Corruption as a Threat to Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Abdullahi Lawal Dangiwa¹, Hassan Abdulazeez²
¹Department of Sociology,
Federal University Dutse,
PMB 7156, Jigawa State, Nigeria
Correspondence email: abdullahidangiwa@gmail.com

²Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences,
Kaduna State University, Kaduna-Nigeria

Abstract: This paper seeks to examine the implication of corruption as a threat to sustainable development in Nigeria, thereby, channeling the problems encapsulating the rigorous challenges process and protocols of the system of governance in Nigeria which hamper and hinders the fight against corruption. Meanwhile, development is a multifaceted trend covering social, economic, political, educational, technological, and cultural progresses. Corruption, also, involves a variety of deleterious effects on all aspects of our lives. The Dysfunctionality Theory was used as a theoretical framework of analyzing the state which can help in understanding the notion of corruption in developing countries and the effect it has on sustainable development in Nigeria, it has been established that due to corruption majority of the Nigerian citizens are victimized in one way or the other. Therefore, as part of the recommendation of the paper suggested that, all citizens should be made to know that they have a stake in the fight against corruption in Nigeria because they are affected more by the corrupt practices in the country, thus, all the developmental challenges that Nigeria faces, including the current economic hardship are product of widespread corruption in Nigeria. So to get out of the present predicament and achieve sustainable development, Nigerians must collectively fight the dreaded evil of corruption in every aspect of their lives.

Keywords: Corruption Threat, Corruption in Nigeria, Sustainable Development, Embezzlement

Introduction
Corruption is an undue pecuniary or material gain in the course of public or civil service, or in private affairs. Combining public, civil and private aspects of corruption is pertinent because corruption is interpreted in legal and moral terms, to the extent that there is division between legal, bureaucratic and moral corruptions. As acknowledged by Smith (2007), the boundaries between these forms of corruption can be fluid, and the perceived legitimacy of particular practices can depend very much on context, and particularly on the position of the people participating in or assessing the behavior. Some forms of corruption are almost always less legitimate than others. For example, the bureaucratic corruption can be less legitimate than corruption carried out in private affairs.

Many available literatures have indicated that corruption poses a serious challenge to sustainable development, especially in the developing countries, Nigeria inclusive (Parrish, 2008; Abdullahi, Idris, Bakabe & Mukhtar, 2019). From developing countries in Africa,
Latin America, and Asia to the United States, Western Europe, and the United Kingdom, bribery and corruption continues to create an uneven playing field in international trade, commerce, and the process of government. Problems range from the small payment demanded by a customs official to inappropriately process an import package, to multimillion-dollar payment to secure a large government contract. There are myriad examples and scenarios that businesses face in the international market place. The central themes in sustainable development are improved and sustained human wellbeing, social justice, sustainable economic growth, critical limits and improved environmental quality, for which a long term time horizon are laid out (Abdullahi, et al. 2019).

There are previous studies on the implications of corruption on development and also sustainable development in Nigeria (Mohammed, 2013; Mukhtar & Dangiwa, 2017; Abdullahi, et al. 2019). However, the present study is unique because the topic of sustainable development is new in the global development agenda, following Millennium Development Goals in 2015. In view of this, the article will examine corruption as a threat to sustainable development in Nigeria. The article is divided into six sections. Section is the introduction. Section two is the conceptual issues. Section three is the theoretical orientation. Section four is on the corruption as a threat to sustainable development in Nigeria. Section five is the conclusion. Section six is the recommendation section.

Conceptual Issues

Corruption: The common definition of corruption is the use of public power or property for private gain or benefit (Morris, 2011). Yet, this is too narrow to depict corruption in Nigerian context. Given that Nigerians see corruption to take place not only in public offices but also in a wide range of commercial exchanges and interpersonal relations, tying the definition of corruption too strictly to public officials and affairs of the state is overly limiting (Smith, 2007). On this note, it could be said that there is more to corruption than the mere transgression of rules governing the conduct of public officials because the word may also refer to so many vices that include illegal activities. Anders & Niujten (2007: 1) depict that corruption revolve around “the individual feeling of moral depravity and perversion or to the moral decay of whole societies”

To define corruption primarily in moral rather than legal terms has a long tradition, but today’s legal prohibitions of bribery, theft, embezzlement, and the misuse of public property for private gains constitute the secular avatars of ethical principles once formulated by moral philosophers and theologians (Anders & Niujten, 2007). As a working definition, the definition can therefore, define corruption to be seen as “a legally and morally condemn act of transaction involving a self-serving, and/or exchange of favour between individuals or groups as agents of public or private structures”.

Corruption Typology

There are various versions of corruption’s typology. This paper will review Smith’s (2007) typology which was primarily developed and highlighted to depict the variety of corrupt practices that characterise Nigerian society. The Smith’s (2007) typology identified seven forms of corruption. The first one, commission for illicit services refers to the payment by clients to officials who are then granted access to unwarranted advantages. For example, a contractor might provide money to a government official to ensure that he receives a job in a process supposedly based on competitive bids, or an importer might pay a customs official to underestimate the value of their goods to reduce a tariff. The second type of corruption, according to Smith (2007), is unwarranted payment for public services involves an official
forcing a user to pay for a service that is ostensibly provided for free, or inflating the cost of a routine service. In Nigeria, people commonly pay extra money for basic services such as the issuance of licences, passports, and birth certificates. (3) A _gratuity_ is also a kind of payment for services, but usually after the pact and commonly done in the guise of “thank you.” For Smith, Nigerians do not think of this expression in the same terms as a bribe; typically call such a gratuity a “dash”. But a dash only makes sense in an environment where officials are diligently doing their jobs without the demand for a bribe and the client felt it is exceptional and deserves a reward. In fact, many Nigerians recognise that dashes are simply more sociable and socially acceptable ways of paying bribes. This is why some principled academic and bureaucrats detest hearing “thank you” from a student or anyone who received their services, because they think it is a situation whereby they discharged their duties, hence it is not a favour.

(4) _String pulling_ refers to using social and political influence to promote favoritism, offering preferential access to employment, education, and a whole range of other opportunities, particularly those allocated by the state. Nigerians commonly believe that resources and opportunities of all kinds are awarded based, above all, on who you know. This trend had prevented many youth from poor family background getting a job though they might have required qualification but they do not know any influential person, while those from well-to-do family though unqualified, but could get job with lucrative reward.

(5) _Levies and tolls_ are relatively stark forms of tribute that persons in positions of power can extract from ordinary citizens. For example, police who collect illegal tolls from motor vehicle drivers at roadside checkpoints, vigilante groups that demand a security levy from local businesses, or bureaucrats who require pensioners to pay money in order to receive their pensions fall into this category. In most cases, this type of levying is viewed by Nigerians as outright extortion. (6) _Sidelining_ refers to the use of public or company resources for private purposes—for instance, using official vehicles for personal travel, running a private clinic in a public health facility, or using university resources to conduct a private consulting job. (7) _Misappropriation_ extends the corrupt practice in _sidelining_ form further, whereby public materials are not simply used for private purposes but expropriated entirely, usually in a manner more concealed than _sidelining_ because it is both more illegitimate and more obviously illegal.

As acknowledged by Smith (2007), the boundaries between these forms can be fluid, and the perceived legitimacy of particular practices can depend very much on context, and particularly on the position of the people participating in or assessing the behavior. Some forms of corruption are almost always less legitimate than others. For example, the tolls collected by police at checkpoints are widely resented, whereas string pulling by a patron to assist a friend or relative is often seen as highly legitimate and even morally honorable. A number of dimensions are salient in situating particular forms of corruption and understanding their degree of acceptability in Nigeria. Whether a particular behavior is perceived as corrupt and how corrupt a behavior is judged depends on where the behavior falls along a number of intersecting continuums.

**Sustainable Development**

According to International Institute for Sustainable Development (2015), the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission) published its report in 1987 and it presented the new concept of sustainable development. However, Parish (2009) cited Ibn Khaldun 14th Century scholar has envisioned how “assabiya” (an Arabic
term for “group feeling” or group solidarity) can generate unending development. In fact, the concept of sustainable development can be used in a variety of contexts, cutting across social, political, economic, environmental and cultural aspects of our lives (Abdullahi et al. 2019). The concept has become one of the most successful approaches to be introduced in many years. In fact, it helped to shape the international agenda and the international community’s attitude towards economic, social and environmental development. Sustainable development has been defined in many ways, but the most frequently used definition is from Our Common Future, also known as the Brundtland Report. Brundtland Report defined sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2015). It contains within it two key concepts: 1) the concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and 2) the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs.

The concept supports strong economic and social development, in particular for people with a low standard of living. At the same time it underlines the importance of protecting the natural resource base and the environment. Economic and social well-being cannot be improved with measures that destroy the environment. Intergenerational solidarity is also crucial: all development has to take into account its impact on the opportunities for future generations (Barlund, 2005). It is important to note that gender equality is instrumental to sustainable development. This is why the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which was ratified in 2015 identified “promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women” as its Goal 5 (UN-DESA, 2015), knowing that no development will be sustainable if women are excluded in the agenda.

Theoretical Explanation
This article is anchored on the Dysfunctionality of state theory (Mbembé, 2001; Abdullahi et al. 2019). The Dysfunctionality of state theory remains at the core of policymaking as well as part of the academic debate on development. The Dysfunctionality of state view harks back to a debate of the 1960s and 1970s when some studies on the influence of corruption on the development of newly independent states in Africa and Asia challenged the moralistic view that corruption was evil and harmful to development. The Dysfunctionality of state theory draws to some extent its argument from Weberian legal-rational analysis of the modern society (Abdullahi et al. 2019).

Mbembé (2001) conceptualised the subversive appropriation of the bureaucracy by ethnic and tribal networks as a distinctly developing countries’ creation stemming from the colonial experience. For example, studies on Africa, Asia and Latin America have largely highlighted the importance of patron-client relationships and usually point to their influence on the working of the state bureaucracy as the main cause of corruption (Mbembe, 2001). These researchers do not differentiate the so-called clientelistic relations that usurp the state institutions. They, therefore, unwittingly reproduce the dualism between the legal-rational order and developing societies, especially Africa by lumping all types of social relationships, ranging from kinship to various voluntary forms of association. The Dysfunctionality of state theory can help in understanding corruption in developing countries and the effect it has on sustainable development in Nigeria it has been established that due to corruption majority of the Nigerian citizens are victimised. Yet, Mukhtar & Dangiwa (2017) concluded that the immediate and long term implication of corruption on the sustainability of any society is negative.
Corruption as a threat to Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Some scholars argued that corruption facilitates economic growth of some developing south eastern countries, like Thailand and Indonesia (Huntington, 1968). Huntington (1968) advanced a logical argument which states that, corruption serves as an efficiency-enhancing mechanism because it removes rigidities imposed by the government which then constitute impediments to investments and interfere with economic decisions favorable to national development. For example, offering bribe to an agent is presumed to hasten business process. Many smugglers between Nigeria and neighboring countries of Benin Republic, Niger, Chad and Cameroon are benefiting from this ‘short cut’ procedure to import or export goods in connivance with law enforcement agents on the border. Transnational companies are also benefiting from corruption by giving bribe or ‘commission’, in Tanzi’s (1998) sense of the word to some Nigerian law enforcement agents and get contract from State’s executives in exchange for an agreed upon kickback.

From the above example, corruption is benefitted by some few individuals in the Nigerian society, but there is no certainty that it will benefit the entire country. Thus, immediate and long term implications of corruption on the sustainable prospects of any society are negatives. Development is a multifaceted trend covering social, economic, political, educational, technological, and cultural progresses. Corruption, also, involves a variety of deleterious effects on all aspects of our lives. For instance, Croall (2010, as cited in Mukhtar, 2015) mentioned that corruption involves undue gratification in all facets of people lives and at all levels. Corruption occur in local authorities, public sector, political spheres, and in commercial organisations, infringement of occupational health safety; car safety; pricing offences, counterfeit goods, marketing malpractice, food frauds or food safety, environmental crime, etc (Abdullahi et al. 2019). The threat of corruption on the sustainable development in Nigeria has been agued extensively by Mukhtar, Dangiwa and Haruna (2017) that the corruption phenomenon has been receiving considerable attention across humanities, social and management sciences over the years. This is to show that corruption has been in an increasing spate of time, that is why many citizens in Nigeria see it as a way that most government officials who are supposed to be the championed of the crusade in curtailing the menace and spread of corruption in Nigeria are doing nothing and are always paying lip service to it because they either benefit from it or they use it as a weapon to tarnish the image of their opponent directly or indirectly as the case may be.

Corruption, unemployment and above all bad leadership hinder and hamper the success of sustainable development this are clear monsters in the impediments to development in all ramifications in the country. Meanwhile, no clear and objective progress and development will yield any result without curtailing, reducing, controlling the menace of corruption if at all sustainable development will see the light of the day in Nigeria, for development to be sustained there must be widespread reduction drastically on corruption and corrupt practices. Evidently conscious citizens lose confidence in the government as a whole; this is because corruption by the powerful is interpreted as conformity in Nigeria that is the irony faced in the country (Mukhtar, Dangiwa & Haruna (2017). Many citizens are of the view that corruption in Nigeria has been a hydra-headed monster so difficult to crack because of those that engage in the activities of preventing or controlling it are the ones propagating it or benefitting from it. This is why many have lost hope in the fight against corruption either by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) or the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Crimes Commission (ICPC), Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) etc. these are the commissions that are created in combating the rising tide of corruption.
The scourge of development has been drastically reduced and relegated due to the act of corruption in the country, however, Igboke-W-Ibeto, Justine and Osakede (2019) posited that corruption has been on the increase in spite of efforts of present and previous government administrations in combating it menace. This has to be the reason why many in the country are agitating for restructuring of the government through the sharing formula allocation of the federation account to be divided in the various state base on the availability of mineral resources which many see other state as parasite that do not offer anything in the country yet they are benefitting immensely on other hardworking state in Nigeria, which is seen as perceived injustice.

**Conclusion**
The fight against corruption in Nigeria is a herculean task; it is even more lamentable to note that many of the country’s law enforcement agents and even law makers are also among the law breakers. The study precipitated how corruption as a threat to sustainable development in Nigeria, it is found that virtually all forms of corruption begin from insincerity, greed and selfishness from the leaders down to the citizens of the country because without these three forms it will be very difficult for corruption to be curtailed or reduced to the bearest level and without combating corruption there will be no way for any meaningful, reliable and sustained development could be achieved in the country. A society that harbors and favors corruption is also at fault and cannot be able to see or witnessed any meaningful development in every aspect of it developmental spheres.

**Recommendations**
1. The adherence to the rule of law by all citizens of every class and due diligent process in the criminal administration by the criminal justice system (police, court & correctional institutions), this will be seen as a way of strengthening the agencies to be able to carry their jobs effectively and efficiently without any interference.
2. To fight corruption in Nigeria, rule of law must be respected by not only the masses but also the ruling elites; application of the rule of law shall know no political and socio-economic status or barrier.
3. Thus, necessary, any politician or public official that embezzles public fund shall be inflicted with more severe punishment without fine than a poor thief who stole a hen or a loaf of bread out of starvation.
4. Government should also make sure that anti-corruption crusade is targeted at all Nigerians in every sector of the country’s political economy. Political leaders in the executive and the legislative branches as well as officials in judiciary must also obey the law if other public servant and the masses are expected to avoid corrupt act or attitude.
5. Religious institutions in Nigeria can also play a significant role in the war against corruption, this is important because teaching Godliness could deter people from committing corruptible act as it is negatively affect the development aspirations of the country un social, economic and political sense.
6. All citizens should be made to know that, they have stake in the fight against the culture of corruption in Nigeria because they are affected more by the corrupt practices in the country, thus, all the development challenges that Nigeria faces, including the current economic hardship are product of widespread corruption in Nigeria. So to get out of the present predicament and achieve sustainable development, Nigerians must collectively fight the dreaded evil of corruption in every aspect of their lives.
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