

**CORRUPTION IN AWKA SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ANAMBRA STATE;
THE NEED FOR ATTITUDINAL CHANGE**

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Abstract

Bribery, extortion and other forms of graft are arguably often the outgrowths of a deeper culture of corruption which has proved disconcertingly resilient in the face of several attempts to stem the tide by the various anti graft agencies in Nigeria. This paper investigated the prevalence of corruption in the local government system in Awka south local government area of Anambra state. The factors responsible for corruption, the consequences of corruption and the suggestions on how to curb the menace of corruption were examined in the paper. To effectively execute the stated mandate, the paper adopted the cross sectional survey design and applied both the quantitative and qualitative instruments for data collection. The rational choice theory constituted the theoretical framework for the paper and the two hypotheses stated in the paper were tested using the One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The study found among others that corruption in the Awka south local government system was principally caused by the prevalent values for materialistic propensity. Social reaction to affluence such as the inability to question people's sources of wealth was also found to inflame involvement in corrupt practices. Consequently, the paper recommended among others the need for value reorientation and attitudinal change.

Key Words: Corruption, Bribery, Extortion, Values, Attitude, Change

INTRODUCTION

Corruption in Nigeria is no longer a new phenomenon. It is a widespread phenomenon in the country. It may be difficult to discuss the affairs of the Nigerian nation without mentioning the hydra headed monster which has taken a prime position in almost all the institutions in the country. Voskanyan (2000) stressed that as one of the oldest and most perplexing phenomenon in human society, corruption exist in every country in the contemporary world and it is not exclusively a problem of developing countries. The classical concept of corruption as a general disease of the body politics was stated by ancient political philosophers Plato and Aristotle (Voskanyan, 2000). To state that corruption is systemic in Nigeria is saying the obvious. Corruption is also endemic in Nigeria. The most intriguing aspect of this is that everybody is complaining about the prevalence of corruption in the country but nobody will easily own up to being corrupt. Nigeria as a nation could not be said to be corrupt as an entity. It is the people inhabiting the Nigerian landscape that could be said to be corrupt. Corruption could be personal or official. For the purpose of this paper, corruption is defined as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain (Transparency International, 2018). When a person occupying a particular office or position uses it for private gain, it amounts to corruption. According to Ene, Arikpo, Jeffery and Albert (2013), corruption involves acts of omission and commission ranging from trivial to monumental depending on the ethics and mores of a given society. Corruption can be classified as grand,

petty and political, depending on the amounts of money lost and the sector where it occurs (Transparency International, 2018). According to the organization,

Grand corruption consists of acts committed at a high level of government that distort policies or the central functioning of the state, enabling leaders to benefit at the expense of the public good. Petty corruption refers to everyday abuse of entrusted power by low- and mid-level public officials in their interactions with ordinary citizens, who often are trying to access basic goods or services in places like hospitals, schools, police departments and other agencies. Political corruption is a manipulation of policies, institutions and rules of procedure in the allocation of resources and financing by political decision makers, who abuse their position to sustain their power, status and wealth (Transparency International, 2018:1).

Corruption in the local government system in Nigeria is arguably an offshoot of corruption in the other tiers of government. It has affected every sector of the Nigerian economy. According to Voskanyan (2000:10);

For Machiavelli, corruption was process by which the virtue of the citizen was undermined and eventually destroyed. Since most men are weak and lacking in the virtue of the good citizen except when inspired by a great leader, the process of corruption is ever threatening.

Corruption threatens the growth and development of a people. It is necessary to stem the monster from destroying all that is left of our battered economic and institutions in the country. Corruption in the local government system tends to decimate its potentials for growth. This could partly explain why most local government systems in the country are not economically viable. Several studies on corruption in the local government systems in Nigeria abound, however, empirical works on corruption in Awka South local government area of Anambra state are either too skeletal or at best non discursive. It is based on the foregoing that this paper is focused on investigating; the factors responsible for corruption, the consequences of corruption and the possible measures to be taken in counteracting the effects of corruption in the study area. Furthermore, two hypotheses were put forward in this study;

- 1) Men are more likely to engage in corrupt practices than their female counterparts in Awka South LGA.
- 2) Women are more likely to feel the consequences of corrupt practices than their male counterparts in Awka South LGA

LITERATURE REVIEW

Corruption is ubiquitous in the Nigerian society. It has manifested in several forms ranging from petty corruption at the individual level to grand corruption at institutional and corporate levels. Literature will be reviewed according to the aims of the study.

Factors responsible for corruption in Nigeria: Several factors could be adduced as being responsible for the spread of corruption in the Nigerian society. One of such is the value system prevalent in the country. There is a propensity for materialistic acquisition in the country. This explains why Umez (2000) maintained that the prevailing value system in the country which glorifies affluence and get rich quick syndrome must be deemphasized. Similarly, Ugwuoke (2005) argued that the insatiable and inordinate urge to acquire and own property by some Nigerians account for the genesis of the different crimes in the country. The prevailing value system which encourages unbridled materialistic acquisitiveness was able to flourish due to the absence of strong institutional control mechanism. This was supported by Moyosore (2015) who stressed that among the factors responsible for corruption in Nigeria are weak institution of government, a culture of affluent and get rich syndrome which has become part and parcel of public officials coupled with the extended family pressure, village and ethnic loyalties and, unbridled competition between and among the ethnic groups and a dysfunctional legal system. Furthermore, Okwuagbala (2019) stressed that greed, poor youth empowerment, poverty and unemployment could be seen as being responsible for corruption in Nigeria. Other factors also responsible for corruption in Nigeria as stated by Okolo and Akpokighe (2014:35) include;

Non- conformity to religious tenets, imparted values and ideas alien to our culture, ethnicity which encourages favoritism and nepotism, a weak legal system which is

honored in the breach than observance. The political bureau in its report mentioned such causes as excessive materialism generated by our individual capitalist order which emphasize personal wealth without regard to the collective interest and welfare of the larger society. Other causes of poverty, illiteracy, get-rich- mania, statism, and wrong attitude to public property, absence of a welfare scheme which cushions effect of unemployment, retirement, large families, and quest for power, double standards and low level of patriotism.

Sometimes, poor reward system, low remuneration for public servants and greed account for corruption related behaviour or actions. The reward system in Nigeria is, perhaps, among the poorest in the world (Moyosore, 2015). It could be deduced that there multiplicity of factors responsible for corruption in Nigeria. Underlying most of these factors is the problem of greed and lack of institutional mechanism to effectively curb the menace of corruption in the country. Corruption in Awka local government system is likely to be caused by same or conglomeration of all or some of these factors. A proper investigation will definitely unravel this.

Consequences of corruption in Nigeria: corruption has so many bizarre consequences in Nigeria. According to Okwuagbala (2019), the consequences of corruption in Nigeria include poor investment, rise in poverty, poor national development and national crises. These can cause great deal of discomfort for the country and its inhabitants. In a related manner, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) (2008) stated that the effects of corruption are social and economic. According to the agency, governments and communities suffer from the malaise as it makes them uneconomic because less revenue is collected, with a loss to government much greater than the individual gains; more money is paid for the goods and services procured. As a result of corruption, policies are distorted to maximise corrupt gains, usually in favour of capital intensive spending; resources are diverted away from social and developmental priorities and investment is discouraged (ICPC, 2008). Corruption makes the society becomes unstable, because people become angry, particularly the poor who cannot afford to pay bribes and who get hurt the most and others whose human rights are violated. The rich provoke resentment, through wanting of more riches and by flaunting their corrupt gains; they make corruption a political issue. Society becomes unsafe because bribes protect criminals and facilitate drug-smuggling, unemployment, gun-running, terrorism and other crimes; bribes make the protection of society fail, because people pay bribes to avoid compliance with the requirements for health, safety and the environment (ICPC, 2008). Okolo & Akpokighe (2014) maintained that the cost of corruption in Nigeria could be seen from four dimensions; the political, economic, social and environmental. Politically, corruption can impede the functioning of a democratic system. It has the potency of negating the rule of law. Furthermore, corruption leads to depletion of the scarce resources in the nation. This could be seen in the involvement of public servants in engaging in white elephant projects. This has led to diversion of public funds into non viable projects. This could lead to job losses and economic backwardness (Okolo and Akpokighe, 2014). Corruption could also lead to lack of trust in the political system. This could partly explain the incidences of voter apathy which occasioned several elections in the different parts of the country. One of the visible consequences of corruption is the decay in the societal infrastructure. This is mainly due to neglect and failure to take necessary actions to mitigate the problem at onset. Corruption has given the country a poor image in the comity of nations. The recent ranking of the country among the most corrupt countries of the world leaves a lot to be desired. Corruption kills productivity and entrenches mediocrity. It is very necessary that this is stemmed to allow for a progressive and merit driven society.

Measures for stemming the tide of corruption; granted that corruption is ubiquitous in Nigeria, it can still be controlled. The creations of the anti graft institutions in Nigeria were some of the steps taken to decimate the monster in the country. However, these agencies appeared to have become prey to the monster they intended to tame. Fighting corruption in Nigeria is becoming a daunting task. Most Nigerian rulers who came in as physicians have come out as patients (Ijewereme, 2015). This could be liken to the proverbial witch doctor called upon to exorcised a demon possessed person who ended up being afflicted by the same demon. It is necessary to strengthen the anti graft agencies in the country to be proactive rather than being reactionary. Weak institutional base are at the root of the crises in the country Okwuagbala, 2019). Further

to this, is the issue of good governance, purposeful leadership and political will. When these elements are lacking, anti graft campaigns can be less productive. There is the need for attitudinal change. The value system underlined by the desire for unbridled materialism should be questioned by all and sundry. Public sector reform may go a long way in positioning the public sector in accordance with the conducts expected from it. Corrupt personnel should be punished severely (Ijewereme, 2015). Increase in workers take home pay may reduce the penchant for corruption. For instance, Ackerman (1991:87) stressed that “pay increase may indeed be necessary for good performance, but only if the increases are tied to productivity and are accompanied by a reduction in the overall level of public sector employment”. This position gained support from the work of Moyosore (2015) which contended that government must introduce an equitable wages and incentive system and improve other conditions of work so that the level of poverty could be reduced and the quality of life improved. It is believed that it will go a long way in reducing civil servants' vulnerability and susceptibility to corruption. Workers monthly wages and salaries should also be promptly paid to complement for the increase in take home pay Moyosore, 2015).

Theoretical Review: this paper is anchored on the tenets of the rational choice theory. Rational choice theory states that individuals rely on rational calculations to achieve outcomes that are in line with their personal objectives. These decisions provide people with the greatest benefit or satisfaction — given the choices available — and are also in their highest self-interest. Rational choice theory originated during the late 18th century with the work of Cesare Beccaria. Since then, the theory has been expanded upon and extended to include other perspectives, such as deterrence, situational crime prevention, and routine activity theory. The theory explained that people are rational beings. They go into crime after weighing the cost and benefits of the crime. Corrupt person weigh the prospects of corruption against its cost and eventually adopt the benefit of the action. Corruption in Awka South local government area could be as a result of the rational choices made by the corrupt persons to maximize their gains.

METHODS

This paper adopted the cross sectional survey design and applied both the quantitative and qualitative instruments for data collection. The questionnaire and the In Depth Interview (IDI) were used to illicit responses from the study participants. A sample size of 400 study participants responded to the study questionnaire whereas 4 male and 4 female opinion leaders were interviewed in the work. They were purposively chosen from Awka town. The 24th version of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for processing the quantitative data. Collated data were analyzed using the descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages. Study hypotheses were tested with a parametric test statistic using the one way Anova. Data from the IDI were transcribed and analyzed thematically using the thematic method of data analysis.

RESULTS

Table 1: Personal Data of the Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	188	47.0
Female	212	53.0
Total	400	100.0
Age		
22 - 31	78	19.5
32 - 41	176	44.0
42 - 51	96	24.0
52 years and above	50	12.5
Total	400	100.0
Marital Status		
Single	165	41.3
Married	224	56.0
Divorced	5	1.3
Separated	4	1.0
Widowed	2	.5
Total	400	100.0
Religion		
Christianity	384	96.0
Islam	6	1.5
African Traditional Religion	10	2.5
Total	400	100.0
Education		
No formal education	63	15.8
FSLC	48	12.0
SSCE/GCE	102	25.5
OND/NCE	100	25.0
B. Sc. and its equivalent	65	16.3
M. Sc. and its equivalent	13	3.3
PhD	9	2.3
Total	400	100.0
Occupation		
Self employed	200	50.0
Civil servant	146	36.5
Unemployed	34	8.5
Student	20	5.0
Total	400	100.0

Field Survey, 2019

In table 1, 47% of the respondents are males whereas 53% of them are females indicating more females than males in the distribution. The table further shows that 44% of the respondents are 32-41 years old while 12.5% of them are 52 years old and above. The distribution of the respondents by marital status indicates that 56% of them were married whereas 2% of them were widowed. In terms of their religious affiliation, almost all of them were Christians. Educational qualification of the respondents shows that 25.5% of them are SSCE/GCE holders while 2.3% of them are PhD holders. Lastly but not the least, half of the respondents were self employed while 5% of them were students.

Table 2: Respondents' views on main factor responsible for corruption in their communities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	The desire to acquire wealth by all means	144	36.0	36.0	36.0
	Weak institutional mechanism for fighting corruption	96	24.0	24.0	60.0
	Prevailing culture of flaunting affluence	64	16.0	16.0	76.0
	Widespread disregard to hard work and honesty	48	12.0	12.0	88.0
	Lack of accountability and transparency in handling of public funds	28	7.0	7.0	95.0
	Lack of patriotism	20	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey, 2019

In table 2, 36% of the respondents see the desire to acquire wealth by all means as the main factor responsible for corruption in their communities while 5% of them see lack of patriotism as being responsible for corruption in their communities. Participants in the In Depth Interview (IDI) were of the view that several factors were responsible for corrupt practices in their communities. For instance, a 64 year old male opinion leader from Amaenyi Awka stated;

Greed is at the centre of the increase in corruption in this community. Some people are no longer contented with what they have. The worst part of this is that too many people are desirous of becoming rich overnight. This is not right and has to be stopped.

Table 3: Respondents' views on the major consequence of corruption their communities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Economic stagnation and backwardness	157	39.3	39.3	39.3
	High cost of doing business	106	26.5	26.5	65.8
	Lack of security	51	12.8	12.8	78.5
	Increase in untimely death	42	10.5	10.5	89.0
	It kills industry and hard work	44	11.0	11.0	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey, 2019

Economic stagnation and backwardness was seen by 39.3% of the respondents as the major consequence of corruption in their communities whereas 10.5% of them maintained that increase in untimely death as the major consequence of corruption in their communities. Data from the qualitative instrument corroborated the above view. For instance, one of the participants in the IDI, a 60 year old female opinion leader from Amikwo Awka stressed that corruption is very dangerous to the community. According to her;

A corrupt society is a time bomb. Nobody is safe any longer. Corruption leads to waste of resources, delay or denial of delivery of services and the worst of it is denial of justice. Corruption can turn a plaintiff into a defendant. When justice is sold to the highest bidder, the hope of the common man on the street is dashed.

Table 4: Respondents’ views on how to stop corruption in their communities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Value reorientation/attitudinal change	98	24.5	24.5	24.5
	Making of the anti graft agencies proactive and efficient	80	20.0	20.0	44.5
	Entrenchment of meritocracy and reward for hard work	69	17.3	17.3	61.8
	Questioning of people’s sources of wealth	74	18.5	18.5	80.3
	Stiffer penalties for corrupt practices	79	19.8	19.8	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey, 2019

Almost a quarter of the respondents believed that corruption could be stopped in their communities through value reorientation/ attitudinal change whereas 17.3% of them opined that entrenchment of meritocracy and reward for hard work will stop corruption in their communities. The responses from the IDI were very illuminating. One of the interviewees in the study maintained that;

Being corrupt is a personal choice. If the penalty for corruption is severe and immediate, then it may be stemmed. People should learn to abide by the rules and stop looking for alternatives to the right ways of doing things. There is the need to deemphasize unnecessary attachment to materialism in the society (57 year old male opinion leader from Ifite Awka).

Test of hypotheses

First Hypothesis:- Educated people are more likely to engage in corrupt practices than their uneducated counterparts in Awka South LGA. Data in table 5 formed the basis for testing hypotheses 5.

Table 5: Relationship between levels of education and tendency to be corrupt

Tendency for corruption	Descriptives							
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
No formal education	63	17.78	3.381	.426	16.93	18.63	12	24
FSLC	48	17.90	3.191	.461	16.97	18.82	10	22
SSCE/GCE	10	18.21	2.615	.259	17.69	18.72	10	23
OND/NCE	10	17.35	2.844	.284	16.79	17.91	11	21
B. Sc. and its equivalent	65	15.86	3.137	.389	15.08	16.64	10	23
M. Sc. and its equivalent	13	17.62	3.863	1.071	15.28	19.95	14	24
PhD	9	16.56	3.087	1.029	14.18	18.93	10	20
Total	400	17.45	3.091	.155	17.15	17.75	10	24

Field Survey, 2019

Table 6: One Way ANOVA

Tendency for corruption	ANOVA				
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	247.152	6	41.192	4.542	.000
Within Groups	3563.848	393	9.068		
Total	3811.000	399			

Field Survey, 2019

A significant relationship was found between levels of education and tendency for corruption in Awka South LGA at P=0.000. The mean scores of the independent variables were compared using the Scheffe test and significant difference was observed. It then implies that educated people are more likely to engage in corrupt practices than their uneducated counterparts in Awka South LGA. One can infer that education has influence on corrupt practices in Awka South LGA.

Second Hypothesis: Married persons are more likely to feel the consequences of corrupt practices than their unmarried counterparts in Awka South LGA. Data in table 7 formed the basis for testing hypothesis 2.

Table 7: Relationship between marital status and feeling the consequences of corrupt practices

Consequences of corruption	Descriptives							
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Single	165	13.55	3.089	.240	13.07	14.02	7	19
Married	224	12.39	2.872	.192	12.01	12.77	7	18
Divorced	5	14.20	1.789	.800	11.98	16.42	11	15
Separated	4	9.00	.000	.000	9.00	9.00	9	9
Widowed	2	16.50	.707	.500	10.15	22.85	16	17
Total	400	12.88	3.020	.151	12.58	13.17	7	19

Field Survey, 2019

Table 8: One way ANOVA

Consequences of corruption	ANOVA				
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	222.331	4	55.583	6.424	.000
Within Groups	3417.419	395	8.652		
Total	3639.750	399			

Field Survey, 2019

A significant relationship was found between marital status of respondents and feeling the consequences of corruption in Awka South LGA at $P=0.000$. The mean scores of the independent variables were compared using the Scheffe test and a significant difference was observed. It then implies that married persons are more likely to feel the consequences of corrupt practices than their unmarried counterparts in Awka South LGA.

DISCUSSION

Several factors were found to be responsible for corruption in Awka South LGA. These include the desire to acquire wealth by all means, weak institutional mechanism for fighting corruption, prevailing culture of flaunting affluence, widespread disregard to hard work and honesty and lack of accountability and transparency in handling of public funds. This finding is consistent with Umez (2000) and Ugwuoke (2005) who maintained that the insatiable desire to acquire wealth by some Nigerians account for the genesis of different crimes in the country. The finding is also corroborated by Moyosore (2015) who also argued that weak institution of government and a culture of affluence contribute to the inclination towards corruption. The paper found that the consequences of corruption are enormous. These include economic stagnation and backwardness, high cost of doing business, lack of security, increased in untimely death and its potential for killing industry and hard work. This finding is supported by Okwuagbala (2019) who stated that corruption leads to poor national development and national crises, poor investment and rise in poverty. It also agrees with Okolo and Akpokighe (2014) who commented that corruption leads to depletion of scarce resources of the nation, lack of trust in the political system and diversion of public funds into non viable projects. It was found in this paper that corruption could be stemmed through value reorientation and attitudinal change, making of the anti graft agencies proactive and efficient, entrenchment of meritocracy and reward for hard work, questioning of people's sources of wealth and enforcing stiffer penalties for corrupt practices. This finding is also consistent with Ijewereme (2015) who stated that corrupt personnel should be punished severely. The finding also agrees with Okwuagbala (2019) who stated that weak institutional base are at the root of the crises in the country and proposed a proactive and revamped institutional base.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Corruption has occupied and exalted position in the country for a very long time. It has bastardized and negated several efforts put in place to checkmate it. The emergence of anti graft agencies could not stem the monster from being pervasive and ubiquitous in the country. It is this almost mystical invincibility of the monster that has become a very serious source of concern to all and sundry. Widespread inequality and the increasing spate of poverty in the country are ready made fertile ground for corruption to thrive. It is therefore necessary that concerted efforts are taken to mitigate the rising scourge of this malaise. Treating the symptoms of corruption may not necessarily translate to fighting corruption. Corruption could be stopped by making efforts towards attitudinal change and wealth redistribution. People with excessive wealth should be taxed higher than the others and also forced to engage in community development projects. This will go a long way to hardship in the country. The institutional base should be strengthened and made proactive.

Corrupt persons should be penalized swiftly and sources of wealth of individual questioned. There is the need to deemphasize affluence and imbibe the spirit of industry and hard work. Honesty should be encouraged and rewarded.

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