



## Political corruption and poverty in Nigeria: A literature perspective

Aidelokhai Dennis Idonije<sup>1</sup>, Musa Usman<sup>2</sup>, Abu Idris<sup>3</sup>, & Sulaiman, Fatima Zahra<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2,3&4</sup>Department of Public Administration, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai  
Email: [abuidris769@gmail.com](mailto:abuidris769@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

*It is a common knowledge that corruption is one of the problems daunting socio-political and economic development of both developed and developing nations. Corruption Perception Index demonstrates that poor countries experience high levels of corruption than rich countries. Literature abound reveals that corruption are more evident during the political era and consequently justify reason for high level of poverty. On this premise, this paper utilized secondary data to examine the relationship between political corruption and poverty in Nigeria. The paper reveals that poverty intervention schemes have not achieved desired results due to endemic political corruption. To alleviate poverty, the paper recommend that the leadership should justly commit to combating corruption from the top to down; strengthening corruption control mechanisms, severely apprehend and punish the culprits. In the same vein, the citizens should be mobilized to demand for stewardship from their representatives in government to enhance transparency and accountability. Above all, immunities of politicians should be detached, law courts should be strengthened to adjudicate without fear or favour and public annual declaration of assets of political office holders should be made obligatory.*

**Keywords:** Political, corruption, poverty, literature, Nigeria

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### 1.0 Introduction

Poverty remains a critical challenge to human evolution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the topmost subject of discussion in the development agenda of most developing nations. Poverty is a common denominator of all the economies of the world and a fundamental antithesis to the dignity of mankind. As a global and multi-dimensional phenomenon, poverty affects approximately four billion people across the globe and more devastating in the developing world of Africa, Asia and Latin America (Greig, Hulme, & Turner, 2007). Among the three continents, Africa remains the poorest, most industrially backward, most indebted, most crisis ridden, most politically unstable, most

marginalized in the world (Abinbola, 2012). Poverty is as old as history of mankind and it affects many aspects of human conditions physically, morally and psychologically. It is phenomenon that has zero consideration for age, race, religion, ethnicity or nationality. Hence, it has rendered many useless, hopeless, helpless, powerless, voiceless and visionless (Mishra, 2010; Roy & Chatterjee, 2006; Savadogo et al., 2015).

Corruption is a global phenomenon. It is as old as human existence. Ancient civilization has their traces of wide spread illegalities and corruption. Thus corruption could be traceable to ancient Egypt, Israel, Rome, Greece and from democratic societies to



dictatorial, from socialist economies to capitalist societies. Even Christians, Muslims, Hindu and Buddhist culture have their share of corruption.

Corruption is so pervasive across the globe involving both leaders and the led. The 1996 study of corruption by transparency international and Goettingen University, ranked Nigeria as the most corrupt nation, among 54 nations listed in the study with Pakistan as the second highest (Moore, 1997:4). Also the 1998 transparency international Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of 85 countries, Nigeria was 81 positions out of the 85 countries pooled (Lipset and Lenz, 2000:113). In 2001, Corruption Perception index (CPI), the image of Nigeria slipped further down, ranking 90 out of 91 countries pooled, with second position as most corrupt nation, with Bangladesh coming first (Ibid).

The corruption level in Nigeria has made Nigeria a paradox, so wealthy, yet so poor, so endowed; yet so deprived. Nigeria makes more money than many countries of the world but unfortunately is ranked as the world's 25 poorest country apparently because most Nigerian 92% live below the poverty line as they subsist on less than two dollars (N320) a day (Suleiman. 2011). According to the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) no fewer than 33million Nigerians are unemployed, many of them University graduates, while the 2010 global monitoring report of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) puts the number of out of school children at over 8 million. Corruption Perception Index demonstrates that poor countries experience high levels of corruption than rich countries. Literatures contradictorily reveal that corruption are more evident during the political era and consequently justify reason for high level of

poverty. These inconsistencies establish a gap to conduct further studies.

### **Methodology**

This paper is qualitative in nature and it used secondary sources to explore the effects of political corruption on poverty in Nigeria state. Specifically, the paper used both national and international articles from reputable journals, text books, magazines among others.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study adopted “Broken Windows Theory to examine the relationship between political corruption and poverty in Nigeria. The theory was postulated in 1982 by George Kelling and James K. Wilson in their endeavor to demonstrate how corruption spread across the globe. The proponents postulated that if broken window is allowed in building, all other windows will break and this will impinge on the whole structure. It is this declaration that inspires the authors to develop their theory of “Broken Windows Theory of Corruption”. The breakdown is communities that could not repair their atrocities and allows crimes to thrive liberally. The theory emphasizes that communities should accord paramount attention to minor crimes and offences as preclusion to the bigger ones. In a situation that this is derelict or not done by the authorities, negligible crimes will transmute into a bigger and uncontrollable ones leading to all sorts of crimes without measures of control and consequently makes the community frail and bound for ineptitude (Alford, 2012). The theory is relevant to this study as it explains factors responsible for corruption (systemic failure breeds prevalence of impunity and blatant disregard of institutional law and unlawful liberty or arrogance of power among the politicians).



## **Conceptual Discourse**

### **Concept of Poverty**

Poverty is a relative term; it denotes different things to different people. Poverty is not stationary, it changes overtime, it transforms across the different regions and it adjusts within individual economic group and modifies various economic hierarchies within a nation including the household's levels with differences in the perception among men and women. This made the precision and global acceptability of the definition of poverty elusive (Rajasekhar, 2004). The World Bank defines poverty as a "pronounced deprivation in well-being". By well-being, we mean the control over commodities in general, so, people are more comfortable if they have authority over their resources. On the other hand (Greenberg, 2005) perceived poverty alleviation as any process which seeks to ease or relieve the level of poverty among a group of people or countries.

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and certainly among the black nations of the world with a projected population of 180 million (NPC, 2013). Nigeria is potentially a wealthy state naturally endowed with oil, promising options of agriculture, mineral fossils, and abundant innovative and resilient human capital to transform the economy vis-a-vis improving the living conditions of its citizenry (Chindo, Naibbi, & Abdullahi, 2014). Despite all the resources, mainstream of Nigerians are still wallowing in abject poverty, incapable to meet up with their basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, good water, medical services, and transport. Nigeria is classified among the stragglers and ranked as the third country accommodating 7 percent population of the world poorest, despite its rich

resources (Ezeoke, 2011; Gabriel, 2014; Gbemre, 2015; Ifeanyija, 2013).

In addition, Nigeria is regarded as the giant of Africa for her prominent roles in peace building, conflict resolutions, investment in human and financial resources to unite the continent (Jameh, 2014). However, the colossal resource endowment does not reflect the economic reality, as over 80 percent of Nigerians have insignificant essential infrastructural facility to make life meaningful (Chinn, Eichengreen, & Ito, 2014; Van de Walle, 1996). Relating the UN position to Nigeria, the economy is characterized by paradox of growth without poverty reduction and the trickledown effect of growth on the poor, slow response of government to the pervasive and persistent problem of poverty among the downtrodden (Mentan, 2014). The manifestation of poverty among Nigerians is material deprivation and powerlessness which is evidence in the lack of good food, potable water, steady electricity supply, inability to send children to good schools and inability to pay for good health care. For victims of poverty, the problem starts with joblessness or failure of the system to sustain such activities, which ensure the continued profitability of enterprise or skill or craft.

The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) revealed that about 92 percent of the Nigerian population survives on less than \$2 daily, while 71 per cent live below \$1 daily (Umukoro, 2014). In recognition to the global scale of poverty, the United Nation General Assembly in December, 1996 proclaimed the first decade for the eradication of poverty (1997-2008). The Assembly examines the relationship between growth, employment and poverty, arguing that employment is the missing link in the growth and poverty reduction



equation. Similarly, in December, 2007 the Assembly further declared the second decade for eradication of poverty (2008-2017) echoing that, eradicating poverty was the greatest global challenge facing the world and a core requirement for sustainable development especially for developing countries like Nigeria (Hill & Rapp, 2009). This proclamation renewed the intention of international communities on poverty reduction policies and programs to improve incomes and standard of living of the poor. In its millennium declaration, the United Nations (2000) resolved to liberalize billions of people wallowing in abject poverty through creating enabling environment for economic and socio-political development across the globe (Waituru, 2014).

Political history shows that, successive governments in Nigeria have continually made efforts to address the challenges of poverty alleviation through various Agriculture Intervention Programs (AIPs) perceived as the major occupation of dominant citizens. However, sixty years after independence, the government has achieved less in this regard, especially when one considers the materials and financial resources deployed into tackling the scourge. An initial effort to combat the scourge of poverty was through rural development and planning. It was however observed that the inability of the government to effectively implement these programs led to most of the current challenges of poverty in Nigeria (Nwaobi, 2003). In another study, Obadan (2001) asserts that anti-poverty initiatives were essentially provisional in nature as it only concentrates on growth, basic needs, and rural development approaches, hence, the government was unable to sustain the scheme to effectively fight poverty.

The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) has been combating poverty through some Agricultural Intervention Programs (AIPs), such as Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution (GR), River Basin Development Authorities (RBDA), National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA), Agricultural Development Programs (ADP), Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS), Strategic Grains Reserves Program (SGRP) to mention but few (Hussaini, 2014). As earlier reported, Garba (2006) states that, the Pre-SAP programs were mostly designed to take care of some specific objectives, such as employment generation, enhancing agricultural output and income, and curtailing the exodus of rural-urban migration that have greatly contributed to high level of poverty in Nigeria. Corroborating the above argument, Oshewolo (2010) upheld that, the above agricultural programs yielded insignificant result on poverty reduction in Nigeria. Challenging the result of Operation Feed the Nation, the author claims that the poor were wrongly targeted and this continues to be a setback up to today. On the Green revolution, the author contends that the influential people were inspired by the policy to engage in the fortune of acquiring lands for the purposes of obtaining grants and loans for green farming instead of the target poor in the country

Correspondingly, Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) was introduced as poverty intervening agenda. The program witnessed the falling of the socio-economic and political situation of the country, thus the government introduced Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Better Life Program (BLP), People's Bank of Nigeria (PBN),



Community Banks Program, Family Support Programs (FSP), and the Family Economic Advancement Program (FEAP) among others. In spite of these anti-poverty measures taken by the government, poverty still prevails (Oshewolo, 2010).

Poverty has consistently been on the increase in Nigeria, showing the futility of the policies, programs and projects embarked by the government. The failure of these measures has been attributed to lack of targeting mechanisms for the poor; political and policy instability; poor coordination of various programs; budgetary negligence and diversion. Others factors include governance problems; lack of accountability and transparency; lack of mechanisms for the sustainability of the programs, corruption among others (Obadan, 2001).

The effects of poverty on individuals in a society is numerous and manifest in various forms through creation of a “poverty cycle” operating across multiple levels, individuals, local, national and global. One of the major diseases of poverty is poor health. One third of deaths; some 18 million people a year or 50,000 people per day, are due to poverty related causes. In some 270 million people, most of them women and children have died as a result of poverty since 1999 (World Health Organization, 2010). Those living on poverty suffer low life expectancy. According to the World Health Organization, hunger and malnutrition are the single gravest threats to the world public health and malnutrition is by far the biggest contributor to child mortality, present in half of all cases (The Star *velings.economist* 2011). The World Bank warned that 100 million people were at risk of sinking deeper into poverty (Borger 2008). Threats to the supply of food may also be caused by drought and water crisis.

Approximately, 40 percent of the world’s agricultural land is seriously degraded. In Africa, if current trend of soil degradation continue, the continent might not be able to feed just 25 percent of its population by 2025, according to United Nation University’s Ghana based Institute for Natural Resources in Africa (News.mongabay.com 2010 -10-24). Every year nearly 11 million children living in poverty died before their fifth birth day. 1.02 billion People go to bed hungry every night. (News.mongabay)

Poverty increases the risk of homelessness. Slum dwellers that make up a third of the world’s urban population live in poverty. According to a report by the United Nation (2010) there are over 100 million street children worldwide. Most of the children living in institutions around the world have a surviving parent or close relatives, and the most commonly entered orphanages because of poverty. Experts and child advocates maintain that orphanages are expensive and harm children’s development by separating them from their families (Ibid).

Many women become victims of trafficking, the most common form of which is prostitutions, as a means of survival and economic desperation. Deterioration of living conditions can often compel children to abandon school in order to contribute to the family income, putting them at risk of being exploited. For instance in Zimbabwe, a number of girls are turning to prostitution for food to survive because of the increasing poverty (Globalpost 2010).

#### **Political Corruption and Poverty**

Corruption is a spiritual or moral impurity or deviation from an ideal. From the economic perspective, corruption is payment for services or material which the recipient is not due, under law. This may be called bribery either in business, politics or sports;





collusion, cronyism, electoral fraud, embezzlement, influences peddling, nepotism, organized crime, patronage, price fixing etcetera.

Corruption is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. It is on record that Juan D. Peron of Argentina and Batista of Cuba and Augusta Pinochet of Chile among others were known to have deposited their ill gotten wealth in Swiss bank and other foreign financial institutions just like General Sanni Abacha of Nigeria, instead of investing the loots in their local economy (Adams 1995). During his inaugural address, Olusegun Obasanjo (1999 May, 29) vowed to tackle the menace of corruption in Nigeria. He said "Corruption will be tackled head on, no society can achieve its full potential if it allows corruption to become the full blown cancer it has acquired in Nigeria and that there will be no sacred cows in his process to stamp out corruption in the society" It is self evident that the corrupt big cows are still walking freely and recruiting more corrupt cows into their fold during and after Obasanjo's exit as president of Nigeria. It should be noted that corruption diverts scarce public resources into private pockets, literally undermines effective governance, endangers democracy and erodes the social and moral fabric of the nation. The lust for power and corrupt practices is not strictly a Nigerian problem. It is indeed a global phenomenon, which manifest in both the ruling elites, business executives and even the ruled. The resultant effect of corruption is mass poverty to which we shall now focus.

Reiterating on the danger of corruption, Buhari (2014) during his campaign warned Nigerians against voting for the Peoples Democratic Party, (PDP) at the general polls if they truly want to end corruption in the country. He stressed on the danger of

allowing corruption thrive in the country." *If we don't kill corruption this corruption will kill us. If you make a mistake of voting the PDP I assure you, you will regret it*"

According to the CNN (2009) report, six million children die of hunger every year, 17,000 every day. In sub-Saharan Africa extreme poverty went up from 41 percent in 1981 to 46 percent in 2001, which combined with growing population, increased the number of people living in extreme poverty from 231 million to 318 million people (World Bank : 2010). In the early 1990s, some of the transition economic of Eastern Europe and Central Asia experience a sharp drop in income. The collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in large declines in GDP per capita, of about 30 to 35 percent between 1990-1998; when it was at its minimum. As a result, poverty rates also increased although in subsequent years per capita incomes recovered and the poverty rate dropped from 31.4 percent of the population to 19.6 percent.

Political corruption takes place at the highest levels of political authority. It is the abuse of public power, office, or resources by elected government officials for personal gain either through extortion, soliciting or offering bribes (Chinhamo et al, 2007). It can also take the form of political office holders, political decision makers, who are entitled to formulate, establish and implement the laws in name of the people are themselves corrupt. It also takes place when policy formulation and legislation is tailored to benefit politicians and legislators. Political corruption is sometimes seen as similar to corruption of greed as it affects the manner in which decisions are made, as it manipulates political institutions, rules of procedures and distorts the institutions, rule of procedures and distorts the institution of



government. (Encycopaedia Americana, 1999).

Scholars argue that political corruption is a nuisance to political and socioeconomic development in Nigeria. It impedes good governance and provision of public goods and services which throws many people into the line of poverty in Nigeria. By implication, the meagre resources meant for developmental projects such as provision of quality education, good healthcare delivery services, good roads network, electricity and other services being sidetracked into the personal pockets of self-centered and greedy individuals who have access to the power control. Many scholars (Jain, 2000, Hope, 2000 Ogundiya, 2010 & Mohammed 2012) identified political corruption as the major obstacles against good governance and national development in Nigeria.

Over the years, political corruption has been proliferating in Nigeria. The perception index of Nigeria in 1996 shows that, the country ranked 54 out of 54 countries surveyed by Transparency International. The perception index rased to 1.9 and Nigeria ranked 81 out of total of 85 countries surveyed. The perception index rose higher to 2.5 in 2013 and the rank rose up to 144 out of 175. The figure keeps on rising as in 2014; Nigeria's perception index reached 2.7 ranking 136 out of 176 countries in the world (Transparency International, 2015).

As the rate of political corruption increased in Nigeria, so also the level of poverty is increasing. For instance, national poverty level is 42.7 in 1992, 65.6 in 1996, 70 % in 2013 and 70.6 % in 2014. This shows clearly that there is a correlation between political corruption and poverty in Nigeria and thus, corruption can be seen as the main reason behind the continuous persistence of abject penury in Nigeria. Despite the establishment of various anti-graft agencies

and the existence of different policies targeted towards poverty alleviation, the rate of corruption keeps on increasing there by increasing the level of poverty (Atuoel, 2007).

The causes of corruption are myriad with political and cultural variables. Some evidence points to link between corruption and social diversity, ethno-linguistic and factionalization; and the proportion of country's population adhering to different religious traditions (Lipset and Lenz; 2000). Studies have shown that corruption is widespread in most non-democratic countries, and particularly in countries that have been branded neo-patrimonial, kleptocratic and prebendal (NORAD, 2000) Therefore the political system and the culture of a society could make the citizens more prone to corrupt activities. Some of the fundamental causes of corruption include inequality in the distribution of wealth; political office as the primary means of gaining access to wealth; conflict between changing moral codes; and absence of a strong sense of national community (Bryce; 1921);

On the contrary, Ndiulor (1999) contended that the causes of corruption in Nigeria cannot deviate significantly, from the above factors. The author acknowledged that obsessions coupled with materialism, compulsion for a short cut to affluence, glorification and approbation (of ill gotten wealth) by the general public are among the reasons for the persistence of corruption in Nigeria. Corroborating the above, lack of ethical standard throughout the agencies of government and business organization in Nigeria is a contributory factor to corruption. According to Bowman (1991), ethic is action, the way we practice our values; it is a guidance system to be used in making decisions. The issue of ethics in



public sector (and in private sector life) encompasses a broad range, including a stress on obedience to authority, on the necessity of logic in moral reasoning, and on the necessity of putting moral judgment into practice. Unfortunately, many office holders in Nigeria (appointed or elected) do not have clear conceptions of the ethical demands of their positions. Even as corrupt practices are going out of control in Nigeria, little attention, is being given to this ideal.

In the same vein, poor reward system and greed contributed significantly to the high rate of corruption in Nigeria. The reward system in Nigeria is very poor and perhaps the poorest in the world. Nigeria is a country where national priorities are turned upside down. Hard work is not rewarded, but rogues are often glorified in Nigeria. Thus, the trouble with Nigeria is not that our capabilities are inadequate. It is that our priorities are inadequate. Peer community and extended family pressure and polygamous households are other cause of corruption in Nigeria (Onalaja and Onalaja; 1997). The influence of extended family system and pressure to meet family obligations are more in less developed societies. Lawrence Hamson (1985; 7) acknowledges that the extended family system is an effective institution for survival, but notes that it possess a big obstacle for development. Edward Lotterman (2002) noted that bad rules and ineffective taxing system, which makes it difficult to track down people financial activities breeds corruption. Ineffective taxing system is a serious problem in Nigeria. The society should institute appropriate and effective taxing system where everyone is made to explain his or her sources of income, through end-of-the year income tax filling to check corruption. The lukewarm attitudes of those who are

supposed to enforce the laws of the land (Judges, police officers and public officials) could lead to people engaging in corrupt behaviour, knowing that they would get away with it.

Lipset and Lenze (2000: 112) note that those going through corrupt means (through the backdoor) to achieve their objectives have little or no access to opportunity structure. The hindrance to economic opportunity, could be as a result of their race, ethnicity, lack of skills, capital, material and other human resources. Cultures that stresses economic success as an important goal but nevertheless strongly restrict access to opportunities will have higher level of corruption. This probably explains the high incidence of corrupt behaviours in Nigeria. Many Nigerians are highly achievement oriented, but they have relatively low access to economic opportunities. For instance in Nigeria, many civil servants work for months without getting paid (2002; This Day, July 7) yet the society expects them to be honest and productive. Many of those public servants working without pay are parents, who are expected to train their children in schools with empty pockets. Under this situation, many citizens would reject the rule of the game (societal norms) and criminally innovate to make ends meet.

The brazen display of wealth by public officials, which they are unable to explain the source, points to how bad corruption has reached in the society. Many of those officials before being elected or appointed into offices had little or modest income, after assumption of office they become owners of many properties around the world. In contrast, with United States, many of the elected officials are known to be modest in living. Though, there are some bad ones among them, but they face the law when found wanting.





The above, including, bad practices of non-payment or late payment of workers, bad business culture of delays and refusal or late payment for services executed by business establishments in Nigeria are all forms of corruption. These kinds of behaviour have the tendency to scare away foreign and local investors, with huge negative effects on the economy and thus encouraging poverty.

### **Effects of Corruption**

The effects of corruption on a nation's socio-political and economic development are myriad. The negative effects impact economic growth as it among other things reduces public spending on education (Mauro; 1997). Lipset and Lonz (2000:112) note that the effect on growth, is in part, a result to reduced level of investment, as it adds to investment risk. The effect of corruption on education comes from the fact that the government spends relatively more on items to make room for graft. Corrupt government officials would shift government expenditures to areas in which they can collect bribes easily. Large and hard-to-manage projects, such as air ports or high ways make fraud easy. Development projects are often made unnecessarily complex in Nigeria to justify the corrupt and huge expenses in it.

Despite the immoral aspect of corruption, Pye (1967), argues that corruption can be beneficial to political modernization or development. Political modernization or development means growth in the capacity of a society's governmental structures and processes to maintain their legitimacy over time (presumably in time of social change) by contributing to economic development, National integration and administrative capacity... (Ibid)

Max (1955) opined that the scandals associated with corruption sometimes have the effect of strengthening a value system of

a society as a whole. The scandals associated with the General Abacha's era in Nigeria (looting of the treasury and human right violation) have given the nation a food for thought on how to strengthen the nation's essential governmental structures to avoid the reoccurrence of the atrocities in future.

Corruption may help to ease the transition from traditional life to a modern political life. The vast gap between literate officials and illiterate peasants, which is often characteristics of the countryside, may be bridged if the peasants approach the officials bearing traditional gifts or their (corrupt) money equivalent. In this respect, Me Mullan (1961) points out that a degree of low level corruption can soften relations of official and people. Shils (1962: 385) notes that corruption can humanize government and make it less awesome. These observations are common occurrence in Nigeria, where communities pay traditional visits to their governors, commissioners and top government officials with cows, wines, kolanuts and money in order to get them attend to their local problems.

Corruption is counterproductive to any society. It is so endemic in Nigeria that a wrong culture is being imbibed by Nigerians that it does not pay to be honest, hardworking and law abiding. In Nigeria, mediocrity is celebrated while honesty is relegated to the background. Through corrupt means, many political office holders acquire wealth and properties in and outside Nigeria and display their wealth (which is beyond their means), but the society does not bother. This has made politics a lucrative business and investment, which matures immediately one gets into office (Guardian 2002, July 14).

Corruption wastes skills as precious time is often wasted to set up unending committees



to fight corruption, and monitor public projects. It also leads to counties losing aids from donor countries. For instance, the international Monetary fund (IMF) has withdrawn development support from some nations that are notoriously corrupt. The World Bank (WB) similarly has introduced tougher anti-corruption standards into its lending policies to corrupt countries. Corruption is politically destabilizing as it lead to social revolution and military take powers of political process. The General Buhari's post coup broadcast to Nigerians in 1983 is a case in Point. Hiding under the excuse of corruption to topple a legitimate government in Nigeria will cease to be a credible reason for the involvement of the military in Nigerian politics in the nearest future. This is because many of the previous military leaders in Nigeria were as corrupt, if not more corrupt than the civilian politician they replaced.

A reduction in quality of goods and services available to the public could occur in a country due to corruption as some companies could cut corners to increase profit margin. Corruption affects investment, economic growth and government expenditure. Corruption affects investment, economic growth and government expenditure choices. It also reduces private investment (Mauro, 1997) Corruption discourage honest effort and valuable economic activities, and it breeds inefficiency and nepotism. It lead to possible information distortion as it cooks the books, and a high level of corruption can make public policies ineffective (Sen. 1999).

Corruption upsets ethnic balance and exacerbates problems of national integration developing countries. The social brut that followed the Moshood Abiola's 1993 election rebuff is one of the many cases dotting Nigeria's political landscape till date.

Destruction of government structures and capacity could be resultant effect of corruption. The news of the forgery and perjury committed by the former speaker of the House of Representation, Alhaji Salisu Ibrahim Buhari is a case in point. Through corrupt means, Alhaji Buhari amassed wealth (made millions working for NEPA) and bribed his way to the fourth highest position in Nigeria instead of being punished for his activities, ex-president Obasanjo, granted him a state pardon. This is inspite of Obasanjo's campaign to transform Nigeria into a corrupt free society (Obasanjo 1999 inaugural address, May, 29).

The legitimacy of a government could be destroyed due to corruption. The Shehu Shagari's administration was written off as inept because of the magnitude of corruption in his administration and its lack of policy direction. Corruption could alienate modern oriented civil servants and may cause them to reduce or withdraw their services or to leave the country. The brain drain phenomenon in Nigeria could be ascribed to corruption.

The World Bank issued a report predicting that between 2007 and 2027, the population of Georgia and Ukraine will decrease by 17 percent and 24 percent respectively (Borger, 2008). The World Bank, shows that the percentage of the population living in household with consumption or income per capita below the poverty line has decreased in developing regions of the world since 1990 with other human development indication also improving. Life expectancy has greatly increased in the developing world since world-war II and it is starting to close the gap to the developed world. Child mortality has decreased in every developing region of the world. The proportion of the world's population living in countries where pa capita food supplies are less than 2,200



calories per day decreased from 56 percent in the mid 1960s to below 10 percent by the 1990s. Similar trends can be observed for literacy, access to clean water and electricity and basic consumers' items. There are however various criticisms of their measurement. Shaohua and Rava Uion (2010), note that although "a clear trend decline in the percentage of people who are absolutely poor is evident... with uneven progress across regions... the developing world outside China and India, has seen little or no sustained efforts in reducing the number of poor".

Since the world "population is increasing, a constant number living in poverty would be associated with diminishing proportion. Looking at the percentage living on less than \$1 per day and if excluding China and India then this percentage has decreased from 31.35 percent to 20.7 percent between 1981 - 2004" (Ibid). The World Bank Report (2007), "Global Economic Prospects" predicts that in 2030, the number living on less than the equivalent of \$1 a day will fall by half, to about 550 million. An average resident of what we used to call the third world will live about as well as do residents of the Czech or Slovak Republics today. Much of Africa will have difficulty keeping pace with the rest of the developing world and even if conditions there improve in absolute terms, the report warns, Africa in 2030 will be home to a large proportion of the world's poorest people than it is today. Most African states are already gradually and steadily moving towards this direction.

### **Democracy, Political Corruption and Poverty in Nigeria**

Corruption is prevalent in both dictatorial as in democratic societies, in socialist societies just as in capitalist societies, in Christian, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhist Society. In Nigeria, both the military and civilian

governments since independency have had their share of corruption and thus contributed to the economic impoverishment of Nigerians. Our argument is that though military and democratic governments' breeds' corruption and poverty, the proper inculcation of the culture and moral imperatives of democracy on Nigerians in itself can act as a check on corrupt practices by our ruling elites and the masses, with corresponding reduction of poverty on Nigerians.

The philosophical notions of democracy relates to freedom, equality, popular sovereignty rule of law, representative government, political accountability, elections and electoral systems majority rule etcetera (Ojo, 1997). The main issue under focus in this section is whether democracy is an end in itself or a means to some ends. Every society has certain ends even if loosely defined either as "public good", "national interest", "social good" or "general good of society" (Ibid).

When society needs are so defined, it is also usual for society to design the means of achieving them. One of the means of achieving the end of society is democracy. Thus our focus in the aspect of this work is to examine democracy in the light of popular politics and enhancement of development, devoid of corruption and poverty in the society.

Central to the concept of democracy is equality. Much of democratic ideas is devoted to the individual, his conditions, how he is affected by the organization and the institutions of the state, the responsibility of the state towards him, his rights, privileges and obligation to the state. Invariably, the great issues that underlay the philosophy and practice of democracy relate to the individual and how his interest and happiness may best be served. This explain



why state as an expression of their commitment to democratic ideas, often profess to seek ends such as social justice, liberty and equality which best preserve the dignity, interest and happiness of the individuals. The constitution of Nigeria (1999) chapter 11, “fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy”, states that, “... the state shall within the context of the ideals and objectives of which provision are made in this constitution:

a. Harness the resources of the nation and promote national prosperity and efficient, dynamic and self reliance economy:

b. Control the economy in such manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity...

c. That suitable and adequate shelter, suitable and adequate food, reasonable national minimum living wage, old age care and pension and welfare of the disabled are provided for all citizens...

Also, the United Nation in pursuing the interest and welfare of citizen in countries in the world, came up with the eight point agenda to take poverty, education, health, environment and global partnership problems and provides solutions to them by the year 2015 (Endpoverty2015). 2015 has come and gone but the lofty goal set is yet to be achieved. Nigeria being a member of the United Nation Organization is indeed pursuing the above goals. The extent to which the Nigerian state is able to fulfill the above obligations in preserving the dignity, interest and happiness of the individual, the more democratic and develop the society would be. Democracy holds that every man has a worth and dignity which society must recognize and respect. In Nigeria both democratic and military governments have

not been able to resolve the issue of provision of basic needs of the citizens, unemployment is on the increase, decayed infrastructures, poor health care facilities and high insecurity which have continually threatened the life of an average Nigerian.

The fundamental principle of democracy is government by consent (Bhagwati, 1995). The institutions through which this principle of democracy is realized constitute the structure of democracy. In a democracy, authority emanates from the people. The ideal of consent as it relates to democracy is invariably related to other associated concepts such as justices and equality of political rights. Since all men are equal in dignity and worth the only ground on which one can justly exercise power over another is that the later has consented. In Nigeria democratic experience, we have seen political leader emerge not through the consent of the people but through imposition and circumvention of the electoral processes. Political leaders are therefore not accountable to the electorates. Instead of the political leaders empowering the electorates or the masses, they engage in looting of the treasury to impoverish the masses. Thus governance is not made relevant to the society and not people oriented.

Another element of democracy is legitimacy. Two aspects of legitimacy are relevant. First is that given the laws and rules for the ascension to power, the leaders or those who control and exercise power have the right to occupy such position and exercise power Second is that in a democratic polity, there is the requirement for the political leadership to rule rightly This requires that those who control and exercise power do so very well and toward ends for which they have been so elected or chosen Implicit in the idea of consent and legitimacy are requirement for



good governance and political accountability. In a democratic polity, it should both possible and necessary to hold leaders responsible for their actions. Once leaders are accountable and responsible for their actions, it would check the excesses of political leaders office, reduce corruption and eliminate poverty.

Under a democratic polity, there is increase rationalization of the use of state power, the primary goals of the state and the underlying philosophy of government are directed toward overall development of the society. Thus, the question of who benefits from and what government should be doing to bring greater sense of benefit to different segments of society are positive under a democratic government than other forms of government. In Nigeria, the state of affairs under the present democratic dispensation under the All Progressive Congress (APC), led government shows an aberration of the above discussed norms of democratic values with no effective planning for development and self-reliance by the masses. The Nigerian democratic state is currently being unable to withstand or mediate pressure, contradictions and conflicts, social forces confront each other with little restraint, as politics loses its norms. Corruption and looting of scarce resource has reached unprecedented proportion. Repression and human right abuses, banditry, kidnapping, secession and other acts of insurrection are in the increase as the struggle for power and political survival receives more attention with Nigerians being highly impoverished. The panacea to the above problem of corruption and poverty in Nigeria is for the political leader and the masses to imbibe and practice true democracy with its fundamental culture and ethos.

#### **Strategies Advocated Towards Control of Political Corruption in Nigeria**

Corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian society. It is now a high-profile issue in Nigeria, and those in political power are the main culprits. To control corruption in Nigeria, the importance of good and enforceable policies should be emphasized. Such policies should be reviewed periodically to check any loophole and to catch up with events in the country. Direct, clear and forceful support of the highest political authority; (the president) and transparency and accountability in government functions, particularly all financial transactions will mitigate corruption. Also, organize civil society to address the problems of corruption brought to light by the process of transparency and the activities of the media vis-a-vis watchdogs agencies anti-corruption bureaus inspector-general, general and ombudsmen. Introduction of anti-bribery clauses with all major procurement contracts and with the assistance of both international financial institutions and bilateral aid agencies among others will help to alleviate corruption.

#### **Measures Advocated Towards Poverty Reduction in Nigeria**

Just as corruption cannot be entirely eliminated in societies so also it is impossible to completely eradicate poverty in any society. Some poverty reduction strategies have been advocated that will assist in the provision of basic human needs and increase the disposable income needed to purchase those needs. Some basic needs, such as improving access to education, may also help increase in income and thus poverty reduction. Government should embark on economic reforms whereby the government and the feudal elites would give full-fledged property rights in land to their tenants. Government should provide micro-loans, where small amount of money are loaned to farmers in villages, mostly





women, who can then obtain physical capital to increase their economic rewards. In addition, public officials should be made to declare their assets, earnings and stricter rules on funding to political parties electoral campaign should be enforced and also developed country should assist the poor underdeveloped countries like Nigeria to overcome the poverty crisis by providing debt relief,

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Poverty and greed breed corruption. Where poverty is alleviated, corrupt practices would be minimal or alleviated. Corruption can never be eradicated and never has it being eradicated in anywhere in the world. The paper reveals that poverty intervention schemes have not achieved desired results due to endemic political corruption. To alleviate poverty, the paper recommend that the leadership should justly commit to combating corruption from the top to down; strengthening corruption control mechanisms, severely apprehend and punish the culprits. In the same vein, the citizens should be mobilized to demand for stewardship from their representatives in government to enhance transparency and accountability. Above all, immunities of politicians should be detached, law courts should be strengthened to adjudicate without fear or favour and public annual declaration of assets of political office holders should be made obligatory. This study has methodological and scope shortcomings as it generate data through content analysis-literature which might be insufficient to make generalization. Therefore, future study on the subject matter should adopt mixed method for sufficient information.

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