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GROUNDING CORRUPTION DISCOURSE IN NIGERIA: REFLECTIONS ON CONTESTING CLAIMS

Tubodenyefa Zibima
Department of Political Science
Niger Delta University
orcid.org/0000-0002-4412-1731
tubozibima@ndu.edu.ng

Helen Odion Hussain
Department of Political Science,
Niger Delta University
Helsain2014@gmail.com
and
Anthony Chukwuebuka Okoye
Department of Political Science,
Federal University Otuoke,
Bayelsa state
okoyeac@fuotuoke.edu.ng

Abstract
This paper explored the discourse of corruption in Nigeria and its social, procedural and behavioral undercurrents. The paper examined how micro-level practices contribute to entrenching corruption at the macro-level and how such understanding can produce a synchronized top-down and bottom-top approach in mitigating corruption. The study espouses how individuals discursively construct, create, manage, maintain and sustain social order in society. The contention is that questions about patterns and processes that go into the making of corruption, and how corruption is enacted in different domains are key to understanding the 'conflicting moral domains' which compounds and, sometimes, impels understanding of the phenomenon. Differences resulting from disparate and sometimes conflicting domains affect the conception and construction of what 'corruption' is or is not in Nigeria. In utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this paper identifies similarities and differences of the 'discursive constructs' of corruption and frames how they bear on the way people respond to, support, reinforce and or deviate from them corrupt practices.

Keywords: Moral domains, Corruption, Corruption discourse, Anticorruption, Microlevel practices

Introduction

The universality of corruption and its ubiquitous nature across the globe is not disputed. However, entrenched corruption has remained a "symptom of poorly functioning nation" (Mathew *et al*. 2013: 2). There is a global consensus that corruption ranks top as one of the major hindrances to the development of nation-states especially in Africa where the rapacious nature of political authority, weak institutions and complicity of international financial institutions and multinational companies (MNCs) overtly or covertly reinforce the phenomenon. Gupta *et al*. (1998), Rose-Ackerman (1999), Adsera *et al*. (2003) and Audu (2008) examine how corruption undermines development and promotes political instability, especially in evolving democracies. This way, the litany of Africa's development problems, as propounded by the World Bank Group (Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi 2008), has been bad governance with corruption as the muse and good governance the panacea. This consensus underscores the proliferation of democracy and persistent calls for good governance (International Monetary Fund 2002).

In Nigeria, corruption has been heightened to the level of national emergency, scoring 25 out of 100 and placing at 145 out of 180 countries (Corruption Perception Index 2023). This has consequences for poverty, marginalisation, and high youth unemployment, with related outcomes such as militancy in the Niger Delta and insurgency in the northeast (Elendu 2011; Bassey *et al.* 2013). It is often argued that Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta region is yet to reap the benefits of oil production over 50 years since the first oil well was discovered in the area due to corruption of one form or the other (Eberlein 2006; Azaiki 2006). The lack of palpable benefit or development is attributed to corruption,

and corruption is equally blamed for the failure of the state to ensure equitable distribution of resources. This paper explores the blurred boundaries and domains of contestations in corruption discourse in Nigeria. With a view of (re)conceptualizing corruption, this study recognises the dominant top-down discourse that places blame on the doorstep of political authority and argues that such approach obscures the multiple realities, nodes and assemblages that mutually coexist and stimulate the persistence of the phenomenon.

Nigeria's sociopolitical history since the 1950s when crude was struck in commercial quantity has been the history of hope and expectation for the betterment and improved standard of living for the masses. This hope has been severally and severely dashed. Since 1999, Nigeria has been under democratic tutelage as opposed to military rule. The presence of democracy does not seem to have helped in addressing the situation – visible poverty in the midst of plenty – with over 70% of its population living below one dollar a day vis-à-vis estimated over $500 billion in oil revenue accruing to its coffer since independence. In fact, in some quarters it is believed democracy complicates issues with the emergence of leaders with questionable credentials to tackle the problems facing the society. It is in this sense Claude Ake (1993) aptly surmises the spirit of the time when he asserts that Africans does not opt for democracy for the sake of democracy, but because of the good life it espouses.

It is in this context Watts (2010) argues that Nigeria's (democracy) is in the precipice of collapse with corruption as its chorus. Thus, Nigeria represents a striking example of wealth, democracy and misgovernance thanks to corruption. Similarly, Diamond (2007) asserts that there is a major threat to democracy around the world and that the threat is bad governance, where bad governance refers to governmental system where the narrow interest of the ruling class is heightened far above the interest of the society. Diamond (2007) argues that a governmental system that is characterised by abuse and misuse of political power and fails to respond to the yearnings and aspirations of the governed, especially in terms of poverty eradication, reducing inequality and reduction of unemployment, is squandering the resources of that society and as such is bad governance regardless whether it is democratic or not.

However, the issue here is no more than the spread of democracy, but the spread or democratisation of consciousness that goes into the making of social structures and institutions shaping society. One outstanding feature in extant literature on corruption in Nigeria is the lack of insight on the role of the people in the generation (construction, determination and conditioning) of unsatisfactory institutions within the state. For example, Eberlein (2006) demonstrates how neopatrimonial networks ("*political instrumentalization of social disorder*") engenders politics and hampers development, while Oyefusi (2008) established positive correlation between economic incentives, militancy (rebel participation) and poor economic condition in Nigeria, particularly the Niger Delta region. In contrast to extant literature, this paper explores the nuances of corruption and how the often-taken-for-granted practices of society combine to produce structures that support and engender 'bad governance'.

At the heart of all these is corruption: corruption has been blamed for mismanagement, poverty and systemic deprivation of the people (Ake, 1997; Abimbola and Adesote, 2012). Paradoxically though, corruption has become a metaphor and ready tool to be conjured and utilized to buttress arguments, justify actions and as well as failure to act, and eschew responsibility by all parties – the state, agitators (militants), civil society organisations (CSOs) multinational corporations (MNCs), etc. How is corruption conceptualised across these different domains? It appears there are several enacted domains with different parameters of moral judgment, so that at times it is a metaphor to depict marginalisation and, at other times, marginalisation becomes the justification for complicity in corruption. To address these issues, together with this introduction, this paper is structured into three parts: the second discusses moralizing corruption and the contesting claims, and; the third concludes with an examination of the state and forces of corruption.

Objectives of the study

The key objective of this paper is to frame how microlevel practices contribute to entrenching corruption at the macro-level and how from a discursive perspective, such understanding can produce

a synchronized understanding of corruption one the one hand and anti-corruption responses on the other.

Methodological and Analytical Frame: critical Discourse Analysis

The utility of CDA as the methodological and analytical frame lies in how it emphasizes the connections between language, power and social problems. It directs attention to the social context in which specific language is used and how embedded in this are power relations that determine and shape political outcomes (Fairclough, 1992, 1995 2000; Wodak and Meyer, 2009: Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). The implication is that there is a nexus, and almost intricate, between language and social practices. This nexus is often a continuing struggle over power and socio-historical in nature. The language of corruption and anti-corruption as contained in laws and corruption reporting has a broader linkage with the practice of corruption and anti-corruption. The point here is that discourses around corruption and anti-corruption do infact, influence, amplify and even complicate social processes.

Interrogating the discourse of corruption can help show how language, words and political pronouncements can provide meaning to how words illuminate power relations and social practices. Importantly, instead of focusing on institutions as political representations and the practice of corruption, it is critically and analytically rewarding to pay attention to the language and statements that spur and shape corruption and define its practices. This is the basis of discursive analysis.
Data this for this paper were drawn from formal and informal statements around corruption, legal language and political pronouncements that form the discursive constructs of corruption in Nigeria.

Understanding Corruption through the theoretical frames of Postcolonial discourse

Postcolonialism as a theory is combined with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as an analytical tool to form the basis of analysis in this study. It is adopted as a theoretical guide that helps us examine the linkages between politics, the economy and ethics (Grovugui, 2013: 264). The underlying assumption in postcolonial theory or decolonial theorizing is that postcolonial societies are still in several ways subject to covert and subtle ways of extraversion utilizing strategies and structures created by colonialism (Fasakin, 2022; Sakue-Collins, 2021; Mignolo, 2009; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2022, 2020, 2015; Mendoza 2016; Nabudere, 2011; Quijano, 2000). The contention is that though colonialism ended, it did not end coloniality and the political management of the commonwealth, that renders it susceptible to privatized accumulation.

The relevance of the theoretical articulation of post-coloniality to the understandings and analysis in this paper is that while colonialism, its life-force, coloniality, did not end and, those who displaced and replaced the colonisers merely inherited the structures of accumulation and continued with the systems of structural and institutional disarticulation. This means that still subsisting in the post-colony are long standing structures of extraversion and primitive accumulation, patterns that are now embedded in socio-psychological understandings of the leaders and the public, and expressed in understandings of politics and political processes.

Thus, subsisting in the post-colony are "long-standing patterns of power which redefine culture, labour, common sense, knowledge and aspiration of the self in ways that accredit superiority to the colonisers" and uncritical reliance on Western claim to universalism (Mendoza, 2016: 114).

Moralizing corruption and contesting claims

One classic definition of corruption sees it as "the use of power for profit, preferment, or prestige, or for the benefit of a group or class, in a way that constitutes a breach of law or of standards of high moral conduct" (Roy, 1970: 86). Williams (1987) concurred with Roy's definition and emphasized the moral aspect of it. For him, any action or conduct that "ruins, perverts, debases and degrades integrity and moral principle" is an act of corruption (1987: 13). The emphasis on moral is pertinent in both conceptions of corruption but is the idea of what 'moral' is, or is not, a straightforward one? The contention here is that it introduces a divide that places the political state at the centre and treats it like an abstraction devoid of human activities because, in most cases, it is the state that marks, defines and

seats as the ultimate judge of what is moral, right or legal. As Torsell (2011: 7) rightly points out, in a way morality becomes a struggle of whose construction what is legal and illegal prevails, where legality and illegality raise contentions of who has the legitimacy to do so (*ibid*).

There is inherent ambiguity as to what constitute corruption in this regard and the burden rests on the state's view on legality and illegality. Pardo (2004: 6) argues that the state might become complicit, by either overtly participating or covertly "through institutional blindness to allow the interests of elites" to thrive. In another way, the state might become permissive and corruption becomes one way that people make sense of politics. this notion of state's role in corruption suggests some sort of conversation between the people and the state, and its draws heavily from Foucauldian tradition. Shore and Haller (2005) argues that corruption in this sense is discursively created and remains largely a semantic of governance to capture fears of the possibility of rising inequality at different levels of government.

In a related sense, Oliver de Sardan employed the notion of *moral economy* captures the widespread diffusion of corruption in the moral fabrics of Africa. De Sardan argues that corruption is always rife in the air like rumour and its omnipresent nature eliminates the boundary of the political, social and private (or personal). Through culturally constructed and accepted practices such as gift-giving, solidarity networks and brokerage, corruption persists alongside other socially accepted practices. Though highly generalized, the moral economy demonstrates the banality of corruption and how generalized and commonplace it has become in the everyday practices to the extent not to defer to it is to appear more or less amoral (Hasty, 2005). Hasty (2005) describes any attempt to indulge in manners that refrain from gift-taking as not only extremely uncommon as it is risk-taking, but any individual who conduct herself or himself as such risk being seen as bashful, asocial and morally depraved or suspicious. This way, corruption is seen simply as an extension of moral courtesy and an invitation to share in the largesse of public sphere. This 'courtesy', colloquially referred to in West Africa as *chop*, an "invitation to eat", becomes social, hence refusal to participate *'in eating'* is seen as *asocial* or an anti-social behaviour (Hasty, 2005; Torsello, 2011; Shore and Haller, 2005).

Similar sentiment was echoed by Rivkin-Fish (2005). Rivkin-Fish (2005) conducted an empirical study of corruption in Russia's post-socialist health sector. He argued that corruption plays a vital role in Russia's post-socialist health care system to bridge the gap created as a result of constricted social space and individualism that comes with market economy model. To this end, she argues, corruption becomes a mechanism upon which mutual trust is founded. Like Sharma and Gupta's discovery in India, Rivkin-Fish observes that this discursive encounter between local citizens and state officials does not encourage the former to refrain from engaging with the latter, but rather a mutually understanding frame of reference was established and the outcome (corruption) assumed the status of best practices (Torsello 2011).

Recently, the then governor of Nigeria's apex bank, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, indicted the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation of an unaccounted 20 billion dollars which led to the subsequent sack of the governor by the president. However, the erstwhile governor and the presidency have reconciled but the missing 20 billion is yet to be reconciled with the Nation's account. This is instructive of Smith's (2007) assertion that Nigeria is a neoliberal institution and as such a prized commodity open to be captured and share among key capitalist actors or their minions. It is on record that, former president, Goodluck Jonathan publicly states that "what many Nigerians refer to as corruption is actually stealing. Stealing is not the same thing as corruption" (Adegoju 2007). Similar sentiment has been shared by the chairman of the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC) that "stealing is erroneously reported as corruption. We must go back to what we were taught at school to show that there are educated people in Nigeria." Jonathan, here, appears weary of the complacency of the notion of corruption and attempts to equate corruption to stealing, since the latter is more reproachful than the former in societies where corruption is almost gaining legitimacy. Perhaps corruption is legally acknowledged but stealing is illegal! Submissions of these sorts not only indicate the imperative of reimagining the Westphalian state system, but also indicts and questions the very role of the neoliberal state (and its top-down approach) in defining corruption.

Drawing on compelling ethnography of practices and discourses of corruption (Smith 2007), Kathy Gardner observes "in Nigeria people live simultaneously in two worlds in which, on the one hand, the expectations of reciprocity and patronage remain, while on the other the ideals of modern governance and citizenship are aspired to" (Gardner 2012:194). How does the ontology of a society affect its attitude to and fight against corruption? If stealing and diversion of public fund for personal aggrandisement is not corruption, what then is it? What does this suggest to the understanding and fight against corruption given a top-down approach? Answer to questions of this sort might help shed more light on why and how international aid and grants meant for developmental purposes are mis/appropriated to account for the increasing chasm between the rich and poor and ever-rising level of poverty. However, answers to these questions has to do with who is doing the definition as well as the moral and ideological inclination of the individuals and institutions concerned.

These conflicting moralities manifest at different planes: firstly, within the individual and then between individuals, and between individuals and social institutions. For instance, Torsello (2003) study of a rural village in Slovakia revealed an unusual high degree of ambivalence between what peoples' perception of corruption in terms of trust for public institutions and action in relation towards those institutions. He noted that people who are highly opinionated with strong views on corruption and distrust for specific institutions might still turn to these institutions due to the importance of "invest[ing] in social relationships" which is invaluable in the society. Thus, people are caught in a situation where they need to acquiesce to social structures and institutions, not because they agree; but because it is necessary to build social network and enhances social net worth (Torsello, 2011: 11). These different moral realms pose analytical problems to any study which looks at corruption from a moral prism.

The State and Forces of Corruption

The notion of corruption as "abuse of public office for private benefits and gains" rests on Weberian rationality that creates a demarcation between public and private domains. This Weberian legal-rational authority with bureaucratic partitioning rarely fit into pre-capitalist and postcolonial societies where the dichotomy between private-public interests is rather blurred (Sharma and Gupta, 2006; Torsello, 2011). Scholars such as Abrams (2006), Ferguson (2014), and Sharma and Gupta (2006) have theorised about the difficulty in studying the state and argue against the stereotype of the state as a monolithic entity. Rather, the state is a complex organisation of a unique kind. It is composed of competing and mutually reinforcing interests, with relationships and patterns networked and functioning in ways that makes the state most complex of social organisations. In his ethnographic study of the state of corruption and imagined state, Gupta (2006) challenged the conceptualisation of the state as a monolithic and unitary entity. Gupta (1995) argues that using "the state" as a point of departure for investigation is analytically impoverishing and reifies the depictions of the state as a unitary entity" (Gupta, 1995: 392). The contention is that, robust analysis of the state "requires us to conceptualise a space that is constituted by the intersection of the local, regional, national, and transnational phenomena" (Gupta, 1995: 392).

With policy gaps and entrenched corruption in developing societies, understanding corruption requires us to conceptualise it beyond the limits of the state and, more importantly, beyond institutions that limit the phenomenon to private-public dichotomy (IMF 2002; Diamond 2008). The persistence of corruption and its eroding effect is implicit on two factors: internal and external. Internally, the ontology of the people and the existence of state capture elites serve as fertile grounds for contrivance with benevolent interests and the perpetuation of corruption while externally, the combined activities of multinational corporations (MNCs) and international donors relying on policy prescriptions/formulations drawn from top-down approach provides veritable sites for corruption to fester, rent extraversion and capital flight.

In recent years in Nigeria, over $400 billion has been siphoned, $20 billion disappeared with no traces, and though 300 persons and over 30 high-profile arraignments have taken place; only six have been convicted; five in Nigeria and one in the United Kingdom (Agbiboa 2013). The culprit in o ne of the more prominent case, Chief James Ibori, has since completed his jail term and returned to Nigeria to a heroic welcome thus making corruption in Nigeria a norm, rather than an aberration (Mohammed

2013; Mathew *et al* 2013). Thus, the phenomenon of corruption in Nigeria is not only incipient upon its perception and reception among the populace, but its perversity is evident in its recurrence in every formal discussion in Nigeria (Bassey *et al*., 2013). This understanding prompted Olusegun Obasanjo to establish the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC) in September 2000 and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Act enacted in December 2002. These efforts notwithstanding, Nigeria is still replete with corruption in all fronts. Matthew et al. (2013) observe that though this is not the fight time anti-graft bodies and agencies are commissioned; what is sad is that as more efforts are geared towards it, the phenomenon keeps regenerating, saturating and covering new spaces.

Anti-graft institutions are thus more or less a show of shame than policies geared towards mitigating corruption (Mohammed, 2013). For Mohammed (2013), the *sui generis* nature of corruption is taking is not unconnected with the criminal justice system that encourages it, wittingly or unwittingly. The contention is that the penal system appears friendly to corruption as it grants frivolous jail terms to convicted criminals and, sometimes, allow them to go scot free in the name of an evolving contemptible precedent styled 'plea bargaining.' Thus, far from punitive, the penal code appears sociable thereby making corruption a lucrative business in the land.

For instance, Richard Joseph's (1987) *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria* and Jordan Smith's (2007) *A Culture of Corruption* demonstrate how deep-rooted and perverse corruption in Nigeria evolves as part of everyday's life. They explored how corruption undermines effective governance through poor policy formulation and quavered implementation that formalizes kleptocracy in Nigeria. Though there are genuine efforts of national and international institutions geared towards curbing corruption, they have been largely marred due in part to the unwitting complicity of these institutions and, also drawing from analytical frameworks failing to account for the intersections of independent but complex constellation of mutually reinforcing entities (Bassey *et al*., 2013; Gupta, 2006). It is not uncommon to see convicted 'brethren' given heroic welcome and traditional titles and honours given to people with proven records of looting public wealth for self-enrichment. In

Nigeria, it has been established that corruption forms part of the cultural mores today (Joseph 1987; Bassey *et al.* 2009; Smith 2007; Audu 2008; Ogundiya 2009; Egwemi 2012; Mathew *et al*. 2013). However, can there be cultural variations to this position? That corruption facilitates poor governance and consequently poverty is nothing new, but what is the direction of this relationship? If corruption undermines development and engenders poor governance, then what feeds corruption? Is it poor governance that feeds corruption or is it corruption that entrenches poor governance in specific political spaces; and what is the nature of correlation between these variables in a given political space? This study seeks to explore and determine the flow of relationship between these variables.

For one thing, business cannot survive without social approval and for another; corruption is not merely a narrative but a social practice (Kerby 1991). The lifestyle of a people cannot be separated from their social practices. Understanding the meaning and values people attach to, and bring to bear in, their engagement with others is central to the understanding of the social practices they espouse. Where people accept and participate in political processes that accentuate political corruption, does this translate to their acceptance of corruption as an intrinsic part of their socio-political reality; does it translate to an acceptance of the state of underdevelopment which corruption entrenches as a reality for which they have to adapt to? What forms of everyday engagement and negotiations from below empowers the state to continue with impunity? What are the broader categories that make up the political economy, materialities and patterns of corruption? An understudied dimension to the discourse of corruption is the blurred lines and role of the 'masses' in giving legitimacy to the structures of patronage and prebendalism, and why is it almost rationally articulated. Clientelism, patronage and exchange network suggest reciprocal relationships that solicits and sustains some sort of approval on both sides (Lawson and Greene 2012). But what do the people think of their seemingly passive and 'unassuming' actions?

It is in this context that Sampson (2005) argued that a better comprehension of corruption requires adequate grounding in the specific historic context that have produced and continues to sustain it over time. Thus, looking at corruption from the lens of the people will furnish a better understanding and

point of departure towards mitigating it. Anti-corruption is not simply a policy instrument to punish nepotism, opined Sampson (2005), but should evolve as a moral force reflecting indignation among ordinary people and communicated through to the political elite (Haller and Shore 2005; Sampson 2005). There is lack of nuance in a good number of reports, frameworks and corpus on corruption in Nigeria as elsewhere in Africa. I argue that classifying corruption in Nigeria as merely endemic is over simplistic and reductionist. I further argue that policy attempts aimed at combating corruption so far have succeeded in exacerbating and reproducing the trends owing to lack of attention to the ontology that legitimises the structure. What has changed with the emergence of a 'minority' as president? How has development agencies in Niger Delta managed resources at its disposal in the face of growing poverty and unemployment in the region? How or in what way (s) has the 'incorporation' of ex-commanders and integration of ex-agitators altered the dynamics of corruption in the larger political economy? With more decentralization of functions and increasing revenue allocation (based on derivation formula) to these states and agencies, how are the people negotiating their path within these complexities? It has been argued in popular discourses that the Amnesty Programme was a negotiated peace deal between the state and insurgents (Zibima and Allison 2013) rather than a comprehensive marshal/economic recovery plan.

Like Sampson (2005), Graham, Amos and Plumptre (2003: 6) observe that the universal acceptance of good governance and its viability notwithstanding, applying its principle has always been characterized by mismatch, for what is consistent is that there are no apparent absolutes and the context of each phenomenon matters if we must learn from others. Similarly, anthropological studies have near consensus that corruption cannot be understood outside the context of the society concerned (Torsello 2011: 3). Thus, Hasnat (2001) notes that though the principles and programmes suggest by leading global experts on corruption are not ineffective, but to give it substance it must be able to address both the actors and organs "just as the dancer cannot be separated from the dance, the organs and actors executing governance in their respective spheres cannot be relegated to the background" (Hasnat 2001: 7).

Beyond individual level motivations, it is important to understand the transnational culture, processes and exchanges that connect the global and the local, international and national and how these linkages impact on the residual political economic forces. The discovery of oil in Nigeria's Niger Delta, the burgeoning of states (from 3 regions to 36 states) as administrative conduits, the channeling of resources to these units, and the transfer of administrative powers meant that the individual units are eclipsed into the cycle of 'rents', 'bribes' and 'oil contract kickbacks' that connects the 'international' (multinational corporations and global dynamics) with 'national', and local milieu (Ake 1997; Zalik 2004; Sassen 2005). Given these shifting continuities, it is insufficient to attempt an understanding of corruption in the region without attention to the "problem of scaling" (Sassen 2005: 2). Sassen (2005) argues that the advent of globalization has made certain activities that are regarded as global localized while some presumably local are implicitly global in scale and reach".

In many respects, the forces of corruption replicate a pattern akin to colonial history and reinforces a belief/suspicion that global efforts, through foreign aids, development grants, and CSR, etc., designed to reverse the effects of corruption, are in fact witting ally of corruption because they intensify its processes as much as provide new sites for it to prey and fester. In recent times, there is growing consensus in scholarly circles that a complex network of interests involving external global forces, particularly those committed to global capitalist cause, serves as veritable source in the spread of corrupt practices around the world (Torsello 2011: 2). This cautions any attempt to explore corruption as a unilinear process to be identified in specific arena in isolation to others. Thus, while the asymmetries of socioeconomic and political realities of the people are very important to our understanding in this regard (Ake 1997), the contention is that the social, cultural and psychological nuances emanating from these connecting asymmetries are equally important in the shaping, appropriating and conceptualizing of corruption. Thus, through our unassuming sociocultural mores, values, meanings and engagements corruption is articulated and sustained in relation to the larger political economy. We can gain more understanding of the "lymph of corrupt practices" underlying corruption both in the west and non-western societies (Torsello 2011: 3). The ubiquity of analyses on corruption has a refrain on intimating us on the meaning of corruption in the everyday experience of a people, who at the receiving end, live with its' impact; what their motifs are, what end they seek to

accomplish, the role of social relationships as well as encounter with MNCs and transnational organisations and how these processes in turn shape these notions.

Conclusion

Social dynamics around resource and revenue management in any society are shaped by everyday political outcomes. As argued in this paper, everyday language representations around corruption and anti-corruption cannot be divorced from the formal and informal renderings of what corruption is. This fact is emphasized by how micro-level understandings and representations of what corruption is or is not have significant impacts on whether and how anti-corruption efforts succeed.

Importantly, the paper holds that social psychological perspectives and actions and their cultural underpinnings are critical to the understanding, shaping, and framing of corruption. In this regard, these issues cannot be overlooked in how corruption is tackled or the content and direction of anti-corruption efforts in Nigeria. The ubiquity of analyses on corruption has a refrain on intimating us on the meaning of corruption in the everyday experience of a people, who at the receiving end, live with its' impact; what their motifs are, what end they seek to accomplish, the role of social relationships as well as encounter with MNCs and transnational organisations and how these processes in turn shape these notions.

Recommendations

This paper makes asingle recommendation that draws from the discursive rendering of corruption in Nigeria. It is that both external and internally supported efforts at manaing corruption and the designing of anti-corruption efforts must be embedded in the contextual knowledge of how micro-level renderings of corruption tie in with macro-level actions around corrupt practices and anti-corruption responses.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare no conflicting interests.

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