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## Curbing Corruption in Nigeria: The Imperatives of Good Leadership

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### Abstract

*The work generally examined the past and present government leaderships' efforts at curbing corruption in Nigeria and the imperatives of good leadership. The study, specifically, analyzed the relationship between effectively fighting and curbing corruption and the leadership style in Nigeria. The basic finding is that because corruption in Nigeria is very pervasive at the nation's various leadership levels, the effort to curb it has not been significantly successful. This is because the leaders who are at the forefront of the anti-graft war are grossly embedded in corrupt activities themselves. In the face of this, the work recommends that to effectively fight and control corruption in Nigeria, government leadership at all levels must be honest, upright, sincere and accountable in their management of state*

*affairs. Very importantly, the leaders need to exhibit exemplary attitudes and serve as models for upright and honest public and even private lives. . In fact, Nigeria leaders must be willing and capable to demonstrate personal commitment to the anti-graft war not only in words but, very importantly, in deeds. This is very necessary if the efforts at fighting corruption in Nigeria are to be effective and meaningful.*

### **Introduction**

Since Nigeria's Independence in 1960, corruption has persisted and grown enormously in variety, magnitude and brazenness. The pervasive corruption obtains in both the private and public sectors of the Nigeria society. However, the emphasis here is on public sector corruption which contributes more than 70% of the corruption cases in Nigeria (Waziri, 2010) and as well, seen as the source of the divide between Nigeria's wealth and its poverty (Abiodun, 2012). Corruption in Nigeria manifests in the form of official contract fees being inflated, public funds doled out to political allies and personal friends in the guise of contracts, improper issuance of license to import goods, improper award of contracts, outright embezzlement of public fund, kick backs on public procurements etc.

Even though no country in the world is corrupt free, corruption in the case of Nigeria has become very worrisome because she has consistently been placed among the most corrupt nations in the world. The pervasive and deep rooted nature of corruption in Nigeria is indicated by the fact that in 1996, Transparency International (TI) ranked Nigeria as the 2<sup>nd</sup> most corrupt nation among the 54 nations surveyed (Morre, 1997). In 1998, Nigeria was again ranked the 2<sup>nd</sup> most corrupt nation out of the 85 countries polled by TI (Lipset and Lenz, 2000). In 2001, Nigeria was ranked 90 out of 91 countries pooled. By 2009, the Global Perception Index (CPI) by TI rated Nigeria 130th out of the 180 countries surveyed. For the year, 2010, Nigeria ranked 134th out of 178 countries assessed (Abiodun, 2012). In 2011, the TI, in its report on corruption perception, rated Nigeria as the 143 most corrupt nations out of the 183 countries surveyed (Business Day, 2012). Indeed as Derin (2007) notes, Nigeria has been featuring prominently amongst the most corrupt nations of the world for the past thirty years.

The effects and implications of the full scale corruption in Nigeria's social, political and economic development are myriad. Generally, as much as sixty percent of the wealth of Nigeria is regularly consumed by corruption (Achebe, 1983) while TI specifically reports that over 500 billion dollars has

been removed from the coffers of the Nigerian government through corruption between 1960 and 2009.

As well, corruption in Nigeria constitutes a serious barrier to effective resource mobilization and allocation as it diverts resources away from activities that are vital to poverty eradication, economic and sustainable development (Derin, 2007). As a matter of fact, corruption in Nigeria has resulted to a reduction in the quality and quantity of goods and services available to the public as reflected in poor infrastructures, poor quality of education standards, poor health facilities and high cost of living and rising social insecurity. On the aspect of political development, corruption has often led to the inability of the nation to develop and consolidate its democratic practice as excessive corruption has often led to erosion of government legitimacy, defective leadership input and democratic destabilization through military take over of government and truncation of civilian rule (Abioduum, 2012 and Ugwuanyi, 2011). For instance the military take overs of 1966 and 1983 were partly explained on the basis of corruption (Ogundiya and Baba, 2004 and Emma, 2006). Internationally, the pervasive corruption in Nigeria has tarnished the image of the country in the international circles and has resulted in foreign nationals exercising extreme caution in entering into business transaction with Nigerians thereby weakening the economic sector. Indeed, the marked deterioration in the quality of human development and in the standard of living in Nigeria is traceable to the interminable phenomenon of corruption (Derin, 2007). And the most damaging effect of corruption is that if left unchecked, it grows, intensifies and spreads like cancer to vital centers of government with powerful influences on the public. Already, the negative multiplier effect of corruption in Nigeria has manifested in the mass spread of poverty and the nation's unenviable position in the list of poor and under developed countries of the world.

Following the pervasive nature and effects of corruption in Nigeria, various government leaderships, either military or civilian, since Nigeria's Independence in 1960, have developed and adopted various measures and policies to curb this malaise called corruption. These measures, among others, had included setting up of the following:

- Corrupt Practices Decree in 1975
- Public Complaints Commission in 1975
- The Public Officer Investigation of Assets Decree in 1976
- Code of Conduct Bureau in 1979

- Ethical Revolution in 1981
- War Against Indiscipline in 1984
- Corrupt Practices Decree in 1984
- Mass Mobilization for Social Justice and Economic Recovering (MAMSER) in 1985
- Foreign exchange Decree in 1995
- Money laundering Decree in 1995
- Banks and other Financial Institutions Act in 1991
- National Orientation Agency in 1992
- War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC) in 1994
- Advance Fee Fraud and other Related Offences Decree in 1995.
- Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) in 2000
- Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in 2004
- Advance Fee Fraud, Corrupt, Practices and Money Laundering Act in 2004
- Advance Free Fraud and Other Related Offence Act in 2006
- Fiscal Responsibility Act in 2010
- Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative in 2010
- Money Laundering Prohibition Act in 2011 etc

It is, however, curious to note that in spite of these measures and the budgetary allocations annually to fight corruption; Nigeria is still neck – deep in corruption. Indeed, the situation is of mind boggling complexity with Nigerians still getting more passionate about anti-corruption war as they feel that the country is rich enough for them to have a decent living if not for the mindless looting of the common wealth through corrupt activities.

In the context of the foregoing, this study has, as its basic objectives, to give a general overview of the various leadership measures and efforts at curbing corruption in Nigeria, to highlight the extent to which the various leaderships have been embedded in corruption themselves, to establish the relationship between curbing corruption effectively and the leadership style in Nigeria and to make recommendations towards enhancing the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts in Nigeria.

### **An overview of initiatives at curbing corruption and the extent of corruption at leadership levels in Nigeria**

Since Nigeria's Independence in 1960, Government under various leaderships, have made varying degrees and forms of efforts at tackling the

cankerworm called corruption. Under the leadership of Alhaji Tafawa Balewa in the first Republic, no significant effort was, however, made at curbing corruption. Rather, his regime was even overthrown partly as a result of corruption at its leadership level (Ojiako, 1980, Dudley, 1982). Derin (2007) specifically notes that top government officials in the first Republic had implicit disregard for accountability for public fund. For instance, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was accused of starching public fund in his own bank account in the African Continental Bank (ACB) while Chief Obafemi Awolowo was indicted for sharp financial practices by Coker Commission of Inquiry into the Western Region Government in 1962.

The government of Major General Aguyi Ironsi that took over power from Alhaji Tafawa Balewa did not do much either as it lasted for only 7 months (January, 1966-July, 1966) following a counter coup that brought General Yakubu Gowon to national leadership in July, 1966. Even though General Gowon's leadership was hailed as a regime that engendered peace, it did not achieve much in the direction of curbing corruption. Rather, his government was accused of massive corruption (Okolie, 2007). His assertion that money was not Nigeria's problem but how to spend it is a pointer to his leadership's corrupt tendencies (Abada, 2002). Indeed, his leadership which was terminated in July, 1975 was characterized by unprecedented corruption which even formed part of the reason for the take over of the regime by General Murtala Mohammed.

Under General Murtala's leadership, serious efforts towards curbing corruption were initiated. However, the anti-graft effort as started by Murtala could not take root to be able to make any meaningful impact as the regime was toppled just few months in office. The coup brought General Olusegun Obasanjo to power and whose leadership started its fight against corruption by setting up Federal Asset Investigation panel to probe the corrupt acquisition by high profile political office holders and top bureaucrats. Generally, however, nothing significant was achieved in the fight against corruption under the leadership of General Obasanjo as he could not maintain the spirit and tempo of his predecessor's fight against corruption (Uju, 2002). On the contrary, his leadership was accused of corruption as manifested through the awards of white elephant projects (Dike, 2001). Again, his leadership could not give account of the N2.8 billion oil money that got missing from the nation's foreign reserve between 1976-1979 (Dike, 2001). Besides, his government could not account for the N2 billion jumbo loans from the International Finance Corporation (IFC) in 1978. (Derin, 2007)

By 1979, General Olusegun Obasanjo handed power over to a civilian government under the leadership of Alhaji Shehu Shagari. Under shagari's leadership, Ethical Revolution was set up in 1981 to transform, for better, the country's national values characterized by fraud and corruption. The efforts of Alhaji Shehu Shagari at curbing corruption were not effective as the regime was itself immersed in corruption. Indeed, Welch (1987) described Shehu Shagari's leadership as uncontrollably corrupt. As a matter of fact, the massive corruption at the leadership level formed part of the reasons for the military take over of the regime in 1983 (Emma, 2006; Dike, 1990 and Ogundiya and Baba, 2004)

Under the military leadership of General Mohammedu Buhari who took over government from Alhaji Shehu Shagari, significant efforts were made to control corruption particularly through the programme of War against Indiscipline (WAI) which the government introduced in 1984, the Public Property Decree and the Public Officers (special provision) Decree of 1984 (Abada, 2003.) Indeed, Buhar's leadership commitment towards curbing corruption was expressed at the international conference of 5<sup>th</sup> January, 1984, where he stated that one of the core tasks of his leadership was to clean up the Nigerian society of the cankerworm of pervasive corruption and to uphold the principle of accountability. General Buhari's regime did really take some drastic steps to prosecute corrupt officers who were forced to cough out millions of naira they embezzled (Emma, 2006). This regime did not, however, consolidate its efforts towards corruption as it lasted barely two years following an overthrow of the government in August, 1985 partly for the leadership's high handedness, poor human rights record and general authoritarian tendencies (Derin, 2007).

The military coup of 1985 brought General Ibrahim Babaginda into the national leadership. His leadership's major effort at controlling corruption was through the establishment of Mass Mobilization for Social Justice, Self Reliance and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) in 1985. Even with this initiative, General Ibrahim Babaginda's leadership was observed not to have significantly controlled corruption. Rather, corrupt practices heightened under his leadership (Dike, 2001). Indeed, his regime was seriously criticized for its personification of state power and the institutionalization of corruption (Derin, 2007). For instance, the Pius Okigbo Report of 1995 indicted Babangida for his inability to account for the \$12.4 billion that accrued to Nigeria from the Gulf War Oil Sales (Derin, 2007). Again, there was

enormous electoral fraud and corruption involved in the transition to civil rule programme initiated and organized by General Ibrahim Babaginda that was even eventually annulled. The annulment of the June, 12<sup>th</sup> presidential election resulted to a political impasse that eventually forced General Ibrahim Babaginda to step aside and to hand over the leadership of the nation to an Interim National Government (ING) under Chief Earnest Shonekan. However, within few months in office, General Sani Abacha overthrew the Interim National Government and assumed the leadership of the country. General Sani Abacha's leadership initiated some measures, to curb corruption. Notable among these measures is the War against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC). Unfortunately, Abacha's leadership did not achieve much in this direction of controlling corruption as his government was itself characterized by general mismanagement and corruption of monumental dimension (Emma, 2006). The level of corruption and despotic tendencies by General Sani Abacha's leadership was such that Nigeria became a pariah nation and was ostracized from the comity of nations. Indeed, General Sani Abacha's leadership was so corrupt that after his death, over 600 million dollars and 75 million British pounds were recovered from his family as part of the money he corruptly enriched himself with. The Sani Abacha led government almost completely emptied the national treasury. The United Nation's Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) reported that about \$107 billion was kept in private accounts in Switzerland, the United States and Paris by General Sani Abacha. Indeed, the State of capital flight was unquantifiable (The Guardian, 2005). Generally, under Abacha's leadership, over N400 billion was looted out of the State treasury (Derin, 2007).

Following the death of General Sani Abacha on June, 1998, General Abdulsalami Abubakar took over national leadership. Under his leadership, no significant effort was made towards curbing corruption as signified by the fact that no attempt was, particularly, made to probe his predecessors whose leadership was seen to be obviously corrupt. Indeed, General Abubakar was visibly timid in addressing the issue of corruption as he retained the military officers accused of looting the nation's treasury with General Sani Abacha (Dike, 2003). The leadership of General Abdulsalami Abubakar lasted barely a year as he handed over to a democratically elected civilian government under the leadership of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in May, 29<sup>th</sup> 1999 (Emma, 2006).

On assumption of leadership, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo vowed to wage war on corruption, noting that no society can achieve its full potential if it allows

corruption to become the full blown cancer it has become in Nigeria. Towards this, some concrete efforts at curbing corruption were made. These efforts were reflected, among others, in the establishment of Independent. Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) in 2000 and the establishment of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in 2004. Even with these initiatives, Obasanjo's leadership itself was, bedeviled by corruption of monumental proportion (Dike, 2003). Abada (2003) in this respect too notes that corruption was very much celebrated in Obasanjo's administration with allegations of corruption in high places. Among these corrupt activities include electoral fraud and corruption as was reflected in 2003 and 2007 general elections, bribery for budget approval by the National Assembly, payment of huge sums of money prior to being confirmed as ministerial nominees by the legislators and use of excessive money during election campaigns etc (Derin, 2007). Monumental corrupt allegations also trailed Obasanjo's alleged third term bid. Again, the allegations and counter allegations by president Obasanjo and his Vice, Atiku Abubakar reveal that those who were supposed to be fighting corruption were themselves deeply involved in corrupt practices.

Under the leadership of Alhaji Shehu Yaradua from 2007 to 2009, nothing spectacular happened in respect of war against corruption even though he gave indication that his administration was going to continue with the war against corruption (David, 2010). He was rather accused of not being forceful in his anti-corruption campaign. Following Yaradua's death in 2009, Good Luck Jonathan assumed the leadership of Nigeria. On assumption of office, Jonathan promised not only to continue but to intensify the fight against corruption. Towards this, he retained some of the anti-graft agencies earlier established by Olusegun Obasanjo's regime; notable among them are the ICPC and EFCC.

However, even with the existence of these anti-graft agencies, corruption is still going on unabated particularly at the leadership levels. For instance, many governors, both present and past, within the Fourth Republic are under allegations and charges of corrupt enrichment from public treasury that are in the neighborhoods of tens of billions of naira (Tell, 2012). Specifically, these Governors under trial for alleged corrupt practices and enrichment, among others include the following:



S/N	NAME	STATE
1	Chimaroke, Nnamani	Enugu
2	Gbenga David	Ogun
3	Alao Akala	Oyo
4	Akwe Dorme	Nasarawa
5	Bala Tinubu	Lagos
6	Ikedi Ohakim	Imo
7	Joshua Dariye	Plateau
8	Saminu Turaki	Jigawa
9	Jolly Tanko Nyame	Taraba
10	Orji Uzor Kalu	Abia
11	Peter Odili	Rivers
12	Lucky Iginiedion	Edo

Source Tell, 2012

Other Ex-Governors that are being investigated by EFCC include Wamako Aliyu of Sokoto State, Ibrahim Idris of Kogi State, Timpriye Sylva of Bayelsa state, Boni Haruna of Adamawa state, Michael Botmang of plateau state, Rasheed Ladoja of Oyo state and Ononefe Ibori of Delta state. Other high profile cases of corruption include the ones involving Professor Babalola Borishade and Femi-Fani Kayode, former Aviation minister, over the fraudulent handling of N19.5 billion Aviation International fund, Senator Iyabo Obasanjo Bello and former health minister, Adenike Grange, over misappropriation of ₦300 million meant for the ministry, former Senate president, Mr. Evans Ewerem, for improper contract award, former Senate president, Dr. Chuba Okadigbo for improper contract award up to the tune of N22.9 million, former senate president, Adolphus Wabara, for his involvement in a contract bribery scandal, Professor Fabian Osuji, former minister for Education for bribing the members of the National Assembly to tune of N55 million to approve the inflated budget of his ministry (Derin, 2007). The Week (2008) reported other high profile cases of corruption that involved Sunday Ehinduru, former Inspector General of Police and Mr. Brodericks Boumi, former minister of Police Affairs, for misappropriation of N577 million donated to the police by the Bayelsa state government for the purchase of arms and ammunitions to enable the police tackle the militants in the Niger Delta; former president Olusegun Obasanjo for using his official position to award contract to his own company known as Unistar Hi-Tech system Ltd, Olusegun Agagu, the former governor of Ondo state for misappropriation of N25 billion meant for the Ondo State Oil Producing

Development Commission (OSOPADEC) and Liyel Imoke, the former minister of power for over costing of projects and contracts.

At the local government leadership level, corruption equally is pervasive. Halidu (2012:22) notes this in his observation thus;

The high incidence of councilors trying to impeach their chairmen and the frequent removal and suspension of chairmen by state governments for acts bordering largely on financial recklessness and corruption is a clear pointer to the fact that local governments grapple with the problem of ensuring transparency and accountability in their operations.

Amujiri (2012) and Bello (2012) note too that there is institutionalized corruption among the key functionaries of the local government. The key functionaries include the Chairman, the Head of personal, the Treasurer, the Secretary to the local government and the Heads of Departments. (HODs)

Unfortunately, the anti-graft agencies have not been able to successfully prosecute high profile cases except for very few ones such as the conviction of former national vice chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Chief Olabode George, former Governor of Edo State, Chief Lucky Igbinedion, former Inspector General of Police, Mr. Tafa Balogun and former Governor of Bayelsa State, Chief Dimpreye Alamesiya. Indeed, these anti-graft agencies like the EFCC have been observed to be largely ineffectual (Nigerian Newsworld, 2012). This is attributable to the fact that EFCC appear to target, for investigation and prosecution, mainly individuals who are out of favour with the government leadership of the day while those that are in favour continued their corrupt-activities with impunity (Nigerian Newsworld, 2012). Generally, it appears that the anti-corruption laws in Nigeria are just like cobwebs that only holds or catches small and weak creatures and gets easily pushed aside by heavy and strong animals.

### **The relationship between leadership style and the difficulty in curbing corruption in Nigeria**

Before attempting to consider the relationship between the difficulty experienced so far in curbing corruption and the leadership style in Nigeria, it is necessary that we briefly conceptualize the terms corruption and leadership.

**Corruption:** Different authors and scholars have conceptualized corruption variously. In the view of Sen (1999), corruption is a perversion or a change from good to bad and essentially involves the violation of established rules for personal gain and profit. In the view of Idike (2003), it is a behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of public role because of private gain or expectation of private gain. In essence, corruption entails an abuse of official position for private gain. An application of the above definitions of corruption in Nigerian clearly reveals that corruption has become an acceptable way of life and has found itself into every sphere of the national existence. This is because the indicators of corruption like embezzlement, bribery, misappropriation, conversion of public funds to personal purse, manipulation of procurement processes, falsification of official financial records, award of contracts by public office holders to cronies and personally held companies and rigging of elections are all easily observable in virtually all public offices and public affairs in Nigeria.

The effects of corruption on economic and socio political development of any nation are multifaceted. For instance, corruption hinders development as it results in misdirection of resources or investment to less socially desirable ventures. In this case, investment may be channeled into sectors not for economic benefits because the major consideration may be kick backs it would attract or for some other selfish considerations. By extension, corruption results to waste and misplaced priority in spending public fund. Corruption equally wastes skills and discourages hard work, honesty, sincerity and valuable economic activities (Lipset and Lenz, 2000). Catan and Chaffin (2003) in this direction note that corruption is the single greatest obstacle to national economic and social development as it decreases public revenue and increases public spending. Dike (2001:15) gave a kind of encompassing description of the effect of corruption in his observation thus:

Corruption diverts scare resources into private pockets, literally undermines effective governance, endangers democracy and erodes the social and moral fabric of a nation.

**Leadership:** According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (6th Edition), leadership refers to the state or position of being a leader. We shall, therefore, take leadership here to be synonymous with holding upper level positions in formal political or governmental structures. Thus, the president of the Country, the Governors of the states, the chairmen of the Local

Governments, the Heads of Ministries, Departments and Agencies are all in leadership positions by virtue of holding high offices. In essence, leadership in this work refers to the occupation of important position in the formal polity or government administration.

Most discussions on leadership have focused essentially on identifying and discussing what a leader should be, who a leader should be, the role of a leader in positively shaping and influencing the course of events in the society, the role of a leader in bringing about economic and socio-political development of the state and in developing policies and programmes and taking actions to solve given societal problems as they may exist at given points in time. In essence, writers on leadership has laid much emphasis on identifying and discussing some ideal characteristics or attitudes that are needed in people in leadership positions that would ensure good governance and effective effort at nation building and development. Basic among the attributes that have been identified as necessary for good leadership include the facts that;

- A leader must lead through personal example
- A leader must encourage the rule of law
- A leader must ensure institutional checks and balances (Gardner, 1978).

Dike (2003) in his categorization of leadership identified two types of leadership. These, he called the instrumental leadership and the societal leadership. He asserts that the main concern of the instrumental leadership is how it can use its office to achieve personal goals. A leader in this category uses his position more to promote private and selfish interests. This entails that national objectives are secondary to such leadership as actions, policies or programmes are considered and adopted more on the basis of the political or economic advantages they will offer to such leaders. This kind of leadership, according to him, has been obtainable in Nigeria since her independence in 1960.

The societal leader, on the other hand, is a public servant first and only secondarily a private person. Such a societal leader subordinates private and narrow goals to broader national objectives. Indeed, for the societal leader, power and influence are important only if they can be used to solve societal problems. This kind of leadership, he notes, is a sine qua non for good

governance and corrupt free society. Unfortunately, Nigeria has clearly lacked this type of leadership since her independence. Naoh and Emezi (1997) in their comment in regard to the nature of leadership in Nigeria note too that Nigeria has always had the misfortune of falling into the hands of rapacious power megalomaniacs who, owing to their selfishness, display corrupt tendencies in office. Derin (2007) equally notes that Nigerian leadership is inextricably linked with corrupt tendencies in the management of state affairs and that a recurring issue in Nigeria's political formation since the post-colonial period is the monopolization of the political field by corrupt and self-conceited leaders.

### **Good leadership and effective curbing of corruption in Nigeria**

Even though there are arguments that ordinary Nigerian citizens have a role to play in curbing corruption, our argument in this work is that the effectiveness of any fight against corruption can be meaningfully and substantially enhanced where there is good and exemplary leadership with its corollary good governance. In essence, good leadership is very imperative to successfully tackle the issue of corruption or even any other social, political or economic problem for that matter.

Fundamentally, every society needs good leadership to move forward and progress. In essence, for the growth and development of any nation to be realized, it must have the best in its leadership positions as such can only bring about good governance. Indeed, the quality and style of leadership plays key role in the extent to which government of any nation can solve societal problems. Curbing corruption in Nigeria has been very difficult because the dominant leadership style in Nigeria, either at national, state or local government levels, has been the instrumental or selfish type that is mainly concerned about their well being and that of their cronies to the neglect of the welfare of the ordinary citizens and national growth. In fact it has been such selfish type that dwells much on looting of the government treasury and misappropriation of public fund.

Dike (2002) describes the corruption that takes place at the highest levels of political authority structures as political corruption and referred to it as corruption of greed. It is corruption of greed indeed, as it is essentially the quest for flamboyant affluence and conspicuous consumption that are the major driving forces in this kind of corruption. As Derin (2007) notes, the perpetration of political corruption is basically a result of the fact that acquiring political leadership position is seen by Nigerians as a means to

influence and affluence. Leaders in Nigeria enjoy very high estacodes and allowances and roam about in convoys of dozens of state-of-the-art cars and generally revel in ostentation and abundance.

Very unfortunately, corruption among Nigerian leaders creates or induces corrupt tendencies in the minds of the ordinary citizens. As well, the profligacy of Nigerian leaders may deter the ordinary citizens from developing the sympathy and patriotism to support or champion the efforts of the leadership towards curbing corruption. The common citizens in the circumstance of the pervasive corruption at the leadership levels rather seek every means, legal or illegal, to make his own wealth or in the popular Nigeria slogan ‘have his share of the national cake’.

Earlier in this work, we indicated that all the various leaderships in Nigeria, since independence, made efforts at curbing corruption but very unfortunately corruption had continued to soar by the day. This is attributable to the fact that those in leadership positions and who initiate the efforts at curbing corruption are immersed in corruption themselves, (Abonyi, 2005) Virtually all the past leaders in Nigeria have vacated office much richer than they were before they went into leadership positions (Dike, 2001). And Nigerians, from this, have learnt over the years that their leaders lack a medicum of integrity, honesty and transparency. This perception makes the fight against corruption complex and difficult. Indeed, corrupt leadership cannot genuinely and effectively, fight corruption. In essence, there are errors in the character of Nigerian leadership that has made the fight against corruption ineffective. As Dike (2001) notes, leaders in Nigeria are of the instrumental type and who lack the desired quality of leading by personal examples that is required for effective curbing of corruption.

Further to the above is that Nigerians as led by corrupt leadership have little chance of becoming virtuous citizens. This is because bad leaders hardly produce good, law abiding and patriotic citizens or followers as citizens are more often than not, motivated to do good and to be patriotic through the good exemplary lives of honesty and integrity of their leaders. The experience in Nigeria since its existence as a sovereign nation is top down direction of corruption. And the scale, manner and impunity of the ordinary citizens, corruption is directly linked to the scale, manner and impunity of the leadership corruption.

Normally, leaders should serve as role models and, in which case, their life styles, values and principles need to be such that they are worthy of

emulation by the citizens (Emma, 2008). Indeed, exemplary leadership is required in getting the voluntary co-operation and loyalty of the citizens towards required action by the government. In essence, in solving any given societal problem, leaders are expected to mobilize support and create motivation among the citizens to support policies and actions adopted to solve them. This motivation can easily and successfully be gotten through exemplary deeds of the leaders. Indeed, when leaders in Nigeria, serve as role models, they will have the chances of successfully evoking the highest level of commitment from the citizens towards the fight against corruption. As Achebe (1983:26) observes;

The basic problem of Nigeria is the unwillingness or inability of its Leaders to rise to the responsibility and the challenge of personal examples which are the hall marks of true leadership

He contents strongly that one outstanding exemplary selfless act by a leader at the top such as unambiguously refused to be corrupt or tolerate corruption at the fountain of leadership will radiate powerful sensation among the citizens towards eschewing corruption. If such exemplary acts become a regular occurrence or culture within the leadership circles at the nation's various social political structures, then the common citizens may not need sermons on patriotism nor a special agency or commission to preach against corruption. Certainly, if the leadership is seen to allow the common wealth to be used for general public welfare and benefit; it will reduce the motivation for corruption.

One bad thing about the corruption among the leaders is that their immunity from censure makes the leaders the envy of the ordinary citizens who, unfortunately again, turn them into role models and imitate their acts of corruption. (Achebe, 1983) It is the explosion of such corrupt actions among our leaders and the tendency for the ordinary citizens to copy such that brings the whole nation under a climate of corruption and has, as well, made it difficult for corruption to be controlled or curbed (Achebe, 1983).

Very unfortunately, there is a vicious relationship between bad leadership and corruption. This is because bad leadership breeds corruption and corruption breeds bad leadership. In essence, bad leadership causes and is, as well, a consequence of corruption. For instance, in a situation of bad leadership, there are always cases of electoral corruption which enhances the possibility of bad leadership being re-elected or elected. This bad leadership,

in subsequent elections, supports and perpetrates electoral fraud or corruption that enhances the possibility of electing bad leaders and the circle continues. It has been observed that in Nigeria, and following electoral corruption, victory in an election is no more linked to the ability to lead well. Neither is re-election of political leaders linked to their previous performance (Ugwuanyi, 2011). Indeed, political leadership, particularly of the ruling political party in Nigeria, through corrupt manipulation of the state agencies like the electoral commission, the police and the judiciary, has ensured that candidates of their choice, even if unacceptable by the electorates, win in an election. One can imagine the type of leadership that such manipulated electoral process can produce. In fact, it may be mere illusion for somebody to believe that the 2015 general elections and subsequent ones will produce any credible political leadership in the context of the pervasive electoral corruption.

Summarily, corruption in Nigeria appears intractable in the context of bad or poor leadership lacking in exemplary life styles. What Nigeria needs to effectively fight corruption is leadership that would be prepared to lead by good personal examples, that is willing to identify and apply good societal values to leadership and governance, that is willing and able to abhor materialism and greed, that is willing to submit its desires and actions to restraints of orderly conduct and rule of law in recognition of the rights of the citizens to enjoy peace, equity and justice. Indeed, the fight against corruption cannot be effectively initiated or championed by leaders whose moral turpitude leaves much to be desired and cannot easily earn public confidence.

### **Recommendations**

Having identified the pervasive corruption at the leadership levels as the clog in the wheel of the efforts to curb corruption in Nigeria, the study makes the following recommendations:

One, there is the need for integrity and honesty among Nigerian leaders as such qualities would enhance or engender responsible and patriotic followership. Nigerian leaders need to live by the highest standards of honesty and integrity. If this becomes the case, the citizen will become inclined to developing patriotic spirits and, consequently, feel obliged to adhere to leadership calls to avoid corrupt practices.

Two, leaders in Nigeria should show exemplary life style and follow it up with radical programmes of social and political reorganization and consistent



agenda of reform. It is pretty difficult for corrupt leaders to genuinely initiate policies and actually fight corruption. Indeed, to effectively fight corruption, the creed for leaders in Nigeria should be do as I do and not just as I say.

Three, succeeding leaderships should have the will to scrutinize and investigate the activities of their predecessors and to prosecute them conclusively if found to have been involved in corrupt activities. Effective and serious effort at fighting corruption in Nigeria should start by effective prosecution of corrupt past leaders. This is necessary because it appears that it is the unwillingness and inability of succeeding regimes to probe the corrupt activities of their predecessors that make it difficult for the citizens to see government leadership efforts to fight corruption in Nigeria as genuine.

Moreover, there is the need for the leadership of any government to enthrone and ensure the observance of the principle of checks and balances. Checks and balances is a corollary to the theory of separation of powers because it emphasizes one arm of government being a watch dog over the other arm, each having been assigned its specific function according to the principles of separation of power. Indeed, the existence of institutional checks and balances moderates the use of power associated with leadership position. This is necessary because as Lord Acton notes, power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Furthermore, political leaders in Nigeria need to be rewarded in fair comparison with the remuneration of the ordinary civil servants. The substantial gap in earnings predisposes the ordinary civil servants to corrupt practices like asking for and accepting bribes and kickbacks in order to “make up”. Presently in Nigeria, a national legislator takes an average of N186 million per annum (Tell, 2011). This amount, is indeed, very high in a country where the minimum monthly salary for workers has just been grudgingly raised to N18000.

Again, there is the need for the leadership itself to adhere to the principles of the rule of law which describes the idea that the law of the state is supreme and should not offer any special protection to any citizen either at the followership or leadership level. Here, the issue of immunity clause as entrenched in section 308 of the 1999 constitution may need not to apply if the anti-graft war is to be effective in Nigeria.

In addition, government leadership need to establish special courts for trying corruption cases as a means of speeding up the trial of cases and reducing the

effect of massive corruption in the judiciary. Such courts with special rules will fast track the trial of corruption cases in a manner that both low and high profile cases will not last more than a year before it is determined.

Finally, Nigeria needs national leadership rooted in constitutionalism and proper democratic practice and that is willing to develop strong institutions in preference to strong rulers.

### **Conclusion**

From the foregoing discussion on the issue of curbing corruption in Nigeria and the imperatives of good leadership, we conclude that corruption is a critical problem for good governance in Nigeria as it reflects a crisis in the functioning of the public sector and as such should be a priority for government leadership to control. But as long as Nigeria does not have the best at its leadership positions, and as long as leaders are not willing to adhere to the ethical demands of their leadership positions, the Nation's effort at curbing corruption may, at best, remain an illusion. Indeed, effective fight against corruption in Nigeria requires a good and exemplary leadership with a strong will to fight corruption and with such high level of ethical and moral standards to be able to motivate and influence the citizens to voluntarily follow in the fight against corruption. In essence, the inability of the Nation to curb corruption underscores the poverty of good leadership in Nigeria. The effective way to curb corruption is, therefore, for the leadership to eschew corruption itself. In this way, it will have the stronger justification and moral right to effectively fight corruption down to the grassroots.

Indeed, effective fight against corruption in Nigeria requires leaderships with apparent display of commitment, personal sacrifice, exemplary lifestyle and a personal show of integrity and honesty. The efforts of such leaderships at fighting corruption should be beyond ordinary formulation and making of laws, policies or pronouncements, and extend to visible and concrete show of exemplary lives of , integrity and transparency. It is in fact, in the hope and possibility of such leaderships emerging that Nigeria should have reason to remain optimistic about the future of Nigeria with particular reference to effectively controlling or curbing corruption.

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