of operational excellence.

(3) **Budgeting Padding** – Budget padding is where Management bribes some members of the legislature to approve inflated estimate for the institution during budgeting. Once the budget is approved or passed, the management is expected to give tips or gratifications to the government functionaries whose duty is to release money to the institutions (Azelama 2005).

(4) **Favouritism** - This is a form of corruption where a public servant gives undue preference or favour to his or her friends, family or anybody close to him/her. Recruitment of unqualified candidates into any organization, either private or public
sector has favouritism as one the causes of employing unqualified workers (Gbenga 2017).

Effects of Corruption

Effects of corruption are numerous. It leaves an economy with an untold hardship and its effects are felt in the economic, political and social spheres directly or indirectly and it deepens poverty and makes it difficult for ordinary people to get ahead of the result of their own efforts (Gbenga 2017). Dike (2005) observed that corruption occurs in many forms and it has contributed immensely to the poverty and misery of a large segment of the Nigeria’s population. Mauro and Johnson (2016) observed that high rate of corruption makes it difficult to predict investment returns and this scares away foreign and local investors. Manjo (2024) sees corruption as personal gain at public expense and efforts to get power, wealth or material things through illicit means. On the effect of corruption, he stated that the high rate of corruption in Nigeria is disturbing as corrupt practices have stalled and slowed down numerous public infrastructural projects in the country through over-invoicing, bribery, connivance and conspiracy to reduce quality of public infrastructure in return for cash, kick-back, misappropriation of project fund, embezzlement, diversion of fund, shoddy work, etc.

Causes of corruption

Corruption can be caused by greed, poor youth empowerment, poverty, unemployment, primitive accumulation, decline in societal values and morals, sublimation of ethical standards, rugged individualism. Greed leads a public officer to divert public fund/wealth for personal use or safe for family future consumption. On poor youth empowerment, it has been observed that empowerment programmes are being hijacked and distributed to non-targeted beneficiaries. People are interested in primitive wealth accumulation in an uncivilized society whereas people in a civilized society are busy touching lives and helping the needy. In terms of unemployment, high unemployment rate leads to corrupt practices. There is scarcity of jobs. Youth are not employed and this leads to a lot of atrocities in the society such as yahoo-boys, hook-ups, corruption, crime, kidnapping, ritual killings, thuggery and so on. Civilization comes with its own negative impacts on the societal values and moral. Values and moral of our society are gradually phasing out as a result of civilization. What was regarded as taboo in the olden days
are no longer such nowadays due to decline in societal values and morals. In term of sublimation of ethical standard, it is on record that in the olden days, no child brings anything home that the parents do not know how it come about. At community level, such cases of suspected corruption are treated at community playground by the villagers or the age grade. Today, Yahoo Boys or corrupt persons are being glorified, adored or worshipped in our society. There is also weak institutional framework and structure in our legal system. A lot of loopholes in our legal institutions exist. The laws are weak and not always fully implemented. Cases of corruption are consistently adjourned or sometimes denied. On rugged individualism, corrupt individuals do not think of consequences of corruption. They believe in accumulation of public wealth at the expense of others thereby applying the Principle of Machiavellian to the fullest. These days, parent no longer ask their children, source of their wealth unlike in the olden days when every acquired wealth was accounted for. To get employment, money has to change hand and it is now in Dollars no longer in Naira.

**Utilitarian-Hedonistic Theory of Corruption**

This study is anchored on Utilitarian-Hedonistic Theory of Corruption. Jereny Bentham who was born and lived in England came up with the principles of Utility in 1769. He is best known for his Utilitarian or Hedonistic Calculus Theory.

The assumption of the theory holds that pleasure and pain are linked to people’s action. This posit that the best moral action is one that maximizes utility. Utilitarian-Hedonistic Theory of Corruption evaluates social situation in terms of good or bad and recognizes pleasures and avoidance of pain as value to man. By application, the theory advocates on morality that foster happiness and opposes action that causes harm or unhappiness. Utilitarian-hedonistic theory explains internal and external cause of corruption in Nigeria and is adopted for this study.
Model for Managing Corruption

Conceptual framework of managing corruption is expressly captured from the above framework. An organization should among other considerations observe with strict compliance the abovementioned factors in managing corruption. These factors are accountability, transparency, compliance to standard, punishment, use of guarantors, corruption trials, prevention mechanism, judicial proceedings bottleneck, banishment, citizen education and curriculum development which are indispensable in handling and managing corruption in this 21st century in Nigeria. Transparency is quality that expresses openness and honest in all your transactions in organization. Accountability is the quality or state of being accountable to entrusted responsibilities. Punishment refers to disciplinary action use to compel one comply to established rules and procedures. Corruption trials are not adequately followed up as sentiment and Godfatherism affect normal corruption trials.

Misangyi, Weaver and Elms (2008) condemned corruption in its totality. Some of the traditional ways like oath-taking and forcing a culprit to swear before idol or shrine is a good way of managing corruption. Any action contrary to sworn oath leads to death. Citizen education whereby awareness on the dangers of corruption to individual and the society should be inculcated in the citizens of a country as a way of managing corruption. The system of judicial...
proceedings bottleneck gives room for continued corrupt practices in an organization. Introduction of banishment of any public officer who is found guilty of corruption charges is a welcomed model for managing corruption in any organization. Therefore, with the application of any of the foregoing factors, the increasing cases of corruption that have crippled most public organization would be effectively controlled and abated.

**Corruption Perceptions Index**

Corruption Perception Index or CPI Ranking is an annual publication of Transparency International which ranks countries by their levels of public sector corruption. Corruption Perception Index (CPI) refers to the ranking of corruption in a country based on their perceived level of public sector corruption. The statistics of Corruption Perception Index shows that corruption is thriving across the world, Africa and in Nigeria. Transparency International is an international non-governmental organization founded in 1993 and in charge of tackling issue of corruption globally. It works in partnership with government, business and civil society to effectively measure corruption. It exists in more than 100 countries with its international secretariat at Berlin, Germany.

**Corruption Perception Index - Nigeria**

Ede (2017), disclosed that Nigeria was ranked 32nd as one the most corrupt countries in the world according to Corruption Perception Index of 2015. In 2021, Nigeria was ranked 26th position of corrupt country in the world. From International Transparency, Nigeria scored 25 over 100 in 2023, thereby ranking 145 out of 180 countries in the world on a scale of 100 (very clean) to 0 (highly corrupt). Nkwede, Moliki and Dauda (2017) noted that successive governments in Nigeria since independence in 1960 had in one way or the other devised means of curbing corruption but with little success.

Transparency International listed two strengths and seven weaknesses of Nigeria. Nigeria’s strength is seen in the passage of key bill such as the Electoral Act and the efforts of anti-graft agencies despite political interference. The Nigeria’s seven weaknesses in the assessed Corruption Perception Index are: pardon of convicted high-profile individuals, prevalence of high-profile corruption, increase in oil theft, judicial challenges, lack of accountability and
transparency of security sector, lack of transparency in consistency projects and opacity of the subsidy regime.

In Nigeria, there are three accredited or major anti-corruption institutions: ICPC (Independent) established on 29th September, 2000, EFCC (Establishment Act was enacted and amended on 4th June, 2004, and CCB (Code of conduct Bureau) and BBP (Bureau of Public Procurement).

**Table 1: Corruption Perception Index of Nigeria 2014 - 2023**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>SCORE (Corruption Perception Index)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>136 out of 176</td>
<td>27/100</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>136 out of 176</td>
<td>26/100</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>136 out of 180</td>
<td>28/100</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>148 out of 180</td>
<td>27/100</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>144 out of 180</td>
<td>27/100</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>146 out of 180</td>
<td>26/100</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>149 out of 180</td>
<td>26/100</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td>154 out of 180</td>
<td>24/100</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>150 out of 180</td>
<td>24/100</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2023</td>
<td>145 out of 180</td>
<td>25/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Transparency International, compiled by the authors 2024

**Corruption Perception Index – 10 most Corrupt African Countries**

Corruption Perception Index captures 10 countries as the most top corrupt countries in Africa. Most of Africans are denied their basic needs by corrupt African leaders who live in affluence as a result of corruption and corrupt practices.
Table 2: Corruption Perception Index of top 10 African countries with high corruption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>COUNTRIES</th>
<th>CPI</th>
<th>GLOBAL RANKING</th>
<th>CAUSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>180(^{th})</td>
<td>Weak Central Government, Political Instability</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>177(^{th})</td>
<td>Power Struggle, Resources Mismanagement</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Equatorial Guinea</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>172(^{nd})</td>
<td>High level of nepotism, Embezzlement</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>170(^{th})</td>
<td>Political Instability, Post Revolution</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>162(^{nd})</td>
<td>Political Turmoil, Economic Instability</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Congo</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>162(^{nd})</td>
<td>Corruption is seen in public and private sectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Comoros</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>162(^{nd})</td>
<td>Unable to combat corruption and promote transparency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>162(^{nd})</td>
<td>Lack of effective corruption measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>162(^{nd})</td>
<td>Battles with systematic corruption issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>161(^{st})</td>
<td>Inability to tackle corruption</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Transparency International 2023

Corruption Perception Index – 180 Countries in the World

The 2023 Corruption Perception Index showed that corruption is thriving across the world and the Transparency International survey across the world shows Corruption Perception Index as follows.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Norway</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
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<td>Sweden</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Germany</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Luxemborg</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Estonia</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Canada</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
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<td>Belgium</td>
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<td>Japan</td>
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<td>Uruguay</td>
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<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>France</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<td>Barbados</td>
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<td>Spain</td>
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<td>Saint Vincent and the Grenadines</td>
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Implication of Corrupt Perception Index (CPI) on Nigeria

From the Corruption Perception Index carried out by Transparency International, it has been discovered that while some countries have low level of corruption in their public sector some have high level of corruption. Government effort towards fighting corruption is failing. It is also observed that corruption is still high in African countries. A total of 180 countries were ranked by International Transparency. However, Nigeria recorded an improved ranking in corruption perception index by moving five places up to rank 145 out of 180 countries assessed in 2023.


Despite the above-mentioned measures, corruption still persists in Nigeria regardless of Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Offences Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).
Conclusion

Corruption is bad. It portrays countries involved in bad image and adversely affect growth and development. This paper develops a model for managing corruption in our society. Transparency International ranks countries annually through corruption Perception Index to ascertain level of involvement in corruption.

Recommendations

1. Anti-corruption Agents and Corporate Business Community must be involved in the fight against corruption in an organization. Anti-corruption measures in any society cannot be successful unless individual organizations and the general public are involved in the fight against corruption.

2. Education and Training – Workers in the organization should be trained or educated on the evils of corruption, corruption detection and deterrence. This should be done through integration of corporate culture, organizational structure and compliance system.

3. Curriculum development – the school curriculum should be designed in such a way to discourage corrupt practice especially in developing country like Nigeria.

4. The traditional means of corruption management such as oath-taking in the shrine, banishment and use of guarantor should be re-emphasized, amplified and implemented.

5. Corrupt practices and trials should be straight-forward without any form of corrupt proceeding or sentiment.

6. Curriculum developers should enshrine corruption in the school curriculum to specify clearly dangers and management of corruption.
References


Onu, J. O (2022), Anatomy of Crime of Corruption in Nigeria (Constitutional Framework as the Tap-Root), Volume 1, SNAAP Press Ltd, Enugu, Nigeria, Pg 1
