

Journal of Public Policy and Administration (JPPA)

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Crimes Commission in Promoting Good Governance and Accountability in
Nigeria**

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Article History

Received 26th January 2023

Received in Revised Form 15th February 2023

Accepted 27th February 2023

Abstract

Purpose: This study investigated the impact of the fight against corruption by the EFCC in promoting good governance and accountability in the current administration of president Muhammadu Buhari. Specifically the paper sought to examine the extent to which the fight against corruption by the EFCC have promoted good governance and accountability in Nigeria today.

Methodology: The methodology adopted is qualitative method of data collection and analysis where some informants with an experience and classified information on the subject matter were consulted for interview. The paper adopted Richard A Joseph (1996) Prebendalism theory on corruption. The data obtained was interpreted for analysis and findings.

Findings: The paper discovered that as laudable as the intentions and effort of the government to curb corruption through the EFCC and laws, they have left much to be desired. Infact the fight against corruption by the EFCC are of limited value because they fail to take into account much of the dynamics that support corruption making people now regard the EFCC as a tool to fight political enemies of the current administration.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The paper therefore recommends among others the need for greater transparency by the EFCC in combating corruption if its effort must promote good governance and accountability in Nigeria

Keywords: *Corruption, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, Good Governance, Accountability.*

INTRODUCTION

In every society and community, there are certain behaviours which are very much detested in the course of interpersonal relationship and group behaviour. The behaviours include cheating, lying etc. These behaviours which have moral, ethical, legal and religious implications are detested because they are inimical to proper and decent standards. The pattern of that encapsulates all this detested attitude is corruption (Comolau, 2019).

Corruption is a household name now in Nigeria and the negative impact it has on the socio-economic and political setting of a country can hardly be overemphasized. There has been global efforts to tackle this social evil in Nigeria through the creation and implementation of anti-graft laws and policies across Nations. Some Nations have been successful in their quest to reduce the level of corruption while others are still lagging behind in this light Nigeria seems to be a state that failed in combating corruption, from the common man in the street to the highest political figure, corruption is recurrent in almost every transaction in the Nigerian society.

Within the last one decade, the issue of corruption and good governance has taken the centre stage in development discourse worldwide. Corruption is shaking the foundation of the Nation as there is no sector that is not affected by this monster. Over the years governance has been characterized largely by ineffectiveness and inefficiency (Muhammed, 2019). High level corruption has been identified and being responsible for Nigeria's underdevelopment and poor governance. It is instructive to note that the Nigerian government and citizens have not totally committed themselves to introducing and implementing measures that can prevent or drastically reduce the extent and consequence of corruption in the country. Despite the fact that since 1975, every Nigerian government has introduced elaborate laws and institutions to tackle corruption, only for officials to turn such laws and institutions into fertile opportunity for corrupt practices and enrichment.

Consequently there have been a geometrical growth in the rate of corruption in the country (Etanbi, 2018). Etanbi noted that corruption is the source of many socio-economic and political problems that have militated against the attainment of good governance, political integration and stability as well as democracy in Nigeria. Governance generally has been riddled with corruption in Nigeria and it was estimated that Nigeria had lost to corruption as much as 800 billion dollars between (1999-2019) yet corruption in Nigeria preceded 1966 and has continued ever since beyond 2007 with greater frequency and intensity (Olorun, 2019). Since the return of the country to civil rule on May 29, 1999, the Nigerian government has taken a number of measures to address the problem of corruption and bad governance in the country and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) is one of them which shall take cognizance of.

The EFCC was established by an act of parliament in the year 2003 by the regime of President Olusegun Obasanjo, partially in response to pressure from the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF) which named Nigeria as one of 23 non-cooperative countries in the international community effort to fight money laundering with its head office in Abuja.

The EFCC was set up to rid Nigeria of economic and financial crimes and to effectively coordinate the domestic effort of the global fight against corruption and money laundering. The EFCC has successfully investigated and prosecuted and secured over 1425 convictions

between 2015 till date which included several top government functionaries both in past and present dispensation.

Despite the success attained by the EFCC in combating corruption in order to promote good governance, with reference to governance in Nigeria, Olumide 2019 has aptly summarized governance in Nigeria by noting that it has degenerated into a state of comma and it will take years for the fight against corruption to promote good governance if this is ever possible as corruption itself continues to permeate and pervade every facet of national life in Nigeria.

In view of the forgoing, the following specific objective will guide the study.

1. To examine the extent the fight against corruption by the EFCC have improved the level of accountability among elected government officials.
2. To examine the extent the fight against corruption by the EFCC have improved the level of transparency among elected government officials.

METHODOLOGY

Documentary design was adopted in this study. Data were collected using documentary instrument, direct observation, media commentaries and from scholarly writings on corruption and good governance. Content analytical approach was equally employed in the analysis of data generated for this study.

Theoretical Construct

Richard A Joseph (1996) Prebendalism theory on corruption was adopted for this study. Richard A Joseph Director of the program of African studies at North Western University is usually credited with first usage of the term to describe patron-clientelism or neo-patrimonialism in Nigeria.

According to the theory, state offices are regarded as prebends that can be appropriated by government officials who use them to generate materials, benefit for themselves and their constituents and kin groups and this has made Nigeria regularly be ranked high as one of the most corruption Nations of the world by transparency international.

Joseph used the term to describe sense of entitlement that many people in Nigeria feel they have to the revenues of the Nigeria state. Elected officials, government workers and members of the ethnic group and religious group to which they belong to feel they have a right to a share of government revenues. Prebendalism have been used to describe the nature of states derived rights over capital held by state officials in part of India and China, Europe and even in the Roman Catholic Church in the Catholic Encyclopaedia.

Giving credence to this assertion, Political Bureau (1988) observed that while the struggle for and the acquisition of wealth impoverished governance and the culture of politics. The struggles for and the exercise of power created the context and culture of predation and ruination of the Nigerian economy and Governance.

Regrettably in Nigeria it is those that impoverished the poor people in Nigeria that received traditional titles, religious recognition, birthday wished on pages of newspaper, radio and television, media, award of excellence from the combination of corruption eaters highlighted above.

The relevance of this theory to the study is that the self-destructive tendencies of prebendalism must be thoroughly understood if ways can ever be devised to escape its debilitating cycle of renewal and decay by the EFCC and other anti-corruption agencies of the government. Political elites, public servant and citizens at all levels in the process of government must be engaged in system transformation. Ways must be found by the EFCC to protect the state power from being prebendalized and then squeezed of its resources to satisfy the unceasing struggle among massed communities and their (self-serving) patrons for access for the public till.

Unless we reorder the fundamentally flawed logic of prebendalism which Nigeria has operated till now. The EFCC cannot be successful in its fight against corruption and enthrone good governance.

Conceptual Clarification

Concept of Corruption

Corruption is a multifaceted phenomenon that has multiple causes and effects. Scholars, policy makers and opinion leaders tend to be confused in the process of analysis due to complexity of the phenomenon as it takes on various forms. Defining activities as corruption is highly subjective and as Levi and Nelka 2018 points out, corrupt acts in some countries are seen as normal elsewhere. This made it possible for scholars to define corruption in different ways. It is not surprising therefore that there is often no consensus as to what exactly constitutes this concept.

Ikotun (2018) said that corruption comes from Latin word “rumpere” (to break) implying that something is broken. This something might be moral or social code of conduct more often an administrative use.

According to ICPC ACT (section 2) corruption include vices like Bribery, fraud and other related offences. Corruption is the abuse or misuse of power or position of trust for personal or group benefit (monetary and otherwise).

Senator Ali in 2018 defined corruption or corrupt behaviours as one that involves the violation of established rules for personal gain and Profit. According to upset and Leiz (2009) journal of public administration and governance issue, corruption refers to effort to secure wealth or power for private benefit. Ego (1989:7) sees corruption as the sacrifice of public for personal benefits but this definition of Ego seems to Vague and not detailed enough.

These definitions bring to light the extent to which corrupt practices are indulged and perpetrated. Corruption viewed from different perspectives by scholars share some common concern. There is general agreement among scholars that corruption is the abuse of entrusted powers for private gain. It hurts everyone whose life, livelihood or happiness depend on the integrity of people in a position of authority. It is a serious societal problem about which something has to be done to reduce its occurrence and prevalence (Fatile and Adejuwon 2018).

Concept of Governance

Governance has been defined as the use of political authority and exercise of control over society and the management of its resources for social and economic development. It encompasses the nature of functioning of a state’s institutional and structural arrangement, decision making process, policy formulation, implementation capacity information flows, effectiveness of leadership and the nature of the relationship between rules and the ruled (Diri

2019). Governance can also be described as the use of authority and the exercise of control over society and the economic development. It is the manner in which power is exercised by government in the distribution of a country's social and economic resources. The nature and manner of distribution is what makes governance good or bad one. Thus, according to Ogundiya 2018, when resources must be distributed to promote inequality or to achieve personal or group ambitions, the essence of governance which coincides with essence of politics and essence of the state is defeated. Therefore resources must be distributed responsibly, equitably and fairly for the realization of the essence of the state. As noted by Okeke (2019) governance is said to have evolved from the need to organize society towards the achievement of a common goal. An opinion worth considering is that society derives its roots from the solitary man who later got transformed into a family person to fulfill need for socialization within this union he enjoyed the love, care and company of family members and recognized their inherent and inalienable rights in order to preserve the love, harmony and cohesion within the family, society later grew out of family in response to the need to fulfill other higher needs and collective aspirations of the people through negotiation of a social contract between the governors and the governed. Governance therefore concerns not just the integrity, efficiency and economy of government but also its effectiveness terms of the ends to which government or organization and activity are directed.

Concept of Good Governance

Good governance refers to government that fulfills the terms of the social contract with the people. Good governance is a fundamental right in a democracy and it implies transparency and accountability. Good governance entails an administration that is sensitive and responsive to the needs of the people and is effective in coping with emerging challenges in society by framing and implementing appropriate laws and measures that includes strict rules of accountability. Good governance is largely depended on the extent to which the general citizenry perceives a government to be legitimate i.e committed to improving the general public welfare, deliver public services and dividend of democracy, favouring no special interest or group. It is among other things participatory, transparent and accountable. It is also effective, equitable, and promote the rule of law. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society and the nation at large. There is no doubt in Nigeria since the return to democratic rule in 1999, good governance has been elusive which many scholars believes is largely attributable to large scale level of corruption in different facets of the society and most especially the public sector in this present administration.

Forms of Corruption

Political corruption: Political corruption according to Morris 2018 takes place at the highest level of political authority. It occurs when politicians and public office holders who are entrusted with the power to formulate, establish and implement laws in the name of the people they represent are corrupt themselves.

Bureaucratic corruption: This type of corruption is found in public and private sector of the economy. It is the type of corruption we see and hear of everyday. It usually involves buying of favour from the bureaucrat or decision makers who formulate and implement policies. This type of corruption takes place at the implementation level.

Electoral corruption: This type of corruption according to Toke (2019) is the manifestation of electoral corruption which includes Rigging, and the use of thugs to intimidate people during elections. Electoral corruption is usually anti-productive because it used to entrust power to unqualified people in politics.

Systemic corruption: Systemic corruption occurs when corruption is integrated and accepted as essential aspect of the economy, social and political system or when it is embedded in a wider situation that helps to sustain it. Systemic corruption is not a special category of corrupt practice but rather a situation in which the major institutions and processes of the state are routinely dominated and used by corrupt individuals and groups and in which most people have no alternatives in dealing with corrupt officials. (Morris 2018).

Individual corruption: Individual corruption is the opposite of systemic corruption. Individual corruption occurs irregularly and therefore it does not threaten the mechanism of control nor the economy as such. It is crippling but it can seriously undermine morale and sap the economy resources.

Causes of Corruption

Poverty: Poverty is one of the major causes of corruption. Usually when a poor person is put in a position of authority according to Dike 2019, the only avenue available to him or her is how to amass wealth. Most of them engage in corrupt practices while others engage in it out of frustration

Unemployment: Unemployment Exposes the unemployed to the risk of illegal way if making money. In Nigeria today, most internet scammers and dishonest people engage in their business because they lack the opportunity of legitimate ways of making money.

Unemployment had made many people use their parents for ritual according to united Human Right Watch (2018).

Weak Government: Corruption is most prominent in the society or organization where there is weak government like Nigeria. In corrupt societies, Government are unable to stop corruption because they lack strong will to do so. Even if there is anti corruption agencies to tackle the case of corruption, such agencies are easily being swallowed up into corruption because of weak government.

Ostentations Living: One of the major problems of corruption in Nigeria today is ostentations living. Everybody wants recognition. Nobody wants to be second in command. Competition among peer groups is the order of the day. Everybody both those in position of authority or otherwise want honour and respect.

Favouritism and Nepotism: Favouritism according to Mbaya (2019) is usually seen as unfair treatment of persons or groups. It is a mechanism of abuse of power or position implying high biases in the allocation of job, positions of authority and resources to people, kinsmen family members, society and country. while nepotism is the favouritism shown to friends and relatives. Favouritism enables wrong persons to be employed in any establishment without proper qualification.

Effect of Corruption on Good Governance

According to Bardhan 2016, corruption and governance lie on a continuum but occupying opposite poles. Corruption is however mostly associated with violation of socioeconomic rights. It is the abuse of entrusted authority for private gain which represent a major hurdle on the road to social and economic development. It reduces the economy to extreme level of poverty. However to achieve good governance, corruption has to be curbed and rule of law maintained. In Nigeria with 36 states, good governance devoured of any corruption is required so as to make all sectors of the economy have the sense of belonging. However on the contrary, corruption has a far reaching negative effect on the behaviour of individuals in any nation which eventually goes back to undermine the whole system of good governance itself. Systemic corruption according to Ayobani (2018) breeds a culture of corruption and skews the people perception of what is right and wrong, for a number of countries like Nigeria where it has been institutionalized, while wealth and power have become the measure of success, corruption has become socially acceptable sometimes even acceptable for people to be called corrupt. Energies of a large number of people are channeled towards occupying position in the government to partake of the fruit of a corrupt system.

From the foregoing, the effects of corruption on good governance in Nigeria can never be underestimated. These negative impacts according to Dike Gburu Gburu (2019) include the following.

1. Misallocation of Talents: Corruption often leads to appointment of corrupt officers to positions of authority with no regard to educational qualification or merit when most appointment are made.
2. Diversion of development resources for private gain impeding states ability to use its available resources to progressively achieve the full realization of socio economic rights.
3. Corruption leave negative impact on quality of infrastructure and public service.
4. Low levels of economic growth is also another negative impacts of corruption on good governance.
5. High tax burdens and few services.

Therefore it is pertinent to note that corruption undermines good governance in Nigeria by fueling popular disillusionment with politicians who are corrupt. To be more specific, corruption can lead to a vicious circle where corrupt people manipulate the political system to get into power only to further corrupt the political system and indeed the entire society (El rufai 2019).

Corruption prevents leaders from discharging their duties efficiently to the admiration of their followers. It prevents the delivery of goods and services to the civil populace, it erodes the integrity of the people in government and pauperize the citizenry.

Magu (2018) notes that politics under develops Nigeria because corruption has crept into the political life of the Nation. He further stated that political power is used for the accumulation of wealth. Government looks the other way and a few people using the instrumentality of power corner the wealth of the nation and appropriate our common patrimony for private iniquitous benefits. Thus corruption weakens the accountability of state officials, reduces transparency in

the work of the state institutions and allows human right violations go unpunished. (UN REPORT 2019).

Corruption hurts a lot of people as money that would have been use to reduce poverty in the country is being channeled into the pockets of a select few. Government activities has increasingly become a fertile ground for this monster of corruption. (Basheka 2019). It has been noted that 70 percent of Nigeria enterprises pay graft to secure government contracts which are usually worth about 1 and 15 percent of the contract value (National integrity system 2018). The Auditor general report of the 2018 financial year revealed irregularity in most audited institutions and federal agencies because of over invoicing, non retirement of cash advances, lack of audit inspection, payment for jobs not done, double debiting, contract inflation, lack of receipts to back up purchase made, brazen violation of financial regulations, release of money without the reporting period (National Integrity System 2018) about 69 ministries, department and Agencies including the presidency and National

Assembly were indicted by the report.

These crimes continue to happen in spite of ongoing government reforms efforts of using EFCC to reduce the level of corruption in public today so as promote good governance in Nigeria today.

Findings on the Impact of the Fight against Corruption by the EFCC in Promoting Good Governance

Fighting corruption is a necessary foundation for good governance and the rule of law which are the building blocks of sustainable development in a country (TNU 2014).

In Nigeria, public roles and responsibilities are usually entrusted to the public office holders by the people in a quest for good governance especially in the current democratic system. Most of the times this trust has been corrupted whereby these public roles and resources used were used for private benefit.

With the emergence of a new government in the year 2015 which listed war against corruption as one of his administration major agenda when he came into power in 2015.

Many Nigerians were hopeful that the country's corruption level would be minimized because eradication of corruption in the country was the major campaign promise of the government as such good governance would be enthroned.

The EFCC swung into action immediately because the role of the EFCC in achieving good governance cannot be underestimated. This can be gleaned from the central role it plays in fighting corruption in Nigeria. The fact that Nigeria is still grappling with the problem of bad governance goes to show the level of non-accountability and present manifestation of crude corruption that is often, naked, undisguised and yet legally untenable.

The EFCC which was established by an Act of parliament in the year 2004 by the Regime of president Olusegun Obasanjo was set up with the statutory power to investigate corruption cases of both public and private individuals of all economic and financial crimes as seen in its recent raid of yahoo boys. The commission have successfully investigated and prosecuted and secured over 1425 convictions between 2015 till date which included three former governors and several top government functionaries

The commission recently announced that 939.51 billion was recovered in the last four years with several convictions while 1.28 trillion cash was recovered from 2013 till date. The EFCC has continued to improve since 2015 till date in terms of conviction profile. While the commission secured 170 convictions in 2016, the record for 2017 was 190 and that of 2018 was 312 while from January 2019 till date, over 890 convictions have been recorded. This is unprecedented. The positive trajectory of conviction record is replicated in asset recovery. From 2015 till date several hundred of billions of naira have been recovered by the commission. Furthermore within the same period, several properties including automobiles, motorcycles, lands, farmlands, housing estate, company shares, ocean going vessel, petroleum products, plazas, hotels, fuel stations, bank accounts and jewelry were forfeited to the federal government by order of court. (MAGU 2019). He further stated that and I quote “The EFCC have been making efforts to curb corruption in the country through its dogged fight and while we celebrate these milestone achievement of the commission, we must continue to remind ourselves that there is still so much to be done.

Corruption is still rampant and bad governance and lack of accountability continue to increase and overall the institutional responses to it are in some instance weak.

Conclusion

Corruption is Nigeria biggest challenge. Its clear to every citizens that the country has an extremely high level of corruption that has resulted to the bad governance in the country (Oyejide 2018). Resources that could go into infrastructure, education etc. integral to promote good governance and ensure accountability end up lining in someone’s pocket due to effect of corruption.

As laudable as the intentions of the current administration to tackle corruption through the EFCC and other institutions, their effort are of limited value because they fail to take into account much of the dynamics that support corruption in the country. Thus people now regard the laws as paper tigers meant only to be enforced when breached by low level public officers and members of the opposition political party. This analysis show that corruption will continue inspite of the effort of the EFCC in tackling the menace because the perpetrators do not fear any consequence as the fight by the EFCC is a selective one (Oyinola 2019).

Recommendations

- i. In order to prevent corruption in Nigeria through the EFCC, government should emphasize on transparency, integrity and accountability in all their private and public transactions so as to increase the level of accountability and transparency among government officials.
- ii. Good people in politics that can provide good leadership with vision and effort needed to exploit a nations competitive advantages and create the inclusive institutions that would enable growth, development and prosperity to emerge should be elected and selected for any political office in the state. This is because good leaders, honest leaders, just leaders, that shun all forms of corruption are likely to lead their nations and the state to prosperity than others that pretend to be religious but are dishonest, corrupt and unjust.

- iii. Likewise, people who have been found guilty of corruption should never be granted any form of pardon or be appointed into any political office. This if properly followed will act as deterrent to others in the economy.
- iv. Impunity clause should be removed in governance. Every political office holders discovered to have diverted or mismanaged public resources should be made to face the rot of the law no matter the position he or she occupies in government. This if properly implemented will act as a checkmate to everybody in government and make them to be transparent in governance thereby reducing corruption to its barest minimum.
- v. Money bag politicians should be banned from participating in political activities of the country. This is because the moneybag are the perpetrators of corruption and corrupt practices in the country. They often pump out money to win the mind of the populace during campaign and after winning the election mismanage the resources meant for development into privates without query or molestation and this is the major cause of corruption in Nigeria.
- vi. Also the judicial system, especially in relation to cases of corruption requires a overhaul. Unnecessary delays by way of adjournment make the fight against corruption by the
- vii. EFCC look like a child's play. The laws should be tinkered with in such a way that officials accused of corruption are expeditiously tried and punished appropriately as envisaged by the president's plan of establishing a special court for corrupt cases.
- viii. Finally, the EFCC and other anti-corruption agencies should be strengthened as an apparatus for maintaining the integrity of public accountability among public servants. One can go on and on ad infinitum, ad nauseam but if Nigeria leadership studiously and conscientiously accepts these thoughts and those of other well-meaning thinkers and scholars, we might yet win the battle against corruption and enthrone good governance while attendant beneficial effects will redound to the good of Nigerians.

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