

Factors That Undermined President Muhammadu Buhari's Anti-Corruption Campaigns in Nigeria: An Empirical Appraisal

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Abstract

In Nigeria, corruption has remained intractable despite efforts by President Muhammadu Buhari's administrations in reducing it. This work titled "Factors that undermined President Muhammadu Buhari's anti-corruption campaigns in Nigeria: Empirical Appraisal", seeks to interrogate how the specificities of the state affects both the character of the regime and the regime's anti-corruption policy implementation. The researcher adopted quantitative method of data analysis which entails collecting and analyzing numerical data to examine relevant issues of interest in the history of corruption in Nigeria. The work examined why corruption has persisted in the country under President Buhari's administration from 2015-2023 despite his anti-corruption stance. Also, the work seeks to determine whether the anti-corruption policy implementation in Nigeria under President Muhammadu Buhari's administration was a success or not. Theory of Moral Development was adopted for this study. The following questions guided the work; What is the character of the state under President Muhammadu Buhari's administration, 2015-2023? How is the anti-corruption agency under PMB a significant factor against the anti-corruption drive in Nigeria? What are the implications of the character of the state on anti-corruption drive in Nigeria under President Buhari 2015-2023? Findings show that, with the compromised sincerity of those mandated to fight corruption under President Muhammadu Buhari, winning the fight has remained a mirage. Based on the findings, the work suggested persistent value reorientation as a sine-qua-non for winning the war against corruption in Nigeria. Again, the anti-corruption agencies should be given free hand to operate; this will reduce political influence and financial inducement of judicial officials. Finally, it was recommended that those guilty of corruption charge should be banned from contesting for any political position to deter others.

Keywords: Anti-corruption, Campaigns, Factors, President Muhammadu Buhari.

Introduction

In a discussion with the Queen of England on 10th May, 2016, the former British Prime Minister, David Cameron, described Nigeria as "fantastically, one of the most corrupt countries of the world". Many Nigerians were surprised going by the efforts of the present administration under President Muhammadu Buhari at reducing corruption to a barest minimum in Nigeria. Worse still, the statement by Transparency International which ranked Nigeria as the 36th corrupt country in the globe is another issue of concern. More surprisingly, President Muhammadu Buhari declared that he needs no apology from Prime Minister Cameroon, rather, he is more interested in recovery back all the looted funds from the British Government (TVC News, 2016).

According to the African Development Bank (AfDB, 2012) report, Nigeria was seen as the biggest economy in Africa with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 481.07 billion United States Dollar (USD) as of 2015 ahead of countries such as Egypt with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 330.78 billion United States Dollar (USD) and South Africa with GDP of 312.80 billion USD respectively. The African Development Bank (AfDB), however regretted the fact that further inquiry shows that in terms of infrastructural development, Nigeria lags far behind many countries in Africa. It went further to state that “infrastructure in Nigeria have suffered decades of neglects and is close to the worst ranked in Africa. It frowned at the high amount that is expended on the power sector by various administrations in Nigeria but without success due largely to management and implementation problems.

Consequently, Nigerians have continued to wallow in abject penury despite the vast resources that abound in the country, unemployment, underemployment, nepotism, ethnicity, favouritism, insecurity among others, has continued to fester in alarming proportion. Politically, Nigerians grope in utter political darkness, wandering in political wilderness in search of true leaders for their redemption and emancipation, to no avail. This effort appeared futile as the leaders do not seem to possess the political will and strong character to combat corruption to the barest minimum in Nigeria Ajah (2019).

Prior to the Buhari’s administration, preceding administrations have instituted various legal frameworks, instruments, measures and policies designed to fight corruption in the country. Ironically, all these measures merely rendered corruption in Nigeria virulent. A number of factors account for this; (a) The Political Culture of office holders (b) Elites character of the Nigerian state(c) Greed and politics of vengeance character of the Nigeria state. Others are the penal code, apart from their wording complexity which created technical problems of interpretation and application, restricted the offence of corruption to members of the public service, this gave the impression that non-public servant could get away with active collaboration in commission of acts of corruption.

Corruption in the Context of Nigeria

Nigeria situation today in terms of corruption and the practice of it has become despicable. This was why Bishop Hassan Kukah of the Catholic Diocese of Sokoto, during his 2021 Easter message, in a paper titled, *Nigeria: Before our Glory Departs*, maintained that Nigeria’s current predicament reminds him of Israel’s situation that led to the death of Eli, the great high priest of Israel. He summed Nigeria’s present situation thus; “the country is taunted by Boko-Haram, ravaged by bandits, kidnaapers, armed robbers, and other merchants of death across the nation. These evils has led to a collective fear as to whether Nigeria’s glory is about to depart”. To him, Nigeria has remained one of the unhappiest nations in the world. As our clay-footed fight against corruption has not moved the need of transparency forward. Sadly, human life is hemorrhaging on daily basis in Nigeria, but the greatest tragedy is the death of empathy from those in power.

Corroborating Kukah’s view, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (2014) argued that Nigeria is one of the difficult and complex countries where corrupt people often adopt the language of reform to confuse decision makers, donors, development experts and observers. She cited the pension arena as being fraught with this type of deception. She further argues that despite efforts by Buhari’s administration to curb these financial leakages, for instance, the Buhari’s administration has build the financial institutions, systems and processes through the Integrated Payrolls and Personnel Information System (IPPIS), Government Integrated

Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS) and the Treasury Single Account (TSA) respectively. These technology platforms were introduced to help the federal government fight corruption and financial mismanagement in the country. Regrettably, despite these technology platforms introduced by this administration, the issue of corruption in the financial sector is far from over.

Obasanjo (2009), sees corruption as being responsible for instability in the polity in Nigeria. In his words, "corruption has been responsible for the political instability of successive governments since the first republic. He maintained that every coup since then has been in the name of stamping out corruption. Unfortunately, the cure turned out to be worse than the disease, and Nigeria has been worse for it. Nigeria's external image took a serious bashing; as our dear country began to fixtured on every corruption index". The eloquent testimony to the above submission are the manifest electoral malpractices in Nigeria such as snatching of ballot boxes, buying of votes, manipulation of figures and other rigging methods which often times results in electoral violence are all subsumed under corruption.

Arzard (2017) on his own part argued that even the common man on the streets of Nigeria is also not immune to the virus of corruption, only that he appears to be comfortable living with it. According to him, "the common man who suffers more from the consequences of corruption is content to pick the crumbs that fall from the tables of the high and mighty without batting an eyelid. He is content when dropouts are handed to him. He asks no question and only whines at the travails of the country. In his own small way; when opportunity avails itself, he steals from his neighbour or extorts from those lower than him too; the perception of the common man is that corruption is perpetrated only in the corridors of power or in government offices. This impression is erroneous because, He fails to realize that every day, various forms of corruption is perpetrated on the street where he daily lives.

For instance, the common man sees nothing wrong when a taxi driver violates traffic regulations, he sees nothing wrong when a voter trades his franchise for a morsel, he sees nothing wrong when driven by nepotism, apart from the November 6, 2021 Anambra state Governorship elections, the common man in Nigeria casts his vote for a candidate not because of the quality and competence of the candidate but simply because they both come from the same part of the country or because they both practice the same religion, or because they belong to the same political party.

Arzard (2017) argues also that the Nigerian students are quick to throw stones at government officials whom he sees as the root cause of Nigeria's woes. He blames them for stealing the country dry; he calls their conduct "corruption" and in his disdain, he brands them wicked, but he sees nothing wrong when he gratifies his lecturer to score high marks in his examination. The market women, he continues, will also pour invectives at public officers and policy makers whom he sees as the cause of inflation in the country. She blames them for the high cost in transportation, which makes her pay more to transport her wares to the market; she calls their conduct corruption but sees nothing wrong when she manipulates her scale and measures to the disadvantages of her buyers. She calls it business when she sells sub-standard goods passing same as original.

The police are saddled with the responsibility of maintaining law and order in the society and to apprehend and prosecute offenders. He is the one who effect the arrest of a public officer who demanded bribe to perform his official duties. He calls the public officer corrupt but sees nothing wrong when he demands bribe to grant administration bail even when on the bail form, it is boldly inscribed "bail is free" in the judicial system, corruption

has destroyed the basic concept of the rule of law in Nigeria. The law is constantly breached with impunity; people are fast losing their fears of the law as justice is given to the highest bidder.

From on-line information made available by naij.com of 18th June, 2016, the Clerics are also involved in corrupt practices. So, corruption has crawled into Religion in Nigeria. Today, many religious organizations have sprung up in Nigeria. The expectation would be that with the rise in religious activities in Nigeria, the country would experience renewed moral and ethical rebirth and discipline. Disappointingly, the country according to Ardzard (2017), has continued to sink deeper into decadence and infamy. To him, "it is now apparent that religion is also a tool for corruption and exploitation in Nigeria". He regretted the way and manner with which many worship centres are opened not with the aim of preaching salvation to lost souls but with the aim of freezing innocent citizens their hard earned resources.

Many clerics in the country who openly rebuked corrupt officials and served as checks to the excesses of public officers and government are now largely compromised. Instances abound; In Ebonyi state during the 2019 elections, the governor through financial inducement lured almost the Pastors in the state, into partisan politics under the aegis of 'Divine Mandate Pastors'. They were used to convince members of their various churches and worship centers to vote for a particular political party. Another was the role played by Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) during the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. Some pastors under this body were accused of receiving bribe to the tune of Seven Billion Naira (₦7bn.), from one of the political parties in the country to campaign against its main political opponents. Today, we talk about richest pastors in Nigeria which is very appalling as clerics live in affluence while those following live in abject penury.

Today in Nigeria, Clerics compete for the most expensive world class jets, opulent houses in choice areas, exotic cars, (in fleet), and expensive foreign wears among others. Yet, a country that is so richly blessed with wealthy Pastors, Church buildings everywhere including Kiosk, still record the reprehensible remarks of being among the most corrupt in the entire world. Which was why Malema (2020) comparatively, opine that Nigeria has failed significantly globally due to a lot of factors, for instance, he argues that China produces 2 million engineers yearly. Whereas, Nigeria produces 10 million Pastors every year yet witches are still disturbing the country. This calls for sober reflection.

Kwede, F.M and Ardzard, H.S (2007), maintained that the law regulates the conduct of affairs in a nation; it spells out the rights and duties of the citizens; it also defines the way of doing things. They went further to state that "appropriately, the law can be said to be the oil that ensures the smooth running of the engine of every nation. Where there is no respect for the law, there will be chaos and anarchy". In fact, the pervasive nature of corruption in Nigeria is better imagined than said. Corruption made greater percentage of Nigerian to live below poverty line not because the country lacks resources to enhance the living standard of her citizenry but because few people have connived to amass unto themselves what belong to all. Thus, if this trend is allowed to continue unabated, then the country is heading towards state failure.

Factors that Undermined Anti-Corruption Campaigns Under President Muhammadu Buhari

Tendency to shield political allies from investigation and persecution According to Osi (2017) in a work titled, *anti-corruption war: a campaign compromised. ...* "I belong to everybody and I belong to nobody" ..., was part of the inaugural speech that was made by the then

newly inaugurated President Muhammadu Buhari on 29th May, 2015. Osi (2017) argues that the punchy line resonated across the country, from the vast landscape of the North to the forest region of the South. The long awaited nemesis of the chronically corrupt and unrepentant enemies of good governance has arrived. It shall no longer be business as usual. The optimism on the part of the citizens was infectious. From a backdrop of a beaten and battered economy, widespread insecurity and a massively looted treasury, President Buhari served to the citizenry a three pronged dosage as antidote, namely; the anti-corruption drive, war against insecurity and economic rejuvenation.

It is common knowledge that the most potent weapon in the kitty of President Muhammadu Buhari was the famed iron-cast integrity he earned over the years in the course of his service to the fatherland. In order to clean the PDP rots of 16 years maladministration, President Buhari committed himself to taking on corruption in every area where it reared its ugly head and there was no doubt on the part of Nigerians and other watchers that this difficult battle would be won given the antecedents of its exponent. The zeal and seeming determination with which the onslaught against graft commenced under PMB 2015-2023 gave hope that indeed the nation was undergoing a rebirth; that a new Nigeria, free of malfeasance is possible. But recent developments have given Nigerians and indeed the international observers cause for serious concern, as some toes are getting too big, scared, and too sacred to be stepped upon. Hence, several petitions written against top members of the President Muhammadu Buhari's APC led administration such as former governors like Rotimi Chibuike Amaechi, RajiFashola, Rauf Aregbesola, Orji UzorKalu, Godswill Akpabio, George Akume and many more have fallen on deaf ears. Rather, the president has appointed these men into his cabinet as ministers and as such shielded them with juicy portfolios.

Another instance is the case of Mallam Ahmed Saleh, previous Chief Registrar of the Supreme Court who plotted with two others (that is, Mohammed Abdulrahman Sharif and Rilwanu Lawal) and took N2.2 billion belonging to the Apex court. They were additionally said to have gotten gratifications totaling N74.4 million from private temporary workers who were offering types of assistance to the apex court. Mallam Saleh was shown the way out by Jonathan's administration, but President Buhari recalled him and even advanced him as the secretary of Legal Council of Nigeria. Even the former acting chairman of EFCC, Ibrahim Magu was arraigned by the DSS for debasement and not much was done about it (Transparency International, 2018).

Corruption is by all accounts worsening in Nigeria under President Buhari's watch according to the most recent corruption perception index (CPI) Nigeria was positioned 136th in 2016 a noteworthy 12 places beneath where it was in 2015. Nigeria positioned 148 out of 180 nations surveyed in 2017 on the straightforwardness global yearly defilement observation record, demonstrating crumbling in view of debasement in public administration in Nigeria contrasted with 2016.

Fayose, the former governor of Ekiti state said the report was another vindication of his position that the All Progressive congress (APC) administration under President Muhammadu Buhari was not battling any corrupt practice. He referred to the instance of EFCC Chairman Ibrahim Magu as an instance of corrupt practice that is being hidden away from plain view. The truth of the matter is that President Buhari is managing the more awful type of corruption throughout the entire existence of Nigeria and interestingly, in spite of their publicity, they have not had the option to conceal the decay in their government from the International Organizations like the Transparency International (The Daily Post, 2018, February 22).

Thus, embezzlement of public funds and property has become the order of the day in Nigeria as those caught doing so are not giving commensurable punishment. Hence, others are not deterred from doing same. Rather everybody craves to get to a position where he could also embezzle without recourse to the future consequences of such action on the nation's already fragile economy and the society at large. As a result, Misappropriation of property or funds legally entrusted to someone in their formal position as an agent or guardian has continued unabated in the country due to compromised sincerity by the concerned authorities.

This according to Abel and Blackman (2014) has become systematic and has adversely affected the socio-economic cum political development of Nigeria. They further argued that "systematic embezzlement of public funds seriously undermines the capacity of the state to manage resources and deliver services". No doubt, this age-long social misnomer has become a cog in the wheel of progress in the country as the government has failed significantly to manage and redistribute resources fairly.

Fraud in the oil sector has become a culture in the country, over ₦ 1.3 trillion was spent between 2015 and 2019 with ₦4.923b of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) spent outside the budget; and the unaccounted ₦100billion in North East Development Commission and so much more. This made the PDP to call for President Buhari's resignation if under his watch such fraud could be committed despite his resolve to fighting corruption to conclusive end. Yet, the men who are chosen to join hands in fighting corruption are now the most corrupt as they are only interested in looting back the recovered loots as in the case of Maina and the former acting EFCC bosses, Ibrahim Magu, Lamorde and their accomplices (premiumtimes.ng, 2023)

For instance, Ibrahim Lamorde former EFCC Chairman was dismissed by President Buhari on November 9, 2015, for allegedly diverting the sum of ₦1trillion recovered funds into his private purse. But when summoned by Nigeria Senate, Ibrahim Lamorde refused to appear before the Senate and subsequently disappeared from the country without trace till date. Similarly, the immediate past EFCC boss, Ibrahim Magu was also summoned by the Senate on January 2016 to come and present a financial statement sum of what has been recovered so far, Magu also declined to that national call. Yet, the President was silent about this attitude of his appointees. Though the President is enthusing that his approach in fighting corruption will deter others from exhibiting such traits, but this attitude of shielding political allies from investigation and persecution has rather exacerbated corrupt practices in both high and low places in the country (*Vanguard*, 2021).

Failed Promises of President Muhammadu Buhari Administration's to curb Corruption and Insecurity in Nigeria

In consideration of the four major campaign promises of President Muhammadu Buhari as packaged by his promoters in his fourth and successful bid for the presidency, which were to terminate insecurity, fight corruption, revamp the economy, and in still discipline and vigour in governance, one could rightly say that Buhari has come to rescue the country from the age-long leadership quagmire. But everywhere one looks, failure was writ large, because under PMB's administration, none of the promises made was fulfilled to the best of my knowledge. This has led to trust deficit among politicians which has become universal in the country (*The vanguard*, 2022).

For the record, Buhari's promises to shift from the corruption-enhancing, waste-inducing, envelope-budgeting system that facilitates massive looting by civil servants, heads of ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) and federal legislators to a needs-

based planning was never fulfilled. In January, 2019, ahead of the general elections where President Buhari was seeking his second term bid, a civil right group, "Mandate Protection Vanguard", listed 62 promises made by Buhari and his party, the All Progressive Congress (APC) in the run-up to the elections and after the 2015 elections. Saying none had been fulfilled. Similarly, he failed beyond rhetoric to take direct interest in cleaning up the electoral system leaving the electoral umpire to struggle against entrenched and subversive interests. Indeed, under PMB's regime, respect for human rights has suffered and that perhaps punctured his claim to be a convert to democracy.

Hence, on Buhari's watch, failed promises have deepened public distrust. In terms of security, Buhari had repeatedly promised to secure the country, but Nigerians are yet to see this promise come to fulfillment as cases of extra-judicial killings has continued on daily basis across the country. In 2015 the major security challenges were the Boko Haram Islamist insurgency, proliferation of small arms and ethnic clashes in some North-Central states: Banditry was on its infancy in Zamfara state. The Jihadist were mainly active in the North-East states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa.

Insecurity has metastasized in the country under PMB's administration from 2015 to 2023. For the instance, the Boko Haram insurgents, initially driven to the fringes of the Lake Chad under Jonathan's administration have since spread to the North-Central and North-West. Just as the Fulani Herders and Militants are spreading deaths, arson, and ethnic cleansing in the North-Central states of Benue, Niger, Kogi, Kwara, Plateau and even in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Kidnapping-for-ransom has reached an industrial scale to become arguably the country's most thriving "industry" under PMB's administration from 2015 to 2023. In the South-East, criminals tagged "Unknown Gunmen" are painting the region in blood and on fire. In the South-West, criminal gangs, cult groups, and violent transport union thugs, as well as hooligans hired by politicians have rendered the zone unsafe. The South-South region is equally rife with cults, criminal gangs; oil-pipes line vandals and thieves (The vanguard, 2022).

According to CPI(2022), Buhari's promise to fight corruption has also proved to be hollow; as Nigeria was ranked 150 out of 180 countries in the Corruption Perception Index in 2022, the same spot it occupied in 2021; with no drastic improvement since Buhari took power. A report by Deutsche (2022), labeled the administration's avowed war on corruption as "hopeless" He noted that "instead, the country was sinking deeper into mire of corruption". President Buhari's promise to revamp the economy has also crashed. Rather Buhari's tenure delivered two recessions, degraded the naira by over 800 per cent, and raised the debts to #44 trillion, as well as #77.6 trillion CBN securitization.

Under President Muhammadu Buhari's administration from 2015 to 2023, railway lines were provided by the federal government in the Western and Northern parts of the country without any for the Southern part. The Southern part of the country sees it as marginalization at a time the federal government vigorously defended her decision to build railway to connect Niger Republic. Again, the same country that preaches federal character in appointments openly appoints all service chiefs from one religion and one ethnic group under the regime of a President who claims to belong to everybody.

The Punch (2023) maintains that, while on his frequent junkets abroad, President Buhari professed variously to have revamped the economy, delivered on infrastructure, tamed insecurity, reduced poverty and above all reduced corruption to a barest minimum. Some of his ministers have also been laying claims to delivering on the regime promises. Fashola, the Minister of Works and Housing for instance cites over 450 roads and bridges being rehabilitated across the country, Amaechi, the former minister of transportation,

boasts of new rail tracks, including the Ajaokuta –Itakpe rail, and rehabilitation of older track built mostly with Chinese loans. HadiSirika, the Aviation Minister on his own, presents the new terminal building at the Murtala Muhammad International Airport, Lagos and IATA certification among the strides made by the President. Other ministers also presented favourable scorecards of the President. But this is just one side of the story, as Nigerians will remember President Muhammadu Buhari and his administration more for their failed promises, poor leadership, and sustenance of the failed template of governance he inherited from his predecessor that is delivering divisions; poverty, unemployment, insecurity, and driving the country towards state failure (Punch, 2023).

Unemployment has risen to 33.3 per cent; energy prices have spiked, and more factories are closing under PMB's administration 2015-2023. Governance has suffered under a man who had promised to clean up the system. Distracted and constantly travelling and unavailable to give direction on the state of affairs in the country, the government, according to critics is on "auto pilot". Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) heads sometimes carry on as they please, as President Buhari's directives are often ignored. An example was an order to the Inspector General of Police to relocate to Benue state to crush the Fulani campaign of murder and mayhem that went unheeded. Likewise, the Judiciary is particularly vulnerable to political pressure and interference under PMB's administration 2015-2023.

The *Punch* (2023), in an article titled; "the Buhari years: failed promise, dashed hopes." Maintains that with just barely six weeks to the expiration of his tenure, President Buhari and his administration's officials have been claiming successes in governance over the past eight (8) years, prompting independent assessment, at home and abroad. Buhari has been reiterating his achievements, insisting that Nigerians would appreciate him favourably after his exit. Even though he is entitled to his self-appraisal, the President knew his dream for the country is yet to materialize as he intended. But it is the electorate, society's watchdogs, and of course history that have the final words. They will remember him also for among other things, his failure to redeem his promises and deliver good governance, and the negative impacts of these on the lives of the people.

Buhari's intention to restructuring the country which would have changed the country's trajectory for the better has failed too. Other failed promises of PMB include revival of Ajaokuta steel company, generation of 20,000 megawatts of electricity, construction of 3000 kilometers of superhighways, reducing maternal mortality by 70 percent, allotting 20 percent of budget to education, up-grading federal hospitals to a world standard, increasing the number of doctors, making the Naira equals to Dollar in value, and reforming the justice system among others. Yet, Under PMB's watch from 2015 to 2023, the power sector quagmire for example, has remained an insurmountable drawback to economic recovery in Nigeria. Unemployment and increased poverty has skyrocketed. In fact, the state under Buhari is fast enthroning unresponsive and shrewd capitalist order where the survival of the state is not linked to the survival of the citizenry.

The next is privatization, Buhari practically shut down the privatization process in the country. According to World Poverty Clock (2023), even plans to concession Airports, Seaports, as well as to privatize the Ajaokuta Steel Company did not materialized. His greatest disservice was his renegeing on the promise to fold the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) into two entities and privatize its four (4) comatose and loss-making refineries. The later misstep cost the country N4.39 trillion in subsidies alone in 2022 through importing petrol and defraying part of the cost.

The President broke a pledge to reduce the Presidential fleet. Instead, he and his coterie have been traveling around the globe at public expense the eight years under study. More so, his ambition to lift 100 million Nigerians out of poverty in ten years was not realizable as about 133 million Nigerians are now adjudged to be multi-dimensionally poor (World Poverty Clock, 2023).

Under President Muhammadu Buhari's watch, a promise to entrench community policing has remained an empty sound beat. Meanwhile, insecurity and criminality are ravaging every part of the country on daily basis. In sum, by Buhari's failure, he has further eroded trust in government and devalued the democratic inclusion. Whatever accomplishments he and his supporters claim and celebrate is immaterial compared to the widened trust deficit in a democratizing polity under his watch. For now the public rating of President Buhari's administration from 2015 to 2023 is one of few positives (successes) and many negatives (failures). Worst still, the administration represents dashed hopes of a population yearning for change (World Poverty Clock, 2023).

Theoretical Framework and Methodology Theory of moral development have been well developed by such notable scholars like Jean Piaget (1968), and expanded by Lawrence Kolberg in 1971, Kolberg & Candee (1984). These scholars' position is used for the analysis of this work. Morality simply refers to the relative goodness of people as it is reflected in their behaviour and beliefs. Piaget (1968) maintains that children progress from a pre-moral stage to a stage where morality is defined by outside authority (heteronomy). The final stage is one of moral autonomy where morality is defined in terms of the individual's judgment of right and wrong. Thus, a time comes when an individual matures to decide whether to do what is right or wrong.

Kolberg and Candee (1984), speak of three different aspects of morality: the ability to resist temptation; the amount of guilt that accompanies moral transgression and the standard by which individuals judge or discern what is right or wrong. These different aspects culminate into three progressive levels of moral development. The first is labelled pre-moral which characterized an authority-oriented definitions of good and bad as well as the belief that behaviour that leads to less pleasant outcomes are bad; The second level is period of conformity to family and peer standards, motivated in part by a desire to maintain good social relations. At the highest level of moral development, children re-examine the rules that have previously governed and theoretically arrived at a set of self-accepted principles of moral conduct to them.

From Piaget (1968) and Kolberg & Candee (1984), it implies that individuals redefine their behaviour towards good and bad as they grow. It therefore means that societal conditions and influences affect people's behaviours and perceptions of corruption and the practice of it. For instance, the Nigeria society perception of success has changed from what it used to be in the past when people work hard to earn it. Honour is given to those who can make it by all means (usually dubious) means, and red-carpet receptions are given to undesirable men and women with questionable character in the society. This has adversely affected the citizens' perception of life. Indeed, the decline of morality at the expense of hard-work, honesty and integrity can be adduced to be facilitators of corruption in Nigeria. This made Oyebode (2006) to infer that corruption connotes impropriety and therefore encompasses all forms of reprehensive, indecorous and infamous conduct of some officials and performance of judicial responsibility.

The importance of this theory to this study is that Nigerians are in dire need of a just state where the common wealth would be used for the benefit of all, high or low, educated or not, rich or poor, employed or unemployed, without recourse to ethnic, religious or

political considerations. This will discourage greed and avaricious quest for wealth by those in authority. This will go a long way in bridging the gap between the rich and the poor and therefore make corrupt practice in public and private places a thing of the past as actions and inactions of those in leadership positions will be driven by moral rectitude. The research design that was used in this study is survey design. The choice of the design was informed by the fact that only a part of the population was studied (sample) and the result was generalized for the entire population of the study.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Corruption hinders development and economic growth. It increases poverty and inequality; it dents the image of a country. The total eradication of corruption in Nigeria should therefore involve everybody and not only the government to maintain the “change begins with me” mantra of the present administration under President Muhammadu Buhari. So, for Nigeria to move forward and for the citizens to benefit from democratic dividends, a national awareness campaign is necessary to let Nigerians know the implications of corruption on the nation’s already fragile economy. (a) The powers of the two anti-graft agencies (ICPC and EFCC) should be strengthened to ensure timely prosecution of those indicted of corrupt practices because justice delayed is justice denied. (b) All those found culpable of corrupt practices should be banned from participating in politics. This will mitigate the ‘pardon to contest’ issue in the country. (c) The income of every public official should be thoroughly scrutinized by the code of conduct bureau before and after office to avoid falsification of claims (d) Capital punishment should be clearly spelt out for offenders as it is obtained in other developed countries. (e) The public servants should be well remunerated and motivated with improved staff welfare packages to have job satisfaction. With the above recommendations in place, corruption in both private and public places would be reduced to a barest minimum in Nigeria.

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