



Corruption, Accountability and Transparency in the Public Service: An Evaluative Analysis of the Obasanjo Administration, 1999-2007

ORBUNDE Emmanuel¹ and A. O. OGOH²

^{1,2} Department of Political Science

Federal University Dutsin-Ma,

Katsina State, Nigeria

[Email: eorbunde@fudutsinma.edu.ng](mailto:eorbunde@fudutsinma.edu.ng);

aogoh@fudutsinma.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

The task of this paper is to critically evaluate the relationship between corruption, accountability and transparency in Nigeria's public service with specific reference to Obasanjo administration which was from 1999 to 2007. In doing this, the paper view corruption as behavior such as bribery, nepotism and misappropriation of funds which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private gains. Relying on secondary data, and anchored fundamentally on the Political Economy theory as a framework of analysis, the paper argues that the chronic problem of corruption has rubbed off on the accountability and transparency level of the Nigerian leadership class and so the issue of accountability and transparency leaves much to be desired under former president Obasanjo administration. The direct implication of this is underdevelopment and anti democratic activities. Consequently, the paper concludes that corruption other than poverty do create a sort of social stratification between the rich and the poor, hence making the masses of the people totally alienated from the government and unwilling tools for democratic ideals. It recommends among others good governance noting that good governance through democracy brings about accountability and transparency.

Keywords: Accountability, Corruption, Democracy, Transparency, Good Governance, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

A careful look into the history of Nigeria will reveal a sad and pathetic story, especially as it has to do with ethical values and efficient management of her resources. Nigeria is a country so bountifully blessed with more than enough material resources for all, and yet there is such heaped corrupt wealth interlocked with such abject and debasing poverty. Ayua (2001:2) captures the situation vividly when he states that "Nigeria at independence was referred to in international cycles as the "the showpiece of decolonizing Africa" and as the continent's good example of democratic institutions" has for the most part of its history gone through a vicious cycle of failed political leadership, political instability, economic mismanagement, under-development and social chaos among others. The situation has so deteriorated that Nigeria is now one among the nations of the world where poverty and other social evil are rampant. The cause of this pathetic situation over the years in Nigeria is largely corruption. To Otite (1996:3) corruption is the bedrock of Nigeria's political and economic failure thus making the country to become trapped in the web of consistent development and social crisis which results in structural imbalances and political confusion. This unfortunate reality highlighted above about corruption is seen in the public service, private sector etc. it has continued to be reflective of the symptoms of much deeper contradictions and predicaments confronting a flawed social order at the precipice of collapse; and in desperate need or quest for political

redemption through good governance. In other words, the Nigerian social order is a collapsing system that needs redemption through genuine democracy and committed leadership built on the pillars of accountability and transparency. Successive military governments have often used the issue of corruption as the main reason why a particular regime is being ousted through coup detats. Experience has however shown that they do not perform any better than the ones they have toppled. Ayua (2001:1) sums up the situation when he states that;

“Corruption has been responsible for the instability of successive government since the first republic. Every coup since then has been in the name of stamping out the disease called corruption. Unfortunately, the cure often turned out to be worse than the disease. And Nigeria has been worse for it.”

Consequently Nigeria’s external image over the years has taken serious bashing, as she began to feature on top of every corruption index. At the inception of the Fourth Republic (May 29, 1999) Olusegun Obasanjo emerged as Nigeria’s President, he categorically stated that his administration will decisively fight corruption to a standstill in Nigeria. This according to the former President was to usher in a new Nigeria, where gradually corruption would be pushed to the background in our ethical values and good governance will ultimately hold supreme among the leadership class (Ifamose, 2000:14). To Obasanjo, Nigeria under his leadership was to gradually bring in high ethical values like accountability and transparency into the Nigerian public service as well as the private sector. So the main argument of this paper is to critically evaluate the Obasanjo administration in relation to his war on corruption, instituting accountability and transparency especially as it has to do with the Nigerian public service.

Corruption: Its Meaning and Conceptual Clarification

The term corruption is difficult to ascribe a universally single acceptable definition. Thus, the need for the advancement of a universally acceptable definition on the concept of corruption has over time engaged the keen attention of scholars and analysts. In fact a plethora of definitions have been variously advanced by scholars and analyst of varying intellectual orientations with different but interesting submissions on the concept of corruption.

Otite (1996:12) sees corruption as the perversion of integrity or state of affairs through bribery, favor or moral depravity. He further asserts that corruption takes place when:

At least two parties have interact to change the existing structure or process of society or the behavior of functionaries in order to produce or influence dishonest, unfaithful or defiled situations.

Nye (1967:419) views corruption as a behavior which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private gains. To him such behavior includes bribery, nepotism and misappropriation of funds. In the opinion of Bhargave (2004:78) corruption is any improper or sailfish exercise of power and influence with attachment of a public office or to a specific position in public life. This opinion is further reinforced by Olusoga (1981:34) who avers that corruption is any behavior of public officials which deviates from accepted norms.

In his own contribution, Gboyega has advanced a conventional definition of corruption as involving:

The giving or taking of bribe, or illegal acquisition of wealth using the resources of a public office, including the exercise of discretion. In this regard, it is those who have business to do with government who are compelled somehow to provide inducement to public officials to make them favors (Gboyega 1996:7).

The above definition is the conventional one, looking at corruption from the public sector perspective; thereby leaving out private sector corruption. More often than not, definitions of corruption place emphasis on the public sector and neglect the private sector. Very importantly, it should be understood that the public sector is prone to inducement from the private sector for the enhancement of corruption. Therefore, in attempting to conceptualize and comprehend what corruption means or implies, it will be most appropriate to advance an explanation of the concept to aptly capture the public and private sectors. In this light the Asian Development Bank definition is quite befitting. It sees corruption in the following light;

“the behavior on the part of officials in the public and private sectors, in which they improperly and unlawfully enrich themselves or those close to them, or induce others to do so by misusing the position in which they are placed”. (Asian Development Bank, 1999).

The above definition is broadly based as it adequately covers what constitutes corruption in both the public and private sector of the economy. Similarly, the submission of the World Bank on what constitutes corrupt practices vividly captures the two sectors (private and public). It sees corruption as: The abuse of public office for private gain, when an official accepts, solicits or extorts a bribe. It is also abused when private agents actively offer bribes to circumvent public policies and processes for competitive advantage and profit. Public office can also be abused for personal benefit even if bribery occurs through patronage and nepotism, the theft of state assets or the diversion of the state revenues (World Bank 2006).

The federal government report on the characterization of corruption as given by the political Bureau defines corruption to include:

The inflation of government contracts in return for kickbacks; frauds and fabrication of accounts in the public service, examination malpractices in our educational institutions; the taking of bribes and perversion of justice among the public, the judiciary and other organs for administering justice; and the various heinous crimes against the state in the business and industrial sectors of our economy: collusion with multinational companies such as invoicing of goods and foreign exchange swindling, hoarding and smuggling. (Report of the Political Bureau, (1987:213).

The above clarification, gives a broad characterization of corruption in the Nigerian situation.

Corruption, Accountability and Transparency in Perspective

The chronic problem of corruption has rubbed off on the accountability and transparency level of the Nigerian leadership class. One thing is clear, Nigeria needs good governance that will bring about development. This can only be achievable with a committed leadership that is willing to imbibe the values of good governance. This also means that true democratic values must be enshrined in the polity. For Nigeria to come out of her development crisis she has to do more beyond mere democratization. According to Orngu (2006:3) the beauty of democracy is identified and sustained through good governance with the attributes of accountability and transparency. Chalker(2006:22) submits that:

Democratic good governance has come to refer generally to a political regime (that is) based on the model of a representative, liberal democratic policy, which protects human and civil rights, combined with a competent, non-corrupt and accountable public administration.

The World Bank corroborates this where it notes that:

Underlying the litany of Africa’s development problems is crisis of good governance infused with accountability and transparency. By good governance is meant the exercise of political power to manage a nation’s affairs properly and were the rule of law reign supreme (World Bank 2006).

Arguing further Moor and Robinson (2004:12) are of the view that good governance can be conceptualized as accountability, especially if public and elected officers are held responsible for their actions and or inactions and by so doing checkmating corruption or sharp practices. Secondary, according to them, good governance relates to transparency, which in turn dwells on openness of governance towards the enhancement of accountability for the eviction of corruption and the stimulation of a process of consultation and participation between the various stakeholders over policy formulation, development and implementation.

Thirdly, good governance fundamentally dwells on the strengthening of civil society, encouragement of political opposition, elimination of the personalization of politics through contrived network of patronage and clientelism, dislocation of coercive and arbitrary leadership, as well as the entrenchment of a sustainable culture of accountability so that corruption is avoided.

Fourthly, Moore and Robinson (2005:32) further state that good governance centrally resides in the total submission to the rule of law, that is supremacy of the law, for the enhancement of accountability and transparency. While accountability connotes the leaders obligation in taking responsibility for decision and actions taken and explaining the rationality connotes the leaders obligation in taking responsibility for decision and actions taken and explaining the rationality or irrationality of same to the led, or their representatives, transparency on the other hand implies the openness guiding or regulating such decisions or actions to be taken and with sincere explanation as may be necessary from time to time.

Clearly therefore, there can be no good governance where corruption is the order of the day and where accountability and transparency are lacking. The interplay between the variables-according to Elaigwu (2005:231) is indisputably securely anchored to democratic leadership. To him, accountability and transparency can only be entrenched and sustained in a democratic milieu. Meaning that there is an inseparable nexus between democracy and good governance. But in the Nigerian experience, the above assertion is an exasperation that has continued to offend the sensibilities of critical minds and keen watchers of the country's drama of governance in the face of an anti-corruption campaign that has undoubtedly appeared to be make believe in a theatre of endless absurdities, especially under the administration of the former President, Olusegun Obasanjo.

Theoretical Framework

There are many theoretical frameworks that can be associated with the phenomenon of corruption. But for this paper, it becomes appropriate for us to adopt the political economy approach. We believe this approach conveniently captures the problem of corruption and the Nigerian society. The modern political economy took its roots from Karl Marx's works which proceeded from Smith and Ricardo's "understanding of capitalism and society in general". In the preface to his contribution to the Critique on political economy, Marx put political issues like property, wage labour, the state on focus etc.

The problem of corruption in Nigeria can only be seriously ascertained through examination of classes and class structure, state power, the bourgeoisie, the nature of the peasantry and the working class. Bangura (1985) is in agreement with this view when he states that understanding the society, its corresponding class structure and politics; and the organization of state power are necessary for a theoretical appreciation of the problem of corruption in a society. This is one of the reasons the political economy approach is relevant in this work. Robinson (1998:40) further gives more credence to this theoretical approach when he asserts that "since the state is a major instrument of class formulation, wealth accumulation (especially in Africa), exploitation and domination. Most often than not, the ruling class in collaboration with other members of the dominant class such as the bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, national bourgeoisie and comprador bourgeoisie view the acquisition of state power as a means of attaining economic wealth, to the neglect of the other class. Consequently, the lumpen proletariat and the peasantry who are usually left out in the distribution of national wealth try also to get their own little share by other negative means. This situation continues to produce a recycled problem of corruption which ultimately affects the governmental process and hinders development of the nation or society.

The failure or success of the Nigerian state as a socio-economic formation is highly dependent on the actions of the contending classes in the state and the issue of corruption, accountability and transparency in the Nigerian public service, cannot be isolated from this ugly situation.

The paper is inferring that the relationship between the contending classes in the Nigerian society, especially in the public service to a larger extent has a negative impact on the level of corruption in our public service.

CORRUPTION AND THE NIGERIAN POLITICAL ECONOMY

Brief History of Corruption in Nigeria

Corruption is a global problem and its history is said to be "as old as man himself" but in a more precise statement. Corruption in Nigeria according to Orngu (2006:33) is as old as the beginning of the post-

colonial Nigerian state. This is because corruption is arguably a colonial legacy in Nigeria. The immediate post-independence or post-colonial political leadership that emerged in the post-colonial Nigerian state inherited many vices from the colonialist.

Corruption besieged the early Nigerian nation and bestirred the country's political workings to a very ridiculous extent. Even though the indigenous political elite that emerged out of the debris of the colonial Nigeria were aware of the presence of corruption, they deliberately squinted their eyes in the euphoria of the new political era. The likes of Nnandi Azikiwe, Tafawa Balewa, Obafemi Owolowo, who were the country's political leaders at the time, acknowledged the prevalence of corruption in the country and steamed promises to eradicate the menace, but all eventually amounted to a mere grandstanding which provided a convenient excuse for the first military intervention in Nigeria's political leadership (Gboyega 1996:34).

Corruption prepared the launching pad for the first military coup in Nigeria. After staging the first coup in Nigeria in January 1966, in that coup, major Kaduna Nzeogwu echoed that:

Our enemies are the political profiteers, the swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribes and demand 10 percent, those that seek to keep the country divided permanently so that they can remain in office as ministers of VIPs at least, the tribalist, the nepotists, those that make the country look big for nothing before international circles. Those that have corrupted our society and put Nigerian political calendar back by their words and deeds. (Otiye 1996:124).

Since then, virtually all the succeeding military regimes usually accused the other for being very corrupt and the major reason why it has to be toppled. For example, from Babangida to Abacha's administration leaves much to be desired. Yet their reasons for coming to power was to help salvage the "System" including fighting corruption (Ayua 2000:12).

Thus the present situation of corruption in Nigeria can be traced back to the early independence periods, as well as through successive regimes and administrations. Of important mentioning are the regimes of Babangida and Abacha. They particularly took the image of the country to the gutters and meted out unbearable living conditions to the majority of Nigerians, in the face of dwindling economic fortunes and glorification and exaltation of corruption and its related vices.

Corruption and the Political Economy of Nigeria

It has not been easy or rather possible to control corruption in Nigeria because of the nature of our political economy, which breeds corruption and indiscipline. A variety of forces operating upon officials in conditions of development produces repeated opportunities for corruption. To Richard(1991:33) these include, low and declining civil service salaries in relation to market purchasing power (Inflation), promotion that it is not based on performance, dysfunctional government budgets and delays in the release of budgets funds, delay in salaries and wages payments. Under these circumstances and many others, officials deliberately refuse to act or delayed action in order to coerce some payment out of citizens or firms. Public officials have discretion to allocate scarce resources among the population; such discretion may be exercised only for financial reward. Most of the activity in the public sector is based upon contracts are very lucrative and they involve large sums of money and constitute an easy way of making quick and cheap profits. Secretly negotiated government contracts do constitute the most fertile breeding ground for corruption.

The political economy of modern Nigerian society appears to be avaricious, greedy, egotistical and hypocritical, which obviously explains the venality of the elites as the motive for corrupt practices in their various callings. These elites, with their acquired ideology which is inconsistent with the goals of development have a tendency to emulate the Western lifestyle that is luxurious and exorbitant which ultimately only corrupt practices can help them achieve or sustain. The situation is a pathetic one.

The Structure of the Nigerian Public Service and Corruption Processes

The organized structure of the Nigerian public service is such that, it appears to aid and abuse corruption and corrupt practices. Ojo (2004:31) is of the view that certain factors such as the weak institutions of government, dysfunctional legal system, culture, ethnic factor, extended family factors etc. have come to

put pressure on the public service, thereby encouraging corruption in the sector. To him deep ethnic division and sectional interest have infested the structural composition of the Nigerian public service. This to Ojo, leads to ethnic groups jostling for precious administrative and “strategic” economic position. Once in these positions, all methods, weather legal or illegal are employed to ensure that their “kinsfolk” have what is referred to in Nigeria’s parlance as “Our share of the National Cake”, not minding weather it is fair or weather the imbalance so created is blatantly unreasonable. This explains why every government, weather military or civilian, every ministry, department or extra-ministerial or parastatal, is always dissected to see which ethnic group is in control. The urge therefore to perpetrate corruption in the Nigerian public service is always present. The weak institution of government due to political interference does not help the public service at all. This is because corrupt tendencies are further enhanced when institutions of government are weak and government policies generate economic rents and problems of proper implementation by bureaucrats and civil servants.

Corruption, Accountability and Transparency in a Democratic System

There seems to be a kind of consensus among scholars generally, that with the menace of corruption, lack of accountability, probity and transparency in the conduct of public affairs, democratic sustenance will be a mirage. In a more lucid argument, Ojo (2004:40) asserts that democratic development depends on economic development, and that this is unattainable in a corruption ridden environment. In more recent time’s, another school of thought is of the view that without democracy, sustainable economic development over a long period of time is most unlikely (Ojo, 2004:410).

Thus, for democracy to succeed corruption menace must be done away with, also the culture of accountability, probity and transparency must be entrenched in the Nigerian public system. One reason why democracy is not safe in a corruption-ridden polity, Aboade (2007:23) illuminates further that firstly, a corrupt government can never hold a free and fair election, and where elections are not free and fair, whatever government emerged from such system becomes rightly illegitimate, thereby, laying the foundation for political instability. Secondly, poverty and retarded development are twin babies of corruption. The poverty ratio of Nigeria is an alarming one despite the abundance of human and natural resources, Ojo, (2002:42) is of the view that, this poverty scenario can be traced to bad leadership and corruption. He furthers argues that, democracy is not safe in a country where a large majority of her populace is living in poverty. To him, corruption also other than poverty, do create a sort of social stratification between the rich and the poor, hence making the masses of the people totally alienated from the government and unwilling tools for democratic ideals.

Democracy usually brings a sense of good governance in a society. According to Orngu (2006:4) good governance relates to transparency, which in turn dwells on openness of governance towards the enhancement of accountability for the eviction of corruption and the stimulation of a process of consultation and participation between the various stakeholders over policy formulation and implementation. Deriving from the above, good governance through democracy brings about accountability and transparency, clearly going by these connotations, the Nigerian situation especially in the Fourth Republic under former president Obasanjo on the issue of good governance, accountability and transparency leaves much to be desired.

AN ANALYSIS OF CORRUPTION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN THE OBASANJO’S ADMINISTRATION, 1999-2007

Manifestations of Corruption during the Obasanjo’s Administration. 1999-2007

The manifestations of corruption and its related issues abound in various development and circumstances during the administrative years of Obasanjo in the fourth Republic. According to Odusola (2001:34) it is no longer news that between 1985 and 1999, the Nigerian state was arbitrarily ruled by a succession of corrupt military dictators who dislocated the country internally and marred her image internationally. Before the advent of democracy in 1999, Nigeria had acquired virtually all the features of a failed state, with corruption as the chief reason for that. Olusegun Obasanjo came with a steamed effort to flush the

malady out of the Nigerian social order when he assumed office as the country's elected President. On May 29, 1999, at his swearing in ceremony, Former President, Obasanjo categorically emphasized that:

Corruption, the greatest single bane of our society today will be tackled head-on at all levels, the impact of official corruption is so rampant and has earned Nigeria a very bad image at home and abroad. Besides, it has distorted and retrogressed development.
(Daily Independent, August 29, 2005:P.25).

Thus, the anti-corruption Act containing 71 sections was put in place soon after he took over power to enable him forcefully ejects corruption out of Nigeria. Soon afterwards, the then speaker of the House of Representatives, Salihu Buhari, provided a good opportunity for serious action and test of Obasanjo's anti-corruption stand. Ojo (2006:8) presents the situation that, the then speaker was accused of perjury and forgery. This was followed by his defiance to resign with an emotion-laden mood, as he apologized to Nigerians. The former speaker was arrested and detained in manner that was apparently dramatic, found guilty and sentenced to jail with an option of N2,000 fine. According to Iorhen (2008:9) in a quick twist, Buhari was granted state pardon by Obasanjo in the wake of his determination to fight corruption, this situation was clearly a paradox manifestation.

In another development, according to Adesola (2006:23) two million naira (N2.m) was displayed in the House of Representatives alleged to be bribe from the executive arm of government for the members to effect the impeachment of the erstwhile speaker, Ghali Na'aba. Also, in a related development, the Former Minister of Federal Capital Territory, Malam El-Rufai, alleged that the National Assembly (senate) demanded a bribe of N54 million from him (Anger, 2002:12). Although the issue was "swept under the carpet", it left a question on the integrity of the senate and the administration of Obasanjo in its drive to combat corruption.

According to Orngu (2006:73) Obasanjo's paradoxical approach in his war against corruption can be seen from the perspective of the case against Julius Makanjuola, the Former President's Cousin, who was arrested for the embezzlement of N42 million in the ministry of defense. Makanjuola was later released on bail and was not prosecuted for the crime (The week Vol. 22, No. 14 2005 P. 16). This selective approach was also adopted by the sacked Inspector General of Police Tafa Balogun, who perfecting diabolical art of "scapegotism, publicly disgraced men and officers from the rank and file of the Nigeria police for extortion. Also the police became instruments in the hands of the Nigeria ruling elites (Shaibu and Ogoh, 2015). The anti-extortionist later turned out to be the richest or wealthiest Inspector General in the history of Nigeria obviously through corrupt means to the tune of N13 billion by the time nemesis caught up with him. The eventual sacking of Tafa Balogun through the facility of the EFCC in 2005 rekindled this weak hope in some Nigerians that there is some seriousness in the government action towards corruption. However, according to Junadu (2006:23) the irreconcilability in the Balogun case is that the six-month jail term he bagged appeared to be a "window dressing" arrangement contrived to fulfill conditions of lip service.

In his own view, David West (2003:22) avers that: drawing from the Obasanjo multi-billion naira presidential library project, skeptics of the Obasanjo anti-graft have reasoned that launching such a project by a president while in office is quit compromising to his anti-corruption stance. To David-West (2005:63) the way and manner the former president raised the sum of over N6 billion naira at the launch of the Presidential library project leaves much to be desired. The involvement of virgin Airline, NNPC, NPA etc. speaks volumes against the Obasanjo administrations anti-corruption stance. David West's observation on the contribution of the Nigeria's Port Authority is very apt.

The terrible case of the Nigerian Port Authority (NPA) smells to the high heavens. How can the President reconcile the contradiction that while his government was probing the NPA of an alleged multi-billion (Naira) Fraud, when the NPA donated 1 Million Pound sterling in foreign hard currency for his library project? (The Guardian September 8, 2005:62-63).

Also the case of the National ID card drainpipe by the Obasanjo government is a manifestation of corruption and antithetical to the anti-corruption stance of Obasanjo's administration. Despite several warnings from some members of the National Assembly that the National ID card project inherited from

the past military regime had become a means for stealing public funds, Obasanjo went ahead with the implementation of the project. (Orngu 2006:71). By the year 2000, when a request from the presidency for N18 billion went before the senate, Obasanjo had already released N6 billion to the Internal Affairs Ministry for the project and in 2003, the project had attained a monumental expenditure level of a scandalous N24 billion (The News, July 2004:P21). This was handled by Sagem S.A. of France and it was reported that the permanent secretary in the Internal Affairs Ministry and Christopher Agidi a Former Director in the Department of National Civil Registration, had variously received sums of money in dollars and naira to influence the award of the ID card contract to Segem S.A. of France.

According to Odusola (2005:38) in a rather dramatic manner, Adeniyi Adelagun, the Nigerian business partner of Sagem S.A. stated in his defense before the senate committee that “part of the 214 billion dollars bribe money collected in the National ID card- scam was used in the persecution of the PDP’s “operation capture southwest” spearheaded by late Afolabi into whose foreign account in the United Kingdom the payment of 345 thousand dollars was made (the News, July 5, 2004:22).

Today the essence and usefulness of the National ID card especially at it concerns the Nigerian citizens is not too certain. Its validity is not fully established, especially given that the document lacked the issuer and holder’s signatures. Yet so much public money has been wasted on the project by the Obasanjo administration.

Also, the calamitous activities for the hosting of the 8th All African Games (COJA), held in October 2003 provides some penetrating skepticism and cynical perspectives to the Obasanjo anti-corruption stance. According to Orngu (2006:71) on the whole, the Obasanjo administration lavished N30 billion on the games jamboree exclusive of the sum of about N50 billion spent on the building of an ultra-modern stadium in Abuja specifically for the games, inspite of the fact that there were protests that the hosting of the jamboree was not the priority need of the nation at the time (Orngu 2006:72). The hosting of COJA turned out to be a conduct pipe for the siphoning of public funds through award of contracts with utter disregard to the principle of due process. For example, it was reliably observed by David West (2005:25-28) that , COJA, headed by Amos Adamu, the then Director of Sports Development, awarded a contract for mere mobile toilets to be used at the Games for N200 million, a Lagos-based company bagged a contract of N104.4 million while Teju foam earned N264.8 million to provide mattresses. There were other numerous contracts for which COJA ran up a sum of over N26 billion for the Obasanjo administration.

The above circumstances brilliantly illuminate the degree of squandemania in an administration that was ostensibly poised to fight corruption head-on. This is indeed an irreconcilable contradiction. In another paradoxical manifestation; the case of the works and housing ministry is very apt; Odusola (2005:28-30) evidently provides that:

The Works and Housing Ministry has a total contractual commitment of about N352 billion for federal roads between 1999 and 2003, especially when Chief Tony Anenih was minister. The ministry, however, claimed that funds paid out for all competed works and ongoing projects was N118.42 billion. But it was common knowledge that federal roads across the country were a national disgrace and it did not ever seem an elected government was in place as regards the rehabilitation of roads.

To collaborate the above statement, Former President Obasanjo himself lamented at a function in Ogun State that he was ashamed of the Federal roads at the time. (Tell, October, 2005 P.27) Anenih claimed that funds were released for the construction and rehabilitation of roads, it is either the funds were misappropriated or misapplied, with him at the helm of affairs of the Ministry of Works and Housing. He was also PDP Board of Trustees chairman. This situation cannot be reconciled with Obasanjo anti-corruption stance. This irreconcilability provides a penetrating insight into the capricious anti-corruption campaign of former President Obasanjo administration.

Anti-Corruption Campaign in the Fourth Republic: Problems, Effects and Manifestations

The scandalous level corruption was propagated in the wake of Obasanjo’s anti-corruption war was the reason why Chinua-Achebe, author of the classic novel “Things Fall Apart” refused to accept the 2004

national Honour (CFR) Awards. Achebe (2004:5), giving reasons on why he rejected the Federal Governments offer to award him commander of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Achebe unequivocally wrote:

Nigeria's condition under your watch is too dangerous for silence. I must register my disappointment and protest by declining to accept the honour awarded me in the 2004 honour list. For sometimes now, I have watched events in Nigeria with alarm and dismay I have watched a small clique of regnades, openly boasting its connection in high places determined to turn my homeland into a bankrupt and lawless fiefdom. I am appalled by the brazenness of his clique and the silence, if not connivance of the presidency.

The above sentiment was shared by many Nigerians in the face of the fact that the country, brazenly corrupt and patently bankrupt has been reduced to a theater of endless absurdities during the Obasanjo's administration. According to Ojo (2006:31) corruption was evidence and visible in all spheres of the country's social existence.

During the administration of Obasanjo his aides, ministers and many other top government officials were reputed to be careless about Obasanjo's anti-graft law as they were guilty of sustaining the culture of kickbacks and also perpetuated all manner of sharp practices. This state of affairs attained a noticeable crescendo when on October 31, 2000, a member of the House of Representatives termed Obasanjo's anti-corruption campaign as mucky, nasty and messy, accusing the president of bribing some members of the House and its leadership (The News, October 31, 2000, P.15). Similarly, Bukhar Bello, the then executive secretary of the National Human Rights Commissions said this of the Obasanjo-led government at the 57th anniversary celebration of the International Human Rights Day in Abuja in December, 2005.

The obasanjo administration that prides itself on democratic principles had been caught in a web of human rights abuses, disobedience of court orders, inhuman and degrading treatment, extra-Judicial and summary executions and deficit in good governance (New Age, December 13, 2005).

In another development, the scandalous manner with which Atiku Abubakar, the then Vice President, acquired a house in the United State of America (USA) also rendered the Obasanjo's anti-corruption war pregnant with a lot of paradoxical issues of ethical concern. Orngu (2006: 76-77) has observed that Obasanjo's Vice President, Atiku Abubakar, drew attention of the US security and revenue agencies to himself through the acquisition of his Maryland home in the USA. It is indeed absurd to learn that,

At a time when Former US President, Bill Clinton was seeking a \$1.5 million loan to buy a home in New York in preparation for his exist from the white House in January 2001, after his two terms in office, Abubakar in his first term in office as VP, bought his Palatial Potomac home for 1.8 million pounds sterling's and paid cash. He allegedly claimed to have spend \$2 million to renovate the mansion to his taste. (Tell, October 17, 2005, P.27).

The reaction of the Obasanjo-led anti-corruption to the above scandalous developments all amounted to mere smokescreen. Equally interesting, is the N55 million bribes to national assembly members involving the then Minister of Education Prof. Fabian Osuji and the National University Commission (NUC), Senator Aldolphus Wabara who was then Senate President and who was later forced to resign following his indictment in the bribery scandal. Also, the Education Minister, Prof. Fabian Osuji was removed as a result of the incident (Orngu, 2006:73-75). A catalogue of other bribery allegations was rife and rampant in all circles of the Obasanjo's administration.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can observe that corruption, lack of accountability and transparency has had a great deal of negative impact and effects on our public service or the public sector in general under the Obasanjo's democratic experience from 1999 to 2007. The former president, made a loud noise on his determination to combat corruption and ethical issues, only for his administration to emerged in the heap of pervasive corruption and ethical issues. Even in present times, corruption still persists in Nigeria and it is assuming more forceful and horrendous dimensions. Although, Nigeria now has a leader in the person

of President Goodluck Jonathan, who is more committed in stemming the tide of corruption by matching words with action unlike the case of Obasanjo. It is therefore hoped that positive leadership direction can gradually bring some hope in the quest to greatly reduce if not eliminate corruption from the shores of Nigeria no matter how difficult it may appear.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. **Value Re-orientation:** No campaign against corruption and ethical issues would ever triumph in an environment that is still corruption prone. The Nigerian environment is still corruption endemic and this has been the problem and the reason for failure. A re-orientation of our value system is very important.
- ii. **A Genuine Political will on the part of our Leaders:** Events have shown as we have seen in the Obasanjo administration that it requires a leadership class that is true and committed to fighting the menace of corruption by “leading by example”. A situation where a leader enacts the most stringent laws but ends up being corrupt himself cannot help our cause of stamping out the menace of corruption in our public sector.
- iii. **Change in the nature and character of the Nigerian State:** The nature and character of the state is promotive and generative of corruption. As a dependent neo-colonial capitalist state, the inequitable structures inherent in this kind of relationship leads to increasing the issue of corruption. So, an improvement in the living standard of Nigerians can stem the tide of corruption.
- iv. **Good Governance and Improved Conditions of Service:** Conditions of services should be improved and salaries and wages enhanced. Poverty should be tackled head on and reduced to the barest minimum. The virtues of good government where accountability and transparency reign supreme must be entrenched in our governmental system.
- v. Basic fundamental needs such as food, shelter, clothing, employment etc should be affordable by all. Likewise, marginalization, discrimination and deprivation and neglect should be stamped out in our body politic and replaced by fairness, equity, justice etc. By this, the Nigerian state will elicit the loyalty of all thereby rendering centrifugal loyalties, secondary.
- vi. **Enforcement of Laws on Corruption:** Laws on corruption have not been fairly-enforced in Nigeria except to either witch-hunt or settle certain political scores. We therefore recommend that existing laws on corruption and their penalties should be very sternly enforced without fear or favour.

REFERENCES

Books

- Aboade, S. (2007) *An Anatomy of Corruption in Nigeria*. Ibadan, Printing Press.
- Bharsava, R., (2004) *The Monster Tide in Political Corruption*. Truin Pub. Ltd.
- Elaigwu, J. (2005) “Good Governance for National Development” in Elaigue Ed” Nigeria, Yesterday and Today, for Tomorrow. Essays in Governance and Society. Aha Pub. House Jos. Nigeria.
- Gboyega, A. (1996) *Corruption and Democratization in Nigeria*, Friedrul Elbert Foundation, Ibadan, Agbo Areo Publishers.
- Johnson and el al (1999) *Corruption and Underdevelopment in Africa*: Malthouse Press Ltd.
- Robinson and et al (2005) *A Prognosis of Corruption and Mismanagement in Third World Countries*; Triple 3rd Pait Press. Pub. Ltd.
- Richard, d. (1991) *Corruption, Public Finance and the Unofficial Economy*. Leo Pub. Press.
- Maduagwu, I. (2005) *Corruption and the Stability of the Fourth Republic*, Lagos Perceptions. Communications.
- Olusoga, S. D., (1981) *Management of Corruption*. Lagos: Lantern Books.
- Orngu, C.S. (2006) *Anti-Corruption Campaign In Nigeria: A Paradox*: Aboki Publishers, Makurdi.

Otite, O. (1996) *“On the Sociological Study of Corruption in Nigeria”* in Odekunle Femi (Ed) *Corruption in Development*. Ibadan: University Press.

Shaibu, M. T and Ogoh, A. O. (2015) *The Strategic Features of Colonial Politico-Economic, Changes and Continuities: The Nigerian Experience*. IJHSSE 2(3), PP: 116-125.

Udo, T.U. (2006) *“Analysis of Corruption in Nigeria: Problems and Challenges to Policy Makers in a Changing World*. In Daniel Denga and Okoro James (Ed) *Policy Studies and Administration in a Changing world*. Rapid Education publishers Ltd.

Journals

Ojo, E.O. (2004) *“The Phenomenon of Corruption and the Challenges of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria: A Prognosis*. Nigeria Journal of Political and Administrative Studies Vol. 2, No. 1.

Anger, B. (2002) *“Ethnical Problems in Nigeria’s Democratic Experience: A Critical Analysis in Africa* Journal of Economy and Society: Vol 4. No. 1 and 2, Jan-Dec.

Adesola, R. (2006) *Bureaucratic Corruption in Developing Countries*, Minty Press Publishing.

Ayua, I.A. (2001) *“Overview of Corruption in Nigeria”*. Nigerian Journal of Political and Administrative Studies, Vol. 1. No. 2.

Ifamose, F. (2004) *“Governance in a Perverted Society”* Journal of Historical Society of Nigerian (Vol. 1, No. 2.)

Nnoli, O. (1988) *Path to Nigerian Development* CODESRIA DAKAR.

Nye, J. (1967) *“Corruption and Political Development: A Cost Benefit Analysis”*. America Political Science Review, Vol. 56.

Odusola A. F. (2001) *“Corruption and Governance in Nigeria: Bureaucrats Reflections, Processed*, NCEMA.

Newspapers and Magazines Articles

Achebe Chima (2004) *“On why I rejected the 2004 National Honour Award (CFE)”* in Daily Independent, October, 25, P.5.

David-West, T. (2005) *“Building Leaders for Tomorrow: A Collective Responsibility”* in the Guardian, September 8, P. 1.

Newspapers and Magazines Cited

The Week, Vol. 22 NO. 14, 2005, P.16.

The News, July 5, 2004, P.21.

Tell, October 17, 2005, P.27.

The News October 31, 2000, P.15.

New Age, December 13, 2005 P.2.

Daily Independent, August 29, 2004, P.5.

Daily Trust, October 19, 2005.

The Punch, November 22, 2002.

Documents, Publications and Periodicals

Asian Development Bank Report 1999.

World Bank (2006) *Helping Countries Combat Corruption, the Role of the World Bank Re-examined*.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (1987) *Report of the Political Bureau*.

The Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act 2000.

Economic and Information Handbook.