

Corruption and its Implication on Indigenous Development for Local Governments in Nigeria

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Abstract

Corruption has created severe consequences for indigenous development in Nigeria. Some of which include terrorism, banditry, genocide and food insecurity. It perpetuates social, economic, and political inequality by exacerbating squalor and hindering overall human development. The diversion of public funds away from sectors that benefit the indigenous poor towards sectors where kickbacks can be obtained, distorts public policies and prioritizes the interests of corrupt officials over the welfare of the grassroot people and at the expense of development. This not only hampers the effectiveness and efficiency of government performance but also jeopardizes any chance of Nigeria experiencing indigenous development. Thus, owing to the destructive capacity of corruption particularly for indigenous development, the objective of this paper is to examine corruption and its implications on indigenous development. Qualitative technique was adopted and the findings from this paper revealed that corruption desecrates the rule of law, distorts the decision-making processes and undermines the credibility and legitimacy of the government. Therefore, the acceptance and normalization of corruption creates an environment where politics is seen as a means for personal gain instead of indigenous development, hence leading to social conflict and ethnic violence as different groups vie for state power and the distribution of resources.

Keywords: *Corruption, Indigenous Development, Local Government, Rural Poverty, Social Injustice*

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Background to the Study

The whole point of government at the grassroots encapsulates development at the indigenous level. In essence, local government as an agent of government signifies a public institution that provides a conducive environment for every form of indigenous development. Some of which includes local collective political participation, raising, regulating and monitoring of community resources for the general good of the jurisdiction. On this same premise, local government by conception and design acknowledges that local government provides the flexibility needed for proper integration and for the modification of programme in response to changing local conditions. Community involvement which is essential to a sustained development process is greatly facilitated by local rather than centralized control. One particular advantage is that the problems of the community, perceived by its residents and those imputed by local officials tend to be more easily reconciled (Olojede,2022). However, Nigeria is a country of paradoxes, tremendously blessed with a wide variety of abundant natural resources yet poor. Nigeria has an array of mineral wealth which are also some of the world's scarce precious gems ranging from gold, lead, zinc, lime stone, oil/gas, marble, gemstone, amethyst, aqua marine, ruby, sapphire, soda ash-coal, clay, glass sand, gypsum, iron-ore, kaolin, uranium, manganese, phosphate, barite, dolomite, feldspar, talc, bitumen, coal, salt, diatomite etc. Paradoxically, the citizens are poor in the midst of abundance This has consequently created incidence of extreme paradoxes wherein the nation is rich yet the people still suffer widespread and endemic poverty and underdevelopment (Olojede,2021). Subsequently, this miserable event signifies entrenched corruption wherein it has resulted in the decadence of the state and destroyed every hope for development.

Therefore, corruption in this context is the misappropriation of funds which is meant to provide socio-economic amenities and infrastructural facilities that facilitates indigenous development (Ackay and Mauro ,2019) and so corruption causes public funds to be diverted from human development projects to capital-intensive projects, resulting in a lack of basic healthcare, transportation, agriculture and educational facilities at the grassroots. Thus, local governments play a crucial role in driving development at the grassroots level and this is because they are strategically positioned to bring about fundamental and sustainable changes to the indigenous level. Hence, indigenous development encompasses aspects such as social justice, equality in opportunities and local democratization. It is essentially about developmental actions that focuses on human, communal and consequently national development. This implies that achieving indigenous development involves providing essential social and infrastructural facilities that aid poverty reduction, job creation, human capital development, improved healthcare, and access to electricity, and sustainable investment in agriculture. This reveals that grassroots development is a multidimensional process that involves major changes in indigenous social structures, attitudes, and institutions, as well as the reduction of rural and urban poverty (Edogbanya 2021).

Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to examine corruption and its implications on indigenous development for local governments in Nigeria while the specific objectives are to:

1. Identify the causes of corruption in the local governments
2. Evaluate the challenges of local governments that affects indigenous development
3. Proffer solutions to the challenges of corruption at the grassroots level in Nigeria

Concept of Corruption

Corruption is the behavior which deviates from the formal duty of a public role because of private needs which violates constitutional and ethical rules. Hence, corruption is an improbity or decay in the decision-making process in which a decision maker consents to deviate or demands deviation from his criterion which should rule his or her decision making in exchange for a reward or for the promise or expectation of a reward. This implies that corruption is the abuse or complicity in the abuse of private or public power. This entails that corruption takes place in private and public sectors. It holds individuals and institutions that are involved in the abuse of power, office and authority vicariously responsible (Ibeogu and Ogbu,2019). From the foregoing, corruption can be seen as the abuse of public office for personal benefits through patronage and nepotism, the theft of state assets or the diversion of public funds for private ends. Thus, corruption has been described as including any form of government authority that is sold, any public authority that is embezzled, any special access that is exploited, the inflation of government contracts in return for kickback, fraud and falsification of account in the public service. In addition to bribe solicitation and bribe taking, self-dealing, insider trading, selective law enforcement and the passage of special interest legislation for private gain (Egonmwan,2020).

This lends credence to the fact that corruption includes fraud and other related offences. Offences punishable include: willful giving and receipt of bribes and gratification to influence a public duty, fraudulent acquisition and receipt of properties, deliberate frustration of investigation by the anti-corruption commission (ICPC),making false returns, making of false or misleading statements to the anti-corruption commission, attempts, conspiracies and abetment of offences under the act. This suggests that corruption is an impairment of integrity, virtue or moral principle especially the impairment of a public official's duties by bribery or the act of doing something with an intent to give some advantage inconsistent with official duty and the rights of others; or the official use of station or office to procure some benefit either personally or for someone else contrary to the rights of others (Nnamdi, 2015).This reveals that corruption are illegal or unethical use of governmental authority as a result of consideration of personal or political gain (Agara, 2006).Basically, corruption refers to those improper actions and transactions aimed at changing the normal cause of events, judgement and positions of trust (Ishaya,2018).

Concept of Local Government

Universally, local government has become an important tier of government. The establishment or creation of local governments in many countries is anchored on the philosophy of bringing government close to the people at the grassroots. In addition, it is a critical and potential instrument for improving the standard of living of the citizens as well as for facilitating infrastructural development in the local communities. This therefore suggests that local government is the breaking down of the country into smaller units or localities for the purpose of administration in which the inhabitants of the different units or localities concerned play a direct and full role through their elected representatives who exercise power and undertake functions under the general authority of the national or state government (Olojede, 2022). Therefore, local government involves a philosophical commitment to democratic participation in the political and administrative processes at the grassroot levels and so local government is a form of public administration and a political process in a democratic political system. In this regard, local government subsists as the lowest level of administration in a democratically governed state wherein it is seen as a political and administrative component of government lower than the state or central government, established by law to exercise political and administrative power through a representative council within a defined geographical area. Hence local representative government is a practice that span and links politics and administration within the local government structures. This implies that local government is a subdivision of a state or derivation of a nation state established by law to provide public services and regulate public affairs within its political jurisdiction. In the same vein, local government is a unit of government established for the maintenance of law and order based on a range of social amenities and to encourage cooperation and participation of people at the grassroots to improve their living conditions (Taleat,2020).

Furthermore, (Eneanya,2009) sees local government as in which popular participation both in the choice of decision makers and in the decision-making process is conducted by local bodies while recognizing the supremacy of the central government. Fundamentally, local government has been seen as the lowest unit of administration to whose laws and regulations ,the communities who live in a defined geographical area and with common social and political ties are subject (Ugwu,2000) and so local government has also been seen as a system in which local communities and towns are organized to maintain law and order, provide some limited range of social services in cooperation with the inhabitants in joint endeavors towards the improvement of their conditions of living .From the above definitions, we can discern that local government is a political subdivision of a nation or state and it exists within a geographical and political territory which has well defined borders or boundaries. It is also a government just like any other government and it has the authority to levy and collect certain local taxes from citizens living within its territory (Okwueze,2010).

Reasons for Establishing Local Governments in Nigeria

According to Eneanya (2009) below are the reasons for establishing local governments in Nigeria

- a. It provides the people with the platform to conduct their own affairs in line with indigenous needs and customs
- b. It provides a base for mobilizing the grassroots people for community development
- c. Local government serves as an edge against over concentration of power at the centre which often leads to tyranny
- d. It helps to promote indigenous democracy
- e. It provides a source of supply for governance at the national and state level
- f. It serves as a medium of communication with the local people and the state or central government

Causes of corruption in the local governments

For Onah and Oguonu (2010; Aluko,2006) in the theatrics of local governance in Nigeria, there are multifarious factors that causes corruption in the local government. Some of which are

1. Politics of Clientelism and Prebendalism: The prevalent phenomenon of Nigerian politics that is hinged on Clientelism and Prebendalism is a big cause of corruption in the management of public affairs especially in the local government. While Clientelism espouses public affairs management based on patron-client relationships, underscored by ethnicism and other cleavages as religious identities, cliquism and other primordial elements, Prebendalism connotes the philosophical view of personalization of public office for advancement of personal interest rather than the collective advantages of the grass root and so, in the operationalization of these two phenomenon in Nigeria, many Nigerian office holders in the local government allow their personal idiosyncrasies and self-aggrandizement to predominate over public interest.
2. Poverty: A preponderant number of Nigerian citizens are wallowing in excruciating poverty and this poverty syndrome in combination with the prevailing extended family system, unemployment, poor conditions of service and unreasonable pressure on public servants by the people coupled with public unaccountability undue processes, poor governance are all contributory factors that enable corruption in the local government
3. The Nigerian Culture: Many Nigerians are imbued with obsessive lust for excessive materialism and political positions and so this cultural instinct to keep acquiring for mere ostentatious living has facilitated corruption in the local government. All campaigns for avoidance of corruption leading to public resource mismanagement at the indigenous level has significantly not produced the required results in Nigeria due to the squandermania cultural tendencies in the social fabric
4. Existence of Poor Judicial System: The Nigerian legal and political scene is enveloped in poor and very slow cycle of judicial services. This feature of the Nigerian legal system has demonstrated a social malaise that has made the implementation of good governance in the local governments very difficult in Nigeria. The implications of this is that it has encouraged undue processes, pervasive corruption and maladministration in the local government

5. **Distorted Social values:** It is the general belief system among the people at the local government level that an average worker in the local government council makes money. Thus, when people are recruited into the local government service, their friends or relatives expect them to become rich. For instance, immediately a young officer is recruited into the local government, his godfather would begin to lobby the management staff to post him at the earliest opportunity, to a schedule where embezzlement or bribe taking opportunities abound. It is no surprise that when such recruits are deployed to certain locations to collect revenue, all they can think of is how to embezzle money. This trend usually sends wrong signals to members of the community who believe that the local arm of the public service is the best place to make quick money

Challenges of Local Governments that affects Indigenous Development

Local government administration in Nigeria for Gbervbie (2017; Eneanya,2009; Ajisegiri,2011) is plagued with a number of problems that has made them not to achieve indigenous development goals some of which include

1. **The problem of revenue collection:** At the local government level is derived from the general problem of apathy on the part of members of the public as well as ineffective governmental framework necessary for the enforcement of policies for indigenous development. In addition, revenues collected are never spent on projects considered to be beneficial to the grassroot people. This has brought about indigenous underdevelopment.
2. **Lack of skilled manpower and inefficient service delivery by local government:** Many local governments in Nigeria are today manned by persons who do not possess the requisite leadership and managerial skills to the people. The constitution makes provision that the qualification for election into the offices of the chairman and the councilor shall be the same as that of the election into the house of assembly of a state. Section 106 of the constitution puts the minimum educational qualification of election into the house of assembly of a state as school certificate. This entails that the average political office holder in the local government is not expected to be a technocrat or one versed in any discipline. The above scenario has made the local government councils dumping ground for illiterates or a starting point for political toddlers. Thus, the business of local governance in ensuring indigenous development is such that able hands are needed to deal with the demands of development. Thus, local government being a democratic unit requires the best of hands to accomplish indigenous development and by extension good governance. Therefore, a lack in skilled workforce have been attributed to the inability of local government to deliver their services efficiently Indigenous development in any area requires competent employees. Therefore, where there is a lack of competent workforce, service delivery is bound to be affected negatively. This has contributed in no small way in hindering development at the grassroot level.
3. **Poor Management skills:** There is an acute shortage of the right caliber of personnel for local governments. Local governments need competent, well-

trained and experienced administrative, financial, technical, and specialist staff to provide an efficient and effective indigenous service to the grassroots. Unfortunately, many local government councils in Nigeria lack the managerial capability to formulate and implement policies for efficient and effective service delivery as far as indigenous development is concerned. Therefore, the inability of local governments to provide needed services for improved standard of living of the grass root people can be attributed to poor management skills and strategies at the local level

4. **Weak Monitoring Mechanism:** Many local governments in Nigeria particularly the rural based LCDAs have weak taxing systems. Some even lack the necessary legal backing for dealing with defaulters. For most local government councils, there is the absence of enabling bye laws on taxation. Where any exists, there are no effective enforcement mechanisms to deter defaulters in future. In addition, projects are poorly monitored, which results in poor outputs, thereby hindering indigenous development at the grass root level in Nigeria.
5. **Establishment of State- Local Government Joint Account:** Establishment of state-local government joint account as stipulated by section 162 (6) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is a major setback on grass root development in Nigeria. The outcome of section 162 (6) of the constitution has resulted in the subjugation of the local government councils to the state governments, thus giving rise to face offs and legal tussles between chairmen of some local government councils and their governors. The negative aspect of it is that funds that would have gone into indigenous development ventures are channeled into legal fees and private pockets thereby hindering development at the grassroot level in Nigeria.
6. **Poverty:** Poverty is one of the most crippling menace facing Nigeria as an entire state which can be attributed to mal administration, inflation, terrorism human capital underdevelopment, genocide and high debt burden amongst others and so some local governments do not have enough funds to embark on developmental projects at the grassroots and this is because of their inability to raise funds internally.
7. **Gradual erosion of Power and Autonomy:** The legal problems created by the 1999 constitution have made it impossible for the local government to assume its rightful role as the third tier of government. The constitution confers powers that relegate the local governments to both the state and federal governments. Therefore, there is no separation of powers as expected in the presidential system of government. State governments have taken over many indigenous services peculiar to the grassroot people. Hence, government councils have no major roles to play. Sometimes, the state authorities interfere with the affairs of local governments by usurping their allocations from the federation account and making a mess of their financial autonomy

Theoretical Framework

This study employed the systemic corruption theory advocated by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the 1940s otherwise known as endemic corruption and this theory argued

that corruption is an inevitable part of a state's economic, social and political system particularly in underdeveloped societies and where most people have no alternatives to dealing with corrupt officials, the institutions and processes become engulfed in corruption thus stifling and sabotaging every form of indigenous development and for the most part, this theory holds true in emerging democracies like Democratic Republic of the Congo, Federal Republic of Nigeria, Ghana, Angola, Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia, Venezuela and Nicaragua (Egonmwan,2020) and so systemic corruption has its roots in the capitalist economic formation. Thus, capitalism as a socio-economic and political state of affairs is characterized by excessive individualism, narcissism, obsessive selfishness and inordinate quest for material possession at all costs through undue profiteering, enrichment and unregulated political competition. Hence, the implication of this capitalist system of socio-economic formation is the balkanization of the Nigerian society into various social classes creating the haves and the have nots. Therefore, this reveals that the class formations of the capitalist system translated into the elites and the propertied class has not only taken over the reins of power but determine the development and underdevelopment of states and local governments under the shadows of massive corruption. Sadly, because of the state hijack by charlatans and people of questionable character by the Nigerian ruling class, the Nigerian ruling class has infiltrated the character of the Nigerian state and destabilized the political and economic system such that instead of the system being based on economic production and development, it is hinged on acute primitive accumulation and exploitation using the instrumentalities of the state apparatus at the detriment of grass root development (Onah and Oguonu,2010).

Hence, the theory explains why indigenous development is almost impossible despite the prospects of Nigeria in terms of human, capital and natural resources. This is so because even though Nigeria has the capacity of achieving development, it is unable to because corruption has become institutionalized as a work culture and in social life which destroys and truncates the very essence of achieving indigenous development. It also gives room for mediocrity and impunity particularly in leadership positions. All of which are all antithetical to indigenous development.

Methodology

Documentary method was adopted for this study. Hence, data was sourced from local, national and international academic publications. These consisted of relevant text books and academic journals. The data gathered from the aforementioned method was analyzed using qualitative descriptive technique.

Corruption and its Implications on Indigenous Development for Local Governments in Nigeria

Corruption more than anything else has aggravated the complexity of indigenous underdevelopment in Nigeria. It is responsible in large scale for the long precedence of rural poverty, infrastructural decay, genocide and banditry that has militated against grassroot development in Nigeria in the last few decades. Corruption is principally a governance issue, a failure of institutions and a lack of capacity to manage the society by

means of a framework of social, judicial, political and economic checks and balances. In fact, corruption in local government is becoming a public malignancy, a social evil and a wicked policy problem in different settings. It is spreading like cancer and eating up all forms of grass root development or potentials that comes out of it (Olojede and Erinle, 2024). And so, despite state governors' interference in local government affairs, many local government chairmen are not left out in the corruption in the crisis that has bedeviled indigenous development in the local governments in Nigeria.

Hence, most local government chairmen see their position as opportunity to enrich themselves. A cursory look at the level of corruption perpetrated by chairmen of local governments under obasanjo civilian administration till date is a monumental waste. For instance, in 2001, the chairman Kachia local government in Kaduna state awarded a contract of N2.5 million for the rehabilitation and completion of women's centre and no work was done. Similarly, the chairman of Samga local government spent N16,495,605.70 as extra budgetary spending. He awarded a contract of N3,171,375.00 for rehabilitation of his office which N906,044.00 would have been enough for the job. In the light of this, the corrupt activities of local government chairmen in the country have continued to take its toll on indigenous development in local governments in Nigeria (Avosetinyen, 2011).

In addition, corruption destroys the economic fabric of local governments and by extension paralyzes indigenous development in the sense that the individuals, society and the economy suffer retrogression and indigenous underdevelopment because corruption enables mediocrity and empowers criminals in leadership either at the federal, state or local government unfortunately this discourages and turns off leaders with vision, transformational ideas, proactive ,responsive, accountable and leading by personal example. Thus when there is governance bereft of good leadership, charlatans are carnorized and given all forms of political appointment to help perpetuate and entrench themselves and their tentacles in government for the purpose of draining state treasury for their benefits and their cronies and this accounts for why many local governments in Nigeria have not been able to achieve indigenous development and why local governments have been in a lamentable state such that there is a dearth of infrastructure and deterioration in the living standard of the grassroot people. This reveals that corruption impedes indigenous development and frustrates the quest for sustainable growth and development especially as foreign aids, foreign investments, taxation and entrepreneurship are distorted, while politically it affects the way a country is governed this is because corruption affects income distribution and that ineffective income redistribution results to resource misallocation hence poverty, squalor, unemployment, insecurity, terrorism and hunger becomes visible particularly at the grassroots. This results in the breakdown of law and order (Ibeogu and Ogbu, 2019).

Conclusion and Recommendations

As long as corruption pervades the socio-political system, indigenous development will remain an illusion because no nation can ever achieve any kind of development without curbing the stronghold of corruption. In the light of this, this study recommends that

policy frameworks should be made at the local level to enlighten the community members at the grass root level on the dangers of corruption at the individual, family, community and corporate level. This should be done on a monthly basis through publicity and jingles on the traditional and social media spaces. This will discourage members of the public particularly friends and relatives of office holders from putting pressure on their kinsmen to indulge in corrupt practices.

Secondly the ideology and belief system propagated from religious and entertainment institutions need to be regulated. The, value system that places excessive emphasis or promotes financial accumulation of wealth without work needs to be regulated by the social and traditional institutions. Finally, the abuse and misuse of social media wherein people portray an ostentatious lifestyle also needs to be regulated by anti-cyber-crime agencies. This is because some social media users often create a fantasy or illusion of extravagance which always stir up greed and desperation for wealth on impressionable internet users. All of this eventually takes its toll on the nation, society and community and creates a society of decadence, destruction, impunity and lawlessness.

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