

OPINIONS OF COUNSELLORS ON CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA, WAYS OF CURBING IT AND THEIR ROLES IN CURBING IT

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ABSTRACT

Corruption is the biggest challenge facing successive administrations in Nigeria. It has undermined social, political and economic development of our nation. Currently, it appears to defy all solutions adduced for curbing it. This study is a descriptive study designed to explore the opinions of counsellors on corruption in Nigeria, ways of curbing it and their roles in curbing it. A sample of 125 counsellors drawn from a population of professional counsellors in Rivers State using purposive sampling technique participated in the study. Two research questions and two hypotheses were designed to guide the study. The instrument for data collection was Opinions of Counsellors on Corruption Questionnaire. The reliability indices for the internal consistency of the instrument obtained through Cronbach alpha were 0.76 and 0.69 for sections B and C respectively. The findings of the study showed that counsellors in Rivers state are of the opinion that wrong value system, greed and selfishness, materialism, nepotism and parochialism, unemployment and weak institutions are major causes of corruption in Nigeria. They are also of the opinion that value re-orientation, strengthening corruption-fighting institutions, improved political will to fight corruption, promulgating and implementing draconian laws against corruption, and mounting surveillance cameras to help track down corrupt people are possible ways of curbing corruption in Nigeria. It was therefore recommended that for any meaningful sustainable development to take place in the country and for peaceful coexistence among Nigerians, genuine, spirited and concerted efforts must be made to eliminate or curb corruption in the country.

Keywords: Corruption, election rigging, examination malpractices, kidnapping, adulteration, budget padding, cyber crime, advanced fee fraud, robbery, contract inflation, kickback, bribery.

INTRODUCTION

There is no consensus definition of corruption. Hence, corruption has been defined variously by different people and groups from various fields of human endeavour. It was defined by Onyeziri (2004) as a behavioural attitude contrary to or at variance with the set rules and agreed norms. It is an illegal, unethical and unauthorized exploitation of one's position for personal gains (Lawal & Victor, 2012). It is the illegal use of one's position for personal gains in a manner contrary to the rule of law. Corruption is a cankerworm that has eaten deep right into the very fabric of Nigerian society. It has created tension, strife and threatened the corporate existence of the nation. Despite the huge human and material resources the country is endowed with, she remains underdeveloped since the amalgamation of northern and southern protectorates of Nigeria by Lord Lugard in 1914 owing to corruption. It has grown in leaps and bounds ever since. It is found in nooks and crannies of our society. It is almost granted legitimacy status by all and sundry.

However, corruption is not peculiar to Nigeria. It occurs in every nation at varying degrees. It is as old as man himself. No country is immune to the menace of corruption, but the prevalence and forms of corruption vary from country to country. In sub-saharan Africa, especially Nigeria, it is deep-rooted, chronic, endemic and usually regarded as a way of life as it enjoys popular support, or how do we explain the call on the current government in Nigeria from some ignorant quarters to “bring back our corruption” if it is what is required to take Nigeria out of the present economic recession? Commenting on this ugly trend, Olagunju (2012, p.78) lamented that

Corruption now appears to have become a permanent feature of the Nigerian polity. It has become completely institutionalized, entered into the realm of culture and value system. It is now a norm and no longer an aberration. The young ones are born into it, grow up in it, live with it and possibly die in it. The aged are not left out as they are re-socialized and begin to conform to it.

Corroborating this view, Transparency International (2015) quoted Chantal Uwimana, the Director of Transparency International, sub-Saharan African as saying.

From ebola to terrorism, we have seen corruption exacerbate crisis in 2015 in sub-saharan Africa. Forty out of the region’s 46 countries show a serious corruption problem and there is no improvement for the continent’s power houses, Nigeria and South Africa. If corruption and impunity are to be a thing of the past as the African Union stated, governments need to take bold steps to ensure rule of law is the reality for everyone.

Many Nigerians condemn corruption, yet many Nigerians knowingly or unknowingly indulge in it. It is noticeable at every sector and level of Nigerian society. In primary schools, head teachers extort money from parents and pupils indulge in pilfering and other antisocial behaviours. In secondary schools unauthorized levies are imposed on the students. Bullying, cultism, stealing, promiscuity and examination malpractices are the order of the day. In tertiary institutions, admission and job racketeering is noticeable. Prostitution, sexual harassment, trading of grades for sex and cash, cultism and high level examination malpractices are common. In summary, a list of corrupt practices prevalent generally in Nigerian society is as follows; kidnapping, pipeline vandalism, examination malpractices, election rigging, political assignation, inflation of contract figures, kickbacks, frivolous award of allowances, budget padding, drug and human trafficking, production of counterfeit drugs and substandard goods, gratification, adulteration of manufactured goods, baby factory, money laundering, thuggery. Others are bribery, rape, embezzlement, diversion of funds, ghost workers syndrome, nepotism, parochialism, tribalism, piracy, plagiarism, blackmail, cyber crime, advanced fee fraud (419), skewed admission criteria in favour of staff children, dereliction of duties and responsibilities, armed robbery and subversion of justice, etc. This list is by no means exhaustive.

Providing a list of corrupt practices common in Nigeria is absolutely necessary here as many Nigerians are incapable of distinguishing between corrupt practices and acceptable standard ways of life. The reactions of many Nigerians to corruption range from indifference to outright support. It is a vicious cycle in which victims of corruption may take it in a good faith and rather devise means to perpetrate corruption to his own advantage or to pay people back in their own coin. However, all well-meaning Nigerians especially the counsellors should avoid and condemn corruption in its entirety. Counsellors are deployed to secondary

schools to work on the personality of young ones. They are meant to work towards modifying maladjusted behaviours of the young ones who will later become adults with greater positions of trust. A high level of corruption in Nigeria is an indictment on counsellors or perhaps the ineffectiveness of their services as most Nigerians in positions of trust passed through one school or the other.

Statement of the problem

Successive governments in Nigeria have made efforts in reining in corruption in the country (Ene, Arikpo, Jeffery & Albert, 2013) however spirited or feeble the efforts were. In a bid to curb corruption in the country, some of the leaders set up anti-corruption agencies and groups. Notable among them are Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), Public Account Committees, Public Complaint Commission, Code of Conduct Bureau, Nigeria Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and Failed Bank Tribunal.

Despite the efforts of these agencies and groups, oversight functions of the legislative arm of the government, and pressure mounted on Nigerian governments by developed countries, corruption seems to escalate rather than abate over the years. Hence, the desired results are far from being achieved. The level of corruption in Nigeria in recent times is revealed by corruption perceptions index of Transparency International. This is shown in table 1.

Table 1: Position of Nigeria in corruption perception index

Year	Position	Out of	Rank
2000	90	90	1 st
2001	90	90	2 nd
2002	101	102	2 nd
2003	101	102	2 nd
2004	144	146	3 rd
2005	151	158	8 th
2006	143	163	21 st
2007	147	180	33 rd
2012	139	176	37 th
2013	144	177	33 rd
2014	136	174	38 th
2015	136	168	32 nd

Table 1 shows that Nigeria was the most corrupt country in the year 2000. It maintained second most corrupt country position for three consecutive years starting from 2001 to 2003. The improvement recorded in 2015 as the 32nd most corrupt country out of 168 countries surveyed left much to be desired. So when corruption free countries are counted, Nigeria is never found in a comfort zone. Therefore this study is meant to explore the opinions of counsellors on corruption in Nigeria, ways of curbing it and their roles in curbing it.

Research questions and hypotheses

To guide the conduct of this study, two research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated. The research questions and null hypotheses are as follows;

RQ₁: What are the opinions of counsellors on causes of corruption in Nigeria?

RQ₂: What are the opinions of counsellors on the possible ways of curbing corruption in Nigeria?

H0₁: There is no significant difference in opinions between male and female counsellors on the causes of corruption in Nigeria.

H0₂: There is no significant difference in opinions between married and single counsellors on the possible ways of curbing corruption in Nigeria

Method

This is a descriptive study which investigated the opinions of counsellors on corruption in Nigeria, ways of curbing it and their roles in curbing it. A sample of 125 counsellors drawn from the population of professional counsellors in Rivers State using purposive sampling technique participated in the study. The instrument for data collection was Opinions of Counsellors on Corruption Questionnaire. This questionnaire was made up of three sections. Section A was designed to elicit demographic information from the respondents. Section B contained six items on the causes of corruption in Nigeria. Section C contained five items on the possible ways of curbing corruption in Nigeria. The items are of four-point response format of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The instrument was vetted by three experts in educational sociology.

The reliability of the instrument was established through Cronbach alpha method for the internal consistency of the instrument. The reliability coefficients for sections B and C were 0.76 and 0.69 respectively. The instrument was administered to the respondents by the researchers. The data obtained from the instrument were analyzed using SPSS (version 21) with mean and standard deviation as statistical tools for research questions and independent sample t-test as a statistical tool for testing the null hypotheses.

RESULTS

RQ₁: What are the opinions of counsellors on causes of corruption in Nigeria?

To answer this research question, the data were subjected to statistical test using mean and standard deviation. The results are as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on the opinions of counsellors on the causes of corruption in Nigeria

S/N	Causes of corruption	\bar{X}	Sd	Decision
1	Wrong values system	2.95	0.77	Accept
2	Greed and selfishness	3.07	0.73	Accept
3	Materialism	3.22	0.74	Accept
4	Nepotism and parochialism	2.79	0.96	Accept
5	Unemployment	3.17	0.63	Accept
6	Weak institutions	3.25	0.78	Accept

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations for the causes of corruption in Nigeria based on the opinions of counsellors. Wrong value system (\bar{X} =2.95, sd= 0.77), greed and selfishness (\bar{X} =3.07, sd= 0.73), materialism (\bar{X} =3.22, sd=0.74), nepotism and parochialism (2.79, sd=0.96), unemployment (\bar{X} =3.17, sd=0.63) and weak institutions (\bar{X} =3.25, sd=0.78). All the causes of corruption have means greater than 2.5 which is the criterion mean. Therefore, counsellors are of the opinion that wrong value system, greed and

selfishness, materialism, nepotism and parochialism, unemployment and weak institutions are the major causes of corruption in Nigeria.

H0₁: There is no significant difference in opinions between male and female counsellors on the causes of corruption in Nigeria.

Hypothesis one was tested at 0.05 alpha level using independent sample t-test. The results are presented in table 3.

Table 3: t-test on the opinions of male and female counsellors about the causes of corruption in Nigeria

Gender	N	\bar{X}	sd	Df	t	sig	Decision
Male	64	3.05	0.30	123	1.05	0.30	Accept
Female	61	3.10	0.31				

Table 3 shows that male counsellors obtained a mean score of 3.05 and a standard deviation of 0.30 while female counsellors obtained a mean score of 3.10 and a standard deviation of 0.31. The calculated t-value is 1.05 which is significant at 0.30 alpha level but not significant at 0.05 alpha level. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in opinions between male and female counsellors on the causes of corruption in Nigeria.

RQ₂: What are the opinions of counsellors on the possible ways of curbing corruption in Nigeria?

Research question 2 was answered using mean and standard deviation. The results are as presented in table 4.

Table 4: \bar{X} and std deviation of counsellors on ways of curbing corruption in Nigeria

S/N	Possible ways of curbing corruption	\bar{X}	Sd	Decision
1	Value re-orientation	2.82	0.86	Accept
2	Strengthening corruption fighting institutions	2.92	0.93	Accept
3	Improved political will to fight corruption	3.14	0.81	Accept
4	Promulgating and implementing draconian laws against corruption	2.86	0.95	Accept
5	Mounting surveillance cameras to help track down corrupt people	3.05	0.82	Accept

Table 4 shows possible ways of curbing corruption and the corresponding means and standard deviations obtained for counsellors. Value re-orientation (\bar{X} =2.82, sd=0.86), strengthening corruption-fighting institutions (\bar{X} =2.92, sd =0.93), improved political will to fight corruption (\bar{X} =3.14, sd=0.81), promulgating and implementing draconian laws against corruption (\bar{X} =2.86, sd =0.95) and mounting surveillance cameras to help track down corrupt people (\bar{X} =3.05, sd=0.82). All the possible ways of curbing corruption have their means greater than 2.5 which is the criterion mean. Therefore, they all represent the opinions of counsellors on the possible ways of curbing corruption in Nigeria.

H0₂: There is no significant difference in opinions between married and single counsellors on the possible ways of curbing corruption in Nigeria.

Table 5: t-test on the opinions of single and married counsellors on the possible ways of curbing corruption in Nigeria

Marital status	N	\bar{X}	Sd	df	t	Sig	Decision
Single	30	2.96	0.38	123	0.062	0.95	Accept
Married	95	2.95	0.34				

Table 5 shows that the mean for single counsellors is 2.96 with a standard deviation of 0.38. The mean for married counsellors is 2.95 with a standard deviation of 0.34. The calculated t-value is 0.062 which is significant at 0.95 alpha level but not significant at 0.05 alpha level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in opinions between single and married counsellors on the possible ways of curbing corruption in Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The counsellors are of the opinion that wrong value system, greed and selfishness, materialism, nepotism and parochialism, unemployment and weak institutions are major causes of corruption in Nigeria. This is understandable because as a result of our wrong value system, there is a blurred line of distinction between what is an aberration and what is morally right. Indecent dressing is a common sight along our streets. People of all walks of life indulge in one form of corruption or the other. We tacitly reward corruption by honoring those who indulge in it.

An average corrupt Nigerian man is greedy, selfish and materialistic. Such people hold material things to a high esteem at the expense of human dignity and sanctity of life. They want to be regarded as the richest men in their constituencies, Nigeria, Africa or the world. Obsessed by greed and narrow mindedness, they do not care how they obtain the material things or if they impoverish the masses or deplete the resources meant for development of the nation.

Uncontrolled nepotism and parochial tendencies bring about corruption. Nepotism and parochialism are extension of greed and selfishness. A situation whereby people who find themselves in positions of trust reserve best jobs and positions for their relatives and people from their constituencies does not augur well for even distribution of resources.

Unemployment is also a serious causal factor of corruption. An idle man is a devil's workshop. Unemployed youths have become veritable tools for political assassination, thuggery, drug trafficking, baby factory, cyber crime, armed robbery, kidnapping, electoral malpractices, etc. Unless the youths are offered gainful employment, all attempts at curbing corruption will remain a mirage.

Weak institutions are one of the greatest factors militating against corruption eradication in Nigeria. This explains the impunity with which Nigerians engage in corrupt practices. They bank on the hope that corruption fighting institutions are not properly funded to perform their statutory functions. Judges can easily be bribed to acquit the accused. Even when the accused are convicted, the punishment given to them can be best described as a pat on the back. This gives criminally minded Nigerians sufficient courage to embark on massive looting as a paltry fraction of their loots may be used to settle judges or pay fine.

Besides, counsellors are of the opinion that value re-orientation, strengthening corruption fighting institutions, improved political will to fight corruption, promulgating and implementing draconian laws against corruption and mounting of surveillance cameras are possible ways of curbing corruption in Nigeria. Value re-orientation is necessary so that Nigerians will begin to rank honesty, integrity, reputation and decency higher than dirty wealth and immorality. Social values and norms must be preached. People who are embodiments of social norms and values should be rewarded. Social norms and values should be entrenched in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions' curricula to help Nigerian children and adolescents imbibe these virtues at tender age. It is important we train up our children the way they should go, so that when they grow, they will not depart from it. Mounting a vigorous and sustained campaign against wrong values will certainly place Nigeria at an advantaged position where a greater percentage of youths who are agents of change have acquired appropriate social norms and values for sustainable development.

Improved political will to fight corruption can go a long way in helping to curb corruption in the country. Government should fund and strengthen corruption fighting institutions very well. She should grant such institutions autonomy. The institutions should not be used for fighting political opponents only, rather they should go after corrupt officials without fear or favour, irrespective of the religious, social, tribal and political affiliations of the people concerned. Draconian laws against corruption should be promulgated and implemented. People who enrich themselves through corrupt practices should be prosecuted and made to refund the proceeds of corruption in addition to fine and imprisonment. Mounting functional surveillance cameras in offices and public places should be done to help track down people who engage in corrupt practices. Arresting, prosecuting and imprisoning these people will serve as a deterrent to other criminally minded people.

Roles of counsellors in curbing corruption in Nigeria

Counsellors should play leading roles in curbing corruption in Nigeria. They should organize themselves and pay regular visits to schools including primary and secondary schools. Students showing symptoms of antisocial behaviour should be assisted by the counsellors to jettison such behaviours for pro-social behaviours. Behaviour modification counsellors must deploy appropriate and effective counselling techniques to realize the counselling goals. It is hoped that appropriate moral and ethical values acquired at youthful age will stand a test of time.

Besides, public office holders especially those entrusted with common resources must be mandated to receive anti-corruption counselling services from the professional counsellors at least once in a week. Consistent awareness of the evils of corruption in our society may douse the urge of such people to indulge in corrupt practices. The counsellors should serve as models of integrity and honesty. Moral counsellors should exude virtues of diligence, patriotism and altruism so that people will be compelled to emulate their sterling qualities.

Counsellors should occasionally organize town hall meeting with parents and guardians in attendance. Parents and guardians should be informed about the various forms of corruption. If counsellors succeed in inculcating self-discipline and moral values in parents, there is no doubt that parents will transmit such moral values to their children more than other persons. Children are leaders of tomorrow. A large proportion of children of moral rectitude will surely guarantee future economic, social and political development of our nation.

CONCLUSION

Counsellors are of the opinion that wrong value system, greed and selfishness, materialism, nepotism and parochialism, unemployment and weak institutions are the major causes of corruption in Nigeria. To minimize corruption in Nigerian nation, there must be value re-orientation among the populace, genuine effort should be made to strengthen corruption-fighting institutions, political will to fight corruption must be improved upon, draconian laws against corruption should be promulgated and implemented, and surveillance cameras must be mounted on offices and strategic public places in order to track down people who indulge in corrupt practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Nigeria is undoubtedly endowed with human and materials resources. All she needs do is to harness judiciously the abundant resources available at her disposal. Nigerian citizens need to down play the influence of money in their lives in favour of good name. They should shun all forms of avarice, selfishness, nepotism and parochialism and embrace altruism and patriotism for sustainable development of the country.

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