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Full Length Research

Political Corruption and Democratic Governance in Nigeria: A Retrospective Analysis of the Buhari Administration, 2015-2023

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Abstract

President Buhari came to power in the 2015 elections, and one of his main campaign promises was to fight the corruption that was considered rife in his predecessor's administration. However, years later, corruption still subsists as one of the greatest challenges facing Nigeria. In recent times, public attention has been drawn to the spectacles of corruption cases in Nigeria, especially in the agencies of government. This has shown that moral values are fast diminishing among the people. As it were, integrity, honesty and dedication to duty have collapsed in the society and particularly among politicians, political office holders and government officials. The menace of corruption in Nigeria poses a great threat to the democratic governance of the country. This study, titled "Political Corruption and Democratic Governance in Nigeria, 2015-2023," aims to investigate the impact of political corruption on democratic governance. Specifically, the study seeks to examine the effects of bribery, embezzlement, and nepotism on transparency, government accountability, and the rule of law, respectively. Grounded in the principal-agent theory propounded by Michael C. Jensen and William H. Meckling in 1976, the study elucidates how the dynamics between principals (citizens) and agents (government officials) contribute to corruption within democratic institutions. The findings reveal that bribery significantly impacts transparency, embezzlement affects government accountability, and nepotism influences the rule of law in Nigeria's democratic governance. The study recommends strengthening anti-bribery measures, enhancing financial oversight, promoting merit-based appointments, and increasing public awareness to combat corruption and improve governance. These recommendations are aimed at fostering a more transparent, accountable, and equitable democratic system in Nigeria.

Keywords: Political, Corruption, Democracy, Governance, Buhari

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INTRODUCTION

Historically, the roots of political corruption in Nigeria can be traced back to the colonial era. The colonial administration's exploitative practices set a precedent for the misuse of public office for personal gain. Post-independence, Nigeria's political landscape was marred by successive military coups, each regime often justifying its takeover with the promise of eradicating corruption, only to perpetuate it further. The transition to civilian rule in 1999 marked a significant milestone in Nigeria's democratic journey, yet corruption remained a persistent challenge, embedded in various facets of public life.

In Nigeria, political corruption is those corrupt practices perpetrated by public office holders. Bribery, kickbacks, extortion, looting, diversion of public funds for personal use, awarding contracts to themselves and relatives, among other things, are some of the corrupt acts committed by these people. The majority of corrupt cases involving public officials are not heard about by the people. Most of these offences are covered and never allowed to be heard in the public domain. According to Andersson and Anechiarico (2019), apart from abusing their offices, public office holders use their power to cover

up their offence, get away with it, or serve a lesser punishment compared to the offence committed (Uwak and Udofia, 2016). Corruption is not only the bane of a nation; it also hinders democratic governance.

Various administrations, both military and civilian, have made numerous attempts to combat corruption in Nigeria. Several agencies and institutions were established for this purpose, such as the War Against Indiscipline (WAI), the War Against Indiscipline and Corruption, the Corruption Investigation Bureau, and the Code of Conduct Bureau. Following Nigeria's return to democratic governance in 1999, efforts to fight corruption intensified, leading to the creation of anti-graft bodies like the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Due Process Office, and the Anti-Corruption Commission. Despite these initiatives, there has been minimal success in eradicating corruption in Nigeria.

Democratic governance has struggled to take root in Nigeria, even after more than two decades of practising democracy. Corruption remains a significant challenge to the Nigerian political system, obstructing the establishment of successful and credible democratic governance. However, corruption is not the only issue facing Nigeria; other significant problems include poverty, insurgency, ethno-religious crises, illiteracy, insecurity, election rigging and violence, unemployment, and economic hardship. Corruption is at the core of these issues, infiltrating every sector of Nigerian society. This pervasive corruption is perpetuated by public officials who act with impunity, facing little to no severe punishment for their actions.

To foster good democratic governance, it is essential to first address corrupt practices. As Jega (2005), Ijewereme and Dunmade (2014), and Abdulrasheed and Abubakar (2021) argue, any serious political and socioeconomic reforms in Nigeria must prioritise the fight against corruption.

These corrupt practices collectively diminish the quality of democratic governance in Nigeria, preventing the establishment of a fair, just, and effective political system. This study aims to investigate the specific ways in which political corruption, through the constructs of bribery, embezzlement, and nepotism, affects the transparency, accountability, and rule of law in Nigeria's democratic governance. By understanding these dynamics, the study seeks to contribute to the development of targeted strategies to combat corruption and promote robust democratic governance in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bribery and Democratic Governance in Nigeria

Bribery remains a wicked problem that does not seem to go away so easily, or at all, in many countries across

the world, especially in Nigeria. According to De Waele et al. (2021), bribery comes with very high social costs, undermining the sense of fairness. Bribery has macro-, meso-, and micro-level roots. First, a macro lens is required to explain differences across countries. Bribery undermines democratic institutions, erodes public trust, and impedes socio-economic development. In a democratic setting, bribery compromises the principles of transparency, accountability, and the rule of law, leading to weakened institutions and diminished public confidence.

The impact of bribery on democratic governance in Nigeria is far-reaching. It distorts the electoral process, compromises the quality of elected officials, and hampers the effective delivery of public services. When officials are elected or appointed based on bribery rather than merit, it leads to inefficiency, mismanagement, and corruption at various levels of government.

The integrity of elections is a cornerstone of democracy. However, in Nigeria, bribery often taints the electoral process. Votes are bought; election officials are bribed to alter results; and security agencies are compromised to favour certain candidates. Such behaviour undermines the legitimacy of elected officials and erodes public trust in the electoral system (Jinadu, 2022). Bribery also leads to the appointment of unqualified individuals who prioritise personal gain over public service. This results in poor governance, as decisions are made to benefit a few rather than the collective interest of society. Consequently, public resources are diverted for private use, and development projects are either poorly executed or abandoned (Ogundiya, 2022).

Effective public service delivery is crucial for democratic governance. However, bribery disrupts this process, leading to inefficiencies and inequities. Public officials demand bribes to perform basic services, denying access to those who cannot afford to pay. Such behaviour exacerbates inequality and hinders socio-economic development (Smith, 2022). The Halliburton bribery scandal is one of the most notable cases of bribery in Nigeria. This scandal involved senior Nigerian officials who accepted bribes from the multinational corporation Halliburton to secure lucrative contracts for the construction of a liquefied natural gas plant. The scandal, which spanned several administrations, highlighted the extent of bribery at the highest levels of government (Smith, 2022).

Another significant case is the Siemens bribery scandal. In 2007, it was revealed that the German engineering firm Siemens had paid bribes to Nigerian officials to secure telecommunications contracts. The scandal implicated several high-ranking officials, which resulted in trials and convictions in Germany; however, accountability in Nigeria remained limited (Ogundiya, 2022). The bribery case during the 2014 gubernatorial elections in Ekiti State is another example. Audio recordings surfaced showing discussions about bribing

military officials to influence the election outcome. The recordings implicated several prominent politicians and highlighted the role of bribery in subverting the democratic process (Jinadu, 2022).

The Farouk Lawan bribery scandal is another high-profile case. In 2012, Farouk Lawan, a member of the House of Representatives, was caught on tape accepting a \$620,000 bribe from Femi Otedola, a businessman, to remove his company's name from a report on fuel subsidy fraud. The case underscored how bribery infiltrates legislative functions, compromising oversight and accountability (Akanbi, 2022). The Police Pension Fund scandal involved the embezzlement of over \$2 billion meant for police pensions. Investigations revealed that officials in charge of the fund demanded bribes for disbursements, leading to widespread suffering among retired police officers. The case highlighted the devastating impact of bribery on vulnerable populations (Ibekwe, 2022).

Bribery remains a significant impediment to democratic governance in Nigeria. It distorts the electoral process, undermines the quality of governance, and hampers public service delivery. Addressing bribery requires comprehensive reforms, including strengthening institutions, enforcing anti-bribery laws, and promoting a culture of integrity and accountability.

Embezzlement and Government Accountability

Embezzlement is classified as a white-collar crime, and its impact is experienced across all levels of government. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defines embezzlement as the illegal misuse or misapplication by a criminal for their own benefit, involving money, property, or any other valuable item entrusted to their care, custody, or control. Olojede (2018) includes embezzlement in his list of financial crimes. It is an offence that occurs when an individual deliberately uses assets and/or money for an unintended purpose.

The National White-Collar Crime Centre (NW3C) distinguishes embezzlement from other types of theft by the breach of financial trust between the property or money owner and the offender. They further explain that, technically, embezzlement is a type of larceny and therefore does not have its own category in uniform crime reports, making its frequency difficult to measure and variable across sources. Embezzlement is typically committed by employees entrusted with money or assets. Bartz, Stroock, and Harris (2017) confirm that every organisation, regardless of size or sector, is susceptible to embezzlement, and they suggest preventive measures such as the segregation of duties and meticulous checks of all transactions, whether large or small.

In many countries, including Nigeria, embezzlement undermines public trust, hinders economic development, and perpetuates a cycle of poverty and corruption. Effective government accountability mechanisms are

essential to combat embezzlement and ensure that public resources are used for the common good. Embezzlement within government institutions typically involves officials diverting funds meant for public projects or services into personal accounts. This deprives the public of essential services and erodes trust in government institutions. For instance, in Nigeria, numerous high-profile cases of embezzlement have highlighted the pervasive nature of this issue and its detrimental impact on governance and development.

One notable case is the embezzlement scandal involving the former Minister of Petroleum Resources, Diezani Alison-Madueke. In 2015, it was reported that Alison-Madueke was involved in the misappropriation of billions of dollars from the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). Investigations revealed that funds meant for public investment were diverted to private accounts and used to purchase luxury properties and other assets. This case underscored the extent to which high-level officials could exploit their positions for personal gain, thereby undermining government accountability and public trust (Smith, 2022). Another significant case is the Police Pension Fund scandal, where officials embezzled over \$2 billion intended for the pensions of retired police officers. The embezzlement was orchestrated by top officials who manipulated records and diverted funds into their personal accounts. The scandal left many retired officers without their rightful pensions, highlighting the devastating impact of embezzlement on vulnerable populations and the need for robust accountability mechanisms (Ibekwe, 2022).

Government accountability refers to the processes, mechanisms, and institutions through which public officials are held responsible for their actions, decisions, and the use of public resources. Effective accountability mechanisms are crucial in preventing embezzlement and ensuring that public resources are used transparently and efficiently. Key components of government accountability include robust financial oversight, transparent procurement processes, and effective judicial systems. Financial oversight involves regular audits, both internal and external, to ensure that public funds are appropriately managed. Independent audit institutions play a critical role in detecting and preventing embezzlement. For example, the Office of the Auditor-General in Nigeria is mandated to audit public accounts and report any discrepancies. However, the effectiveness of such institutions often depends on their independence and the political will to act on their findings (Akanbi, 2022).

Transparent procurement processes are also essential in curbing embezzlement. Public procurement involves significant financial outlays, making it a prime target for embezzlement. Implementing transparent and competitive bidding processes can reduce opportunities for officials to divert funds. The Public Procurement Act in Nigeria aims to promote transparency and accountability in public procurement. However, its effectiveness is often hampered by weak enforcement and pervasive corruption

(Ogundiya, 2022). An effective judicial system is crucial for holding officials accountable for embezzlement. The process involves prosecuting and penalising those found guilty of embezzling public funds. However, often, political interference and a lack of judicial independence undermine the ability of the judiciary to act decisively. Strengthening judicial independence and ensuring that anti-corruption agencies have the resources and autonomy to carry out their mandates are essential steps toward improving government accountability (Jinadu, 2022).

Civil society and the media also play an important role in enhancing government accountability. Civil society organisations (CSOs) can monitor government activities, advocate for transparency, and hold officials accountable through public campaigning and legal action. The media, on the other hand, can investigate and expose cases of embezzlement, thereby informing the public and putting pressure on authorities to act. However, in many countries, including Nigeria, journalists and activists face significant risks when exposing corruption, highlighting the need for legal protections and a supportive environment for their work (Smith, 2022). Embezzlement is a major impediment to government accountability, with far-reaching consequences for governance, economic development, and public trust. Addressing embezzlement requires a multi-faceted approach that includes strengthening financial oversight, ensuring transparent procurement processes, bolstering judicial independence, and empowering civil society and the media. By implementing these measures, governments can enhance accountability, reduce corruption, and ensure that public resources are used for the benefit of all citizens.

Political Corruption and Democratic Governance

Kolstad and Wiig (2016) contend that the connection between corruption and democracy is well-documented and widely recognised. Despite this, democracy does not guarantee clean and transparent governance, as evidenced by numerous studies. Even democratic nations known for low corruption levels continue to struggle with this issue (Ferrin, 2016). Notable examples include the corruption cases of Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff in Brazil, Viktor Yanukovich in Ukraine, and Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe (Andersson and Anechiarico, 2019). Corruption scandals are prevalent in many European countries such as Italy, Iceland, Spain, the United Kingdom, and Germany, as well as in the United States, indicating that corruption is a pervasive problem across political systems worldwide.

Corruption adversely impacts governance, affecting various aspects of a country's integrity, effective policymaking, and trust in the democratic process (Andersson and Anechiarico, 2019). Public officials must exhibit high levels of integrity by adhering to procedures,

processes, and behaviours consistent with essential moral values and norms (Huberts, 2014). They are expected to maintain high standards of integrity, honesty, objectivity, and propriety because they manage public funds and resources. Their conduct must align with democratic governance norms to ensure the effective and efficient use of these resources for national benefit (Andersson and Anechiarico, 2019; Waziri, 2009). Democratic governance is both practical and humane, characterised by consistent checks on those in power by the opposition. When opposition fails to check the excesses of those in power, it signifies a lack of true democracy, leading to the concealment and denial of corruption and wrongdoings. The humane aspect of democratic governance emphasises principles of equity and equal treatment, preventing public officials from enriching themselves at the expense of the populace (Andersson & Anechiarico, 2019). However, governance integrity is compromised when those in power abuse their positions through corruption.

In Nigeria, as in other democratic states, public officials are entrusted with roles and responsibilities to achieve good governance. Unfortunately, these roles and resources are often diverted for private gain, betraying public trust. The Nigerian public sector is plagued by fraudulent accumulation practices used by both military and civilian leaders to enrich themselves, depleting the national treasury and driving the country into debt. This misappropriation results in a scarcity of resources necessary for economic, social, and cultural development (Moris, 2015). Consequently, Nigeria faces a "paradoxical situation", where the wealth of a few ruling elites mocks the ordinary citizens (Fatile and Okewale, 2013).

Empirical Review

Muyiwa and Olabode (2023) carried out a study which examined the manifestations and impacts of corruption on democratic governance in Nigeria. The paper made use of secondary data and adopted the elite theory as the theoretical framework for its analysis. The paper posited that corruption is the primary cause of Nigeria's underdevelopment, permeating every aspect of Nigerian society. This, in consequence, placed the wealth of the nation in the wrong hands, leading to wastage of scarce resources which disrupts service delivery and a high cost of governance. The paper suggested stringent punishment for corrupt acts, reform to be institutionalised to increase transparency, accountability and good governance, and implementation of other institutional reforms that would lay a solid foundation for economic development.

Abubakar and Fadeyi (2019) conducted a study titled "Corruption and Democracy: The Nigerian Case," exploring corruption as a pervasive issue affecting democracy in Nigeria. Their research employs a qualitative approach, utilising both secondary (library) and

primary (interview) data sources. The data were descriptively analysed based on the gathered information. The study concluded that Nigeria's democracy faces significant challenges from widespread corrupt practices across all sectors of the economy. Despite various efforts by successive governments to combat corruption, these initiatives have proven largely ineffective.

Soreide (2022) conducted a study titled "Corruption in Democratic Systems: A Cross-Country Analysis," focusing on various countries worldwide. Using quantitative methods and regression analysis on data from Transparency International and the World Bank, the study found that higher levels of political corruption significantly weaken democratic institutions. It highlighted that corruption undermines public trust and electoral integrity, leading to ineffective governance. The study recommended stronger international cooperation, enhanced transparency measures, and robust legal frameworks to combat corruption.

Mukherjee (2022) explored "Political Corruption and Democratic Stability in India", employing qualitative case study methods. The research revealed that corruption in political offices compromises democratic stability by fostering economic inequality and undermining legal systems. It suggested implementing stringent anti-corruption laws, improving judicial independence, and fostering civic education to enhance democratic stability and reduce corruption.

Garcia and Morales (2022) studied "Electoral Corruption and Democratic Processes in Latin America", using mixed methods. The study found that electoral corruption, including vote-buying and electoral fraud, severely impacts democratic processes by distorting electoral outcomes and reducing voter trust. Recommendations included electoral reforms, strengthening election monitoring bodies, and promoting political accountability.

Kim (2022) examined "Government Accountability and Corruption in South Korea", employing econometric analysis. The study discovered that lack of government accountability exacerbates corruption, resulting in inefficiencies and public disillusionment. The findings emphasised the need for transparent governance practices, enhanced public sector audits, and active citizen participation in governance.

Mbaku's (2022) research on "Embezzlement and Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa" used comparative case studies. The study revealed that embezzlement of public funds is rampant, leading to underdevelopment and weakened state institutions. It recommended comprehensive financial oversight mechanisms, public financial management reforms, and empowering civil society to monitor government activities.

Akech and Omondi (2022) explored "Corruption and Democratic Governance in Kenya", employing a mixed-methods approach involving qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys with political analysts, civil society representatives, and government officials. Their research highlighted pervasive corruption's detrimental impact on

democratic institutions, emphasising the need for enhanced transparency, accountability, and anti-corruption measures to strengthen governance. Akech and Omondi underscored the importance of political will and institutional reforms in combating corruption and restoring public trust in Kenya's democratic processes.

Chen and Lee (2022) conducted a comprehensive study titled "Bribery and its Impact on Democratic Institutions in Taiwan.". They employed a mixed-methods approach, utilising quantitative surveys and qualitative focus group discussions with stakeholders from government, business, and civil society. Their findings highlighted how bribery undermines democratic integrity by fostering clientelism and eroding public trust in institutions. Chen and Lee recommended stricter enforcement of anti-bribery laws, transparency in political financing, and civic education to promote ethical governance and strengthen democratic institutions in Taiwan.

Gomez and Martinez (2022) examined "Political Nepotism and Governance in Mexico" through qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews with political experts and public officials and analysis of case studies. Their research elucidated how nepotism perpetuates inefficiency and undermines meritocracy in public service appointments. Gomez and Martinez recommended reforms to promote transparency, merit-based recruitment processes, and institutional safeguards against nepotistic practices to enhance governance effectiveness in Mexico.

Khan and Ahmed (2022) analysed "Embezzlement in Public Office: A Case Study of Pakistan" using a combination of archival research, document analysis, and structured interviews with government officials and anti-corruption experts. Their study revealed systemic challenges and vulnerabilities in public financial management, contributing to widespread embezzlement and corruption. Khan and Ahmed advocated for strengthened audit mechanisms, regulatory reforms, and ethical training programs to mitigate embezzlement and promote accountability in Pakistan's public sector.

Santos and Silva (2022) investigated "Electoral Fraud and Democratic Resilience in Brazil" through quantitative data analysis of electoral records and surveys among voters and political analysts. Their research demonstrated how electoral fraud compromises democratic resilience by undermining electoral integrity and public confidence in electoral processes. Santos and Silva proposed electoral reforms, enhanced oversight mechanisms, and civic education initiatives to strengthen electoral transparency and accountability in Brazil.

Adewole and Ojo (2022) conducted a comprehensive study titled "Corruption and Economic Implications in Nigeria", employing a mixed-methods approach including surveys, interviews with stakeholders, and analysis of financial data. Their research revealed the pervasive impact of corruption on Nigeria's economy, highlighting how embezzlement and bribery contribute to economic

instability and hinder development. Recommendations included strengthening anti-corruption agencies, enhancing transparency in public financial management, and promoting ethical leadership to combat corruption effectively.

Ibrahim and Lawal (2022) conducted a rigorous exploration of political patronage and its impact on governance in Nigeria. Through qualitative interviews with key stakeholders, they illuminated how patronage networks shape political appointments and policy decisions, often at the expense of meritocracy and public accountability. The study underscores the need for institutional reforms to enhance transparency, strengthen governance structures, and foster inclusive citizen participation. By addressing these challenges, Nigeria can cultivate a more responsive and accountable political environment conducive to sustainable development and democratic consolidation.

Ogundele and Oladele's (2022) study provides a critical analysis of bribery and its ramifications within Nigeria's public sector. Through archival research and case studies of corruption scandals, they highlight the pervasive nature of bribery among public officials, which undermines service delivery and erodes institutional integrity. The study underscores the urgent need for robust anti-corruption measures, including stringent enforcement of laws, institutional reforms, and comprehensive civic education. By addressing these challenges, Nigeria can enhance transparency, accountability, and governance effectiveness, fostering sustainable development and public trust.

Eze and Nwankwo (2022) undertook a detailed examination of nepotism and its effects on administrative efficiency in Nigeria. Through case studies and interviews with civil servants, they elucidated how nepotistic practices in recruitment and promotion undermine meritocracy and diminish public trust. The study advocates for institutional reforms aimed at promoting transparency, merit-based appointments, and capacity building within the public sector. By addressing these challenges, Nigeria can enhance administrative efficiency, foster inclusive governance, and strengthen public service delivery.

Ogunlesi and Yusuf (2022) conducted a rigorous investigation into embezzlement and its implications for governance accountability in Nigeria. Through archival research and expert interviews, they underscored the pervasive nature of embezzlement, highlighting its detrimental effects on public trust and financial management. The study recommends robust measures such as enhanced financial oversight, regulatory reforms, and ethical leadership to combat embezzlement effectively. By addressing these challenges, Nigeria can strengthen governance accountability, restore public confidence, and foster sustainable economic development.

Most of these researchers carried out their studies within Nigeria and some African states. The researcher

identifies the need to carry out this study in Nigeria. The study therefore sought to fill the geographical gap by analysing the effect of political corruption on democratic governance in Nigeria between 2015 and 2023.

Theoretical Orientation

This paper on political corruption and democratic governance in Nigeria is grounded in the principal-agent theory. This theory was propounded by Michael C. Jensen and William H. Meckling in their seminal work published in 1976. The principal-agent theory offers a framework for understanding the dynamics of corruption within democratic institutions by exploring the relationships between those who delegate authority (principals) and those who exercise it (agents).

The Principal-Agent Theory posits that in any hierarchical structure, principals (such as citizens or shareholders) delegate authority to agents (such as government officials or managers) to perform tasks on their behalf. The theory's central tenet is the existence of information asymmetry between principals and agents, where agents have more information about their actions and intentions than the principals. This asymmetry creates opportunities for agents to act in their own interests rather than those of the principals, leading to issues such as moral hazards and adverse selection. Agents may exploit their positions for personal gain through practices like bribery, embezzlement, and nepotism, especially in environments where oversight and accountability mechanisms are weak.

Applying the principal-agent theory to this paper further emphasises the need for robust governance frameworks that reduce information asymmetry and enhance accountability. Strengthening institutions that monitor and regulate the actions of government officials can mitigate the risks of corruption. The establishment of systems that ensure regular audits, whistleblower protections, and stringent enforcement of anti-corruption laws can significantly reduce the incidence of corrupt practices.

Furthermore, the theory emphasises the importance of political will and leadership integrity in combating corruption. Leaders who demonstrate a commitment to transparency and accountability can set a positive example for other government officials and create an environment where corrupt practices are less likely to be tolerated. This approach can be complemented by efforts to educate and engage the public in anti-corruption initiatives, thereby fostering a culture of accountability and civic responsibility.

Principal-Agent Theory, propounded by Michael C. Jensen and William H. Meckling in 1976, provides a theoretical lens for examining the relationship between political corruption and democratic governance in Nigeria. By elucidating the dynamics between principals and agents, this theory underscores the importance of

transparency, accountability, and robust oversight in curbing corruption and promoting effective democratic governance. Addressing the challenges of political corruption through the principles of the principal-agent theory can lead to a more equitable distribution of resources, enhanced public trust, and improved socio-economic outcomes for the Nigerian populace.

METHODOLOGY

This paper adopted the documentary design. Documentary research design is based on the examination of the independent and dependent variables after the events have taken place and the data is already in existence.

To generate the relevant data to test and validate our hypotheses, we relied on the qualitative method. Furthermore, this paper employed secondary sources of data. The paper employed secondary data sources. Secondary data is collected for purposes other than the original application.

This study is qualitative research, and therefore qualitative research is generally characterised by the simultaneous collection and analysis of data whereby both mutually shape each other.

Empirical Verification

The Nature and Effects of Corruption in Nigeria

Corruption pervades the whole of fabric of Nigeria. It is systematically practiced by the ruling elite and comes in many guises, including: embezzlement of state funds, clientelism, nepo-tism, fraud, bribery and, as a result, large-scale money laundering at home and abroad. It permeates every level of society, from highlevel politicians and civil servants to the security forces, business people and the country's poorest citizens (Kreck, 2019). Thus, corruption manifests itself in Nigeria in form of abuse of position and privileges, low level of transparency and accountability, inflation of contacts, bribery, kickbacks, misappropriation or diversion of funds, under and over invoicing, false declaration, advance free fraud know as 419, collection of illegal tolls, etc (Ogbonnaya, 2018). Corruption has been the source of problems militating against the attainment of political integration, political stability, social justice, equity and economic development in Nigeria. Corruption is responsible for the high level of poverty, insecurity, widespread diseases, and high unemployment rate. In Nigeria, public revenues are not only stolen and misused, but often pay for the services and weapons behind political violence experienced in the country (Umuna, 2018). Corruption, which has been depriving the country of the resources it needs to develop, is largely to blame for the current state of affairs (Kreck, 2019). The current situation in Nigeria is largely due to the scale of corruption

that has deprived the country of vital development capital for decades (Kreck, 2019). As it were, corruption has been largely responsible for the seeming collapse of every institution in the Nigeria. It is disheartening to note that corruption is not only systemic, it has become institutionalized that no aspect of societal life is spared (Ozah, 2020).

Despite having the world's seventh largest reserve of crude oil coupled with other resources in Nigeria, poverty and underdevelopment still ravage the country, this can be seen from all indexes of development over the years. The major reason advanced for this is the prevalence of corruption in governance, public and private places (Nageri, Umar & Abdul, 2013). Thus, the impact of corruption has drastically increased the rate of poverty in Nigeria in recent times. For instance, it was first revealed in June 2018 that Nigeria had overtaken India as the nation with the highest number of people living in extreme poverty across the world, with an estimated 87 million Nigerians measured to be living on less than \$1.90 (N684) a day. Thus, the World Poverty Clock had named Nigeria the poverty capital of the world in June, 2018. Presently, Nigeria had about 93.7 million people in extreme poverty, compared with India's 73 million. What is more, extreme poverty in Nigeria is growing by six people every minute, while poverty in India continues to fall." India with a population of 1.324 billion people previously held the position, which is now occupied by Nigeria which has a population of about 200 million (Aderinokun, 2018; Olayinka, 2019).

Impact of Corruption on Democratic Governance under Buhari's Administration

The negative perceptions appeared to be influenced by both perceived and actual biases in the execution of President Buhari's anti-corruption campaign. Some argued that the members of the PDP were mostly targeted for prosecution (Abosedo, 2018; Mossman, 2019). The US government that was once effusive in praise of the anti-corruption programme expressed worry over unaddressed corruption allegations involving APC elites and allies of President Buhari (Sahara Reporters, 2019).

Evidence abounds that those who are strong supporters of President Buhari or members of the ruling political party APC have been left unprosecuted for corruption cases. Some of these people include Mr Andrew Yakubu, former GMD of Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC); Babachir Lawal, former SSG to the President; Ambassador Ayodele Oke, former head of the National Intelligence Agency; Professor Usman Yusuf, head of the National Health Insurance Scheme; Abdulrasheed Maina, former Director of Pension Scheme; etc. (Bada, 2018; Bello, 2018; Akinkuotu, Adeoye & Alagbe, 2018; Tukur, 2019; Sobechi, 2020). For instance, in 2016, President Buhari was

reportedly presented evidence that his Chief of Staff, Abba Kyari, took a ₦500 million naira bribe from MTN to help it slash the \$5 billion fine slammed against it for violation of Nigeria telecommunications regulations bordering on national security (Opejobi, 2016). MTN fired the staff involved in the bribery scandal (Sahara Reporters, 2016). But Abba Kyari was left intact in his position as Chief of Staff to national outrage, forcing Buhari to announce the probe of Kyari. The findings of the investigation were never made public (Sahara Reporters, 2016; Omonobi, 2016).

In addition, Abdurashheed Maina, a President Buhari ally who was the head of the task force on pension reforms during the President Goodluck Jonathan-led administration, fled Nigeria in 2015 after claims that he embezzled two billion naira (\$5.6 million, 4.8 million euros). Despite the fact that an Interpol arrest warrant was issued, he still managed to return to Nigeria, where he was said to have enjoyed protection from the Buhari government (Vanguard, 2017). Maina was sacked in 2013 during Goodluck Jonathan's administration and was put under investigation for corrupt practices but was reinstated and given double promotion by the Buhari administration (Abdulaziz & Busari, 2017).

Corrupt individuals have been spared on account of party allegiance. Some cases went cold, possibly due to the change in political affiliation of the accused individuals or a lack of enthusiasm in their prosecution. They include Godswill Akpabio for his indictment of allegedly stealing ₦180 billion; Senator Adamu Abdullahi, who was facing charges for misappropriating ₦15 billion; and APC's former national chairman, Adams Oshiomhole, who was indicted for \$55 million in bribery and was quoted as

saying that any corrupt politician who finds his way to the ruling party would have his sins forgiven (Sobechi, 2020). For example, Godswill Akpabio, who has been suspected of corruption, was made Minister of Affairs of the oil-rich Niger Delta. He was the PDP governor of Akwa Ibom State from 2007 to 2015 and was a PDP senator and Senate Minority Leader during the last legislative period. In August 2018, he was in the spotlight when he left the PDP and joined the APC. Before his nomination was announced, the EFCC refused to respond to press queries relating to ongoing corruption investigations against him and his wife (Kreck, 2019). Also, Babachir Lawal (the immediate past Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) who diverted funds that were assigned for rehabilitation purposes in the crisis-ridden North-East Nigeria to his private pockets)? He has been walking freely because he is a top member of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) (Adebusuyi, 2019).

Again, a well-known financier and supporter of the APC administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, ex-Governor of Bayelsa State Timipre Sylva, was alleged to have looted ₦19.7 billion and was facing trial before Justice A. Y. Mohammed of the Federal High Court, Abuja. However, two days after President Buhari was sworn in, the new APC government withdrew the charges preferred against Sylva on June 1, 2015, and on October 3, 2018, the EFCC returned to Sylva 48 houses seized from him during the administration of former president Goodluck Jonathan in 2013 (Bada, 2018; Akinkuotu, Adeoye & Alagbe, 2018). In fact, some of these alleged corrupt persons, politicians and government officials (former and present) are displayed in the table below.

Table 1: Alleged Corrupt Officials and Politicians Under Buhari Administration

S/N	Name	Alleged Corrupt Act	Status/Outcome
1	Ambassador Ayodele Oke and his wife Folashade	Oke, former DG of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA), allegedly hid \$43 million (₦13 billion) of government funds in a Lagos apartment. Folashade, his wife, allegedly rented the flat for \$1.6 million cash and lodged the money there.	There has been no news of the outcome of the prosecution of either Folashade or Ayodele Oke.
2	Mr. Andrew Yakubu	Former Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation's (NNPC) boss, arrested by EFCC for corruption. ₦39 billion (\$9.7 million and £74,000) recovered from his home.	Due to affinity to the president, EFCC is powerless to act on the case.
3	Mustapha Maihaja	Director General of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), indicted for embezzling ₦33 billion.	Due to affinity to the president, EFCC is powerless to act on the case.
4	Ishaq Kawu	Director General of the Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation's (NBC), indicted for [The table is incomplete for Ishaq Kawu's alleged act].	Due to affinity to the president, EFCC is powerless to act on the case.

Table 1 cont			
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5	Babachir Lawal	Immediate past Secretary to the Government of the Federation, indicted for awarding a N223 million consultancy contract for the removal of invasive plant species to his company, Rholavision Engineering, in contravention of the Public Procurement Act 2007.	Has been sacked after protest by the opposition and civil society. He has still not been charged. He was allowed to be replaced as SGF by his own cousin.
6	Abdulrasheed Maina	Former head of the task force on pension reforms, fled Nigeria in 2015 after claims he embezzled two billion naira (\$5.6 million, 4.8 million euros).	He was reinstated into the civil service with a promotion as deputy director Ministry of Interior and h
7.	Professor Usman Yusuf	DG, National Health Insurance Scheme, suspended/sacked for allegedly being involved in fraud to the tune of N919 million.	Professor Usman Yusuf was reinstated despite being under investigation for fraud
8	Godswill Akpabio	Former Governor of Akwa Ibom State and current Minister of Niger Delta Affairs. Under investigation by EFCC for alleged embezzlement of N108 billion during his tenure as governor (2007-2015).	He has not been prosecuted and his case is still pending with the EFCC.
9	Rotimi Amaechi	Former Governor of Rivers State and current Minister of Transportation. Indicted by the Justice George Omeregiled Rivers State Judicial Commission of Inquiry for allegedly misappropriating N97 billion through the sale of state assets.	He has not been prosecuted.
10	Ganduje Yahaya	Current governor of Kano State. Caught on video evidence collecting large amounts of American dollars as a bribe from an undisclosed associate in the last quarter of 2018.	He has not been prosecuted by EFCC due to immunity of prosecution.
11	Ibrahim Magu	Former acting chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Accused of a myriad of contraventions.	Currently facing Presidential probe panel.

especially diversion of recovered loot, insubordination and misconduct by the Attorney General of the Federation (AGF) and Justice Minister, Abubakar Malami. He was also alleged of selling off most the assets recovered by the EFCC without the knowledge of anyone.

Source: Adapted from Adetayo, (2017); Bada (2018); Akinkuotu, Adeoye and Alagbe (2018); Awala, (2018); Tukur, (2019); Kreck, (2019); Sobechi (2020).

The issues of nepotism and favouritism, which are forms of corruption, have also characterised most of the appointments into key positions by President Buhari. The biggest trouble with the Buhari administration is the elephant in the room variously tagged as “lopsided appointments”, “nepotism”, “sectionalism”, “parochialism,

etc. (The Guardian Editorial, 2020). These have been largely displayed with impunity. For example, there is imbalance in the appointments of those heading the military and paramilitary agencies. These are displayed in the table below:

Table 2: Personnel of Military and Para-Military Agencies in Nigeria

S/N	Name of Officer	Position	State of Origin
1	Bashir Salihi Magashi	Minister of Defence	Kano State
2	Babagana Monguno	National Security Adviser	Bornu State
3	Abayomi Olonisakin	Chief of Defence Staff	Ekiti State
4	Tukur Burutai	Chief of Army Staff	Bornu State
5	Sadique Abubakar	Chief of Air Staff,	Bauchi State
6	Ibok-Etelbas	Chief of Naval Staff	Cross River State
7	Mohammed Adamu	Inspector General of Police	Nasarawa State
8	Yusuf Bichi	Director-General, Department of State Services	Kano State

9	Ahmed Abubakar	Director-General, National Intelligence Agency	Katsina State
10	Hameed Ali	Comptroller-General of Customs	Bauchi State
11	Jaafar Ahmed	Comptroller General, Nigeria	Kebbi State
12	Mohammed Babandede	Comptroller General, Nigeria	Jigawa State
13	Liman Ibrahim	Controller General, Federal Fire Service	Niger State
14	Abdullahi Muhammadu	Commandant General, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC),	

Source: Adapted from Adebowale, (2020).

Table 2 provides evidence of current appointments to top positions in the military and paramilitary institutions, which currently appear to be reserved for individuals from specific regions of the country (Omeihe, 2020). As you can see, almost all the agencies under the Ministry of Internal Affairs are headed by people from a section of the country. Apart from Chief of Naval Staff Ibok-Ete Ibas, who is from Cross River State in the South-South geopolitical zone, and Chief of Defence Staff Abayomi Olonisakin, who is from Ekiti State in the South-West geopolitical zone, all the others are from the north. This has never happened in all the 60 years of Nigeria as an

independent entity. How does this list represent Nigeria in key military and paramilitary agencies like these? This list cannot and will not promote a sense of national unity in this country of ours called Nigeria (Adebowale, 2020).

In 2017 there was outrage in some parts of the country over the lopsided appointments in the Department of State Service (DSS) by the president. The appointments revealed that 51 of the 479 new recruits came from Katsina, the President's state of origin, which is more than the 42 new cadets recruited from the six South-South states. These appointments are shown in the table below.

Table 3: Key Management Positions Held By Northerners in NNPC

S/N	Name	Position Held
1	Mele Kolo Kyari	Group Managing Director, GMD
2	Umar Isa Ajiya	Chief Finance Officer, Finance & Account
3	Yusuf Usman	Chief Operating Officer, Gas & Power
4	Farouk Garba Sa'id	Chief Operating Officer, Corporate Services
5	Mustapha Y. Yakubu	Chief Operating Officer, Refining and Petrochemicals
6	Hadiza Y. Coomassie	Corporate Secretary/Legal Adviser to the Corporation
7	Omar Farouk Ibrahim	GGM, International Energy Relations, IER
8	Kallamu Abdullahi	GGM, Renewable Energy
9	Ibrahim Birma	GGM, Governance Risk and Compliance
10	Bala Wunti	GGM, NAPIMS
11	Inuwa Waya	MD, NNPC Shipping
12	Musa Lawan	MD, Pipelines & Product Marketing, PPMC
13	Mansur Sambo	MD, Nigeria Petroleum Development Company, NPDC
14	Lawal Sade	MD, Duke Oil/NNPC Trading Company
15	Malami Shehu	MD, Port Harcourt Refining Company
16	Muhammed Abah	MD, Warri Refining and Petrochemical Company
17	Abdulkadir Ahmed	MD, Nigeria Gas Marketing Company
18	Salihu Jamari	MD, Nigeria Gas and Power Investment Company Limited
19	Mohammed Zango	MD, NNPC Medical Services
20	Sarki Auwalu.	Director, Department of Petroleum Resources, DPR

Source: Onyekakeyah (2020).

From these appointments in the above table, the entire southern Nigeria was allotted only three top management positions in the NNPC. In other words, the oil-producing zones of South-south, Southeast, and South-west are left with one Chief Operating Officer position each and a few senior and middle-level management positions in peripheral and incidental subsidiaries, departments, and divisions of the corporation (Onyekakeyah, 2020). This development makes one wonder if the organisation has surreptitiously become Northern Nigeria Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). To say the least, the northernisation of federal offices is legendary and a daylight assault on merit or national integration (The Guardian Editorial, 2020).

Moreover, there is gross imbalance and dominance by northerners in an unprecedented manner at the top of all these institutions and agencies of government below: Federal Inland Revenue, Customs and Excise, Nigeria Maritime Administration and Safety Agency, Nigeria Ports Authority, Central Bank of Nigeria, Tertiary Education Fund, Bank of Industry, Pension Commission, Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation, Petroleum Technology Development Fund, Petroleum Pricing and Regulation Agency, Petroleum Equalisation Fund, Department of Petroleum Resources, Asset Management Corporation of Nigeria, the Universal Basic Education Commission, National Broadcasting Commission, Energy Commission of Nigeria, The Department of State Security (DSS), Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), National Intelligence Agency (NIA), Police Force, Air Force, Nigerian Army, Customs, Immigrations and Correctional Service, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Defence Ministry, NIMASA, Nigerian Shippers' Council, FAAN, NCAA, EFCC, NFIU, Code of Conduct Bureau, (CCB), Code of Conduct Tribunal (CCT), and so on (Adebowale, 2020: The Guardian Editorial, 2020).

According to all indications, almost all key departments and agencies of the federal government under President Buhari are headed by people from the northern part of the country. These appointments are in violation of the Federal Character Principle in Nigeria (The Guardian Editorial, 2020). For clarity, Chapter 2, Section 14, Subsection 3 of the 1999 Constitution, as amended, provides in detail that "the composition of the government of the federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in the government or in any of its agencies.

The brazen assault on the federal character principle in Nigeria was further replicated by the president in the appointment of both the chairman, Dr Muheeba Farida Dankaka (Kwara State), and the secretary, Mohammed Bello Tukur (Taraba State), of the Federal Character Commission from one section of the country – the north –

contrary to extant tradition (Omeihe, 2020). If such a balancing institution can be subverted in such a manner, what else is left of its constitutional objective? Obviously, in the context of appointments, President Buhari has consistently failed to respect the federal character provision in the country's constitution. The provision is designed to address lopsided appointments and build a peace that has eluded us since independence almost 60 years ago (The Guardian Editorial, 2020).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Corruption in Nigeria seems to be increasing despite efforts to curb it under President Muhammadu Buhari's leadership (Momoh, 2018). Reports indicate that the current Buhari's administration is fighting corruption, but it lacks the basic understanding of what drives it in Nigeria. This weakness reveals why it has concentrated on punishment without addressing the socio-economic factors driving corruption. An overwhelming majority of people in Nigeria do not have portable water to drink; they don't have access to a stable power supply, they do not have good roads to carry out commercial activities, and their income per capita is too low to do anything more than just consume to stay alive (Amannah & Adeyeye, 2018).

The paper recommends, amongst others, that

There is the need to enhance and enforce anti-bribery laws with strict penalties and independent oversight bodies to monitor and report bribery. This will improve transparency and trust in the political system.

Again, the government should implement robust auditing processes, increase transparency in government expenditures, and establish a whistleblower protection programme. These steps will promote greater accountability and reduce embezzlement.

Finally, the government should develop clear, transparent criteria for hiring and promotions to ensure positions are filled based on qualifications, not personal connections. This will uphold the rule of law and enhance public trust in institutions.

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