

## THE IMPACT OF CORRUPTION ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*Corruption remains a persistent structural challenge undermining governance quality and public sector performance in Nigeria. Despite the establishment of multiple anti-corruption institutions and legislative reforms, public administration effectiveness continues to be compromised, raising concerns about institutional capacity and accountability. This study examines the impact of corruption on the effectiveness of public administration in Nigeria. The study adopts a structured narrative literature review methodology, drawing on peer-reviewed articles, policy documents, and institutional reports published between 1990 and 2025. Using qualitative content analysis, the study synthesizes existing evidence to identify dominant forms of corruption and their institutional consequences. The findings reveal that corruption distorts policy implementation, weakens accountability mechanisms, erodes public trust, reduces service delivery efficiency, and entrenches administrative dysfunction. The study concludes that sustainable improvement in public administration effectiveness requires strengthening institutional independence, enhancing transparency frameworks, digitizing public sector processes, improving public servant welfare structures, and enforcing accountability mechanisms. These findings contribute to the governance reform discourse by providing an integrated analytical framework linking corruption dynamics to administrative performance outcomes in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** *Corruption; Public Administration; Institutional Effectiveness; Governance Reform; Nigeria.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Public administration in any country represent the organization arrangement, the process through which it will be managed and various institutional value that the officers legislate in order to ensure implementation of the policies and ensuring that the will of government is endorsed (Henry 1975). Considering this explanation, a state should be governed in a way that all public office holders who are thus referred to as public administrator should be held accountable for their conduct

to have an effective administration. In support of this, Finlay (2016) opined that the public administration is the area of governance where the laws and policies that have been legislated is carried out. Thus, Public administration comprises all the operations carried out in the pursuit of fulfilling and enforcing of public policies (Ezedu 2023).

In execution of the legislated laws and policies, it is ethical to ensure that the public administration should not use the public office for private gain or use their

prank, status or position for their personal benefit in order to have an effective public administration. However, many public office holders are presiding over the state for personal and selfish interest, which can be referred to as corruption. Corruption refers to trading in entrusted authority and the act of using one's influence or status to maneuver the outcome in return for selfish and personal gain. Corruption is a global issue, which actually varies in sophistication, intensity and form, from country to country (Hussaini & Kabuga 2025). It however involves doing unethical things as a public office holder such as bribery, extortion, fraud, embezzlement, nepotism and so on (Jancsics, 2019). In addition to this corruption also involves failing to do something that one ought to do or doing something permissible but doing it purposely for an improper manner.

For a country to run without glitch, and smoothly, corruption should be nipped at the bud. Makar et al. (2023) opined that accountability and transparency begets effectiveness and development because corruption is a major obstacle to effective public administration in any country. The cankerworm, thus referred to as corruption has eaten deep and have been entrenched in the system to the extent that Nigeria public sector cannot achieve more without tackling the menace of corruption. In the past decades, the major components of reform

programs in many countries is fighting of corruption, mainly as a result of the outcome of international convention of OECD Anti-bribery convention in 1997 and the UN convention against corruption 2004, nevertheless, corruption is the order of the day in every country.

However, despite the establishment of anti-corruption institutions such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission, corruption remains deeply embedded in Nigeria's public sector. Existing reforms have not sufficiently translated into measurable improvements in administrative efficiency, transparency, and accountability. The absence of a structured conceptual synthesis linking corruption mechanisms to administrative dysfunction creates a scholarly and policy gap. This study addresses that gap. The primary objective of this study is to examine the impact of corruption on the effectiveness of public administration in Nigeria. The study will focus of Conceptualization of corruption and public administration effectiveness; Identification of major forms of corruption within Nigerian public administration; analyzing how corruption affects administrative performance and Evaluation of reform efforts and proposing institutional strengthening strategies.

## 2. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

2.1 The concept of public administration effectiveness.

Section 318 of the Nigerian constitution of 1999 defined public service as any service provided by the federation in relation to its government. The provision also said that it applies to those who work for state governments in the same capacity as those who work at the federal level. However, administration highlights the element of coordinated and cooperative efforts among two or more individuals or personnel targeted at reaching a predetermined goal (Chávez & Paredes 2023). In furthermore, public administration is found and obtainable in the political setting, it is concerned mainly with the execution and implementation of the public policy. According to Ibietan (2013), public administration entails applying administrative principles in a political setting and utilizing both human and material resources in order to implement government policies, objectives, and goals with the ultimate goal of national development.

Concisely, public administration is the crucial and pertinent part that is evident in government; it is referred to as government in action, which is the operational and most conspicuous part of government, it is thus about policy making and politicking. Marume (2016) explained

that public administration is concentrated in the executive arms of any government, where the goals and purpose of government are implemented i.e the area of study and practice where the law and policies that have been enacted and legislated on, are carried out. Thus, all operations carried out for the purpose of fulfilling or enforcing public policy is referred to as public administration (Henry 1975).

Public administration is dominated in the executive arm of government where the work of government is predominantly carried out. That is why public administration is continually an active business in the government, which is concerned with implementation and execution of the laws that have been made and enacted by the legislative arm and interpreted by the judiciary arm, through the process of organization and management. Hence, public administration is concerned with what government does and how they do it. In conclusion, Administration of public sector should be efficiently and effectively structured, filled with professionals that have integrity and transparent in order to be protected against corruption.

2.2 The concept of corruption

Corruption is a constantly evolving and complicated worldwide issue involving a wide range of activities, behaviors, and people. The idea is broad, and there is no

consensus on an exhaustive and standard definition. Mugellini (2020) believes that the complexity of corruption cannot be dealt with by general and one-dimensional definitions, but rather through a diverse disciplinary approach.

The most frequently accepted definition of corruption, according to Transparency International (2013), is the abuse of power entrusted to an officer for personal or private gain. This definition supports and broadens the version of those definitions provided years ago. For example, the World Bank in 1997 defined corruption as the use of public office for private gain.

In addition to this OECD (2008) described it as the abuse of private or public office for personal gain. Apart from the definition given by the Transparency International, World Bank and OECD, different scholars see corruption from different perspectives thus giving different definitions. According to Onwuka et al. (2009), corruption occurs when public office holders disregard their official responsibilities in order to benefit themselves. According to Osuma et al. (2024), corruption is defined as dishonest, unlawful action by those in positions of authority as well as the act of forcing an office holder to adopt an unethical and immoral pattern of behavior.

All the definition above add the concepts -ethical and behavioral dimension-

to the discourse. This suggests that if public administration is not placed and anchored on principles, cultural values and ethics, the campaign against corruption is like chasing shadows.

In conclusion, corruption include many types of behaviour such as

1. Bribery: This is the usage of monetary or monetary inducement and rewards in order to prevent the judgments of public officer in position of trust. It can also be referred to as promise, offering, or supplying directly or indirectly to a public office holder purposefully for an undue advantage, for the officer or another person, which may abstain the holder from his or her official obligations (UNCAC 2004).
2. Nepotism: This constitute a major cause for corruption. It involves putting an incompetent individual to perform specialized accomplishments. Concisely, it is the appointment of relations or incompetent persons because of a restrictive relationship rather than basing it on merit.
3. Clientism: This type of corruption is simply described as “who gets what” in the society. This corruption, known as the patron-client paradigm of politics, has penetrated the world's current political systems. It is a complicated network of personal relationships and linkages between political patrons and

their clients/followers. This is founded on mutual material benefit, which is provided by public and taxpayer resources such as money and jobs to their

clients/dependents/followers/accomplishments. In exchange for their corruption and support, such as reelection (Djouadi et al. 2024).

4. Misappropriation: This is illegally appropriating of the resources meant for public consumption for personal and private uses.
5. Favoritism: This is an human inclination to prefer acquaintances, family and friends over a qualified person without regard to merit.
6. Embezzlement: This is the misappropriation, theft and other diversion of public property such a financial and non-financial resources by a public office holder for personal use by the virtue of his or her position (UNCAC 2004).

### 2.3 How to enhance effectiveness and curb corruption in public Administration

For over two decades, the Nigerian government has been promoting their willingness to undertake transformation of public administration. In General, public Administration is provided by a set of different institutions that are arranged according to the state and federal requirements.

In its efforts to combat corruption, the OECD has identified numerous supportive concepts that, directly or indirectly, avert corruption and thereby promote good governance and the improvement of effective public administration. These principles include

1. Integrity: Integrity refers to adhering to ethical standards and moral ideals such as professionalism, righteousness, and honesty. It is the pillar and cornerstone that ensures justice, compliance, and non-discrimination while performing public office duties. The integrity of public officials considerably lowers the likelihood of corruption. Safeguarding integrity is the foundational endeavor to combat corruption.

However, several countries have implemented explicit rules of behavior for public officials, along with manuals and training. This helps them in their regular practice. It is equally critical that integrity and ethics training for public office holders generate knowledge, raise awareness, and commitment, so fostering an integrity culture in the public sector.

A dedicated government who want to curb corruption should be ready to develop, update and diffuse code of conduct that may also provide tailored guidance, advice and practical examples to support the implementation of the code.

2. Transparency : Transparency is central to OECD instrument and practice in the public organization. Transparency is strongly related with anti-corruption and integrity. When a public officer is transparent, He/she will not only ensures access to information and promote accountability , He/she will also serve as a vehicle that play imperative role in levelling the playing field for businesses and citizens that have anything to do with the government.

According to OECD (2015b). The OECD recommendation on public integrity opined that the interest of the public must be protected at all stages of policy process . This can be achieved through promotion of transparency and practicing of open government.

In a summary, Lack of transparency nurtures corruption; it is quite impossible to assess the legitimacy of decision that are made behind a closed door (Jancsics, 2019; Densumite 2023). Public sector are also encourage that corruption can be averted if public sector can ensure prompt access to information and open data, along with timely and active responses to request for information.

Corruption in the public organization can also be curbed by ensuring there is visibility of flow of public fund throughout of the public

financial management cycle be fiscal year.

3. Stakeholders Participation: Stakeholders' involvement and participation in policy process as posited by OECD is an instrument for promoting integrity. The Code recommends that fostering transparent and effective stakeholders' participation will aid curbing corruption. This can be achieved by granting all stakeholders especially civil societies, the media, business organization and the citizens' equitable voice in the process of developing and implementing of public policies. In addition to this, stakeholders such as civil societies, independent media, anti-corruption offices, citizen group can serve as a "watch dog "in order to ensure effective accountability.

Corruption has been attributed on bad institutional architecture, as well as the complexity and ambiguity of contradicting rules and regulations. This has always forced public officials to make discretionary decisions, increasing the likelihood of self-serving decisions. Several countries throughout the world have begun integrating stakeholders in law and policymaking to avoid corruption, enhance government accountability, and encourage citizens' trust in public institutions.

4. Education and Public Awareness: The place and role of education in prevention of corruption cannot be overemphasized. Many parastatals and organizations have made it a point of duty to always give publicity about menace of corruption, how to avoid it and its impact and consequences on the economy. Many anti-graft agencies make media and prints publicity occasionally and many organizations also have inscription such as “we don’t take or give bribe” at the doors and entrance of sensitive offices.

The global issue of corruptions can be reduced by comprehensive approach: “prevent, educate and combat” .In this respect, schools should be actively involved in promoting and supporting mechanism to combat corruption. Citizens should be educated from their primary education to their tertiary education about corruption and its dangers (Danlami 2023)

“Employees” awareness about corruption is also imperative. They should be orientated about ethical rule that govern the exercise of the civil service or public office. They should also be equipped with the legal duties, the mission and the mandate of the various offices and their working procedures and the sanctions for going against is should be made explicit.

5. The Use of Information and Technology: Corruption can be reduced by a holistic approach that incorporates information and communication technology into public sector operations. Digitalization of government activities and businesses, including as e-tax, e-governance, e-education, and e-procurement, would increase internal anti-corruption controls and enable the detection of integrity violations. This will improve openness and lessen contact between public office holders and citizens (Abu & Staniewski 2022). This will enhance outreach and make it easier to spot inconsistencies and corruption. Going electronic will provide service trails, which may aid in investigation efforts.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a structured narrative literature review methodology. Secondary data were sourced from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, policy reports, and institutional publications between 1990 and 2025. The study employs qualitative content analysis of literatures to synthesize findings and identify recurring patterns linking corruption to public administration effectiveness.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

##### 4.1 Corruption and Public administration effectiveness in Nigeria

Corruption in Nigeria can be traced to pre-colonial era, in 1947; a commission was set up to investigate the corruption case and wrongdoing. Moreover, in 1955, a panel was set up to investigate the case of appointment and promotion where bribes of £80 to £100 were demanded for unnecessary appointment (Okonkwo 2005). The corrupt practice of Nnamdi Azikiwe led to the failure of African Continental Bank where his company (ZIK GROUP) was loaned £163,000 at a low interest rate. The loan was not repaid until 1971 as Foster – Sutton tribunal investigated and reported (Ekong 2015).

At independence, the civil servants were co-opted and were put some in ministerial posts, this give them enormous power to initiate social, economic and political policies and executing them. This led to the breakdown of transparency, accountability and lack of probity in the civil serves (Aybodike et al., 2015). Henderson (1999) reported that a large sum of \$12.5 billion of government revenue in “special accounts” were unaccounted for between 1998 and 1994. Abacha Family was not also left out in the corruption saga, as it was reported by Ribadu in the year 2010 that US \$600 million of Nigerian fund was looted

and stashed in various accounts in Switzerland.

Since the return of democratic administration in 1999, several corrupt practices have kept going on till date. During the Regime of Chief Oluwasegun Obasanjo, Human Right Watch (HRW) in 2007 cited that between \$4 billion and \$8 billion annually are gulped via corruption during his eight years of administration. In 2001, ₦450 million was embezzled by a permanent secretary of the ministry of Defense between 1993-2000 , the accountant general of the federation and the chairperson of Educational Tax fund including the Former Chairman of the Inland revenue service were alleged to have embezzled a total of ₦40 billion (Anazodo et al., 2012)

Other instances of corruption in Nigeria are the cases of former Inspector General of police Tafa Balogun , he was convicted to have had assets of \$150 million in Nigeria and foreign bank account worth of \$6.7 million despite his monthly salary being \$25,000 per month . In 2009, two comptroller of custom services were convicted for ₦3 billion waiver of importation of rice by Vasmani Brother (Gistmania 2009). A federal high court also sentenced Tony Omenyi to seven years imprisonment for laundering of ₦136 million in the year 2019 . In the year 2021, Independent Corruption Practice

Commission announced the recovery of 301 house from Two public officers in Federal Capital Territory (Ojo 2021) . The House committee on public account recently uncovered how over ₦1 billion was expend for recruitment and logistics between 2017 and 2020 without following the laid down financial rules (Abulu & Akubo 2022).

Corruption poses a serious threat to the development and effectiveness of public administration. It constitute a major threat to democracy, the rule of law, social progress and national securities (Igwe & Promise 2025). When one considers the economic consequences of corruption and its adverse input on administration, it actually call for a serious concern. Corruption in public service is not peculiar to Nigeria economy as it is seen to affect every country. It is associated with corrupt officers and their cronies. Corruption as it has been earlier mention involve embezzling huge sum of public resources, mismanagement, wastage, nepotism, clientism, favoritism etc.

The excessive tolerance for these act always have devastating negative impact on the economy, social and political development of the nation, by threatening the ethical values, justice and sustainable, economic development(Mugellini 2020). Corruption in the same vein, if it is unattended to weakens the society and endanger the rule of law. It furthers result

into the inefficient provision of service to the public.

The negative consequences of corruption are numerous and cannot be exhausted, but only a handful are discussed in this study. Corrupt practices in the public service have eaten deep into Nigeria's economy, accounting for 20% of GDP. Nigeria has ranked at the bottom of Transparency International's Corrupt Perception Index. However, successive administrations have attempted to reduce and end the corruption menace by implementing programs and regulations ranging from the criminal code (Sections 95-115). Peril code; 1976 corrupt practice edict; Shaxgari's ethical revolution to combat corruption through the implementation of a Code of Conduct for Public Employees; and Buhari/Idiagbon's War Against Indiscipline, among others.

In addition to this, various functional schemes and legislative acts were enacted to combat corruption, including the Bank and Other Financial Institutions Act (1991) and the Financial Malpractice is Bank Act (1994). Furthermore, in 1995, the Advance Fee Fraud and Other Related Offences Act was enacted; in 2000, the Independent Corrupt Practice and Other Related Offenses (ICPC) Act was enacted; in 2002, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission Act was also enacted; and, finally, the Due Process Mechanism, also

known as the Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit (BMPIU), was established. All of these were intended to curb corruption, however they have failed to effectively address the corruption problem.

Report in the media (prints, broadcast, social network) have attested to the fact that the level of corruption in Nigeria is sophisticated and it has permeate the arm of government through Federal government down to the local government. The impact of corruption abounds and are grave to the public administration in particular and the economy of the nation at large; the consequence include lack of trust, corruption make public administration not to be effective in its capacity to run when the citizen do not trust their activities Chletsos & Sintos, 2024). Among other serious challenge that corruption poised to the economic, political and social challenge include; threatening sustainable economic development, ethical values and justice. Corruption also undermine good governance by infringing and undermining formal process. It also destabilizes the confidence the public have in the government. Corruption create bad economic constraint and choice in government ability to implement policies. In conclusion, corruption is like a virus that weakens the functionability and legitimacy of good governance.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Corruption has caused a serious setback for the growth and development in Nigeria. As a serious concern, public servants who supposed to work ethically and diligently for the growth of the nation, by adopting the extant code of public administration, have converted their esteemed position to market central platform in order to amass wealth. This study concludes that corruption has affected every aspect of lives in Nigeria and it has cost Nigeria economic, political and social development.

This study, however, recommend that government should allow antigraft agencies to operate independent of the reigning government. The government should also take harsh decision such as life imprisonment or death sentence on corrupt public servant to serve as a deterrent for future occurrence. The government is also advised to eradicate the plea bargain culture; where a corrupt officer will be made to return a fraction of the stolen fund; however, the common wealth stolen should be wholly returned and the culprit should be punished accordingly. The government is also advised to pay public and civil servant salary that commensurate with the service they rendered and they should be accorded welfare packages such as , health insurance, educational loans, workers' housing schemes etc. because a comfortable public servant will

not dip his or her hand into the public fund. In addition to these, the retiring officers should be paid all their retirement benefits; if other serving public servants are aware that they will be paid all their dues after service, they will not embezzle in anticipation to spend it after retirements. Lastly, government should continually sensitize and sanitize the public sector by orientating them about the grave consequence of corruptions and adequately punish offenders.

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