

NEPOTISM, CRONYISM AND PREBENDALISM: AN EXPLORATION OF THE MORES THAT REINFORCE CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA'S POLITICAL SYSTEM.

Ifeanyichukwu M. Abada (PhD)

Department of Political Science, University of Nigeria Nsukka

Fredrick O. Onyia

Department of Political Science, University of Nigeria Nsukka

ABSTRACT: *The perception that Nigeria is a corrupt country has persisted for decades in spite of measures taken by successive administrations to mitigate it. This study explores the factors that encourage corruption in the Political System. It relies on the explanatory variables of Prebendal Theory. Employing survey research design, data were generated through interviews and documents and analyzed using content analysis. The central argument in the study is that, there are Mores and Belief Systems, rooted in Nigerian culture that encourages corruption. This is encapsulated in a Nigerian proverb: "One, whose father is in heaven, cannot be destined for hell". The proverb purports that a public office holder must use the appurtenances of his office to benefit his cronies and relatives. The study recommends a cultural and moral reorientation to correct the erroneous impression that public office is a platform for dispensing prebends to relatives and cronies.*

KEYWORDS: nepotism, cronyism, prebendalism, corruption, mores.

INTRODUCTION

From January 1966, when Nigeria's first military coup occurred, successive administrations have pledged to fight corruption. General Murtala Muhammed's administration in 1975/76 did a massive purge of the federal civil service, ostensibly to fight corruption. The anti-corruption war was further given legal teeth in year 2000 with the establishment of Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Offences Commission (ICPC). This was followed in 2003 with the creation of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Regrettably, Transparency International, the anti-corruption watchdog has continued to rate Nigeria as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. In its 2018 Corruption Perception Index Report, it scored Nigeria 27/100%, down from 28/100% in 2017. The recent report shows Nigeria trailing behind other West African Countries such as Togo 30/100; Sierra-Leone 30/100; Liberia 32/100; Niger 34/100; Gambia 37/100 and Benin 40/100. Corruption Index in Nigeria averaged 20.76 points from 1996 until 2018, reaching an all time high of 28 points in 2016 and a record low of 6.90 points in 1996(TI Corruption Perception Index 2018. Retrieved on 5/9/19 from https://www.transparency.org/files/content/pages/2018_cpi Executive Summary).

Corruption, a word flagrantly used and abused by Nigerians is a concept that is often misconstrued. According to the World Bank, Corruption is "the abuse of public office for private gains". For most people, the concept resonates when it is associated with politicians and holders of public office. Outside this circle, attitudes and practices that conduce to

corruption are not usually regarded as such. Arising from this myopic view, corruption is perceived in Nigeria as embezzlement of public funds. This perception of corruption has been reinforced by successive administrations in Nigeria.

It is common practice for each administration to start with a pledge to fight corruption and this they do by going after public officers who either misappropriated public funds or diverted same to personal use. Regrettably little or nothing is done to plug the holes that either encourage this misdemeanor or create the right attitudes that will make it difficult for corruption to thrive. While each government creates a media hype of fighting corruption, the same government indulges in corrupt acts they accused their predecessors of. Yet, they remain indifferent to the ones perpetrated under their watch.

It is the contention in this study that this concept of corruption is narrow and therefore misleading. Beyond misappropriation and embezzlement of public funds, there are other corrupt activities that Nigerians irrespective of status indulge in, albeit unknowingly. However they are often glossed over and not recognized as corruption. Such acts have found accommodation in the culture and belief systems of Nigerians. Thus, the approach adopted in this study is to take a holistic view of corruption, using nepotism, cronyism and prebendalism as indices to explicate the mores that reinforce corruption in Nigeria's polity.

The work is divided into six sections. Section one is the introduction. In section two, we did a brief review of the extant literature on corruption in Nigeria. Section three discussed the theoretical framework underpinning the study. The focus on section four is the socio economic structure of Nigeria which provides the context for understanding corruption in Nigeria. Section five discusses under eight headings, the mores and belief systems that reinforce corruption in Nigeria. We conclude in section six with some recommendations.

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Corruption is an issue that Nigerians discuss freely, albeit emotionally. It is therefore not surprising that there is a plethora of literature on corruption. The activities of local and foreign media in exposing cases of corruption, puts Nigeria on the spotlight almost always. This is complemented by the works of Nigerian scholars as well as foreign authors. Ene, Abam, Williams and Dunnamah (2013) wrote on how corruption impacts on the development of Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. They identified fraud, embezzlement, misappropriation of public funds, and inflation of contracts among others as the various manifestations of corruption in Nigeria. The causes of this, they argue are, misplaced sense of values, lack of accountability and transparency in government, greed among others. For them, the ways to curb it are behavior modification, transparency in governance, political will and sustainability of democracy.

Hoffman and Navanit (2017) claims that an estimated \$400 billion was stolen from Nigeria's public accounts from 1960-1966. In addition, another \$182 billion was lost through illicit financial flows from the country between 2005 and 2014. Their major argument is that corruption begets more corruption, perpetuating and entrenching social injustice in daily life. Such an environment weakens social values of fairness, honesty, integrity and common citizenship, while breeding impunity. They further posited that there is a deep-seated lack of confidence in official institutions, or in the universal application of fair and natural rule of law. Thus social contract in Nigeria between government and the people is very local and not

national. Government anti-corruption campaign will only be perceived as sincere if they are self-examining and self-correcting, they concluded.

For PWC (2016), corruption is defined and perceived across a spectrum of illegal payments and transactions such as bribes, embezzlement and money laundering. Citing Transparency International, it defined corruption as “the abuse of public office for private gain”. According to them, Transparency International categorizes corruption in three parts: 1. Grand corruption, which are acts committed at high levels of government that distort policies of the central functioning of the state, enabling leaders to benefit at the expense of the public good. 2. Petty corruption, which is every day abuse of entrusted power by low and mid level public officials in their interactions with ordinary citizens, often trying to access basic public goods and services. 3. Political corruption, which is 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.

PWC identified the impact corruption has on the Nigerian economy as follows: tax avoidance resulting in lower tax base for government revenue; government expenditure in vested interest rather than public interest; hiring based on nepotism, cronyism and patronage rather than merit, thereby reducing quality of public institutions; unnecessary bureaucracy creating further opportunities for bribes and weak enforcement of contracts and property rights.

Ogundiya (2009) states that the privileged elite have successfully disillusioned the psyche of the masses with the virus of ethnicity to the extent that when corrupt acts are unveiled and the perpetrators are under probe, it is customary in Nigeria to associate such probe with ethnic politics. While Ojo (2014) posits that the major origin and reflection of ethnic jingoism and prebendal politics in the country is the British colonialism in Nigeria that led to a marriage of diverse ethnic groups and social classes that make up the country.

Smith (2007) has pointed out that in Nigeria, the pressures to use one’s position to benefit people in networks of personal associations is intense and predisposes public officers to indulge in corrupt acts. From the foregoing, it could be seen that extant literature focused essentially on the different manifestations of corruption in Nigeria and how it continues to impact negatively on the economy as well as breed impunity. Corruption in Nigeria is a topic which scholars and commentators regale in writing about as if Nigeria is the only country where corruption is prevalent. Much thought and writing have not been spared to deeply probe the factors that encourage corruption in Nigeria and why in spite of all the measures put in place to stem its tide, it has failed to abate. Pertinent questions that ought to be asked are: is corruption in the people’s DNA, is it attitudinal, or is it cultural. What is it that fuels corruption in Nigeria? Extant literature has not been able to provide an answer and it is this lacuna that this study tends to fill. The central argument guiding the study is that corruption is rooted in Nigeria’s Mores and Belief systems. Activities which conduce to corruption are part and parcel of the social and cultural life style of Nigerians and this is carried into public office. We will explore these belief systems in the context of Nigeria’s socio-economic structure in order to understand the nexus between the two. However, this would be after we have articulated the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

We relied on the explanatory variables of Prebendal Theory. This is a theory that is majorly associated with an American scholar, Richard Joseph, and which he deployed in a seminal study he did in 1987 to analyze the Patron-Client relationship that has been the hallmark of Nigerian Politics. The word prebend is originally associated with the church. It is the right of a member of a chapter to his share in the revenues of a cathedral (Catholic Encyclopedia). Collins Dictionary on the other hand gave two related definitions, one British and the other American. For the British, it refers to the stipend assigned by a cathedral or collegiate church to a canon or member of the chapter. While it gives the American definition as the part of the revenues of a cathedral or collegiate church paid as a clergyman's salary.

According to the theory, state offices are regarded as prebends that can be appropriated by office holders who use them to generate material benefits for themselves and their constituents and kin groups. Joseph used the term to describe the sense of entitlement that many people feel they have to revenues of the Nigerian state. Elected officials, government workers, and members of the ethnic and religious groups to which they belong, feel they have a right to a share of government revenues (<https://africaplus.wordpress.com/2013/.../prebendalism-and-dysfunctionality-in-nigeria>(accessed 10 December 2018)).

A critical point Joseph makes and which is key to understanding prebendalism is that the office holder is able to appropriate the office, meaning that he converts it into his or her piece of the state. Joseph described the essence of prebendalism as "authority stealing". According to him, it is the authority entrusted to state offices that is stolen by those appointed or elected to fill them. An individual is given a public office in order for him or her to gain personal access over state resources. It entails practices in which important state agents unambiguously subvert the rule of law for personal gain.

In applying this theory to our study, it is pertinent to emphasize that Nigeria is a peripheral capitalist state. And in a society with such a nomenclature, state power is used for primitive accumulation. Since access to state power guarantees access to state resources, there is heightened competition for political offices with little regard for the statutory purposes for which such offices were created. Thus, public servants who occupy vantage positions in government, see it as an opportunity to appropriate state resources, first for themselves and secondly for their kin groups. While they are holding such positions, their kiths and kins utilize every means available to remind them that their position is a once in a lifetime opportunity that must be utilized for the benefit of their people to the total exclusion of other groups. In this connection, Mores that encourage cronyism, nepotism, and other parochial tendencies are constantly drummed up to pressurize public officers to do the "needful" for their people. This is what disposes public officers to engage in corrupt acts as they subvert the rule of law and due process. As Trump (2017) rightly observed "the rule of law is the shield that protects the individual from government corruption"

METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study. Data collection was majorly through documentary method and supplemented with some key informant interviews. Content analysis and logical deduction were employed to analyze data.

Socio-Economic Structure of Nigeria

Nigeria operates a federal system of government with power shared between the federal, state and local governments. There are 68 items in the Exclusive Legislative List which only the federal government has powers to legislate on and 30 items in the Concurrent List which both the federal and state governments have powers to legislate on (1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria with 2011 amendments). Mines and minerals, including oil field, oil mining, geological surveys and natural gas is item 39 in the Exclusive List.

Historically, the non-oil sector, particularly the agricultural sector, was the mainstay of the Nigerian economy during the 1960s and early 1970s. For instance, in the 1960s, the agricultural sector accounted for 85% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings, 90% of employment generation, and about 80% of gross domestic product (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2010). However from the 1980s, the oil sector took a centre stage as the mainstay of Nigeria's economy accounting for 90% of foreign exchange earnings and more than 80% of government revenue. In 2017, agriculture contributed 20.85% to GDP, Industry 22.32% and service sector 55.8% (<https://www.statistica.com/statistics/382311/nigeria-gdp-distribution-across-economic-sectors> (accessed 18 January 2019)).

The bulk of Nigeria's oil deposits are in the Niger Delta Region of the country. However the region has no control over the resources. Exploration, production and distribution are the responsibility of the federal government which has joint venture partnership with several multinational oil companies. Since minerals, oil fields and mining as well as natural gas are items in the Exclusive List; revenues generated from them are centrally controlled and paid into an account maintained by the Central Bank of Nigeria. On a monthly basis, these revenues are shared among the three tiers of government by an agency known as Federation Accounts Allocation Committee (FAAC). The committee which is chaired by the Minister of Finance comprises the representatives of the federal ministry of finance and finance commissioners from the 36 states of the federation and the federal capital territory (FCT). Presently, the allocation formula is tilted in favor of the federal government which takes 52.6%, the states share 26.72% while local governments take 20.60%. There are 36 states in Nigeria plus FCT and 774 local governments.

Table 1 below gives an illustration of a typical FAAC allocation to the three tiers of government for the year 2017. Figures are in billions of Naira – Nigeria’s currency

Month	Federal Government Allocation	State Governments Allocation	Local Governments Allocation	Total Revenue Shared
January	168 billion	114.28 billion	85. 4 billion	430.16 billion
February	200.66	128.4	96.52	514
March	180.5	116.5	87.5	466.9
April	163.89	117.59	87.77	415.73
May	147.7	74.9	57.8	462.4
June	286.6	178.6	134.9	652.2
July	193	130.69	98	467.85
August	260.6	132.18	101.9	637.7
September	210	140.45	107.4	558
October	280.200	142.33	109.73	532.7
November	320.33	162.72	125.54	609
December	344.61	175.06	134.96	655.17
Total	2576.09trillion	1613.7 trillion	1227.42 trillion	6401.81 trillion

Source: Office of the Accountant General of the Federation 2017

This practice of monthly sharing of the revenues that accrues to the Nigerian state among the three tiers of government acts as a disincentive to production. The President, State Governors and Local Government Chairmen look up to this monthly income which is assured, though the amount received monthly varies based on the fluctuations in the international price of crude oil. It is important to mention at this juncture that at the three levels of government, 90% to 95% of the revenue estimates contained in the annual budgets are usually projected to come from the federation account. The primary motive of politicians who aspire to different offices at the three levels of government is to position themselves to control these resources. The reason being that becoming the President, State Governor or Local government Chairman gives one not just unlimited access to these resources, but also deciding how it is dispensed. These scenarios typify Harold Lasswell’s definition of Politics as the science of who gets what, when and how and as some scholars have added, why.

This monthly windfall called federal allocation is proceeds of oil rent which is shared among the three tiers of government. Since it is freely gotten and shared without any of the three tiers of government working hard for it, the average Nigerian believes that he should benefit from the sharing directly or indirectly. Elective offices and public appointments have therefore become the vehicles for accessing the windfall.

Of importance too is a contraption called Security Vote. In the annual budget prepared by the federal government, appropriation is made for the funding of the armed forces, security agencies and paramilitary organizations. Yet there is a fund called Security Vote which does not feature as a line item in the budget, but which the President, State Governors and Local Government Chairmen allocate to themselves monthly. They use their discretionary powers to determine how much to take and most times, the figure is a function of their greed. The disturbing thing is that they are not required by either the national or state assemblies to account for the money.

Defense and Security is in the exclusive legislative list, making it the sole responsibility of the federal government. Maintenance of public order and safety is the work of the Police. Nigeria operates a central police structure. There is no state, municipal or local police. The central police do policing throughout the country and as a result, its funding is the responsibility of the federal government, though some state governments provide logistics support. Yet the President, Governors and Local Government Chairmen pay themselves security vote monthly from public funds. While a local government chairman takes a minimum of five million naira monthly(USD 14,286), a State governor takes between five hundred million naira and one billion naira(USD 1,428,527 – 2,857,141) while the President takes about One billion naira and above(USD 2,857,141).

No doubt, this is an institutionalized corruption. This is part of the unearned income that people who aspire to be President, Governor or Local Government Chairman look up to getting, when they win elections. That the prospects of having such sums of money at their disposal and spending it without questioning, heightens political competition cannot be gainsaid. Nigeria is a peripheral capitalist state characterized by low level of development of productive forces. As a result, political power is used for primitive accumulation. The scenario of how this plays out was succinctly captured by Ake (1981). He observed:

the prospects of capitalist appropriation through political power is so attractive that some people who want to be wealthy and who would normally have engaged in productive enterprises have preferred to seek their fortunes by going into politics. With attention being directed to politics rather than to economics, and emphasis placed on appropriation rather than production capitalism, this cannot be very conducive to the development of productive forces. In a situation where politics is the way to power as well as wealth, the premium on the acquisition of political power becomes inevitably high. The further implication is that political competition becomes a grim battle in which winning is all important. Because winning is all important, the competitors tend to use every means to win. This is part of the explanation of high incidence of political violence and political instability in Nigeria.

The mores which reinforce corruption in Nigeria's political system could therefore be better appreciated when situated within the context of the country's peripheral capitalist system. Doing this provides a better understanding of the interplay between politics and economics. It is this interplay that makes Nigerians to perceive political positions as prebends. As will become glaring in the next section, the Mores presented in this study as reinforcing corruption in Nigeria's political system reflects interplay of politics and economics.

Mores That Reinforce Corruption in Nigeria's Political System

There are different Mores and Belief systems that encourage corruption in Nigeria. However the ones discussed in this study are those that reinforce cronyism, nepotism, misappropriation and diversion of public funds as well as paying lip service to fairness, equity, justice and rule of law. Elements of each or a combination of these vices would be seen in each of the Mores discussed below.

“One, whose father is in heaven, would not be destined for hell”.

This is a common saying in Nigeria. Heaven is used metaphorically to refer to a privileged position or important public office, while hell on the other hand means a situation of suffering or lack of privileges. Translated to politics, it means that when one is occupying a privileged position in government, his kiths and kilns are not expected to suffer any material deprivation. The occupant of such office is expected to appropriate the position of his office to dispense favor and patronage to his relations with a view to improving their material condition. It is because of this belief, that appointments into public offices are usually greeted with cheer and celebration by associates of the appointee. Such excitement does not stem from the fact that the appointee has been given an opportunity to serve the country, rather it stems from the fact that the appointee is going to use the discretionary powers of his office to improve the standard of living of his associates. In most cases, the appointee in collaboration with his friends and relations organizes a church thanksgiving and reception to thank God for “remembering him”. Thus the success of a public officer is measured, not in terms of fulfilling the core mandate which his office requires, but on how he used the appurtenances of his position to improve the living conditions of his relations and cronies. He is expected to do this to the total exclusion of other Nigerians since by the position he occupies, it is the “turn” of his people to benefit from the perks of public appointment. So much pressure is brought to bear on such public officer to minister to the needs of his people as he is daily undated with all manner of requests. In an interview, a prominent traditional ruler from Eastern Nigeria justified this on the grounds of the extended family system practiced in Nigeria and most African countries. He argues that this imposes a burden on one to be his brother’s keeper. Thus when fortune smiles on someone, he is expected to take care of others. Public appointment in this context is regarded as a fortune. As an illustration, students seeking for admission into institutions of higher learning will rely on him to secure them admission. Those seeking employment in Ministries, Departments and Agencies of government, demand that he uses his position to secure them employment. Whatever, his relations or friends, require from the government, he is seen as the points man to make it happen. In a bid to meet these expectations, merit and fairness are sacrificed on the altars of cronyism and nepotism. This pressure brought to bear on the public officer challenges him to do unethical things which find expression in several forms. It could take the form of diversion and misappropriation of public funds. At other times, government infrastructural projects are diverted to the locality of the public officer, even when it does not make economic sense. A popular phrase used to explain away such misdemeanor is that “it is politically correct”.

As all these anomalies go on, the public servant continues to receive accolades from his relatives who regale in the fact that he knows how to use power. Nothing done in the “service of his people” is ever perceived wrong. Obviously this belief which is held strongly in Nigeria predisposes public servants to indulge in corruption. In the unlikely event that the public servant is indicted and criminal charges brought against him in the court, his kinsmen interpret the arraignment as political persecution. In most cases, they mobilize to court to show solidarity with the accused. Thus, criminality is rationalized and celebrated by the beneficiaries who give it an ethnic identity. This is a shameful display of corruption, opportunism and lack of principles.

It is even worse when a public servant who engaged in a similar misdemeanor, but perhaps hails from a different section of the country was never tried. The easiest interpretation given in

such instances is that the one being tried is facing criminal charges because he hails from a politically disadvantaged part of Nigeria. This scenario places the judiciary in a dilemma as they grapple with propaganda orchestrated by the relations and friends of the accused as they adjudicate on criminal cases. Criminal trials are portrayed as political trials that have the intent of vendetta. Jurists therefore face a burden of decision as they handle such cases. That this practice, which stems from the Mores of Nigerian society reinforces corruption, is no doubt apposite.

“When Palm wine sees a familiar face, it allows a sip”

Palm wine is a local alcoholic juice that is gotten from palm trees which abound in the rainforest zone of southern Nigeria. It is a favorite drink of locals from southern Nigeria. When put in a container, it bubbles and this is a sign of its freshness. The saying that when palm wine sees a familiar face, it allows a sip is invoked in disputes that are presented for arbitration. It is a More that encourages compromise and double standard as a result of nepotism. In the same vein, it discourages fairness and equity. An arbiter here faces a moral burden of dispensing justice in an unbiased manner regardless of whose ox is gored, especially where his relation is involved. Any attempt to do this is often interpreted as an act of wickedness on his part. Thus, an arbiter is expected not to apply the full weight of the law, when a friend or relation is involved. He is equally not expected to excuse himself from the case, rather he is encouraged to handle the case, by using his influence to provide “soft landing” for the accused.

In the political realm, this plays out strongly in the fight against corruption. Criminal charges are rarely brought up against corrupt politicians who belong to the ruling party. For those in the opposition party who are indicted, their cases are usually dropped when they defect to the ruling party. The rationale being that the ruling party should not be seen to be persecuting their members, but should rather give them protection as a political dividend. This practice to say the least reinforces corruption.

“One should first look good at the home, before extending his goodness outside”.

This is a belief that is akin to saying that Charity Begins at Home. Although this saying has universal application when associated with philanthropy; however in Nigeria its application has been corrupted in the political sphere. Again because Nigeria operates a peripheral capitalist system where political office is used for primitive accumulation, public officers first meet the preference of their localities in dispensing political patronage, before giving consideration, if any to others. This is the belief system upon which cronyism and nepotism finds justification. This is witnessed even at the highest level of governance.

As an illustration, when President Muhammadu Buhari assumed office in May 2015, the first sets of appointments of his personal staff were his kinsmen of the Fulani ethnic stock from northern Nigeria. Rather than be swayed by criticisms that greeted these appointments, he justified it by asking a rhetorical question, “If I don’t give them appointments, what would then be their reward for supporting me all these years?” This is clearly a statement that portrays the patron-client nomenclature of Nigeria’s political system. Again all but two of heads of security agencies, he appointed are from the northern part of the country and are also of Fulani ethnic stock. His response to criticisms on the lopsided nature of the appointments also reflected the belief that he should look good at the home front first before extending his goodness to outsiders. His response was “you should not expect a people that gave me five percent of votes

to benefit equally with people that gave me ninety seven per cent of votes. This is a clear justification of nepotism from a President who touts fighting corruption as one of his three point agenda, not realizing that nepotism is an act of corruption.

Ironically, people from the northern part of the country utilize every opportunity to defend the President's actions, based on the belief that it is their turn to enjoy prebends. The southerners complain because they feel short changed. However, if a southerner becomes president and acts in a similar manner, he will be applauded by his people while the northerners will complain. That is the paradox of political competition in Nigeria.

“One cannot pay a condolence visit to an outsider when he has a bereaved person at home”.

Bereavement ordinarily attracts sympathy. The tendency is for people to rally round a bereaved family to lend support. Burials and rites of passage are not left to individual families, but made community affairs. Translated to politics, this belief system encourages favoritism as it leads to a situation where national interest is sacrificed at the altars of parochialism.

“If you are privileged to get a pear, savor it and enjoy it”

Whoever is availed of pear should savour it and enjoy it to the fullest. Pear is a local and delicious fruit that grows typically in the rainforest zone of Nigeria. It gets ripe during the rainy season and could be consumed singly or eaten together with boiled corn or roasted corn. In the context that it is used, pear metaphorically means a privileged position, a political appointment or a high profile public office. The meaning conveyed by the saying is that if one gets the opportunity to occupy a position of importance in government, he should maximize that position to his own benefit, regardless of the public good he is expected to serve by virtue of the position. It is a belief system that justifies self aggrandizement and encourages the abuse of public office for personal gains. Following from this belief, acts of misdemeanor committed by public officers are tolerated on the ground that is their turn to “enjoy”. People that rise in condemnation of the untoward acts of such public officers are labeled envious and often advised to wait for their own turn.

“Let the stock of firewood be exhausted, provided the food in the pot gets cooked”.

In most parts of rural Nigeria, fuel wood serves as domestic energy for cooking. It is not just sourced at the point one wants to cook, rather it is gathered in advance in large quantity and stocked to last for a long time. In the process of cooking, one continues to stoke the wood inside the fire until the food is properly cooked. This does not however entail using up the whole stock of fuel wood.

The stock of fuel wood represents a treasure or valued possession. What the saying purports therefore is that a valued treasure should be sacrificed or traded in, provided one gets into an elected office or political appointment. Interpreted politically, it accords with the Machiavellian maxim that the end justifies the means. Guided by this maxim, Nigerians indulge in uncivilized conducts to attain positions that will uplift their fortune. This finds expression in many ways. First it could result to a politician that is vying for office selling all his valuable property to prosecute his campaign. This act of desperation could see him killing or maiming opponents that could scuttle his ambition, bribing of electoral officers, security agencies and even compromising the judiciary when the election outcome leads to litigation. He throws in all he

has to achieve victory and what impels him to do all this is the certainty that once he gets that office, he will use the instrumentality of the office to recover all that he has spent. Some would also do whatever it will take for them to get what in political circles is called “juicy appointment”. These are positions that provide a gateway to financial fortune. Guided by this belief system, the populace hardly condemns such acts and this inadvertently provides a fertile ground for corruption to thrive.

“If the right palm washes the left palm, the left palm washes the right palm in return”.

In local parlance, offering of bribe is pejoratively called “greasing of palm”. When interpreted literally it means, a favor received should be reciprocated. However, this is usually favor corruptly extended to someone and it is a saying that encourages bribery. This plays out in government offices. An officer could demand that his palm should be “greased” before he will perform an official duty for someone that needs his services. In some other instances, such demand or offer could be made to get the other person do something that is illegal. In such instances, the person that offers the bribe would expect that someday, the recipient would also have cause to come to him for a favor and he would oblige him. Policemen are known to apprehend criminals, but at the offer of bribe, they are set free.

“Use the eyes of an elder to examine what is inside the bag”.

In local communities, elders adjudicate on disputes and more often than not, their judgments are devoid of equity and transparency. There is often the tendency to bend the rule because of the status of someone involved in a case. Thus equality before the law takes a back stage while sentiment becomes the guiding principle for deciding cases. This also plays out in the civil society as it is difficult to pronounce guilt on people of high standing in the society.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Extant literature on corruption in Nigeria focused essentially on the manifestations of corruption, instead of the root causes. This study was intended to provide a paradigm shift from the conventional way of looking at corruption in Nigeria. What we set out to do was to first show that corruption as a concept has a broader meaning than what Nigerians construe it to be. It includes, but is not limited to embezzlement of public funds. In the ordinary sense, when something is corrupted, it presupposes that its core essence or meaning has been distorted. Thus when a vacant public position is to be filled and nepotism rather than merit becomes the criteria for selecting the candidate for the job, it means the selection process, has been corrupted. This is how to look at corruption holistically. Unfortunately, Nigerians are selective in their choice of actions that conduce to corruption.

It is the peripheral capitalist economy Nigeria operates, that makes political power to be used for primitive accumulation. If there is high level of development of productive forces, the economy will be production-oriented rather than appropriation-oriented. When people produce, the tendency to look up to public officers for patronage reduces. In this connection, public office will become less attractive. When it is less attractive, political contest will become less vicious, public officers will face less pressure for personal gains from their constituents as their will be no public till to share from.

The Mores and Belief systems which encourage corruption in Nigeria subsist because of the patron-client and transactional nature of the country's political system. In all of these mores, could be seen the interplay of politics and economics coupled with the fact that public offices are platforms for economic dividends which are regarded as prebends.

The popular saying "customs die hard" holds true for the norms and belief systems used in this study to explicate corruption. Stemming the tide of corruption will amount to a wild goose chase if all that the government and anti-corruption agencies do is to go after people who embezzle public funds. A more effective strategy would be to have institutional mechanisms that will discourage corruption and ensure exceptions are not made in bringing the culprits to book.

What will perhaps make a difference is a cultural and moral reorientation. However, this will succeed when leaders demonstrate sincerity of purpose. Changing a belief system that has become people's way of life could be frost with challenges. For Nigerians to key into the project of cultural and moral reorientation, the negative implications of the mores that encourage corruption and how they hamstrung the pursuit of the common good have to be brought to the fore. Finally, the mores and belief systems that encourage corruption, will struggle for relevance in a production based economy.

References

- Ake Claude (1981) *A Political Economy of Africa*. England: Longman Group Limited.
- Awojobi Oladayo (2014) Political corruption and underdevelopment in Nigerian fourth republic. *International Journal of Innovation and Scientific Research*. 11 (1): 151-157
- Catholic Encyclopedia*.
- Central Bank of Nigeria (2010) Annual report.
- Constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria* (1999) with amendments 2011.
- Ene Ene, Arikpo Abam , Jeffrey Williams and Albert Dunnamah (2013) Corruption control and political stability in Nigeria: Implications for value re-orientation in politics. *Global Journal of Human Social Sciences Interdisciplinary* 13 (1) version 1.0: 7-12
- Hoffman Leena and Raj Patel (2017) Collective action on corruption in Nigeria: A social norms approach to connecting society and institutions. A Chattam house report. London. Royal Institute of International Affairs.
- <https://www.collinsdictionary.com>
- Joseph Richard (1987) *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Joseph Richard (1996) Nigeria: Inside the dismal tunnel. *Current History* 95(601)
- Joseph Richard (2013) Prebendalism and dysfunctionality in Nigeria. Online :< <https://africaplus.wordpress.com/2013/.../> (accessed 10 December 2018)
- Obadare Adebani and Ebenezer Larry (eds.) (2013) *Democracy and Prebendalism in Nigeria: Critical Interpretations*. England: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ogundiya Ilufoye (2009) Political corruption in Nigeria: Theoretical perspectives and some explanations. *Anthropologist* 11(4): 281-292.
- Ojo John (2014) Prebendalism, socio-linguistic and ethnic politics: The bane of Nigerian democracy. *International Journal of Politics* 5 (5.1): 1-21
- Price Waterhouse Coopers (2016) Impact of corruption on Nigeria's economy. Report.

Smith Daniel (2007) *A Culture of Corruption, Everyday Deception and Popular Discontent in Nigeria*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Transparency International (2018) Corruption perception index, executive summary.

Trump Donald (2017) *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. White House: Washington D.C.