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A POST-MORTEM OF PRESIDENT MUHAMMADU BUHARI ADMINISTRATION'S FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA (2015-2023)

By

Ibrahim Ishola Yahaya (PhD)
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Department of Political Science and Public Administration
Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria
Mobile N0: 08035247264 & 08123893196
Email address: iiyahaya@alhikmah.edu.ng

Corruption is globally recognized as an act that has negative impacts on the developmental stride of nations. It is more pervasive in developing countries, even though it is a global phenomenon. Studies have revealed that corruption has contributed to Nigeria's underdevelopment. On assumption of office on 29 May 2015 President Muhammadu Buhari pledged to fight corruption as a matter of policy. In this direction he immediately put some legal and institutional frameworks in place. However, even after his eight years in office, corruption has not abated in Nigeria. The broad objective of this study is to assess the performance of the administration in the fight against official corruption in Nigeria between 2015 and 2019. Official corruption refers to public officers taken undue advantage of their position in office to get undeserved financial and other benefits at the expense of the state. The problematic of this work is to identify success or failure of the administration in the fight against official corruption. The study applied qualitative method of research relying on secondary source of data. Moral Development theory, propounded by Piaget in 1958 was the theoretical underpinning of the study. Findings of the study revealed that despite the efforts of the administration, official corruption persisted, even in President Buhari's administration. The moderate achievement of the administration was annulled by the occurrence of corruption in the administration. The study recommends judicial reform, moral rebirth, and death penalty as measures to fight official corruption in Nigeria.

Key Words: *Buhari Administration Democratic Governance, Fourth Republic, Official Corruption, , Post-mortem*

Introduction

At the inception, the General Muhammadu Buhari-led administration, the President promised to promptly address three major problems confronting the country. These are insecurity, official corruption and the precarious economic dysfunction. (Vanguard, 2020) In particular, corruption has become the norm rather than the exception. The emergence of President Muhammadu Buhari as Nigeria's president, 'a perceived "upright" and "no-nonsense" leader like Buhari was an icing on the cake' (Vanguard,2020) His emergence reminded Nigerians of his days as the military head of state and his zero tolerance for corruption endeared his government to the masses. At the end of his tenure, an assessment of the administration's effort in fighting official

corruption is considered pertinent and appropriate. The focus of this work therefore is to examine the Buhari administration's efforts in the fight against official corruption in Nigeria between 2015 and 2023.

Corruption generally is regarded as a cancan worm that has eaten into fabrics of Nigeria, like most other developing countries. It has affected all spheres of man's existence. All over the world, it seems to defy solution. During the military era, foremost among reasons often adduced for military intervention in politics was corrupt practices by civilian government. (Loubna, 2023) Unfortunately, the military regimes were also found wanting. Since 1966, only a few military regimes were not accused of corruption (Ediba, 2020, Uwem, 2015) As a Military leader in Nigeria between 1983 and 1985, Buhari was perceived as an incorruptible and honest leader. He therefore enjoyed the support of the masses when he became the civilian leader in 2015. The theoretical assumption of this study therefore lies in the fact that president Muhammadu Buhari is one of the few fortunate persons to have been privileged to govern Nigeria on two occasions: first, as a military ruler and second, as a civilian leader. Given his antecedent during his first tenure as a military ruler and his acclaimed zero-tolerance for corruption and indiscipline, (Binta and Shuaib, 2022) his second chance in governance was considered an opportunity to rid the country of corruption. However, this did not happen as cases of corrupt practices within the civil service, among public officials and even politicians and top officers of his administration still occurred. (Punch, 2023)

Problem Statement

Corruption is one of the major problems facing Nigeria since independence in 1960. President Muhammadu Buhari was elected in 2015 partly because of his strong stand against corruption. After eight years in office, Buhari`s anti-corruption policy has been the subject of controversy and argument, especially relating to its effectiveness. The problematic of this study therefore is to examine and evaluate the contribution of the administration towards minimizing official corruption in Nigeria

Objective of the study

TO assess and evaluate the performance of the Buhari administration in the fight against corruption in Nigeria between year 2015 and 2023

To identify the weaknesses of the administration in the fight against corruption in Nigeria in the year 2015-2023

Research Method

This work applies the secondary sources of data collection. The secondary source used included textbooks, journals, online materials and other periodicals. This method is considered appropriate because of availability in reasonable numbers, relevant research works on the topic.

Conceptual Review

Corruption is a concept with many connotations. Defining Corruption is important in the context of this paper in order to specifically situate our study within the framework of our conception of the concept. Corruption is a social, legal, economic and political concept riddled with ambiguity

and consequently it is controversial. There are scholarly and institutional definitions of the concept, as such it does not lend itself to a universally accepted definition. For example, the World Bank defines it as:

> abuse of public office for private gains. Publicoffice is abused for private gain when an official accepts, solicits, or extorts a bribe. It is also abused when private agents actively offer bribes tocircumvent Public policies and processes for competitive advantage and profit. Public office canalso be abused for personal benefit even if no bribery occurs, through patronage and nepotism, the theft of state assets or the diversion of state revenues (World Bank, 2002)

This definition largely covers the mode of corruption in Nigeria. It is a common sight in public offices in Nigeria among contractors and public officers who handles public works.Economic and Financial Crime Act of 2004 defines corruption as:

> … the non – violent criminal and illicit activity committed with the objectives of earning wealth illegally either individually or in a group or organized manner thereby violating the economic activities of government and its administration and includes any fraud … money laundering, etc.

Transparency International simply defines corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. This simple definition encompasses many facets of corruption. It includes both private individuals as well as government officials. This is because, without receiver, there can be no giver.

From the above, it is confirmed that corruption has many connotations. In this study corruption is conceptualized as the use of public authority, power, opportunity and privilege conferred on a public officer to satisfy personal or group interest at the expense of the state/the people.

Theoretical Framework

This study applies the theory of moral development as developed by Jean Piaget (1968) and popularized by Lawrence Kohlberg in 1971 and Kohlberg L, & Candee, D. (1984). The theory was originally propounded in 1958 by Piaget as a doctoral student. The central argument of this theory is that individuals progress through distinct stages of moral reasoning as they mature.

Morality means righteousness or goodness exhibited by people in their behaviours and norms of their society. In the opinion of Piaget (1968), cited in Onya, R, et al (2016) man's behavior begins from pre-moral stage and gradually develops to a stage of morality as defined by society. The third stage in the development of morality is when man develops and determines for himself based on knowledge of his environment and the norms of the society he lives in to decide what is morally right or wrong. Corruption is generally known to be bad phenomenon because it has adverse effects on others. A mature person should therefore ordinarily desist from it.

Kohlberg L, & Candee, D. (1984) identify three different aspects of morality: man's ability to defy inducement; the amount of guilt that accompanies moral misdemeanor; and the standards by which man determines what is right or wrong.

From the three aspects of morality identified above, the following deductions could be made:

1. The first stage of morality is the pre-moral stage where what is believed to be moral is determined by an authority so recognized.

2. The second stage of moral development is when man conforms to the norms of the society where he lives and believes and accepts what the society recognizes as good or bad as such.
3. The final stage is the stage where man is capable of self-assessment of the existing rule of morality and decides for himself based on his personal judgment what is morally right or wrong.

Because corruption is a product of human behaviour, the theory is considered relevant to this work. This is because matured individuals should avoid anti-social behaviour which corruption represents.. One can infer from the above that morality is a behavioral attitude that develops in man and influenced by his environment from infancy to maturity. Thus, corruption as a form of behaviour has its influence in the man and his environment. If man has the tendency to be corrupt, society has a role to play in encouraging or discouraging him. Corruption in Nigeria can therefore be seen as being encouraged by the society through glorification of wealth regardless of its source.

Curses of Official Corruption in Nigeria

There are many views expressed by scholars as to what causes official corruption in Nigeria. For example, Tochukwu (2023) in his work titled 'Impact of Political Corruption on Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria' quoted Adesina & Shittu, (2021) to have asserted that weak institutional frameworks, rent-seeking behaviuor, lack of transparency and accountability, and the influence of vested interest are major causes and drivers of official corruption in Nigeria. In their opinion, inadequate legal and regulatory framework, weak enforcement mechanism, and weak institutional capacity contribute to official corruption in Nigeria. This according to Aiyedogbon, (2018) allows corrupt practices to flourish and undermines the integrity of public institutions Rent-seeking behaviors on the other hand is a situation where individuals or groups seek to extract economic benefits from the state without creating value. This takes the form of giving and receiving bribes by public officers from individuals engaged in contracts.

Similarly, Opaleye (2014) cited Agbefe (2005) to have identified about fifteen causes of official corruption in Nigeria. Some of the causes he mentioned are:

i. A fundamentally flawed structure of the Nigerian state government and politics and the absence of functioning government system;
ii. Increasing institutionalized inequality in resource distribution;
iii. Conflict between changing values and moral code;
iv. Inefficient enforcement of existing laws, absence of the rule of law and culture of offering preferential treatment to certain individuals;
v. Reckless expenditure of public fund, including unnecessary foreign trips by public officials and inadequate accountability mechanisms, infringements, monetization of politics and public office, to mention but a few.

From the array of reasons listed above, it can be observed that corruption in Nigeria has several causes and types.

Effect of official corruption on the Nigerian economic and political development

It is an understatement to say that official corruption is pervasive in Nigeria. It widely identified as a major impediment to the economic and political development of the country. Like its causes, the consequences of official corruption on the economic and political development of Nigeria are legion. Several studies have identified these consequences

Corruption, whatever its type or variant, undermines the overall development of the country. (Oromoni, 2023) Economically, corruption has stunted the growth of the country's economy by

making cost of doing business higher through inflation of contracts and bribe collected by public officers. Nwakama, (2003) conducted a research on corruption and manufacturing Concerns in Nigeria', he was quoted by Opaleye, (2014) to have said that;

> Corruption in Nigeria has created a culture of bribery and in recent time, it has become the exception rather than the rule for public officer to render service without seeking for gratification. The effect of this is that it raises the cost of doing business and made competition useless in most transactions.

Other consequences of corruption identified by scholars include:

i. Retardation of Economic Growth
ii. Adverse effect on Quality of Infrastructure and Public Services
iii. Negative Composition of Government Expenditure;
iv. It discourages honest efforts;
v. It diminishes the value of a society, destroys its very fabric and perpetuates economic dependency and under development (David, 1999, Nwakama, 2003)

From our discussion above, it is obvious that corruption has been identified as a major impediment to the socio-economic and political development of Nigeria. As an act, it is considered morally degrading, socially unacceptable and politically unacceptable. Society that is corruption-ridden like Nigeria will remain under developed for a long time.

Efforts of the Buhari administration in the fight against official corruption

The fight against graft since the beginning of the fourth republic in Nigeria has been done through the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt and other offences Commission (ICPC) and Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) (Thompson, 2020)

However, on assumption of office and realizing the magnitude of corrupt practices in Nigeria, and its effects, the Buhari administration took some steps that were meant to address the menace frontally.

To kick-start his administration's resolve to fight corruption, the Buhari administration set up a Presidential Adversary Committee Against Corruption (PACAC) headed by Prof. Itse Sagay. The mandates of the committee are:

a. to receive and investigate reports of corruption and in appropriate cases, prosecute the offender(s)
b. formulate a strategy and co-ordinate the anti-corruption war of the administration
c. to examine, review and enforce the correction of corruption prone systems and procedures of public bodies, with a view to eliminating corruption in public life
d. to educate and enlighten the public on and against corruption and related offences with a view to enlisting and fostering public support. (Olajimi, 2017)

In addition to this committee, the administration strengthened the anti corruption agencies through ejection of new blood into the personnel of the commission. He replaced Mr Ibrahim Lamorde with Mr. Ibrahim Magu, who was considered a more qualified officer. The Anti-Corruption agencies were also assisted with improved funding, collaboration with global anti-graft commissions and motivation of staff so that they could change the strategies of the agencies for better performance. These are in addition to several other legislations and institutions put in place to energize the fight. The administration went further to sign bilateral and multilateral agreements with some foreign countries to recover loots starched in their

countries. One of such agreements was the one signed with the United Arab Emirate (UAE) On 19 January, 2016 (*Premium Times* 2016). Similarly, on 30 and 31 August 2016, British Minister of State for Immigration, Mr Robert Goodwill, briefed reporters in Abuja, on a Memorandum of Understanding signed between both countries. It was reported that the agreement would benefit 40 jurisdictions. (Thompson et al, 2020)

In similar vein, President Muhammadu Buhari demonstrated his zero tolerance for corruption in the early days of his first term in office by kick –starting investigations and prosecution of high politically exposed Nigerians. Among the high-ranking government officers prosecuted are the former senate President, Bukola Saraki, former National Security Adviser, Lt Col. Dasuki Sambo, former petroleum minister, Diezani Alison Madueke, former first lady, Dame Patient Jonathan, ex-governors Babangida Aliyu, (Niger state) Sule Lamido, (Jigawa), and others in the previous and current administrations. They have been and are being investigated and prosecuted by competent institutions. Some of them have been convicted and jailed, for example Theodor Orji (Abia state). The investigation and prosecution of these high profile individuals is unprecedented in the annals of the Nigerian history and goes a long way to demonstrate his commitment to fighting corruption. (Thompson et al, 2020)

In addition, the administration gathered necessary political will to implement the Treasury Single Account (TSA) and the Integrated Personal Payment Information System (IPPIS) which were policies initiated by the President Jonathan's administration, but could not be implemented by the Jonathan government because the administration, according to (Clerk, 2015), lacked the political will to do so. These policies have been used to plug loopholes of embezzlement by public officers. These policies ensured adequacy and appropriateness of salaries and wages of Civil servants and blocked leakages. In addition, Olomu and Adeyemi (2021) assert that the IPPIS has been able to mitigate problems associated with salary payment of public servants. Thus, civil servants that hitherto were illegally benefitting from such leakages were blocked. The implementation of these policies has saved the federal government substantial sum of money. (Oludayo, 2021)

These efforts resulted in some moderate achievements by the administration. These achievements are in the areas of prosecutions and conviction and recovery of looted funds. It also includes forfeitures of products of looted funds. For example between 29 May, 2015 and 25 May, 2016, the administration recovered N3.4 trillion, including recoveries under interim forfeiture; this included both money and assets (This day, 2016). Other recoveries include $160m and another N8 billion stolen government funds (Leadership, 2017). In addition some highly politically exposed Nigerians were investigated, prosecuted and some have been convicted. A number of mind-boggling recoveries and forfeitures were announced by the EFCC boss to the house of representative Ad-hoc committee on Recovered Assets of Government. A former Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) boss, Abdulrasheed Bawa revealed that a former minister of petroleum resources, Mrs. Diezani Alison Madueke forfeited jewelries worth #14.5 million and money running to billions of Naira to the government of Nigeria. (m.guardian.ng, 29 May, 2021) With millions of different currencies and properties been recovered and forfeited by former public officers including the wife of former President, Mrs. Ebele Jonathan, former minister of petroleum resources, Dieazani Allison Madueke, former governors of Abia state, Orji, UzorKalu, Edo state, Lucky Igbenedion, and Plateau state, Joshua Dariye to mention a few, (Nigeria News, December,11 2019) and prosecution of former senate president up to the highest court in the land, The Supreme Court, the administration could

be said to have achieved a little in the fight against corruption. For these bold steps, this study submits that the Buhari administration demonstrated genuine intention to fight.

Good as the recovery of government assets are, absence of transparency in its handling is of major concern. Abdullai (2024) posits that there is no transparency and clear system for managing recovered funds. Possibility of re-looting is high since the recovered asset are said to be plough back to the system. However, the important point to note is that, the administration took a commendable step by investigating, prosecuting and eventually convicting some public officers found wanting. This could serve as deterrence to others.

Corrupt Practices in Nigeria under the Buhari Administration, 2015-2020

Under the Buhari leadership, Nigeria's rating by the Transparency International (TI) and other global rating agencies has remained low. Reports of the global organization in the last five years are quoted below: in 2015, Nigeria was ranked 136 out of 170 countries surveyed. In 2016, Nigeria was ranked the 136th most corrupt nations out of the 176 countries surveyed. In 2017, Nigeria was rated 148 out of about 175 countries surveyed globally. In 2018, the country was rated the 144th most corrupt nation out of the 175 countries surveyed. In 2019, Nigeria was ranked 146th out of the 180 countries surveyed by the organization. (Transparency International, 2020, Adesoji, 2020) Thus, despite the efforts of the administration, corruption still persists in the country. Evidence of this abound. For instance Omokri argued that 'from the so-called anti-corruption regime of President Muhammadu Buhari, N270 million to allegedly clear grass for IDPs was diverted by the former secretary to the federation, Babachir Lawal. Buhari's administration budgeted N180 million to facilitate appearances with social media influencers and the same administration sent the EFCC to arrest its political opponents for facilitating their own media associates (This day, 2017). In another development, the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) Reports that the Buhari administration has failed to put in place political and institutional reforms that could achieve lasting change in the country. The Executive Director of CDD, Idayat Hassan was quoted to have claimed that the President has 'consistently turned blind eyes to malfeasance by some of his own appointees and resisted independent oversight of Nigeria's most scandal-ridden agencies, the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) And The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)' The CDD also cited the case of absence of transparency in the use of security votes at the federal, state and local government levels (The Guardian, May 29, 2020).

In similar vein, the Human and Environmental Development Agenda, (HEDA), A Non-Governmental Agency identified the following cases of corruption under the Buhari administration that has been put under the carpet;

1. the Managing Director of Fidelity Bank, Nnamdi Okonkwo, who was arrested during the 2015 General Elections by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) for allegedly receiving $115 million in cash from a former Minister of Petroleum Resources, Diezani Alison-Madueke;
2. the Executive Director of First Bank Plc, Dauda Lawal, tried by the EFCC for allegedly handling the sum of $25 million of $153m rolled out by Mrs. Alison-Madueke; former Comptroller General of Customs,
3. Abdullahi Dikko, who was alleged to have stolen over N40 billion, but was asked to return N1.5 billion to the Federal Government,
4. former Accountant-General of the Federation, Jonah Otunla, linked to a N2 billion graft
5. the dubious payment of $16.9 million fees to two friends as new lawyers for the recovery of the loot traced to a former Nigerian Head of State, Sanni Abacha, after a Swiss lawyer

hired and fully paid by the previous government, Enrico Monfrini. (Premium Times, February 4,2021)

Why is it difficult to eliminate Corruption from Nigeria body politics?

Corruption has been identified as a global disease that has plagued man from time immemorial**.** From discussion above, we can deduce that the Buhari administration has put in place certain strategies, institutional and legal frameworks and diplomatic efforts to minimize corrupt practice. Not much result has been achieved as can be seen from our discussion above. What factor(s) is responsible for the obstinacy of corruption in Nigeria?

One major reason for this is that according to the Biological theory of Conflict, man is innately selfish, too desirous and wants the best of everything for himself. (Faleti, 2006) The drive to satisfy all these desires naturally prone man to corruption. It is this natural instinct that drives man to corruption. In developing world, environmental factors, especially peer influence exacerbated the selfishness among men. If not callousness, what other reasons can be adduced for person stealing public money in millions and billions of nairafrom money allocated to fight insurgency where thousands of lives are been lost? It is simply man inhumanity to man.

Another cause of the intractable nature of corruption in Nigeria is the relegation of our traditional values and morality. Traditional African culture recognizes and rewards hard work and frowns at laziness and all anti-social behaviours like stealing, etc. However, this has changed and our society now ‘worships’ wealth and praises and recognizes the wealthy individuals in the society regardless of source of their wealth. The situation is so bad that political office holders who have been convicted of crime related to corruption were welcomed back home from jail with pump and pageantry by their communities. (Sahara Reporters, 2018) The meaning of this is that people are encouraged to go and steal. This is a reason why corruption is still around.

The absence of speedy trial of corrupt cases is another reason why corruption still persists in Nigeria. In Nigeria, so many corruption-related cases have been on-going for more than ten years. Justice delayed is justice denied. Investigation is unending and courts keep adjourning cases of corruption endlessly and in most cases on the filmiest excuses. This judicial problem encourages corruption.

The absence of very stiff penalty for corrupt practice is another major reason corruption continues in Nigeria. Most cases prosecuted and concluded so far under the Buhari leadership ended with jail terms with option of ridiculously low fines. This minimum punishment encourages people to go and ‘sin more’ after which they return to continue to enjoy their loots. Very stiff penalty such as death penalty for convicted corrupt officer would serve as a deterrence for others.

Weak institutional mechanism of fighting corruption is another reason why corruption is still a major problem in Nigeria. Generally, Nigeria lacks strong institutions to operate without undue interference by the government. This has made it impossible to perform their functions as expected. For instance, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) is always accused of being an instrument by which the executive arm of government fights its real or perceived political enemies. These institutions should be insulated from control or influence of all arms of government.

Conclusion

This study attempted an assessment of President Muhammdu Buhari administration's anti-corruption crusade between 2015 and 2019. The study applied quantitative research method, relying on secondary source of data. Its theoretical underpinning is the theory of moral development as propounded by Piaget in 1958. The objective of the study is to assess the efforts of the administration in the fight against official corruption between 2015 and 2029. The findings of the work revealed that despite the determination of the administration to minimize it, it did not record insignificant success. Apart from securing some convictions and recovery of looted funds and forfeitures of looted properties, no other achievements can be attributed to the administration. There were also allegations of lopsidedness in the cases prosecuted by the administration. This may have annulled the moderate achievement of the administration.

Way Forward

No doubt, the Buhari administration can be said to have surpassed the preceding administrations in Nigeria in the fight against corruption. This is owing to the administration's efforts at investigating, prosecuting and securing some conviction, recoveries and forfeitures. If previous administrations had initiated these moves, perhaps the Buhari administration would have performed better.

The following recommendations are offered to achieve a corrupt free Nigeria:

a. Selfishness is a product of heart desires. But with proper orientation, self-discipline and consciousness of the need to be fair and just to all, these desires can be controlled by individuals and the society at large. Religious institutions should therefore be involved in developing strategies and institutions to educate people on the need to be moderate in their desires and how to curtail their excessive desires which prone them to corruption. The family has a role to play here. Children should be trained to imbibe the tenet of contentment.
b. Nigeria needs moral rebirth. Hitherto, African tradition acknowledges, promotes and rewards hard work and abhorred laziness and anti-social behaviours. The turn of event where this all time valued norms are jettisoned calls for re-orientation of Nigerians towards reverting to the old order where honesty, dignity, and moral uprightness is held sacrosanct. Our youths should be made to see that one's handiwork is one's pride and not short-cut to wealth. Celebration and acknowledgement of wealth whose source is unknown is alien to Africa. Public offices that have been made very lucrative should be reconsidered. Nigerian political office holders are said to be among the highest paid in the world with a member earning as high as #29 million monthly. This is in a country where minimum wage of public officers is #70,000 and a professor in academic does not earn #700,000 a month.
c. Another solution to the problem of corruption in Nigeria is the need for Nigeria judiciary to be reformed to aid speedy dispensation of cases in our courts. The enactment of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (2015) which was intended to among others, promote speedy dispensation of criminal cases in Nigeria has had no impact on the procedure of investigation, prosecution and dispensation of corruption cases. This work recommends the establishment of special court with due processes that could lead to speedy dispensation of corruption cases. The court should be as much as possible, independent of both the executive and the legislative arms of government.
d. More punitive punishment such as death penalty is strongly recommended for convicted corrupt public officers. Asian countries such as Indonesia, China, among others have adopted this punishment and the result is amazing, corruption has been reduced to the

barest minimum in these countries. It is believed that if these recommendations are iplemented, level of official corruption will reduce I Nigeria.

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