

## CORRUPTION, POLITICAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE CHALLENGES OF GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper examines the issues of corruption, political accountability and the challenges of governance with emphasis on the fourth republic of Nigeria that is 1999 – 2016. This study examines the nature and character of Nigerian State vis-à-vis her politics, corruption and governance. It examines the possible causes of corruption, how it has permeated the Nigeria society. The data for the paper were analysis derived from the available secondary data. The paper recognizes the nexus between corruption and crisis of governance in Nigeria. The paper acknowledged that, democratic practice in the last sixteen years due to corruption has failed to deliver the dividend of democracy solely based on good governance and national development. The paper concludes that previous efforts by various governments to tackle the menace of corruption were superficial and fraught in nature. The paper therefore concludes and recommends that the political and economic elites, the Nigeria society and government must embrace democratic practice, political accountability, transparency in service and good ethics-oriented principle as measures to curb the menace of corruption and the challenges it pose to socio-economic and democratic development in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Nigeria, Prebendal Politics, Corruption Political Accountability, Governance.

### Introduction

In most of the countries of the world, the major economic challenges that confront such nations is how to manage and optimally utilize the available human and material resources in their

possession and of which Nigerian-State is of no exception. Thus, accountability is the hallmark of a prudent government whereby resources are well managed and there is transparency in the utilization of funds by the government. It has been noted that corruption has been the indicator for lack of political accountability in most of the nations of the world especially developing nations. Ogundiya(2009) acknowledged that corruption is neither culture specific nor system bound. However, the practice of corruption is more rampant in countries where the public institutions and the legal system are very weak and relatively underdeveloped. With these attributes, most of the developing nations are more prone to ills of corruption more than the advanced developed countries.

The fourth republic evolved in 1999 in Nigeria and since its inception manifest inadequate good governance while, lack of political accountability and systemic corruption are its hallmark and pose greater challenges to democratic consolidation and governance in Nigeria more than any other factors. Corruption in its multi-dimensional levels have continued to manifest in the level of poverty among the people, induced apathy for the government, reflects in economic mismanagement and lack of good service delivery by the political class in Nigeria.

### **Statement of the problem**

The crisis of corruption and the challenges of governance and national development have become more apparent in the fourth republic in Nigeria more than ever. In addition, it has raise concern in the minds of the people, her leaders and even the international community because corruption has gradually become a way of life in Nigeria. As Achebe (2009) observed that, Nigerians are corrupt because the system in which they live makes corruption easy and profitable; corruption goes with power, whatever the average man may have it is not power. Therefore, to hold any discussion on corruption, we must first locate it where it properly belongs in the ranks of the powerful.

Furthermore, it is pertinent to note that corruption in Nigeria especially during the fourth republic progressed from the level of petty corruption to the high alarming rate of systemic and grand corruption. The crisis of corruption that poses challenge on governance in Nigeria has blighted Nigeria's image globally. Even David Cameron the British Prime Minster quoted from

The Guardian (2016) that “Nigeria is a fantastically corrupt country”, probably one of the two most corrupt nations in the world. However, it is deducible that this is a fallacy of generalization on the part of the British government because research on corrupt do not support his assertion. Nevertheless, the problem arising from this discourse is to appraise the impact of corruption on governance and national development in the fourth republic in Nigeria.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

In the course of this study, the following concepts would be duly clarified; corruption, political accountability, governance and good governance.

### **Corruption**

Corruption has been brought throughout the last decade to an important position in the development and political economy debate/literature. According to Mauro [1995] and Kray [2002] corruption has been seen as a primary impediment to growth with dramatic consequence in the developing world. This analysis has been mainly founded on bureaucratic/public sector corruption, emphasizing in particular manifestations such as administrative bribery. Kaufmann and Kray (2005) view corruption as the use of public office and policy for private gain.

Transparency International (2011) the global anti-corruption watchdog asserted that, corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. It hurts everyone whose life, livelihood and happiness depends on the integrity of people in a position of authority. While, Kwame[2000] analyzed corruption from the sociological perspective, according to him; corruption is prevalent in societies where integration is low and socialization is poor such that recognition of the common national interest is not pervasive enough. Asian Development Bank (2013) posits that; corruption is a behavior on the part of officials in the public or private sector and unlawfully enriches themselves or those close to them, or induces to do so by misusing the position in which they are placed. It is deducible from all these various conceptualization of corruption that it is insidious and criminal act, it erodes the moral value of the society and it is anti-thetical to the development of any society where it permeates and allows to flourish.

### **Concept of Political Accountability**

The concept of accountability in governance is described as answerability for one's deed. While, political accountability is the accountability of the government to the public and to the parliament. The US Legal (2016) refers political accountability to the responsibility or obligation of government officials to act in the best interests of society or face the consequence. It is deducible from this conceptualization of political authority that, public officials at all levels should be answerable for their actions or behavior while in the position of leadership of their society.

### **The Concept of Governance**

Governance is a concept that is central to democracy and it has gained great usage in contemporary period according to UNESCO (2016) Governance refers to structures and processes that are designed to ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, stability, equity and inclusiveness, empowerment and broad-based participation. While; the United Nations Development Programme (1997) defined governance as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs. Mo Ibrahim Foundation [2016] defines governance as the provision of the political, social and economic goods that any citizen has the right to expect from his or her state, and that any state has the responsibility to deliver to its citizens.

### **The Concept of Good Governance**

Good governance is a concept used to describe how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2016) acknowledged that good governance has eight major characteristic. Accordingly, it is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. The assumption of this conceptualization of good governance is that, it assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the weak in the society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society.

**Figure 1: Characteristics of Good Governance**



Source: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific .retrieved from [www.unescap.org/pdd](http://www.unescap.org/pdd) 20th May, 2016

### **Theoretical Issues**

The theory of prebendalism as postulated by Richard (1996) which was used to describe the nature of a patron-client relationship in Nigeria would serve as the basis of theoretical analysis of corruption and the crisis of development in Nigeria with emphasis on the fourth republic. According to the theory of prebendalism, state offices are regarded as prebends that can be appropriated by office holders who use them to generate material benefits for themselves and their constituent kith and kin. In the fourth republic which cover 1999 till date, prebendal politics is the order of the day being displayed by political office holders at all levels of governments. Thus, corruption is the order of the day, regularly being perpetrated at will and the society is at the receiving end. Inevitably, the prebendal nature of Nigerian political system in term of its patron-client or identity politics further allows corruption to thrive, undermine, weakening the deepening of democracy and its institutions and stagnate the development of Nigerian society.

### **Nigeria and the Challenges of Governance: The Nexus of Corruption**

Nigeria is a country that is well endowed by nature with abundant human and natural resources, despite all these available resources and potentials for sustainable development, Nigeria remain a paradox and a complete contrast with its low level of socio-economic development. The United Nations Development Programme has over the years persistently ranked Nigeria among countries with low development index. According to UNDP Human Development Index (2013) Nigeria ranked among countries with low development index at 153 out of 186 countries that were ranked. The low performance of Nigeria can be attributed to leadership failure and the inability of government to address the root causes of corruption and lack of political accountability in Nigeria. It is deducible that, there is a nexus between corruption and failure of governance in Nigeria.

According to a report by Sunday Punch (2016) Nigeria has lost over N38 trillion through mismanagement, embezzlement and money laundering under successive administrations since democracy returned in 1999. The figures were drawn from findings by anti-graft agencies and investigative panel reports on major economic scandals and financial crimes from 1999 – 2016 in Nigeria. It is noteworthy out of the N39 trillion stolen in the country's economy, crude oil theft, official corruption and electoral campaign funding were responsible for a larger percentage of the loss. Nwolise (2010) also linked corruption and Nigeria's underdevelopment, thus, he posited that corruption blocks good governance and accountability, enthrones mediocrity and incompetence and weakens competitive advantage.

**Table 1: 2010 – 2014 (four years) sharing of Revenue between Central, State and Local Government from the federation Account**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Amount in Billions Federal Government</b>	<b>Amount in billions state government</b>	<b>Amount in billions Local government</b>
2010	154,633,681,796.66	89,719,045,266.40	41,936,047,771.84
2011	531,612,593,116.78	348,291,513,603.64	167,160,070,675.77
2012	723,920,377,511.08	465,401,088,573.91	197,546,513,263.92
2013	791,030,594,492.65	441,784,920,342.94	321,324,219,934
2014	739,208,155,737.65	557,887,744,033.24	396,799,689,065.92

**Source:** Federal Ministry of Finance, 2015 Accessed from Sunday, O and Lawal. T. (2016) Fiscal Accountability, Resource Management and Sustainable Development in Nigeria ,International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences Vol. 6. No. 5

It is noteworthy that despite all these huge revenue that accrued to the three tiers of government ,the management of the resources disbursed have not being optimally utilized and neither its effects reflected positively in the lives of the people of Nigeria.

**Table II: Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2015**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>score</b>
1	Denmark	91	83	Zambia	36
2.	Finland	90	83	Benin	37
3.	Sweden	89	83	China	37
4	New Zealand	88	83	Colombia	37
5	Netherlands	87	83	Liberia	37
5	Norway	87	88	Seri Lanka	37
7	Switzerland	86	88	Albania	36
8	Singapore	85	88	Egypt	36
9	Canada	83	88	Indonesia	36
10	Germany	81	88	Morocco	36
10	United Kingdom	81	88	Peru	36
10	Luzembourg	81	95	Suriname	36
13	Australia	79	95	Armenia	35
13	Iceland	79	95	Mali	35

15	Belgium	77	95	Mexico	35
16	Austria	76	99	Phillipines	35
16	United States	76	99	Bolivia	34
18	Hong Kong	75	99	Djibouti	34
18	Ireland	75	99	Gabon	34
18	Japan	75	103	Niger	34
21	Uruguay	74	103	Dominica Republic	33
22	Qatar	71	103	Ethiopia	33
23	Chile	70	103	Kosovo	33
23	Estonia	70	107	Moldova	33
23	France	70	107	Argentina	32
23	United Arab Emirates	70	107	Belarus	32
27	Bhutan	65	107	Cote d'Ivoire	32
28	Botswana	63	107	Ecuador	32
28	Portugal	63	112	Togo	32
30	Poland	62	112	Honduras	31
30	Taiwan	62	112	Mauritania	31
32	Cyprus	61	112	Mozambique	31
32	Israel	61	112	Vietnam	31
32	Lithuania	61	117	Pakistan	30
35	Slovenia	60	119	Tanzania	30
36	Spain	58	119	Azerbaijan	29
37	Czech Republic	56	119	Guyana	29
37	South Korea	56	119	Russia	29
37	Malta	56	123	Sierra Leone	29
40	Cape Verde	55	123	Gambia	28
40	Costa Rica	55	123	Guatemala	28
40	Latvia	55	123	Kazakhstan	28
40	Seychelles	55	123	Lebanon	28
44	Rwanda	54	130	Madagascar	28
45	Jordan	53	130	Cameroon	27
45	Mauritius	53	130	Iran	27
45	Namibia	53	130	Nepal	27
48	Georgia	52	130	Nicaragua	27
48	Saudi Arabia	52	130	Paraguay	27
50	Bahrain	51	136	Ukraine	27
50	Croatia	51	136	Comoros	26
50	Hungary	51	136	Nigeria	26



50	Slovakia	51	139	Tajikistan	26
54	Malaysia	50	139	Bangladesh	25
55	Kuwait	49	139	Kenya	25
56	Cuba	47	139	Laos	25
56	Ghana	47	139	Papua New Guinea	25
58	Greece	46	145	Uganda	25
58	Romania	46	146	Central African Republic	24
60	Oman	45	147	Congo Republic	23
61	Italy	44	147	Chad	22
61	Lesotho	44	147	Democratic Republic of the Congo	22
61	Montenegro	44	150	Myanmar	22
61	Senegal	44	150	Burundi	21
61	South Africa	44	150	Cambodia	21
66	Sao Tome and Principe	42	153	Zimbabwe	21
66	Macedonia	42	154	Uzbekistan	19
66	Turkey	42	154	Eritrea	18
69	Bulgaria	41	154	Turkmenistan	18
69	Jamaica	41	158	Yemen	18
71	Serbia	40	158	Haiti	17
72	El Salvador	39	158	Guinea-Bissau	17
72	Mongolia	39	161	Venezuela	17
72	Panama	39	161	Iraq	16
72	Trinidad and Tobago	39	163	Libya	16
76	Bosnia and Herzegovina	38	136	Angola	15
76	Brazil	38	165	South Sudan	15
76	Burkina Faso	38	166	Sudan	12
76	India	38	167	Afghanistan	11
76	Thailand	38	167	Korea (north)	8
76	Tunisia	38		Somalia	8

**Note:** Nigeria occupied 136<sup>th</sup> position out of 167 countries rated score of 26 out of 100 in the global overview of corruption source: [www.transparency.org/cpi](http://www.transparency.org/cpi)

**Analysis:** The 2015 Transparency International Corruption Index (CPI) which was a survey by the global anti-corruption organization that measures the perceived level of corruption in 168 countries in the world. Based on the survey, advanced developed countries with evidence of

political accountability, good governance, strong democratic institutions, political stability and good economy occupied the top least corrupt nations in the world, such as Denmark, Finland, Sweden, New Zealand, Netherlands, and Norway. While, countries that are characterized with poor economy, lack of political accountability and evidence of weak social institutions occupied the top-most corrupt nations in the world such as south Sudan, Sudan, North Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia etc. Nigeria ranked abysmally at position 136<sup>th</sup> globally.

### **Quality of Governance in Africa**

The Ibrahim Index of African Governance is a tool to measure and monitor African governance performance, its progress over time and across countries of which Nigeria is inclusive. It measures safety and rule of law, participation and human rights, sustainable economic opportunity and human development as a basis of performance of overall governance by African countries.

**Table III: 2015 Ibrahim Index of African Governance**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Score(%)</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Score (%)</b>
1 <sup>st</sup>	Mauritius	79.9	28 <sup>th</sup>	Swaziland	49.6
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Cape Verde	74.5	29 <sup>th</sup>	Madagascar	49.1
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Botswana	74.2	30 <sup>th</sup>	Mali	48.7
4 <sup>th</sup>	South Africa	73.0	31 <sup>st</sup>	Ethiopia	48.6
5 <sup>th</sup>	Namibia	70.4	32 <sup>nd</sup>	Comoros	48.5
6 <sup>th</sup>	Seychelles	70.3	33 <sup>rd</sup>	Niger	48.4
7 <sup>th</sup>	Ghana	67.3	34 <sup>th</sup>	Togo	48.3
8 <sup>th</sup>	Tunisia	66.9	35 <sup>th</sup>	Cote D'voire	48.2
9 <sup>th</sup>	Senegal	62.4	36 <sup>th</sup>	Djibouti	45.9
10 <sup>th</sup>	Lesotho	61.1	37 <sup>th</sup>	Cameroon	45.8
11 <sup>th</sup>	Rwanda	60.7	38 <sup>th</sup>	Burundi	45.7
12 <sup>th</sup>	Zambia	59.5	39 <sup>th</sup>	Nigeria	44.9
13 <sup>th</sup>	Sao Tome and Principe	59.1	40 <sup>th</sup>	Guinea	43.7
14 <sup>th</sup>	Kenya	58.8	41 <sup>th</sup>	Mauritania	43.0
15 <sup>th</sup>	Benin	58.7	42 <sup>th</sup>	Congo	42.8

16 <sup>th</sup>	Morocco	57.6	43 <sup>rd</sup>	Angola	40.8
17 <sup>th</sup>	Malawi	56.7	44 <sup>th</sup>	Zimbabwe	40.4
18 <sup>th</sup>	Tanzania	56.6	45 <sup>th</sup>	Guinea-Bissau	35.7
19 <sup>th</sup>	Uganda	54.6	46 <sup>th</sup>	Equatorial Guinea	35.5
20 <sup>th</sup>	Algeria	52.9	47 <sup>th</sup>	Libya	35.4
21 <sup>st</sup>	Mozambique	52.3	48 <sup>th</sup>	Dr Congo	33.9
22 <sup>nd</sup>	Burkina Faso	52.2	49 <sup>th</sup>	Chad	32.8
23 <sup>rd</sup>	Gabon	52.1	50 <sup>th</sup>	Eritrea	29.9
24 <sup>th</sup>	Egypt	51.3	51 <sup>st</sup>	Sudan	28.3
25 <sup>th</sup>	Sierra Leone	51.0	52 <sup>nd</sup>	Central African Republic	24.9
26 <sup>th</sup>	Liberia	50.7	53 <sup>rd</sup>	South Sudan	19.9
27 <sup>th</sup>	Gambia	50.5	54 <sup>th</sup>	Somalia	8.5

**Source:** [www.moibrahimfoundaiton.org/u/2015/10/02193/252/2015-IIAG-Executive-summary.pdf](http://www.moibrahimfoundaiton.org/u/2015/10/02193/252/2015-IIAG-Executive-summary.pdf)

**Analysis:** The 2015 Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) which was a survey by the respected and well-acclaimed MO Ibrahim origination that measure quality of governance in Africa showed that Mauritius, the best governance performance on the continent, achieves a score that is over 70points performer, Somalia. While, Nigeria occupied 39<sup>th</sup> position out of 54 countries that were surveyed in Africa. It shows that Nigeria is far from having good governance.

### **Anti-corruption Efforts of Nigerian Government**

It is on record that a lot of public policies and measures have being formulated and implemented as part of the federal government measures to combat corruption in Nigeria, at the fore-front of the anti-corruption crusade by the Nigerian government are the anti-graft agencies, independent corrupt practices and other related offences (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)While Public Procurement Act (2007) recognizes that sound public procurement policies and practices are one of the essential elements of good governance. Good practices reduces costs and produce timely results; poor practices lead to waste and delays and are often the causes of allegations of corruption and government inefficiency.

The efforts of the current administration has shown that the government is trying to sanitize the polluted governance-system in Nigeria. Albeit the slow progress made so far, the anti-corruption crusades of the Nigerian government and the mode of operation of EFCC and ICPC have being fraught and in-adequate to address the root cause of corruption in Nigeria holistically. The efforts so far made by the government were symptomatic in nature and not a lasting remedy to the problem of corruption in our society.

### **Conclusion and Policy Recommendations**

This study analyses corruption in Nigeria as a drawback and challenge to political accountability and governance in Nigerian society, it analyses the global trend of corruption and findings indicate that the issue of corruption is of global problem that posses hindrance to deepening of democracy and sustainable development . It is deducible from the analysis that political accountability remains a pivotal stand for effective and efficient utilization of public financial resources and pillar of sustainable development. This is because accountability eliminates wastes and embraces efficiency, effectiveness, openness, discipline, integrity, transparency and good governance.

Also, the study posits that, measures that were formulated and implemented to checkmate corruption in Nigeria were superficial, fraught and could not provide the required solution to the malaise of corruption in Nigeria. The scourge of corruption will only be brought down to an appreciable level when Nigerian society have a social rebirth, embrace good ethics, integrity, the entrenchment of mechanism of accountability and good governance at all levels of governments in Nigeria bearing in mind that, accountability and good governance are the desired remedy for the problem of corruption in Nigeria. Finally, Nigerian government must lay emphasis on political accountability and good governance as means of deepening and consolidate democracy in Nigeria.

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