

Corruption and the Challenges of Good Governance in Kogi State, Nigeria

Dr. Cletus Usman Idoko, Mr. Agenyi, Emmanuel, Oluyote Stephen

Departments of Economics
Educational Foundation and History
Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa.

Abstract: *Corruption has been seen as one of the social problems confronting the developmental efforts of this nation. This is because money and other resources meant for development are often diverted to private pockets by privileged few individuals at the expense of the entire population. The acquisition of wealth due to selfish act and greed has characterized most societies in Nigeria and that has negated the social and economic efforts of many societies. In view of this therefore, the study x-rays the major types of corruption in Kogi State such as, political, bureaucratic, electoral, systematic, individual and godfatherism. The study also discusses the causes of corruption such as, poverty, unemployment, weak government, ostentatious living, nepotism and favouritism to mention but a few. The effects of corruption on good governance and national development such as, misallocation of talents, diversion of development resource, and low levels of economic growth were discussed. However, to do away with corruption and corrupt practices in the State and the country at large, recommendations and suggestion such as imbibing the spirit of transparency, integrity, and accountability in all the private and public transactions in the economy was advocated. Also, the need to involve good people in politics that can provide good leadership with vision and effort needed to exploit a nation's competitive advantages and create the inclusive institutions that would enable growth; development and prosperity to emerge were proffered.*

Keywords: *corruption, nepotism, embezzlement, dishonest, bribery, good governance.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Corruption in Kogi State is a social problem which attracts the interest of many scholars and academia's. Corruption simply refers to as dishonest and illegal activity by those in authority or power. It also involves the violation of established rules and regulation for personal gain and profit. Corruption according to (Aluko 2003) is the process of involving oneself in act of embezzlement, conflict of Interests such as the award of contracts by public office holders to cronies and personally held companies, bribery, fraud, political corruption like nepotism or favoritism, ethnicity, rigging of elections, misappropriation and conversion of public funds for personal gains, bureaucratic corruption, extortion, manipulation of procurement processes by over-inflation of contracts, leaking tender information to friends and relations to mention but a few. It is the processes of making people behave in a way that is morally wrong.

The World Bank (2001) defines corruption as abuse of power for private benefit which thrives when economic policies are poorly designed. Such policies include: low educational standard, weak civil society participation, and weak accountability of public institutions to mention but a few. Corruption also exists in any organization or nation where legitimate means of doing things are circumvented by allowing individuals to enhance their personal power with money or favours, which in turn makes it impossible for others to operate.

In the same vein, corruption according to Ayobami (2011) is the dishonest behaviour exhibited especially by people in authority for personal gains. It is the act of misuse of power and privileges or position of trust for personal or group benefit, be it monetary or otherwise. It is believed by many scholars today in Kogi State, that corruption is the bases for sustainable development. It is endemic in all segments of the economy such as federal, state or local governments. This evil act according to him has also spread to both the state and local government levels, as well as some decentralized centers of power and authority.

Corruption does not only involve people in government alone, but also people in both private and public sectors. Corruption can be found among students in all levels of education, teachers in educational institutions, security agents, and people in government. It is a symptom of numerous difficulties within contemporary society. In light of the above, a holistic approach of discussion of corruption in Kogi State shows that corruption can be dividing it into forms and sub-forms; which include the followings:

- a) *Political Corruption*: Political corruption according to Morris (2008) takes place at the highest level of political authority. It occurs when politicians and political office holders who are entrusted with the power to formulate, establish and implement laws in the name of the people they represent are corrupt themselves. Political corruption is often used synonymously with “grand” or high level corruption, distinguished from bureaucratic corruption because it involves political decision-makers. Political corruption not only leads to the misallocation of resources, but it also leads to abnormality in the manner in which decisions are made. Political corruption is when the laws and regulations are abused by the rulers, side-stepped, ignored, or even tailored to suit their interests.
- b) *Bureaucratic Corruption/Petty Corruption*: This type of corruption is found in public and private sectors of the economy. It is the type of corruption we see and hear of everyday. It usually involves buying of favour from the bureaucrats or decision makers who formulate and administer policies. Bureaucratic corruption takes place at the implementation level of politics (Bardhan 2006). Petty corruption on the other hand, is bribery in connection with the implementation of existing laws, rules and regulations. Petty corruption is usually referred to as corruption of need. It is the kinds of corruption that people can experience more or less daily, in their encounter with public/private administration and services like hospitals, schools, local licensing authorities, police, tax authorities, town councils in villages, market shops and so on.
- c) *Electoral corruption*: This type of corruption according to Toke (2009) is the manifestation of electoral corruption which includes rigging, and the use of thugs to intimidate people during elections. Electoral corruption is usually anti- productive because it is used to entrust power to unqualified people in politics.
- d) *Systemic Corruption*: Systemic corruption occurs when corruption is integrated and accepted as essential aspect of the economy, social and political system, or when it is embedded in a wider situation that helps to sustain it. Systemic corruption is not a special category of corrupt practice, but rather a situation in which the major institutions and processes of the state are routinely dominated and used by corrupt individuals and groups, and in which most people have no alternatives in dealing with corrupt officials (Morris 2008).
- e) *Individual Corruption*: individual corruption is the opposite of systemic corruption. Individual corruption occurs irregularly and therefore it does not threaten the mechanisms of control nor the economy as such. It is crippling, but it can seriously undermine morale and sap the economy resources.

From the above scenario, it can be seen that corruption has a long history in the development of human societies. Different societies have tried to explain how corruption arose but there has been no definite explanation. However, Dike (2005) points out that the stumbling block to economic development of any nation and Kogi State in particular referred to as corruption is majorly caused by the followings:

- a) *Poverty*: poverty is one of the major causes of corruption. Usually, when a poor person is put in a position of authority according to Dike (2002), the only avenue available to him or her is how to amass wealth. Most of them engage in corrupt practices, while others engage in it out of frustration. Sometimes, when people are elected into position of authority they regard it as an avenue of enriching themselves at the expense of those who elected them. In furtherance to this, money meant for development of such an area is often diverted to private pockets at the expense of those they represent. Thus, the issue about poverty and corruption is that poverty results to corruption and corruption begets poverty.

- b) *Unemployment*: unemployment exposes the unemployed to the risk of illegal way of making money out of desperation. In Nigeria today, most internet scammers and dishonest people engage in their businesses because they lack the opportunity of legitimate ways of making money. Unemployment in Nigeria according to Human Right Watch (2007) has resulted in making many people to use their beloved ones especially their mothers or fathers for rituals to amass wealth. Also, many young girls result to prostitution and other criminal activities such as tuggery, theft, kidnapping, abduction, cultism, to mention but a few.
- c) *Weak Government*: Corruption is most prominent in the society or organization where there is weak government. In corrupt societies, governments are unable to stop corruption because they lack strong will to do so. Even if there are anti-corruption agencies to tackle the case of corruption, such agencies can easily be swallowed up into corruption. This is because when such anti-corruption agencies prove to be honest, their effort means nothing to any member of the society. This is because the honest people according to Izueke (2007) are usually not allowed to last in any position of authority by the dishonest ones. The dubious ones usually use all sorts of measures to remove the good ones from the pinnacle of administration because of honesty
- d) *Ostentatious living*: One of the major problems of corruption in Nigeria today is ostentatious living. Everybody wants recognition. Nobody wants to be second in command. Competition among peer-groups is the order of the day. Everybody both those in position of authority or otherwise want honour and respect. This is because in most cases, Nigerians like to worship persons with money without asking how such persons acquire such wealth. It is in view of this that many people indulge in corrupt practices in order to make it. In most cases, most people in positions of authority because of ostentatious living forget those they rule at the expense of wealth acquisition (Ajayi 2006). In fact, ostentation is no doubt one of the greatest enemies of our society today and it is the major cause of indiscipline among our people.
- e) *Favouritism and Nepotism*: Favouritism according to Mbaya, et.al (2006) is usually seen as unfair treatment of persons or groups. It is a mechanism of abuse of power or position implying high biases in the allocation of job, positions of authority, and resources to people, kinsmen, family members, society and country. While nepotism is the favouritism shown to relatives or friends. Favouritism enables wrong persons to be employed in any establishment without proper qualification. It also offers an appointment to politicians who do not merit such appointment. Usually, in most organizations and establishments favouritism usually result to low productivity in terms of offering services to the employers. This is because such persons know that they are protected and they can do anything and go scot free. Also, favouritism in politics enable political office holders to divert resource meant for development into private pocket without query or molestation (Izueke 2007). Favouritism is one nature of corruption that is contagious and endemic. This is because if bad behaviour prevails in an organization, others easily imitate it. Thus, corruption encourages further corruption especially if the culprits go unpunished.
- f) *Praise Singers*: political praise singers according to Manro (1995) usually push politicians into corruption and corrupt practice in government. The praise singers often divert the attention of the electorates from negative aspect of governance to positive dominance using sweet mouth. Usually, when such encomiums and praises are poured on them, it makes some of them to be more corrupt about governance. More often than not, praises are poured even to political office holders who cannot pay salaries of the staff under them. People who divert the constituency allowance meant for development into their private pockets are praised. Also, counselors who refuse to represent his or her ward adequately in local government levels are praised. Usually, many people in Nigeria don't see corruption as bad instead they see it as their share of national cake.
- g) *Greed and Selfishness*: Most of our leaders in Nigeria are full of greedy and selfish in their act of governance. Most of them want to remain in the mantle of leadership till they die. Greed and selfishness make some leaders to be power drunk and as such can divert their attention into doing things that are worrisome at the expense of the teeming population (Dike 2005). In most cases, a greedy man may not even remember his close associate. They only know themselves and believe that if not them nobody else can do it. This is the reason why most leaders in

Nigeria want to migrate from one position to another without considering the youths. Many a time they proclaim that youths are the leaders of tomorrow. The question is how can the youths be the leaders of tomorrow in the presence of money bags? According to one of the Governors in the oil producing state in the country, greed and selfishness as an act of corruption in Nigeria is chronic and endemic that needs serious attention. This is because it is worse than Ebola virus. It has disrupted and destabilized the developmental efforts of many societies and world at large (Hardoon and Hrienrich ,2013),

h) Godfatherism and Impunity Clause: people are sponsored or initiated into politics. Such sponsors are usually regarded as godfathers. Such sponsors control the activities of those they sponsored by giving them directives on what to do and how to act in governance. These type of people are sometimes regarded as untouchables and unshakeable, and they usually constitute threat to governance. Most times, money meant for development is often diverted to them in form of monthly honorarium neglecting the people they govern. Payment of wages and salaries are considered as secondary function in the society instead of primary. In this case, most people engage in corrupt practices not because they want it but because they want to settle their godfathers. According to Izueke (2007), godfatherism has become a thing of concern to many societies because of their dubious way of hijacking and controlling governance. Their power of control and corruption possess' undue influence over public policies, institutions, laws and regulations at the expense of the public interest. Likewise, impunity clause in governance is another serious problem in politics. This is because impunity clause enables some political office holders to divert funds meant for development in the economy into private pockets without molestation or harassment. In Nigeria, people in power do anything and go away Scot free but a poor man in the street is punished for trivial offense.

However, in order to fight corruption and other corrupt practices in Nigeria and Kogi State in particular, governments of this country past and present initiated and pursued some anti-corruption crusades such as The "Corrupt Practices Decree" of 1975, War against Indiscipline in 1984, Advance Fee Fraud & Other Related Offences Decree of 1995, The Economic & Financial Crimes Commission Act of 2004, and some anti-corruption agencies like the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), the Technical Unit on Governance & Anti-Corruption Reforms (TUGAR) ,The Economic & Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), according to Abubakar (2010) is to combat Corruption but corruption is still on increase. The question therefore is, can Kogi State in particular and Nigeria in general constitute good governance that is devoured of corruption?

2. CONCEPT OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

Before the discourse of good governance, it is proper to understand the meaning of governance. Governance is seen as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's resources for development. It is the process by which authority is exercised in management of economic and social resources for development. Governance consists of the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised. This includes the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced; the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them (Rafiu 2014).

In general terms, governance is defined as making decisions and exercising power over people either in towns/villages, states, institutions and countries. It is the act of exercising economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. Governance has been in practice from time immemorial (Ajayi 2006). It existed even from the time human beings moved from being travelling hunters to sedentary communal living. Governance consists of the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised Rafiu (2014). Good governance on the other hand exists when there is close relationship between the central administration and other tiers of government in sharing in the administrative and the management of the country's affairs. Good governance according to Hardoon and Heinrich (2013) entails accountability, transparency, enhanced public participation in decision making, strengthened public sector and civil society institutions and greater adherence to the rule of law. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), (1997) described good governance as a measure that defines the processes and structures that guide political and socio-economic relationships. It is

synonymous with leadership quality. Usually, there are some distinct aspects of governance that are considered in determining the affairs of a nation or state to be managed. The first is the political regime; second is the process by which authority is exercised in the management of a country's or state's economic and social resources for development; and thirdly, the capacity of government to design, formulate and implement policies and discharge functions (Hardoon and Heinrich 2013). Good governance is in short anti-corruption. This is because good governance ensures that comprehensive and credible budget exists and is linked to senatorial priorities and policies for consistent and efficient management of recourses. In promoting good governance, the first thing to do is to tackle the abuse of power that is, making sure that the views of the oppressed groups like the youths, the less privileged groups in the society, women and poor are heard and considered by the governing bodies because they are usually the most negatively affected if good governance is not achieved. Good governance also results to political and social stability and conducive environment for economic growth and development. Good government according to Aluko (2006), institute in individuals and groups the spirit of transparency, integrity, and accountability which is expected to be exhibited in both private and public institutions and government. These happen if children, youths, and adults are given the authority and power to distinguish between rights and wrong and use it to usher in good governance devoured of corruption. The main requisites for good governance according to Hardoon, & Heinrich, (2013) include the followings: Political legitimacy for the state through democratic elections and transfer of power and an effective political opposition and representative government, Accountability and transparency in the sharing of information, Separation of powers, Effective internal and external audit, Effective means of combating corruption and nepotism, Competence of public servants, Impartial and accessible justice systems; and The absence of arbitrary government power.

Following the above scenario therefore, Good governance is bound by rules to create a transparent and accountable government devoured of corruption. This is because; corruption has a far reaching negative effect on national psyche which eventually undermines good governance.

3. THE EFFECT OF CORRUPTION ON GOOD GOVERNANCE

According to Bardhan (2006), Corruption and governance lie on a continuum but occupying opposite poles. Corruption is however, mostly associated with violation of socioeconomic rights. It is the abuse of entrusted authority for private gain which represents a major hurdle on the road to social and economic development. It reduces the economy to extreme level of poverty. However, to achieve good governance corruption has to be curbed and rule of law maintained. In Kogi State with many ethnic groups, good governance devoured of corruption is required so as to make all sectors of the economy have the sense of belonging. Special interests of the minority and vulnerable groups are expected to be protected by granting them access to make inputs in decision making and to elaborate on the policies affecting them. These can only be achieved if there is transparency built on rule of law, and free, fair and credible elections that can bring about good governance in the State.

However, on the contrary, corruption has a far reaching negative effect on the behaviour of individuals in any nation which eventually goes back to undermine the whole system of good governance itself. Systemic corruption according to Ayobami (2011) breeds a culture of corruption and skews the people's perception of what is right and wrong. For a number of countries where it has been effectively institutionalized, where wealth and power have become the measure of success, corruption has become socially acceptable, sometimes even aspired by people to be corrupt. Energies of a large number of people are channeled towards occupying positions in the government to partake of the fruits of a corrupt system. Usually, Corruption in the government involves three broad layers. First is corruption within the broader political system. This includes the demands of electoral politics, the extensive use of patronage in political appointments, and the excessive use money in seeking for an appointment, Secondly, is corruption within the public sector, which is usually focused on three major problems: spot performance of mechanisms for identifying and sanctioning employees engaged in corrupt and illicit behavior, considerations of pay and employment, and government procurement, Thirdly is corruption within specific agencies, which involves grand corruption (involving widespread syndicates and millionnaires, and petty corruption (which involves smaller amounts of money, such as grease money to facilitate the delivery of goods and services (world Bank 1997). Following the above concepts therefore,

the negative impacts of corruption on good governance in Kogi State can never be underestimated. These negative impacts according to Dike (2005) include the followings;

- Misallocation of Talents. Corruption often leads to the appointment of corrupt officers to positions of authority with no regard to educational qualification or merit when most appointments are made. In view of this therefore, people who are talented and qualified for the job are not given the opportunity may be because of nepotism or personal aggrandizement. This results to misallocation of talents
- Diversion of development resources for private gain. Corruption impedes a state's ability to use its available resources to progressively achieve the full realization of [socio-economic] rights because national resources are instead diverted into the pockets of public officials, or because development aid is mismanaged, misused or misappropriated. Corruption in this case, results in the abuse of public office for private gain. This can be gain of any kind – financial, in status – and it could be gain by an individual or a group, or those linked with such an individual or groups. Apart from bribery, corruption also includes patronage or nepotism. This is common most especially where the leaders are protected by impunity clause
- Negative impact on quality of infrastructure and public service; Corruption denies development and quality of life to the most sectors and vulnerable members of society. It is especially harmful in the provision of quality infrastructural, and public service delivery. The root cause of corruption lie in the unequal distribution of resources in a society. Corruption thrives on economic inequality while economic inequality provides a fertile breeding ground for corruption and, in turn, leads to further inequalities (Bello-Imam 2005).
- Low levels of economic growth. High level of Corruption distorts the allocation of resources and the performance of government in many ways. It has a pervasive and troubling impact on the poor, since it distorts public choices in favour of the wealthy and powerful, and reduces the state's capacity to provide social safety (UNDP, 2000).
- Lower opportunities for farmers. Corruption leads lower opportunities for farmers to sell their produce and for SMEs to flourish, as their ability to escape poverty using their livelihood will be severely restricted by corruption of the state regulatory apparatus
- Higher tax burden and fewer services. Corruption also breed higher tax burden as taxes are charged arbitrarily without due considerations to the payers. Usually, the revenue generated from such tax payments are siphoned into private pockets without considerations to provide services commensurate with such payment to the tax payers.

In furtherance to the above discourse therefore, it is pertinent to note that corruption undermines good governance in Kogi State by fuelling popular disillusionment with politicians who are corrupt. To be more specific, corruption can lead to a vicious circle where corrupt people manipulate the political system to get into power only to further corrupt the political system and indeed, the entire society (Rufai 2014). However, no matter the negative impact of corruption on good governance adequate measures can be taken by all and sundry to prevent such anomalies. In view of this therefore, the following suggestions and recommendations are put forward.

Firstly, In order to prevent corruption in Kogi State and Nigeria in general, government should emphasize on transparency, integrity, and accountability in all their private and public transactions. In this case, children, youth, and adults must be given the power to distinguish between right and wrong. All schools should return to the teaching of moral education to endow children with the spirit of stewardship, while adults live exemplary lives reflecting truth, kindness, dignity of labour and integrity. Also, appointments and employment opportunities should be based on merit and educational qualification and not on nepotism and favouritism. People recommended for employment or appointments in both private and public offices should merit such employment and appointment.

Secondly, good people in politics that can provide good leadership with vision and effort needed to exploit a nation's competitive advantages and create the inclusive institutions that would enable growth, development and prosperity to emerge should be elected and selected for any political office in the State. This is because good leaders, honest leaders, just leaders that shun all forms of corruption are likely to lead their nations and the State to prosperity than others that pretend to be

religious but are dishonest, corrupt and unjust. Likewise, people who have been found guilty of corruption should never be granted any form of pardon or be appointed into any political office. This if properly followed will act as a deterrent to others in the economy.

Thirdly, the State “independent” electoral commission should be standardized and made up of professionals, competent and impartial election management bodies with full independent of action to administer elections that are transparent and merit public confidence. Political tugs should be banned and anybody found to engage in the use of political tugs to win election should be banned from contesting election for lifetime.

Fourthly, impunity clause should be removed in governance. Every political office holders discovered to have diverted or mismanaged public resource should be made to face the rot of the law no matter the position he or she occupies in government. This if properly implemented will act as checkmate to everybody in government and make them to be transparent in governance thereby reducing corruption to its barest minimum.

Fifthly, moneybag politicians should be banned from participating in political activities of this country. This is because the moneybags are the perpetrators of corruption and corrupt practices in the country. They often pump out money to win the mind of the populace during campaign and after winning the election mismanage the resources meant for development into private pockets without query or molestation. This has been one the major cause of corruption in Nigeria. It is endemic and needed serious attention. This is because it has deprived the youths of this country from active participation in politics. More importantly is the registration of aspirants vying for any political office. The limit of amount paid by aspirants is too exorbitant which if not controlled will deprive the commoners from dreaming for any political post in this State, and the country at large. However, the aspirants after spending such amount of money to win election would want to recover their expenses through fraudulent practice thereby leading another corruption. In this case therefore, limit of amount that can be affordable by all and sundry in the economy should be advocated. This will give room for larger participation in political process

Finally, workers at both public and private sectors of the economy should be made to declare their assets publically before and after occupying offices so as to ascertain the amount of wealth accumulated during the course of their stewardship. This if properly followed will make workers seat up on their duty posts instead of look warm attitude to work. Limits should be set and anybody who accumulated wealth above such limit should have his or her assets confiscated. This action should be used to control and eradicate corruption in the state and Nigeria at large.

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