

**SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES IN THE PERVASIVENESS OF ENDEMIC CORRUPTION IN  
NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*This study uses social perspectives to examine the pervasiveness of corruption in Nigeria. The focal perspectives include Functionalism, Marxism, Differential Association, and Elite theory to mention but a few. In the course of analyzing these paradigms, it was discovered that none of these approaches could adequately account for the pervasiveness of corruption found in the country, but it was established that each of them explains the social reality of corruption within its scope. Moreover, the study employed secondary data, collected from textbooks, internet materials, newspapers and magazines, journals, articles, etc via a systematic qualitative content analysis, in dealing with these perspectives and other issues relating to forms, which Nigerians are using to perpetuate corruption and measures that have been hitherto put in place to curtail its escalation since Nigeria's political independence. Finally, the study explores the anecdotal bulk of issues leading to the pervasiveness of corruption in the country which hang around leadership and systemic failure mechanisms. In view of this, the study epitomizes asymptom that something has gone wrong with the critical management of the Nigerian State and recommends ways of correcting, modifying and reconditioning the bifurcating malaise of corruption.*

*Keywords: Social perspectives, pervasiveness, corruption, qualitative, leadership, Nigeria*

## INTRODUCTION

Today, corruption is the major bane mitigating growth and development of the people and governments of countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Apparently, Nigeria stands out a giant in the gladiator game of corruption and attendant corruptibility's of poor leadership. The United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC, 2005) cited by Stople, (2008) views corruption as a multi-faceted, dynamic and flexible phenomenon, which does not define, but describes corrupt practices. In agreement with UNCAC, (2005) Olusoga, (1980) cited in Omonijo and Okiti, (2009) describe corruption as giving and receiving something of value (money, sex, gifts and so on), whether demanded or not, to favourably influence the receiver's action towards the giver. In this context however, both the giver and receiver are both guilty of corruption. This captures corrupt practices being perpetuated by the self-employed, unemployed and some junior staff, who are earning poor remunerations in the public and private sector (Omonijo, 2008) of the economy. Nevertheless, Omonijo and Okiti's (2009) description excludes bureaucratic and political corruption prevailing in many underdeveloped countries. Therefore, (Nye, 1967; Dobel, 1978; Amuwo, 2005; Obayelu, 2007; Fjeldstad and Isaksen, 2008; Ogundiya, 2009) view corruption as the exploitation of public positions, resources, and power for private gains, which includes friend, family, community, personal and associate interest etc. Out of these interests, self-motive of corrupt persons seems to be the brain behind the endemic level of corruption in Nigeria. Most people no longer serve as their brother's keeper (Omonijo, 2008). The spirit of communalism prevailing in pre-colonial era has hitherto seized to exist in our towns and villages (Omonijo, 2008). That is why the money meant for the nation's advancement is often siphoned to the detriment of the poor masses (Omonijo et al., 2011b).

Corruption affects societies worldwide Igbuzor, (2008); irrespective of ideological background (Omonijo, 2008), level of development, religious affiliation and cultural orientation (Merton, 1968; Eitzen, 1980; Oloko, 1982; Klitgaard et al., 2000; Agbu, 2001; Obono-Oba, 2003; Dike, 2005; Smith, 2006; Obayelu, 2007; Egwemi, 2012). In spite of the peculiarity of corruption among societies however, its nature differs greatly from one country to another. The nature of 'grand corruption' postulated by Rose-Ackerman (1998) could be linked to many Third World countries, where institutions created to govern the state are contrarily used and manipulated for personal enrichment (Mala, 2010). Whereas, organizations established to govern the state in developed countries are not known for such manipulations. More importantly, corrupt persons are being brought to book in these societies irrespective of the personality involved (Omonijo et al., 2013a). This is because Western cultures are primarily rule-based while underdeveloped societies cultures are relationship-based. The former tends to trust the system, while the latter trusts their friends and family (Hooker, 2008). Although, the rate of corruption is also high in the

former, but not among its government functionaries like in Nigeria and it has minimal impact on national development (Omonijo et al., 2013a).

Corruption in Nigeria dates back to pre-colonial era (Lipset and Lenz, 2000; Omonijo, 2008; Eze, 2012), but adoption of western social value and attitude seems to have not only fostered corruption cognition but engineered modern day corruption behaviours of Nigerians. Regretably, Nigerian elites, mostly those in power, failed to dissociate themselves from this attitude after independence. Instead, it took a disheartening dimension Omonijo et al., (2012b), both during military and political dispensations (Ake, 2001; Akani, 2001; Offiong, 2001; Igwe, 2011). Currently, many Nigerians, are more notorious in perpetuating corrupt practices than nationals of Western nations that introduced and initiated the scourge to them, resulting to lack of sense of national community (Mayer et al. 1996; Kessleman et al., 1996). Quite unfortunate, meaningful development and political stability require the collective identity of the citizenry. Where this is lacking, like in Nigeria, well-meaning development projects are executed with indifference or even hostility and at best, as an exploitative resource, something to be taken advantage of rather than committed to (Ake, 1995).

Most Nigerians see development projects in that direction. To them moral cost is now limited to unfettering impact (Ogundiya, 2009). Consequently, emphasis has been shifted from how people become wealthy to wealth itself (Omonijo and Fadugba, 2011). Nigerian society care less about how people achieve wealth but applauds those who become wealthy, not minding the means (Oduwaiye, 2004). Consequently, corruption keeps on escalating at alarming dimension. This paper uses social science perspectives to examine its pervasiveness in a non-western country of Nigeria. Theoretical perspectives according to Omonijo and Nnedum, (2012a), are tools, which can be used to analyze social problems affecting humanity. The persistence and prevalence of corruption in Nigeria currently needs to be diagnosed by different social paradigms, because corruption is generally regarded as a social and human behavioural phenomenon, mostly in comparative research (Groenendijk, 1997). As a result, the menace emerges from the activities of mankind. Therefore, social perspectives could be very essential in recommending solutions to its endemic prevalence.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The current endemic and pervasive nature of corruption in Nigeria has received increasing attention from scholars in several field of human endeavours (Bayart et al., 1997; Amundsen, 1997; Girling, 1997; Igbovojah, 1998; Gray and Kaufmann, 1998; Amujiri, 2002; Anugwom, 2002; Agogo, 2002; Egbue, 2006; Alatas, 2006; Lawal, 2006; Fagbadebo, 2007; Omonijo and Okiti, 2009; Olukorede, 2011; Omonijo and Fadugba, 2011; Omonijo and Nnedum, 2012b; Eze,

2012; Ogbeidi, 2012). Moreover, international research bodies and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), such as Transparency International (T.I), Global Corruption Barometer Survey (GCBS), Global Attitude Project (GAP), The World Economic Forum(WEF), World Bank Governance Indicator (WBGI) etc have constantly featured Nigeria as the most corrupt nation worldwide (Erubami and Young, 2003; Omonijo, 2008; Simbine, 2011; Edinyang and Usang, 2012). The implication of this according to Ajayi, (2001) is associated with the country's poor drive for increasing foreign investment, socio-economic advancement and poor image of Nigerians abroad. In spite of these implications, however, all attempts to nip the problem of corruption in the bud have failed (Ogundiya, 2009). Instead, the menace is escalating in limbs and bounds (Sowumi, 2012), soiling the character of many elites (Eze, 2012), destroying the nation's quality of education (Shleifer and Vishny, 1993; Lipset and Lenz, 2002; Omonijo and Fadugba, 2011; Omonijo and Nnedum, 2012b), impeding effective and efficient delivery of public service (Eze, 2012), causing sudden and untimely death of many Nigerians through adulteration of products:- food, petroleum products, pharmaceutical drugs among others (Brian, 2011; Osueke and Ofondu, 2011; Agbaraji et al., 2012; Ojinnaka, 2012) and seriously undermining and distorting the growth and development of Nigeria in the comity of nations worldwide (Saliu and Aremu, 2004; Ajibewa, 2006; Omugu, 2006; Egwemi, 2010; Eze, 2012), resulting in untold hardship and misery for the poor masses (Ajie and Wokekoro, 2012).

It is against this backdrop that this paper is conceived. It adds to the existing literature on the endemic and pervasive nature of corruption in Nigeria by updating the work of Ogundiya, (2009) on 'political corruption in Nigeria dealing with theoretical perspectives and some explanations'. Employing the theory of two publics developed by Eke (1975, 1985), Prebendalism popularized by "Richard Joseph" and soft state thesis of "Gurnal Myrdal", Ogundiya, (2009) explains the pandemic corruption ravaging African countries, but failed to include social paradigms, which serve as social engineering or medication that could be used to diagnose its persistence for possible recommendations and systematic amelioration.

## **EXAMINATION OF RESEARCH ON FORMS OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA**

Studies have shown that corrupt practices take different forms. Some of these include: bribery and extortion, fraud and embezzlement, illegal use of public assets for private gains, over and under-invoicing; payment of salaries and other benefits to non-existent [ghost] workers and pensioners, payments for goods not supplied or services not rendered ["air supply"] Ruzindana, (1998). These are some of the patterns of corruption prevailing in both public and private institutions in Nigeria. It is pathetic to realise that some staff in many public institutions collect remunerations and benefits of many non-existent workers. Also, payment for good and services

not rendered still reign supreme in most of these institutions. However, the view of Ruzidana(1998) ignores corruption relating to professionalism and counterfeiting of product. Akani, (2001) corrects this flaw by adding professional misconduct and adulteration of products to the list, while Agogo, (2002) extends the list by including obtaining unmerited advantages, falsification of records, godfatherism and leakage of official secrets for monetary benefits. The politics of godfatherism makes Agogo's (2002) view very essential to this discourse.

Godfatherism, is an ideology which is constructed on the belief that certain individuals possess considerable means to unilaterally determine who gets party ticket to run for an election and who wins in an electoral contest(Gambo, 2006).One of the major damaging form of corruption in Nigeria recently is the emergence of godfathers, which is more distressing to the nation democratic stability (Ogundiya, 2010). Closely related to godfatherism is political corruption, which includes rigging, vote buying, selling, cancellation and inflation, ballot stuffing, manipulation of electoral registers and employment of political offices at the expense of public interest.

Other forms of corruption bothering on fundamental human rights and academic cheating are rooted in the work of (Amujiri, 2002).These include deprivation of people's rights, perversion of justice, smuggling, examination malpractices, sexual harassment. Area of smuggling and cheating in academic arena make Amujiri, (2002) view very crucial to this article. Custom and immigration staff are notorious in perpetuating smuggling in conjunction with a selected clique in the society, while many workers and students in all level of education have been indicted in examination fraud. However, it could be observed that patterns of corruption, which deals with contracts and fraud in most public institutions were omitted. These are over inflation of contracts without any regard to market prices, collection of ten percentage on contracts awarded, awarding of multiple contracts to friends and relations of some members of staff, through phony companies(Aziken, 2004).

In a survey conducted in Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN), Omonijo, (2008) reveals the following forms of corruption: collection of bribe from customers, who connected electricity from the pole illegally, hoarding of meters in order to extort money from consumers, extortion of money from consumers to buy materials to be used to install or repair electricity, which government has already provided, extortion of money from consumers before connecting any disconnected cables due to non-payment of bills, collaborating with consumers to adjust meter to the detriment of PHCN for staff personal gain. However, Omonijo, (2008) limits the scope of his study to one organization and ignores corrupt practices prevailing in politics. Aluko, (2009) tackles this gap in knowledge by adding political (grand), bureaucratic (petty), electoral corruption to the list of form of corruption prevailing in Nigeria while Eze, (2012) sees failure of

remitting revenue collected into government purse, by the board of internal revenue and aiding the staff to sabotage government plans as other serious forms of corruption.

These among others are ways through which corruption is being perpetuated by many workers, business persons and government functionaries in Nigeria (Omonijo, 2008). However, the rate at which corruption is being perpetuated in the public sector is alarming and endemic than private sector. The sector is perceived as no man's business and treated as such. The general attitude of people to work in the sector is marked by ineffectiveness, indolence and inefficiency. People consider what they can obtain from the sector as priority than what they can contribute to it. In the private sector, however, the reverse is the case. Proprietors, who owned their businesses have zero tolerance for corruption among their staff (Amadi, 2004), but most of them work in consonance with their staff in order to cheat the public sector. This is evident in poor or lack of implementation of contracts awarded to them. More often than not, the money is shared between them and elites in public institutions, where the contract is awarded (Obono-Oba, 2003; Omonijo, 2008).

#### **STATE OF KNOWLEDGE ON INSTRUMENTS TO CURB CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA.**

Previous empirical studies revealed that several legal instruments have been put in place to combat corruption in Nigeria (Adamu, 2005; Ogundiya, 2009; Ayittey, 2012). These include the Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous provision), decree 1966, Criminal Code, Code of Conduct Bureau of 1979 Constitution, the Recovery of Public Property Act (RPPA) of 1984 (Diamond 1991). Operations of these measures were marred with inadequacies, which led to the establishment of other measures stated below:

- Jaji Declaration of the Murtala/Obasanjo administration. This measure commenced on a good note and many corrupt persons were brought to book but it was short lived due to the assassination of General Murtala, the brain behind its thorough implementation (Bello-Imam, 2004).
- "Ethical revolution" of the Shehu Shagari's second republic era. This measure was a merely toothless bulldog because no corrupt persons were prosecuted within the period.
- War Against Indiscipline (WAI) of Buhari/Idiagbon regime. The era was equally noted for bringing corrupt elites to book, but it was short lived because the regime was overthrown by Ibrahim Babangida.
- Mass Mobilization for Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) of the Babangida military era. The regime popularized corruption and made it pronounced among Nigerians.
- War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC) of Sani Abacha era. The regime used



this instrument to prosecute failed bank victims and torment innocent citizens. Igwe, (2011) categorically asserted that the rise and fall of this era was one of the most outstanding factors that popularized fraud in Nigeria.

- The Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) of the Olusegun Obasanjo democratic dispensation (Omonijo, 2008). Through EFCC, some corrupt elites were prosecuted (Okonjo-Iweala, 2007). Money and assets were recovered from many criminals (Imohe, 2005) and revenue profile of the nation was increased by about 50% (Ajie and Wokekoro, 2012), but its operations are selective between the influential and none influential politicians and those not favoured by the ruling government (Ajie and Wokekoro, 2012).

## **THEORETICAL INSIGHTS**

In human society, happenings, events, habits, behaviours and attitudes are analyzed via theoretical perspectives (Omonijo and Nnedum, 2012a). Some of the theoretical explanations of corruption in literature hitherto are depicted in “amoral politics”, “amoral familism” (Osaghae, 1995; Ogundiya, 2009), “prebendalism” (Joseph, 1987), “patrimonialism and neopatrimonialism”, “clientelism” (Seteolu, 2005). These perspectives however, fall short of social explanations of corruption. This study intends to correct this critical gap in knowledge.

### **Functionalism**

This perspective has its origin and development traceable to the works of evolutionary scholars such as August Comte” and “Herbert Spencer” while later scholars- “Emile Durkheim” and “Talcott Parsons” refined the theory (Omonijo, 2008).

Functionalism views society as a system that has several parts, which are related to one another and at the same time functions independently, but contribute their quota to the maintenance and survival of the entire system. It therefore assumes that there exists harmony, order and stability in the system, which is attributable to the independent nature of each part as well as existing values and norms governing its operation. This brings about co-operation and consensus in the system (Giddens, 2010).

Functionalists advance by comparing human society with a living organism, such as human body, draw an analogy between the two and argued that understanding any organ in the body, such as lung, heart, livers, eyes, nose, mouth etc involves understanding its relationship and contribution to the survival of the entire body system (Omonijo, 2008). In the same manner, understanding any aspect of various institutions that make the society-family, economy, politics,

education etc, requires an analysis of its relationship and contributions towards the maintenance of entire society (Giddens, 1984)

Reasoning with functionalists, corruption serves as a means to an end and not an end in itself. The social explanation of this is rooted in the functions, which it performs in sustaining some persons in the society. This can be viewed in the following ways:

Firstly, corruption is useful in cutting through red-tapism prevalent in both private and public institutions in Nigeria. Unnecessary delay that goes with the movement of files in several institutions, due to workers poor conditions of service, salaries and entitlements is often avoided through bribery (Omonijo 2008). When a poorly remunerated staff is bribed, he carries out any assignment that has to do with the person. To this extent, it promotes flexibility in intra-administrative procedure (Ugwu, 2002).

Secondly, it sustains Nigerian workers when salaries, entitlements etc are not promptly paid. Also, it sustains workers who are earning poor income. Omonijo (2008) establishes difference between poor income and corruption among staff in Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) and concludes that staff who earn poor income are more corrupt than staff earning good income. In other private institutions, such as filling stations, petroleum attendants across the country rely largely for survival on money they realize through illegal adjustment of meters to the detriment of various consumers (Omonijo, 2008).

Thirdly, when the rate of unemployment is high as indicated in chart 1, it elevates the magnitude of poverty and corruption (Neeleman and Lewis, 1999; Asghar, 2002; Blakely et al., 2003). Hence, corruption like dishonesty, fraud, prostitution, armed robbery, theft and violence generally prevail in societies, where the rate of unemployment is high (Farhat et al., 2009). This corroborates Farnsworth et al., (1994) who believe that unemployment has a strong relation with criminal behaviours. According to them, un-employment correlates with crime rate as an index for societal strains. Obviously, growing joblessness as indicated in Figure 1 could be perceived as an apparent expression of anti-social violence influenced by social stress in the entire Nigeria.

Figure 1: Nigeria Unemployment Rate.



Source: Federal Office of Statistics (2012)



Also, poorly remunerated and underpaid workers could be prone to abject poverty. Such persons are many in Sub-Sahara Africa (Ikejiaku, 2009). In fact, the World Bank, (2005) claims that Sub-Saharan Africa is the world's poorest continent, with nearly half of its 719 million people subsisting on less than \$1 US per day. In Nigeria, poverty rate has risen to 71.5 per cent, 61.9 per cent, and 62.8 per cent using the relative, absolute and dollar-per-day measures respectively (Subair, 2013). Poverty stinks and it could prompt victims to be involved in corrupt practices in order to survive. Its psychological implication could be geared towards avoidance of trauma and its effect on living in society while its social effect could be targeted at continuity of such persons, lineage and the entire social system.

Fourthly, it provides means of employment for people working in institutions created to curb corruption. These include the police force, military, judiciary, prison service, EFCC, ICPC etc. These institutions provide jobs, fame and recognition for many people in the public. Mallam Ribadu, the erstwhile Chairman of EFCC is a clear case in point. His fame worldwide could be attributed to the establishment of an institution meant to fight against corruption in Nigeria.

Fifthly, it serves as a motivating factor among workers. Going by the "means-ends schema" of Merton, (1968), corruption prompts workers to respond to social pressures in order to violate societal norms, so as to meet goals and objectives of a social system. These goals could be for improvement in the lives of family, relations, friends etc. When there is mounting demands from public servants' families and friends, corruption provides means of meeting these demands. Its social importance rests on the premises of acting as one's brothers keeper and it reinforced the traditional spirit of communalism prevailing in pre-colonial era.

"Social function of corruption discussed above refers to its observable and objective consequences, and not subjective dispositions (aims, motives and purposes)" (Merton, 1957). Although, Durkheim, (1898) admits that when the rate of crime (corruption) is unusually high, it becomes dysfunctional to the society. The rate of corruption is now unusually high in Nigeria, thus, it is dysfunctional to the Nation in the following ways:

- The money meant for the nation's development is being embezzled. Amaefule and Owete, (2006) categorically emphasize on the development funds of 220 billion pounds, which elites have stolen since 1960. This huge amount of money could have been used to develop Nigeria more than Europe, because it was more than what was invested in rebuilding Europe after the Second World War through the Marshal Plan (Omonijo, 2008). Therefore, the nation is creeping to grow and develop because the rate of corruption is very high.

- Adulteration of products is endemic in Nigeria. As regard fuel, Osueke and Ofondu, (2011) comment on the damages it does to motor vehicles and other harmful effects on human beings across the nation. Besides, the significant loss of tax revenue to adulteration of petroleum products is alarming. Various estimates have also been made of the extent of financial loss to the national GDP (Gross Domestic Product), as well as the oil companies as a result of diversion of kerosene which is mixed with petrol and diesel. In respect of fake drugs, it has been estimated that up to 15% of all sold drugs are fake, and in parts of Africa and Asia this figure exceeds 50% and it is dangerous to human life (Agbaraji et al., 2012).
- The rate of cheating in education sector has reached an alarming stage (Adeoye, 2010; Adebayo, 2011; Omonijo and Fadugba, 2011; Omonijo and Nnedum, 2012b). Consequently, candidates who cannot defend their course of studies are numerous, resulting in high level of educated illiterates, which is a bad signal to national development (Omonijo and Fadugba, 2011).

By and large, functionalists could be commended for pointing to the usefulness of corruption in society. Its social relevance to the segment, who benefit from it cannot be easily ignored. It prevents them and their families from starvation and extinction, and thereby ensure the continuity of mankind, but the majority that bears the pain of corruption makes it grievous and terrible to societal advancement (Anugwom, 2002). Besides this flaw, functionalist writers are found wanting on two grounds. Firstly, they fail to offer explanation for why certain persons appear to be more prone to corruption than others. For instance, members of staff in public and private institutions, who are earning poor incomes, could be prone to corruption more than those who are earning good incomes. These writers could not provide explanation for this flaw in their approaches. Secondly, functionalists have not been able to explain why certain forms of corruption appear to be associated with a particular group of persons or institutions in society. In Nigeria for example, “419” fraud, stealing and covetousness could be associated with unemployed graduates. Moreover, patterns of corruption such as bribery and extortion could be associated with agencies like the police and customs as institutions. Given these flaws, another core social theory is examined below.

### **Marxian Theory**

This is an interdisciplinary approach to criminality and it is rooted in the philosophy of dialectical and historical materialism (Omonijo, 2008). The theory sprang from the ideas of “Hegel, Ludwing Feurbachi, Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx” (Ritzer and Goodman, 2004). Dahrendorf

contributed greatly to its development (Okeibunor and Anugwom, 2005), while radical scholars, such as Ake, (1986) and Odekunle, (1983) subscribed to it.

Man, according to Marxian theory must produce food and other necessary material objects for his survival. The process of producing these goods involves both social relations of production and technical forces of production. The combination of both social forces of production and technical forces of production is regarded as substructure of the society. Other parts of the society are regarded as superstructure, but substructure determines superstructure. This dialectical relationship between substructure and superstructure of the society is expressed in Marxist assertion that “..the economic structure of society is the real foundation, which raises a legal and political structure that corresponds with definite forms of social consciousness” (Marx and Engels, 1969:69). Thus, any change in the substructure will reflect in the superstructure. Whatever manifests in the superstructure is settled in the substructure under heathen wherein its strength lies. In other words, man’s society is divided into two-substructure (economy) and superstructure (other institutions). Nevertheless, substructure determines the succes of superstructure. This is because economy is very vital to the survival of mankind. Hence, no man can function satisfactorily in the superstructure without food, which substructure represents. The primary need of man is economy and it is very germane to his effectiveness and efficiency in the organizations’, where they work.

In the process of producing food and other necessary objects man needs for his survival, however, man must enter into social relationship with other men in the society. In a capitalist economy, Marxian scholars believe that this social relationship involves those who control the means of production; the bourgeoisie and those who produce the wealth; the proletariat. The bulk of the wealth produced is taken over by the bourgeoisie while the proletariat is underpaid and exploited in relation to total profit that represents the surplus value (Igbo, 2003). Marxists thus believe that this situation of inequality and exploitation is responsible for crimes (corruption inclusive) in the society. This according to Marxian scholars is because the proletariat must look for other means of survival, which can be found in crime. In the public sector of the Nigerian economy, junior staffs who are earning poor income could be akin to proletariat while elites who take leadership positions can be considered as bourgeoisie. The latter is mindful of his/her self-interest to the detriment of the former. Thus, the former is given poor salaries while other entitlements are not regular and at times not paid at all. These may prompt junior staff to indulge in corruption.

In most institutions in the country, remunerations of staff mostly junior ones are poor. Moreover, payment of gratuity and pension is not regular (Ayeni, 2005). Many pensioners are unable to collect their pensions before their death. Many others have collapsed in queues while

trying to collect their entitlements (Obey, 2005). Nigerian elites, who are supposed to govern the country properly, pursue their self-interests to the detriment of the masses, by embezzling the resources meant for national development. In other words, *the surplus value, which the bourgeoisie keep to themselves to the detriment of the proletariat in industries, could be akin to the resources of the state which elites are embezzling to the detriment of the poor staff, unemployed, underpaid and jobless in the society etc.* These classes of people according to “David Gordon and Williams Chambliss” (Haralambous, 2000) must look for other means of survival, which can be found in corruption (bribery, extortion, stealing, armed robbery, prostitution, forgery, smuggling, 419 fraud) and many more. The more unemployment, poor remunerated staff, irregular payment of salaries, underemployed and underpaid staff is increasing in a country; the more these forms of corruption persist and become endemic.

The social understanding of the above is rooted in poor leadership. When the righteous are in power the people rejoice but when the wicked rule the people mourn (Proverbs 29:2). Selfish and wicked elite have been in power since political independence in Nigeria. Their wickedness is demonstrated in different kinds of abuse of power, mostly looting the state resources to the detriment of common man. In spite of the above social life reality of corruption, which Marxism expatiated, however, the school of thought is found wanting on three major grounds: firstly, these scholars ardently emphasized substructure and ignored superstructure in explaining corruption in capitalist societies. Factors under superstructure such as politics, education and religion are also leading to corruption in all societies (Akpan, 2000; Akani, 2001; Ake, 2001; Offiong, 2001; Oyekanmi, 2006). Secondly, Marxists associate corruption with capitalist societies and exonerate socialist societies from the same (Haralambous et al., 2000). This is unrealistic as it could be observed that corruption defies ideological affiliation of countries worldwide (Omonijo, 2008). Thirdly, Marxists have not been able to account for why some of the exploited masses are not resorting to corruption in order to survive in spite of the inequality of life in capitalist societies (Ige, 2005). Omonijo (2008) believes that there are many poor masses in Nigeria, who are not resorting to corruption, in spite of their exploitation or poverty. Such persons according to him value their integrity more than ill-gotten wealth. In view of these flaws in knowledge, a middle-range theory drawn from different areas of specialization in social science and humanities are discussed below.

### **Elite Theory**

The origin of this theory could be traced to the work of Pareto, (1963) and Mosca, (1939). It is a reaction to the view of Karl Marx on power and state. Marx predicted proletariat revolution after which communist party would be established to distribute goods and services to the populace according to their needs and not wants (Omonijo, 2008). Instead, Pareto, (1963) and his

associates argue that communist party is not realistic and that only elite rule is inevitable in human society. Scholars in this paradigm also contend against popular participation of people in governance as put forward by “Abraham Lincoln”. Although, Mosca, (1939) agrees with Abraham Lincoln on Democracy being the government of the people and for the people, but disagrees that it can never be the government by the people. Similarly, Olaniyi, (1995:91) posits “to talk of government in which all take part in decision making is farce. What we have in practice is the government by a minority protecting the selfish interest of members to the detriment of the ruled”.

Central to elite theory is that society is divided into two main groups; a ruling minority and the ruled, which constitutes the majority. Minority monopolizes power by taking major decisions that affect the ruled because it is not possible for everybody to rule. The minority only exercises power based on “coup detat” or the mandate received from the majority, either by direct or indirect election. More often than not, the aim of the minority in power is to satisfy their self interest as well as that of their godfathers.

Mills, (1956) is another scholar of elite extraction, who uses American public institutions to subscribe to this perspective and argues that the structure of institutions is such that those at the top of the hierarchy largely monopolize power to the detriment of those at the lower level. Mills, (1956) advances the view that these institutions, where elites hold sway, occupy key pivotal positions in the society. These institutions according to Hughes and Kroehler, (2005) are not neutral social structures pursuing clear goals but arenas for conflicting interests in which the social issues and power relations of society are played out to the detriment of the masses.

Psychologically, no society can survive without a leader, that is why the political institution is saddled with the responsibility of producing leaders, but the type of leadership prevailing in any country therefore determines her level of development. Just like an adage that says “*if the leader of soldier ants misses the way, his followers become stranded*”. In the same manner, a nation with poor leadership is doomed (Omonijo et al., 2011b). Nigeria is one of such in Africa. “The country has been having leaders without conviction, any sense of patriotism and vision” (Bakoji, 2006:1). These leaders are professional manipulators, who pillaged and emptied treasuries to the detriment of the nation (Amokeodo, 2004). They demonstrate that the struggle for power among them is for sharing the spoil of political office (Osakwe, 2002). This is because every political office, since independence has been subjected to high level of abuse (Osakwe, 2002), either the state resources (EFCC, 2010) or human rights as witnessed in military dispensations. Many elites use their positions in government, parastatal, and institutions to amass wealth to the detriment of the ruled. When the resources meant for social amenities,

recreational, infrastructural and educational facilities are embezzled, the nation is bound to witness problems leading to corruption.

Elite's view presented above is an indication of poor leadership in Nigeria and it could be linked with the pervasiveness of corruption in the country. Nevertheless, elite scholars have been criticized for their failure to realize that not all elites are interested in the selfish interest of their group alone. Few are committed to the welfare of the general masses. In Nigeria, elites like "Professor Dora Akunyili, Professor Wole Soyinka and late Professor Olikoye Ransome-Kuti" demonstrated a good sense of leadership as Director General, Chairman and Minister of institutions they headed. Moreover, Nigerian leaders such as "Late Murtala Mohammed, late Tunde Idiagbon and Dr. Chris Ngige" singled themselves out, as leaders with a difference by fully committed to the welfare of the general public while in power (Omonijo, 2008). However, success of some of these elites may be hindered by certain associations that brought them to power. Such groups may be mounting undue influence on them to abuse power to their advantage and to the disadvantage of the nation. Such associations in Nigerian politics involve dubious godfathers. These godfathers can do anything within their disposal to destroy elites, who refuse to dance to their tune (Agbo, 2005). Due to these flaws, another theoretical approach that is deeply rooted in interactionism is indicated below.

### **Differential Association**

This approach is largely associated with "Edwin Sutherland", a leading figure in the Chicago school of America Sociology. Differential association is built on the interactionist perspective and emphasizes the part which social interaction plays in moulding people's attitude and behaviours (Hughes and Kreohler, 2005). To this end, all behaviour is as a result of socialization by means of interaction. How we act depends on how those around us desire us to act and how much we deviate from or conform to norms depends on differences in whom we associate with (Sutherland and Cressey, 1955).

Central to this approach is the belief that people take active part in crime (corruption inclusive) because they interact with criminals or have them as friends. Coser et al., (1983) believe that people who disobey minor rules as well as those who commit major crimes have often learned such behaviours from their friends and associates. Erickson, (1971) cited in Stark, (1987) also shares similar view with Coser et al., (1983). For him, criminal behaviours are done in co-operation with others and criminals tend to have criminals as friends. This brings to the fore importance of social influence in explanation of criminal behaviours in society. Parsimoniously, interaction is very essential among human beings because no man will ever remain an island on his own. In the process of interaction however, many people could be socialize into criminality.



Dwelling on the above, differential association has demonstrated that effective socialization can be used in socializing some people into corrupt behaviours in work settings, school environments and organizations in the society as a result of such people acting in consonance with their friends. Thus, the paradigm can be used to explain bureaucratic or institutionalized corruption in private and public institutions in Nigeria. Many top officials of public institutions like Chairman, Director General and some junior staff are socialized into organized corruption, when they are elected, appointed or employed. Failure to oblige may likely lead to impeachment, loss of property and assassination as witnessed in Anambra and Oyo States (Agbo, 2005; Ojewale, 2005; Fadare and Ogunyemi, 2006).

Such connections commence from clubs, religious affiliation, friendship, secret cults organizations and other forms of social gathering in the society. They tend to fix their members or anybody recommended by them into one employment or another. This is somehow endemic in the Nigerian Police Force, Customs and Nigerian Army. Employment into most of these public institutions is based on whom you know and not on merit. Recruitment, posting and promotion of staff are often done to encourage and facilitate smuggling of goods in the Nigerian Customs. Such people are often posted to borders like Idi-Iroko in Ogun-State, South West Nigeria. In the police force, members of staff are allegedly to be influencing their posting to certain hotbeds of corruption in Nigeria. Cities like Awka, Enugu, Onitsha, Nnewi are in this police posting choice category in the south east geo-political zone of the country. Members of staff, at the managerial level used to post their loyalists, who are in the same association with them to such places. When they get there, they began to send returns to them in the central office. In respect of political appointment, selection is often made by godfathers through their various associations. Whosoever selected for any political appointment owns allegiance to the association of godfathers that put him there. According to Ayoade, (2006:83)

*“The godfather is not in the business of philanthropy...The godfather gives support to install the godson oftentimes by devious antidemocratic means... They are merchants of fear. They dispense violence freely and fully on those who stand in their way. In this they play the additional role of Warlord. They establish, train and maintain a standing personal “army” which they ostensibly supplement with a sprinkling of the official police detachment. In order to effect electoral change, they bribe election officials to deliver the wining election figures. They also bribe the police and other security agents to look the other way when they traffic in ballot boxes and sack opponents strongholds. The godson, having taken office, returns the gesture hundredfold to the point that the godfather becomes an “intractable parasite” on government. The initial support given by the godfather then becomes an investment with a colossal rate of returns because the godfather becomes the ‘de facto’ governor”.*

The politics of godfatherism is so endemic and pervasive in the present day Nigeria to the extent that no politician can win any election without being involved in it. The consequence of godfatherism in Nigerian politics is very crucial to this discourse, as it considers electoral politics as one huge investment opportunity with considerable promise of massive returns (Gambo, 2006), which is often implemented through corruption. It could be responsible for the failure of electoral democracy to institutionalize a procedurally legitimate government since 1960. The menace of godfatherism has been promoting the politics of pay-off and settlement as strategies for legitimacy engineering Ogundiya, (2009), because some well meaning individuals needed to be bought up with cash reward or through award of undeserving and overinflated contracts for the incumbent to enjoy relative peace and general acceptance. This has rendered corruption intractable in Nigeria.

However, differential association provides the most suitable platform for explaining organized, institutionalized or bureaucratic corruption in the public sector of the Nigerian economy, but scholars in this school of thought are found wanting on two major grounds. Firstly, differential association approach cannot adequately explain why some people, who are close to those who indulge in corruption do not eventually become corrupt. Instead, such people may likely dissociate themselves from their corrupt friends. The case of “Dr. Chris Nigige”, the erstwhile governor of Anambra-State is a clear case in point (Omonijo, 2008). Secondly, it is admitted that forms of corruption like smuggling and fraud (419) take place in group, through a network of associates and they are directly rewarding. Nevertheless, participation of individual member of the group may be attributed to ideological background or orientations. Given these inadequacies, another perspective that explains corruption in terms of some selfish ideas, which are prevalent in the value system of the society is considered below.

### **Idealistic Theory**

This perspective according to Anazodo et al., (2012) is based on the assumption that peoples’ ideas determined the way they live and the way their society is organized. In other words, corruption in man society is perceived in terms of some selfish ideas inherent in the social and value system prevailing in the society (Nkom, 1982).

Social values are very essential in the management of every society because they inspires and motivates our actions and utterances (Brian, 2013). What people value so much determines their actions and they are easily transmitted from one generation to another through socialisation. Its Social implication is that such ideas and values become very difficult to get rid of since they have been rooted in the social system.

Idealistic approach to corruption is reticulated into traditionalist and modernist (Metiboba, 2002). Modernist idealists link corruption with certain acts of traditional practices, such as gift-

giving, ethnic loyalty and other parochial tendencies that encourage corruption. This corroborates the principle of redistribution and reciprocity (Oloko, 1982). However, modernist idealists suggest adoption of modern rationalist values as ways of overcoming corruption (Anazodo et al., 2012). Traditionalist on the other hand associates corruption in Africa with the adoption of western social value and attitude and suggests a return to the social values of the traditional society noted for probity and integrity, as the solution to corruption. Some of these ideas and their root in the pervasiveness of corruption in Nigeria are indicated below.

Public institutions and state resources are generally regarded as no ones businesses or properties by many Nigerians. Hence, everyone is interested in how to grasp the lion's share of these resources. Many elites and government functionaries are fond of engaging this idea to loot the state resources without considering its effect on national development. This idea was demonstrated by the staff of the ruined Ajaokuta and Aladja Iron and Steel Companies (Oduniyi, 2005), Nigerian Railway Corporation of Nigeria (Anagor, 2012), Nigerian Airways (Ibekwe, 2013) among other failed behemoths. Moreover, corruption is perceived as an aspect of daily life, which does not receive public eyebrows (Chukwuezi, 2000; Omonijo and Nnedum, 2012b). This idea has gained ground to the extent that if a public servant does not use his position to amass wealth in favour of his community, friends and family, he is considered a failure, who can never become rich in life, while those who indulge in corruption are being celebrated, applauded and awarded with chieftaincy titles (Omonijo and Fadugba, 2011; Agu, 2012). This makes corruption to become an integral component of the administrative, social and political culture in Nigeria. To make the situation worse, law enforcement agents, who should uphold the law, more often are found wanting to intervene on behalf of culprits in order to set them free (Akanbi and Balogun, 2012).

Dwelling on the above, bad ideals leading to the escalation and pervasiveness of corruption in Nigeria are already formed in the mind of many citizens. Once corruption becomes deep-rooted and institutionalized in any country, it penetrates into the value-system. Hence, it becomes an acceptable norm and culture of the people and subsequently goes into the realm of behavior. Its harmful implications multiply per day. It induces cynicism, because people begin to regard it as the norm. It undermines social value system because people find it easier, more lucrative and attractive to engage in corruption than to seek legitimate ways of accomplishment in every area of life. Its Social implication is that such ideals could be transmitted from one generation to another and becomes very difficult to get rid of. For instance, the idea that government institutions are not my father's businesses is already formed in the mind of many Nigerians. The young ones have now imbibed the idea and the tendency of passing it to the next generation is very bright. This could be used to explain why many people struggle by all

means to get political power. It is the root to ill-gotten wealth (Akani, 2001). Another implication is that such ideas are very difficult to uproot from the minds of people, mostly when unemployment and poverty are on the increase in the society, just like Nigeria. In spite of the above social life reality of the pervasiveness of corruption in Nigeria, which this approach elucidated above, it fails to consider systemic failure and its contribution to the pervasiveness of corruption in the country. On this note, anomie approach is discussed below.

### **Anomie Theory**

This theory is traceable to Merton, (1938), a distinguished figure in the Columbia school of American Sociology. His work in Criminological debate via the seminal paper on “Social Structure and Anomie” provides a platform for explaining the pervasiveness of corruption in the present day Nigeria.

Central to this approach is how some social structures exert a definite pressure upon certain persons to engage in nonconforming rather than conforming conduct in the society. In other words, if we can locate groups peculiarly subject to such pressures, we should expect to find fairly high levels of deviant behavior in these groups, not because individuals comprising them are compounded of distinctive biological tendencies but because they are responding to the social situation in which they find themselves (Merton, 1957). This scholar advances that:

*"a high frequency of deviant behavior is not generated merely by lack of opportunity or by this exaggerated pecuniary emphasis. A comparatively rigidified class structure, a caste order, may limit opportunities far beyond the point which obtains in American society today. It is when a system of cultural values extols, virtually above all else, certain common success-goals for the population at large while the social structure rigorously restricts or completely closes access to approved modes of reaching these goals for a considerable part of the same population, that deviant behavior ensues on a large scale" (Merton 1957, p. 200).*

The social understanding of the above shows that implementation of the social structure of a country to letters can lead to success of such a nation. The structure of a nation could be seen as a two-way-arraignment in which both government and the entire masses have roles to play for its successful implementation. Any deviation from the structure, either by the government or masses could lead to social problems. If the government fails to carry out its responsibilities properly as evident in Nigeria, it can lead to deviance from the masses, who might have suffered in fulfilling their parts of the arrangement. For instance, the structure “Nigeria” makes provision for students to embark on programmes in elementary and tertiary institutions for a specific number of years, at the end of which they are expected to get job opportunities in order to fulfill destiny and to provide means of livelihood for their families. But the same system fails to make employment opportunities available at the end of their studies.

Individuals in this category could be frustrated and forced to indulge in fraud such as cybercrime, '419'scam, armed robbery, kidnapping, ritual killing, and prostitution in order to survive. Inability of the government to provide job opportunities for this class of people could be regarded as a systemic failure that is resulting to corruption in the present day Nigeria.

## **SUMMARY**

Examining the above Psych-social paradigms, four theoretical approaches indicted elites and government functionaries for the pervasiveness of corruption in Nigeria. These includes: Marxism, Differential Association, Anomie and Elite theories. Judging from the standpoint of these theories, the inability of the elites to govern the country properly has resulted in factors leading to the pervasiveness of corruption. These theories present graphic picture of how the minority who control power manipulate it to their own advantage and to the detriment of the many Nigerians. Nevertheless, idealistic approach shows that the public cannot be exonerated from the pervasiveness of corruption as well. Bad ideas behind the escalation of corruption is being perpetuated by the general public. Even, if elites are not interested in stealing the state money, the general public often persuade them to do so. That is why they used to praise corrupt persons, applause and award them with chieftaincy titles . The idea that public resources is not anybody's property, prompts a lot of people to seek the lion share of state money at all cost, without considering its effects on national development.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS.**

- Cognitive re-orientation and re-socialization is needed for every adult in the country in order to change their polluted mindset. This can be realized through seminars, lectures, symposium and sound preaching on moral integrity, mostly by Faith Based Organizations (FBO) across the nation.
- Every corrupt elite should be probed, rip off their loot and forfeit holding any public office for ever.
- Leaders who are ready to minister to the people rather than being ministered to should be allowed to hold positions of authority in the country.
- Value reorientation is required where corrupt persons should be exposed to ridicule rather than being celebrated henceforth.
- Problems of massive unemployment, underemployment, underpayment, poor remuneration and irregular payment of entitlements should be addressed with all seriousness.

- Politics should not be seen as an avenue to make money but as an opportunity to serve the public.
- Virtue, merit, hard work, brilliance, intelligence and patriotism should be encouraged and rewarded accordingly in villages, towns and cities across the federation. This will prompt people to live a life of holiness.
- Faith Based Organizations (FBO) should intensify more efforts in preaching against dubious behaviours and emphasis seriously on holiness.

## CONCLUSION

Going by the above Psycho-social theories, corruption is pervasive in Nigeria because it sustains some people, who are jobless, underemployed, underpaid and others, who are living in abject poverty. The poor leadership status of the country is equally adding fuel to the amber of corruption by aiding and abetting high level of bureaucratic and political corruption among elites. Moreover, it encourages its escalation among the general populace. If the elites are stealing with impunity, it is a way of encouraging the poor masses to indulge in it. The view that Nigeria has become a country, where the best is rubbished, and the brilliance mocked and the wickedness glorified has its root in successive dysfunctional leadership. The state pardon granted to corrupt politicians, ex-convicts, ex-militants and “Boko haram” ex -terrorists by the leadership of the country at federal level is a pointer to this fact. This act can never encourage reduction of corruption. Instead, it will continue to encourage it.

To worsen the situation, political office is perceived as an avenue to make money. Public affairs are regarded as nobody’s business. In order words, people run them with laissez-faire attitude and self-interest. People do not see anything wrong in cheating any more. In fact, it seems to have become an acceptable way of life. These ideas are already entrenched in the cognition of many Nigerians and it has become a sub-culture, which is very difficult to eradicate. The major implication is that the mentality of people is now badly ingrained with corruption; and this is being transmitted from one generation to another. If serious efforts are not put in place to destroy this evil in the heart of people, Nigeria may continue to experience creeping advancement, because corruption is an anti-thesis to development and progress. It is righteousness that exalts a nation; corruption is a reproach to any people anywhere in the world.

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