



Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Anti-Corruption Crusade in Nigeria (2015-2019)

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ABSTRACT

The research investigated the degree to which the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has addressed financial corruption and its detrimental impacts in Nigeria during the period from 2015 to 2019. Nigeria has a serious problem of corruption. It is very widespread and it manifests itself in virtually all aspects of the economy. The viral nature of this phenomenon is such that combating it is consistently proving difficult. It consequently brings about economic backwardness, political instability, social insecurity, infrastructural decay, unaccountability, negation of principle of law and the likes. Myriad of attempts aimed at curtailing the menace by successful governments have suffered various setbacks. A superficial investigation into the history of corruption in Nigeria reveals that, in spite of the establishment of anti-corruption institutions and legislative frameworks by various administrations, financial corruption has remained resilient and has escalated dramatically. For many years, Nigeria has been positioned at the bottom of Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI). This persistent ranking has resulted in a range of detrimental effects, including social insecurity, political instability, the degradation of infrastructure, economic decline, a lack of respect for the rule of law, and various other challenges. The initiatives undertaken by Nigeria to mitigate these issues have encountered significant obstacles. To combat financial crime and corruption, the Nigerian government established the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in 2002. Nevertheless, the EFCC is often regarded as a disconnected institution in Nigeria's fight against corruption and the effort to address financial discrepancies in the economy. This study is anchored on the Institutional theory. The study primarily utilized data sourced from secondary materials, including textbooks, journals, newspapers and magazines, articles, internet materials and EFCC publications, etc. This research delves into the scale of corruption and the efforts made by the Nigerian government to fight it, by analyzing various viewpoints that help to understand the causes of corruption. The study concluded that the commission cannot solely fight corruption in Nigeria because of the high political interference of the elite, poor leadership and the un-enabling environment of the commission to function and recommended that for the commission to achieve and surpass her current achievements, some level of independence is required. This study recommends further improvements in the form of greater political will, improved legal process and also elevated budgetary funds and recruitment of personnel to the EFCC.

Key words: Corruption, the EFCC, Anti-Corruption Crusade, Challenges, Nigeria.

Introduction

Like many countries, Nigeria has a serious problem of corruption. It is widespread in different tiers and arms of government and the private sector. It manifests itself in virtually all aspects of national life and in many types of transactions within and across levels of governments, within and between private enterprises of different types and scales of operations, between principal actors in private and public sectors, and within civil society operations. Practically every government since 1960s came into power with a promise to address corruption. The establishment of numerous institutions by successive Nigerian governments to address corruption in both public and private sectors underscores the pervasive nature of corruption within the country (Nanagh, 2011).

Corruption represents a type of antisocial conduct exhibited by individuals or groups that provides unfair or deceitful advantages to those involved (Fan, Ekpe & Ita, 2008). It takes many forms, these include forgery, fraud, embezzlement, inflation of contracts, misuse and abuse of office (leakage of examination question papers, falsification of examination results and admission malpractices in schools), "Swift maneuvers", "financial returns" and smuggling which covers a wide range of activities like false declaration and concealment of goods, willful underpayment of customs duties; evasion of customs duties; trafficking of prohibited or restricted goods; use of unapproved rules and ports forging customs documents; touting in customs goods and documents (Fan, Usoroh, Ettah & Edinyang, 2009).

Transparency International (2012) characterizes corruption as the "misuse of entrusted authority for personal benefit," categorizing it into three distinct levels: petty, grand, and political. Petty corruption involves the everyday misuse of power by lower and mid-level public officials during their interactions with citizens, who are often seeking access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and law enforcement. Grand corruption refers to high-level government actions that distort state policies or operations, allowing leaders to gain at the expense of the public interest. Political corruption entails the

manipulation of policies, institutions, and procedural rules by political leaders to control resource allocation and financing, thereby abusing their authority to maintain their power, status, and wealth. Emah (2006) highlights that for multiple years in a row, Transparency International has identified Nigeria as either the most corrupt or the second most corrupt nation in the world. This concerning status continues to endure, even with the implementation of laws, regulations, and ethical standards by numerous professional organizations and government agencies.

In the submission of Fan (2002), the root causes of corruption are poverty, false life style, pressure from dependents, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and primacy of wealth in Nigerian communities, greed and undue emphasis on academic certificate acquisition. At the individual level, poverty is a situation and process of serious deprivation or lack of resources and material necessary for living within a minimum standard conducive to human dignity and well-being. Excruciating and dehumanizing levels of poverty tend to weaken people's moral principles. In school system, poor salaries and denied benefits unfortunately create an enabling environment for the academics to indulge in "sharp" practices for survival. Nigeria does not frown on anybody who lives above his income. Luxury breeds corruption among Nigerians. The pursuit of wealth has been stripped of its religious and ethical meaning. When social values are grossly related to wealth, corruption thrives.

Corruption has been conceived as the driving force for the evolution of institutions in Nigeria. It is important to highlight that the various groups that merged to form what is now referred to as Nigeria failed to uphold essential merit-based principles in various ways. This oversight meant that the fundamental aspects of today's corrupt practices were already present in their original contexts within Nigerian communities. These issues have, in turn, affected the country's progress. This context has drawn international attention to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) for its efforts to combat corruption in Nigeria (Morphy & Adetutu, 2012).

Corruption has been a longstanding issue in Nigeria, highlighted by General Murtala Mohammed's coup in 1975, which was partly motivated by this concern. This theme has continued to be cited as a justification for military takeovers in the years that followed (Okoosi-Simbine, 1993). Numerous studies have documented the extensive political corruption that characterized the Second Republic and subsequent administrations in Nigeria. Nuhu Ribadu, the former chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), estimates that since the onset of oil sales in the 1970s, more than \$380 billion has been misappropriated by the nation's political and military leaders (The Guardian Newspaper, 12 December 2006, p.7).

The Transparency International report consistently identifies Nigeria as one of the most corrupt nations globally. In 2015, Nigeria was positioned 136th out of 168 countries. The following year, in 2016, it maintained the same rank of 136 out of 176 countries, and in 2017, the situation remained similar, Nigeria was placed at the 148 position out of 180 countries. In 2018, Nigeria was rated 144 out of 180 countries. Although from 2019 to today, Nigeria has not made any improvement and was rated 146 in the corruption perception index (Transparency International, 2020). Corruption has permeated every aspect of Nigerian society and has become a norm. It has not only affected the functioning of governmental institutions but also the private sector, resulting in a lack of trust in public institutions and a decrease in foreign investment. Examining the table closely will reveal Nigeria's current corruption position in relation to other nations. In 2023, Nigeria achieved a score of only 25 out of a potential 100 points, placing it 145th among 180 nations and territories.

The pervasive issue of corruption prompted the Obasanjo administration, which took office on May 29, 1999, to commit to addressing this challenge directly. One of the first legislative initiatives proposed by the president was an anti-corruption bill aimed at combating this issue. Consequently, institutions such as the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) were created. Regrettably, the struggle against corruption has encountered numerous obstacles, and the situation remains dire. The U.S. State Department has characterized corruption in Nigeria as "extensive, deeply rooted and far-reaching" (Human Rights Report, 2006), highlighting an "environment of unaccountability for political and economic offenses" that must be dismantled to prevent further developmental setbacks (ICG, 2006).

The impact of corruption on political systems and developing economies, such as Nigeria, is profoundly detrimental and catastrophic, ultimately hindering national development efforts (Heidenheimer, 1977) and undermining democratic governance. This raises critical questions: How can we measure the extent of corruption in Nigeria? How do Nigerians define and recognize corruption, and what is their level of personal involvement in corrupt practices? What is their evaluation of governmental initiatives aimed at combating corruption, particularly regarding the roles of the ICPC, EFCC, and the Due Process office during the Buhari's administration? Furthermore, why does corruption persist as a significant challenge despite numerous past and recent attempts to address it?

The EFCC is making significant efforts towards effective management and control of corruption in Nigeria. Yet it appears as if nothing is being done. It is indeed factual that the agency is faced with multiplicity of challenges in executing this onerous task. It is on this premise that this research attempted an examination of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Anti-Corruption crusade in Nigeria (2015-2019).

The Concept of Corruption

Corruption means so many different things to so many different people at different times and places. This is, *inter alia*, attributable to its multidimensional nature as it carries political, economic, social, cultural, religious, ideological and/or historical outlooks, as well as to the existence of laws, regulations and systems of sanction. As highlighted by Akindele (1995), the notion of corruption remains ambiguous across various contexts, largely because there is no universally accepted definition. The perception of corruption is influenced by the national laws and regulations that oversee particular actions. Some countries embrace a wide-ranging definition, whereas others confine it to a more limited scope. From an etymological perspective, the term "corruption" originates from the Greek word "corruptus," which conveys the idea of an anomaly or mislabeling (CLEEN Foundation, 2010).

In a related perspective, Nye (1967) describes corruption as a deviation from formal responsibilities for the sake of personal gain. This includes actions such as bribery, which is the use of incentives to corrupt the judgment of those in trusted positions; nepotism, where relationships rather than qualifications dictate appointments; and misappropriation, which involves the illegal use of public resources for private interests. This definition can be particularly difficult to apply in contexts where corruption is rampant and accepted as a standard practice. Similarly, Otite (2000) views corruption as a corruption of integrity, which can be expressed through acts such as bribery, undue favoritism, or moral degradation. It occurs when multiple parties interact to disrupt the established structures and processes of society. In its 2009 report, the World Bank defines corruption as the exploitation of public office for private benefit, where officials may accept, solicit, or extort bribes. It also involves private individuals who offer bribes to manipulate public rules and processes for their own personal gain. Corruption can take various forms, such as patronage, nepotism, theft of government property, or the misdirection of public resources. The Vision 2010 Committee describes corruption as excessive actions intended to disrupt the normal course of judgment and erode trust (Otite, 2000). Additionally, the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act 2000 include bribery, fraud, and other related offenses within its definition of corruption (Otite, 2000).

Khan (1996, p.45) noted that the nature of corruption differs across countries. It can be characterized as "a deviation from the widely accepted norms or regulations for personal benefit." This definition encompasses a broad spectrum of corrupt practices. According to Otite (1986), corruption is characterized by the distortion of integrity or the existing state of affairs through means such as bribery, favoritism, or ethical decline. This perspective is more comprehensive as it incorporates the moral dimensions of official behavior. Transparency International defines corruption as the unethical conduct of public officials, including both politicians and civil servants, who unlawfully enrich themselves or their associates by misusing the public authority entrusted to them (Pope, 1996). Transparency International provides a comprehensive definition that primarily addresses the public sector. However, it is important to recognize that corruption also exists within the private sector, which adversely affects society as a whole. Additionally, Ogundiya (2009) offered an extensive overview of the concept, identifying various behaviors indicative of corruption. These include embezzlement, conflicts of interest, bribery, fraud, election rigging, misappropriation of funds, personal use of public resources, extortion, and the manipulation of procurement processes, as well as the diversion and falsification of financial records.

Action Aids (2008) characterizes corruption as unethical behavior that should be shunned by the virtuous citizens of any country. It advocates for societal condemnation of individuals involved in corrupt activities, contrasting this with the situation in Nigeria, where corrupt politicians and officials are often indirectly celebrated and sometimes honored with traditional titles and national accolades. Such misconduct should face repercussions in a developing nation like Nigeria, which must strive to advance and align itself with the more developed countries. Ajie & Wokekoro (2012) highlighted that some researchers have approached the topic of corruption from a holistic standpoint, categorizing it into several distinct forms. Taylor (2010) identifies these forms as:

- i. Political corruption arises when elected officials and public administrators, who are responsible for creating and enforcing laws for the benefit of the populace, engage in unethical practices. This phenomenon is evident when the development of policies and legislation is manipulated to serve the interests of politicians and lawmakers, exemplified by the contentious high salaries for legislators and the controversial pension laws designed to benefit Governors and their spouses in Nigeria.
- ii. Bureaucratic corruption refers to the unethical practices that arise within public administration during the execution of public policies. Citizens frequently experience this form of corruption at service delivery locations, including hospitals, schools, local licensing offices, police stations, and various government ministries. It manifests when public sector processes become unlawful or improper.
- iii. This type of corruption, known as electoral corruption, refers to the manipulation and fraudulent practices that occur during elections. It includes actions such as offering political positions, providing special favors, using coercion and intimidation, and interfering with the electoral process. Additionally, it covers vote buying, disenfranchisement, the theft of ballot boxes, and the falsification of election results to favor losing candidates, as well as the emergence of votes in areas where no voting took place.
- iv. Bribery encompasses various forms of illicit payments, including kickbacks and other forms of financial inducements.
- v. Fraud manifests in numerous ways, such as deception, swindling, counterfeiting, racketeering, smuggling, and forgery.
- vi. Embezzlement refers to the misappropriation of public funds by government officials, who unlawfully take resources from the institutions that employ them. In Nigeria, this practice is prevalent, often attributed to insufficient regulatory oversight.
- vii. Extortion involves the use of threats, coercion, or violence to obtain resources, with many members of the police force in Nigeria being implicated in such activities.
- viii. Favouritism represents an abuse of power, characterized by a skewed allocation of state resources that favours certain individuals or groups.
- ix. Nepotism refers to a specific form of favouritism where individuals in public office show preference for their relatives and family members. This practice arises when there is an illegal exemption from certain laws or regulations, or when undue advantages are granted in the distribution of limited resources (Ajie & Wokekoro, 2012). Such corrupt behaviours are prevalent and pervasive, to the point that they have become normalized within the cultural context of Nigeria.

The underlying factors contributing to corruption in Nigeria

Various viewpoints have been presented regarding the underlying factors contributing to corruption in Nigeria. These include, inter alia, economic hardship/recession, impunity, low-level of salaries, greed, materialism, discrimination in wealth distribution, poverty, kleptomania, political instability, ignorance and low level of educational attainment, high societal tolerance, need for societal recognition, etc.

a) Greed: Nigerian society is heavily influenced by a voracious lifestyle, where many individuals are perpetually dissatisfied with their possessions. This mindset permeates the political landscape of the nation. It is not surprising that the Nigerian politico-economic environment is rife with the troubling belief that politics and high-ranking roles, even in the private sector, are merely avenues for profit, aimed at amassing wealth through unethical practices. Consequently, this belief drives those in power to pursue the acquisition and maintenance of authority, facilitating the plundering of public resources and enhancing their own luxurious lifestyles at the cost of a largely impoverished populace.

b) The poverty rate in Nigeria was reported at 54 percent as of 2018 (NBS). This alarming statistic has led many to believe that widespread and persistent poverty, along with significant material deprivation and structural inequalities, exacerbates corruption. Shamija (2006) argues that corruption serves as a coping mechanism for Nigerians facing poverty, especially in urban areas where the high cost of living can drive individuals toward corrupt practices. In an environment characterized by insufficient wages and frequent salary delays for workers, corruption becomes a way to supplement legitimate income. Supporting this view, Ayua (2001) highlights the declining salaries and promotion practices within the civil service that are not performance-based, as well as dysfunctional government budgets and delays in fund disbursement. He contends that under these challenging conditions, officials may intentionally stall actions or refuse to act in order to extract payments from citizens or businesses.

c) The low salary levels in Nigeria are concerning, with the minimum wage and inadequate welfare programs contributing to a working environment that fails to support a decent standard of living. This situation is particularly stark when compared to other countries, including those within Africa. Surviving on a monthly salary of eighteen thousand naira, which is the minimum wage, is nearly impossible in an economy characterized by constant inflation. This challenge becomes even more pronounced for workers with dependents. Consequently, many Nigerian workers find themselves susceptible to corrupt practices such as bribery, extortion, fraud, the ghost worker phenomenon, misappropriation, embezzlement, and money laundering.

d) The cultural landscape and unique value system in Nigeria reveal a context where moral standards are often relaxed, leading many individuals to struggle for survival in the absence of government assistance. Corruption appears almost unavoidable in this environment. Factors such as the public's admiration for ill-gotten wealth, a preoccupation with material possessions, and a desire for rapid financial success contribute to the persistence of corruption in Nigeria (Nduilor, 1999). Notably, extravagant displays of wealth and conspicuous consumption are prevalent yet unfortunate markers of success in the country. Consequently, some individuals resort to unethical practices, including ritualistic killings for monetary gain (Ogugbuaja, 2002). Merton (1968) highlights the connection between cultural norms and corruption, suggesting that corruption may sometimes be a deliberate response to societal pressures that encourage rule-breaking to achieve the established goals of a social framework. Additionally, corruption is intertwined with strong familial values that foster deep-seated obligations. While the extended family system serves as a vital support mechanism, it can also hinder progress (Harrison, 1985).

e) The absence of ethical standards within government agencies and business organizations in Nigeria significantly undermines moral values. As noted by Bowman (1991), ethics encompasses behavior and the application of our ideals in practice, serving as a framework for decision-making. The ethical considerations in both public and private sectors encompass various topics, including respect for authority, logical reasoning in moral judgments, and the application of ethical principles in actions. Regrettably, many officials in Nigeria, whether appointed or elected, lack a clear understanding of the ethical responsibilities associated with their positions. This critical issue is largely overlooked, even as unethical behaviors continue to proliferate (Dike, 2005).

f) A deficient reward system is a major contributing factor to the challenges faced in Nigeria. The country's incentive framework is often regarded as one of the least effective globally. Many employees experience irregular payment schedules, leading to a societal environment where national priorities are misaligned. In Nigeria, individuals who engage in dishonest practices are frequently celebrated, while those who work diligently remain unrecognized. The issue lies not in the capabilities of the workforce but rather in the misalignment of values and priorities. Additionally, the lack of economic opportunities poses a significant challenge for a populace that is driven by achievement yet has limited access to viable prospects. This situation may contribute to the prevalence of unethical behavior within society. For example, numerous civil servants work for extended periods without receiving their salaries (Abubakar, 2002; Oditta, 2002), yet the public still expects them to act with integrity and contribute positively. Many of these unpaid civil servants are parents who are compelled to educate their children without any financial support. Lipset and Lenz (2000) observed that cultures that emphasize economic success while restricting access to opportunities tend to exhibit higher levels of corruption. This dynamic is detrimental to the sociopolitical and economic progress of the nation, as those who resort to dishonest means often find themselves excluded from legitimate opportunities.

g) Ineffective leadership is a significant contributor to corruption in Nigeria. Both historical and contemporary administrations have demonstrated a remarkable ability to foster an environment that supports corrupt practices. Politicians and military leaders have often disregarded the social norms that could have curtailed their corrupt activities. As a result, misappropriated funds have been transferred abroad, leaving minimal resources in the national treasury to sustain their deception of the Nigerian populace (Uko, 2002). The blatant disregard for accountability has undermined both legal and social safeguards that previously acted as barriers against corrupt practices. This lackadaisical approach from those responsible for upholding the law—the judges, the police, and other public officials—has fostered an environment rife with corruption. Offenders often evade consequences when they reach a "settlement." A notable instance is the case involving former Speaker Patricia Olunmi Etteh and her Deputy, Babangida Nguoroje, from the National Assembly. In September 2007, Etteh was summoned by a committee of MPs due to allegations that she approved the expenditure of 628 million naira

(approximately US\$5 million) for renovations of her official residence and that of her deputy, as well as the acquisition of 12 official vehicles for the House of Representatives. As accusations of theft were hurled at her during a session, she was escorted out by security as chaos ensued, despite not facing formal charges. On October 30, after enduring weeks of mounting pressure, Eteh resigned from her role as Speaker. This is merely one example among many. Numerous political figures have amassed wealth and properties both domestically and internationally through corrupt means, often flaunting their ill-gotten gains without societal repercussions. The overt display of unexplained wealth by public officials highlights the extent of corruption in society. Additionally, the difficulty in tracking financial activities due to ineffective taxation and poor regulations further exacerbates the issue of corruption

h) Impunity ensures that those in positions of political power evade accountability for their arbitrary, illegal, and criminal actions. This creates an environment where high-ranking officials exploit their authority for the benefit of a select few, often at the expense of the larger population. A notable example is the lack of prosecution or conviction related to the 1999 Nigerian military invasion of Odi, which led to the deaths of hundreds and widespread destruction. Despite the severity of this human rights violation, justice remains unserved. Furthermore, when affluent and corrupt individuals avoid consequences for their actions, it fosters an environment of increased corruption, erodes the rule of law, and inevitably leads to social unrest and instability.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of institutional theory underpins the analysis of social structures. This theory highlights the intricate and substantial dimensions of social organization. It explores how social structures—such as established rules, conventions, and routines—are perceived as the exclusive standards for appropriate behavior in social interactions. Different aspects of institutional theory clarify the mechanisms by which these elements are formed, disseminated, adopted, and transformed over time and across different environments, and how they fall into decline and disuse. The theory was promoted by (DiMaggio and Powell, (1983) Meyer and Rowan (1977).

Institutional theory - also known as institutionalism - uses country and government institutional characteristics, such as pre-existing rule of law, well-defined anti-corruption norms, and independent anti-corruption institutions with enforcement powers, to explain corruption in the public sector. The study of institutional theory aims to investigate the ways in which norms, conventions, rules, and structures are formed as the supreme standards for social conduct (Scott, 2004). In relation to understanding corruption, institutional theory brings in the social context and provides taxonomy for understanding how corruption might become entrenched in organizations, in institutions and in society, despite the existence of an anti-corruption framework (Luo, 2005). Institutional theory posits that the nature, structure, and transparency of political systems and their institutions play a significant role in shaping corruption. Additionally, it recognizes the intricate interplay among corruption, institutions, political frameworks, cultural factors, and gender dynamics (Debski et al., 2018; Stensöta, Wängnerud & Svensson, 2015). A considerable body of research has examined the connection between political institutions and the incidence and severity of corruption.

Scott (1995) defines institutions as social structures that have attained a high degree of resilience. These institutions are composed of cultural-cognitive, normative, and regulative elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life. Institutions are transmitted by various types of carriers, including symbolic systems, relational systems, routines, and artifacts. Institutions operate at different levels of jurisdiction, from the world system to localized interpersonal relationships. Institutions by definition connote stability but are subject to change processes, both incremental and discontinuous.

Connected to this is the "institutionalist" perspective on political corruption, as articulated by Thompson in 1995. This perspective emphasizes that corruption may manifest at an individual level, but it can also be rooted in institutional frameworks when these institutions are designed in a manner that leads them away from their intended objectives.

In this context, institutional theory is a policy-making theory that emphasizes the formal and legal measures of fighting corruption. States with poor institutions cannot successfully fight corruption. This is because weak institutions and inappropriate policy choices pose enormous challenges to the fight against corruption, a situation which has seen Nigeria move two steps forward and four steps backwards. The end result is what is rampant across Nigeria today; conspicuous consumption, absence of loyalty to the state, oppressive and corrupt state institutions, to mention a few. Also, strong institutions in Nigeria would help mitigate uncertainties in the fight against corruption and fast track developmental programmes in the country.

A culture of corruption within institutions or organizations fosters the acceptance of corrupt behaviors both socially and individually, resulting in a lack of accountability for those who breach or overlook established anti-corruption regulations (Appolloni & Nshombo, 2014). To effectively address corruption in such environments, it is essential to implement collective and coordinated strategies, including reform coalitions or proactive partnerships among organizations with similar values.

The Prevalence of Corruption in Nigeria

Corruption in Nigeria has a long and hybrid history. The First Republic (1960-1966) witnessed unprecedented levels of corruption. For instance, Chief Obafemi Awolowo in 1962 was indicted by the Justice G.B. Coker Commission of Enquiry for diverting public funds to the tune of £7.2 million from government coffers to those of his private firm, the National Investment and Property Corporation, and into the purse of the Action Group. The Western Regional Government subsequently acquired all the property hitherto belonging to the firm (Adegbulu, 2010). The situation prompted the military to strike in 1966 but corruption continued nonetheless. For instance, the Belgore Commission of Inquiry indicted the Gowon government for inflating contracts for cement on behalf of the Ministry of Defence which needed 2.9 million metric tons of cement at a cost of N52 million as against the 16

million metric tons it ordered at a cost of N557 million (Ogbeidi, 2012). Instead of abating, corruption only worsened during the Second Republic under Alhaji Shehu Shagari. It was claimed that over \$16 billion in oil revenues were lost between 1979 and 1983 (Sadiq & Abdullahi, 2013). The level of corruption also increased with Generals Ibrahim Babangida's and Sani Abacha's regimes after the military struck in 1985 and 1993 respectively. The Pius Okigbo Report of 1995 held Babangida accountable for his failure or refusal to explain the approximately \$12.4 billion that Nigeria earned from Gulf War oil sales.

Additionally, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) revealed that General Abacha had approximately \$107 billion stored in private accounts located in Switzerland, the UK, and Paris. Furthermore, it was alleged that Abacha and his military associates embezzled around N400 billion (Egunjobi, 2013). This pervasive corruption led to Nigeria being designated as the most corrupt country in the world by Transparency International during the years 1996-1997 (Agbibo, 2013).

Following the transition to civilian rule, various administrations expressed a commitment to eradicating corruption in Nigeria. However, despite their pledges, these governments were still plagued by significant corruption issues. For instance, in August, 2007, Hamman Tukur, Chairman, Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC), reported that the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) had withheld a total sum of N560 billion from the Federation Account from December 2004 to April 2007 (Okoi-Uyouyo, 2008). Also, Mrs. Patricia Etteh, the first female Speaker of the House of Representatives was accused of misappropriating public funds amounting to 628 million Naira (approximately 5 million USD) for the acquisition of twelve official vehicles and the renovation of her official residence (Mohammed, 2013). Additionally, in April 2012, a committee from the House of Representatives, chaired by Farouk Lawan, released a report investigating the fuel subsidy programme from 2009 to 2012. This report corroborated Dr. Ezekwesili's assertion that \$6.8 billion was siphoned from Nigeria during that period due to the fuel subsidy scandal, along with the misappropriation of N32.8 billion (\$210 million) from the Police Pension Fund (Agbibo, 2013). In a view to curb corruption in Nigeria, the Buhari-led administration has shown its support of the EFCC's operations and presentation of evidence to indict public officers, e.g. the EFCC arraigned Patrick Akpobolokemi, sacked director-general of Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) on a 40-count charge of fraud and money laundering to the tune of about N34.5 billion; the EFCC is prosecuting Sambo Dasuki (Former NSA) and others, in the \$2.1 billion Arms Deal scandal (Dasukigate); etc. However, some persons like Ayo Fayose, Femi Fani-Kayode, Sambo Dasuki, among others, have argued that his supposed anti-corruption blitz is one against his political opponents.

The Cumulative Impact of Corruption on the Nigerian State

The fraudulent accumulation process has resulted, over time, in the progressive and phenomenal enrichment of Nigerian rulers (both civilian and military), the emptying of the national treasury and the indebtedness of the country almost to the point of bankruptcy: hence the critical dearth of resources for investment on the social, economic and overall cultural development of the masses of our people. Nigeria is, therefore, in a paradoxical situation in which the scandalous, almost legendary, wealth of key ruling class members exists to mock the unspeakable mass poverty, misery and degradation of the Nigerian people. This has, in turn brought about a situation of potential and actual violent confrontation between the minority plutocrats and the majority paupers and destitute; within which context the current urban phenomenon of 'area boys' is just a minor manifestation. This situation is also highly productive, at the attitudinal level, of mass cynicism about, and distrust of the political elite, and constitutes a major factor in the persistence of inter- and intra communal disunity, antipathy and strife, as well as the progressively worsening problem of political and social instability since independence. Since the public treasury has been the primary and ultimate source of rapid and sensational private accumulation by the Nigerian political elite, the struggle to capture state power (and, therefore, the national treasury) among factions of the ruling class has become progressively acrimonious and bitter. This is because in this kind of struggle which ends in a winner-take-all resolution, the losing factions tend to be rigorously excluded from sharing in the loot. Hence, the invariable tendency among elite factions to use the poor masses from their areas of origin (village, town, local government, state or ethnic group) as cannon fodder and battering rams against their rivals and competitors from other areas, thus further dividing the people and undermining the stability of a Nigerian state and society that is already profoundly unstable.

The widespread corruption among the ruling elite has imparted a troubling lesson to the general populace: honesty and adherence to the law yield little reward. As a result, some individuals, influenced by the corrupt behaviors of their leaders, attempt to emulate these practices at their own levels through minor acts of bribery, misappropriation, and embezzlement of public resources. This has led to the normalization and acceptance of corruption within Nigerian society, particularly in the context of IBB's Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which has significantly eroded the real incomes of the working class, making it increasingly difficult for many to sustain themselves on their legitimate earnings.

The fixation of numerous elite individuals on primitive private wealth accumulation, often at the cost of public welfare, leads them to misappropriate funds intended for the operation and upkeep of public institutions under their stewardship—such as hospitals, schools, universities, public utilities, the judiciary, law enforcement, and even the military—for corrupt personal gain. This misallocation undermines these institutions and hampers their ability to fulfill their essential functions effectively, ultimately harming the interests and jeopardizing the safety of the citizens they are designed to serve. Over decades, the systematic exploitation of national resources by those entrusted with their management has resulted in many young Nigerians from humble backgrounds, despite their educational achievements, struggling to secure meaningful employment. The funds that could have been allocated for job creation have been siphoned off by corrupt leaders. Consequently, many of these educated youths either seek opportunities abroad or resort to various forms of criminal activity, including armed robbery, prostitution, drug trafficking, and other illicit enterprises. In this manner, the avarice of Nigerian leaders has squandered the nation's future and its youth, relegating Nigeria to a marginalized position among nations.

The costs of corruption are very debilitating to the society. First, corruption causes leakages of public funds, stunted economic growth and mass poverty in the nation. Nuhu Ribadu in 2006 said that about \$220 billion (about N65 trillion) has been stolen by past Nigerian leaders since independence. Commenting on this, Luke Onyekakeyah wrote in the Guardian of October 31, 2006: "What else could have brazenly subjugated and enslaved Nigeria and its people? ...the stolen N65 trillion quoted by Ribadu was only part of \$500 billion Official Development Assistance (ODA) granted to Nigeria during the four decades... Add N65 trillion to Nigeria's total earnings from crude oil during the same period, which is put at \$600 billion (about N84 trillion) by the African Development Bank (ADB), that will be N149 trillion! That is to say our past leaders corruptly stole our collective patrimony, which could have recreated the beauty and glory of Western Europe fourteen times" (Okoi-Uyouyo, 2008).

Also, corruption reduces competition and efficiency, and foreign direct investments because corruption usually leads to the theft of invested funds. It also prevents small businesses from meeting up with their start-up costs, and results to the loss of protection from foreign competition for the already existing businesses, which need for their survival, as much protection as possible from the government.

Corruption constitutes a major obstacle to democracy, undermines the rule of law, results to misguided/non-people-oriented policies, and creates a culture of unaccountability and opaqueness in the system e.g., the Security Vote in Nigeria which Governors are not accountable to anyone for. So, they can aggrandize it at the masses' expense.

Environmental degradation is yet another consequence of corruption. Gas-flaring, pollution of water and air, and the degradation of land (owing to mining activities) have become a recurring decimal especially in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Existing legislation is in place to regulate industrial operations; however, oil companies often work in conjunction with the government, resulting in inadequate rehabilitation and compensation for the Niger Delta region. Groups such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) have emerged as responses to this corruption.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)

In response to the widespread corruption and the negative perception of Nigeria on the global stage, the Nigerian Government established an anti-corruption agency in 2002 aimed at addressing and mitigating the issue of corruption that constitutes the cog in the wheel of progress; protect national and foreign investment in the country, imbue the spirit of hard work in the citizenry and discourage ill gotten wealth; identify illegally acquired wealth and confiscate it; build an upright workforce in both public and private sectors of the economy and; contribute to the global war against financial crimes (EFCC, 2004).

The establishment of the EFCC represented a pivotal transition from mere discussions about combating corruption to tangible actions against it. Prior administrations made attempts to lay down legal structures for addressing corruption, which encompassed various initiatives such as the Miscellaneous Offences Act of 1985, the formation of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency in 1989, the Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act of 1991, the Money Laundering Act of 1995, and the Advanced Fee Fraud and Related Offences Act of 1995; and the Foreign Exchange Miscellaneous Offences Act 1995. Noble and desirable these efforts were, either they were strangled due to inadequate enabling laws and regulations or neglected for an apparent lack of commitment on the part of stakeholders to fight corruption in high places (Ribadu, 2004).

At the global level, by the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was increased pressure on developing countries by governments of industrialized countries and international organizations to combat and reduce corruption, which had become widespread and was a bane to economic development. For example, the Group 7 countries at its 1989 summit established the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on money laundering. By 2001, the FATF had placed Nigeria on the list of non-cooperative countries (Malgwi, 2004, p. 146). It was against this backdrop of failed efforts and international pressure that President Olusegun Obasanjo adopted a multi-pronged approach to fight corruption in order to redeem Nigeria's image by creating or enacting the following: the Anti-Corruption Commission; the Due Process Office in the Presidency; the Corrupt Practices and Related Offences Act of 2000; and the EFCC Act of 2002.

The Establishment Act of 2002 (as amended in the EFCC Establishment, Etc. Act, 2003), the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in Nigeria is tasked with addressing financial and economic crimes as well as terrorism. As a financial intelligence unit, the EFCC is responsible for coordinating the efforts of various institutions engaged in combating money laundering and enforcing laws related to economic and financial offenses, including terrorism (EFCC, 2004). Its comprehensive mandate encompasses the prevention, investigation, prosecution, and punishment of such crimes such as illegal oil bunkering, terrorism, capital market fraud, cyber crime, advance fee fraud (419 or obtaining through different fraudulent schemes), banking fraud and economic governance fraud (transparency and accountability). The EFCC has extensive special and police powers including the authority to conduct investigations into individuals and/or the assets of individuals believed to be violating the provisions of the Establishment Act of 2002, as well as any other laws or regulations pertaining to economic and financial crimes in Nigeria (EFCC, 2004).

The EFCC has enabling powers under the Establishment Etc. Act 2003 and 2004 to deal with terrorism and terrorist offences including: willful provision or collection of money from anyone, directly or indirectly, to perpetrate an act of terrorism; committing or attempting to commit, participate, or assist in the execution of a terrorist act; and providing funds, financial assets, or economic resources for the purpose of enabling any individual or group to carry out, attempt, facilitate, or engage in the perpetration of a terrorist act (EFCC, 2004).

The EFCC is an independent agency headed by an executive chairman under the direction of a board. The chairman, supported by the directors of the five operations units—financial crimes and intelligence; advance-fee fraud and other economic crimes, enforcement, and general operations; prosecution and legal counsel; organization and support; and training school—is the chief executive and accounting officer. The Commission benefits from the

backing of the presidency, legislature, and judiciary. It also collaborates with similar organizations in other nations to investigate corruption and money laundering activities linked to Nigerians. Structurally, the Commission is dedicated to addressing economic and financial crimes, producing and sharing valuable intelligence to support law enforcement, and promoting ethical conduct among Nigerians through a transparent value system and preventive strategies (EFCC, 2004). Its organizational framework encompasses key operational areas, including economic and financial crimes intelligence, investigation and enforcement, prosecution, crime prevention via mass communication and advocacy, as well as proactive and reactive anti-terrorism initiatives. The headquarters is located in Abuja, with regional offices in Lagos, Enugu, and Port Harcourt.

The Role of the EFCC in Combating Corruption in Nigeria

After its formation, the Commission quickly initiated Operation Redemption, aimed at eliminating economic and financial criminals from the marketplace and ensuring their incarceration (Ribadu, 2003). The Commission encouraged citizens to report any information regarding government officials, enabling it to launch investigations. The response from the public was significant, leading to fruitful outcomes.

The Commission has conducted numerous investigations, resulting in arrests, detentions, indictments, the recovery of embezzled funds, and imprisonment of offenders. Notably, under the leadership of its inaugural Chairman, Nuhu Ribadu, the EFCC achieved a significant milestone in October 2005 when Tafa Balogun, the former Inspector-General of Police, received a six-month prison sentence fined \$30,000 and property worth \$150 million seized for stealing over \$121 million (about N13 billion) from the federal budgetary allocation to the Nigerian Police Force (Okoi-Uyoyu, 2008). Chief Bode George, along with five co-defendants—Aminu Dabo, Olusegun Abidoye, Adullahi Tafida, Zanna Maidaribe, and Sule Aliyu—faced arraignment on a total of 163 charges, which were later reduced to 68. These charges pertained to the alleged inflation of contracts and the misappropriation of funds from the Nigeria Ports Authority (NPA), amounting to N85 billion. Ultimately, they were found guilty and received a two-year prison sentence (Dada, 2013) by the Court of Appeal, Lagos Division, in January 2011; they were, however, acquitted of all charges by the Supreme Court (Bamgboye, 2013). More so, Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, former governor of Bayelsa State, arraigned on a six-count charge bordering on fraud and money laundering to the tune of N683 million, was sentenced to two years in prison on each charge.

Additionally, the EFCC took legal action in one of the largest fraud cases globally, involving Nigerian fraudsters Mrs. Amaka Anajemba, Mr. Emmanuel Owude, and Mr. Nzeribe Okoli, who were convicted for defrauding Brazilian banker Mr. Nelson Sakaguchi of approximately \$242 million (Okoi-Uyoyu, 2008). Also, the Commission investigated, arraigned, and facilitated the conviction to an 18-months jail terms and the forfeiture of assets and funds worth over N191 billion, of Cecilia Ibru, the Managing Director and C.E.O. of the Oceanic Bank Plc., for unlawful transactions involving the corrupt accumulation of resources and the irresponsible provision of credit facilities without adequate safeguards against established procedures (Nwagwu, 2012).

Additionally, Patrick Akpobolekemi, sacked Director-General of Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) and others – Captain Ezekiel Agaba, Ekene Nwakuche, and two companies, Blockz and Stonez Limited and Al-Kenzo Logistic Limited – were arraigned on 22-count of N2.6 billion theft belonging to NIMASA (Olasupo, 2015). Also, the EFCC arraigned Sambo Dasuki (former NSA), Bashir Yuguda (former Minister of State for Finance), Attahiru Bafarawa, Sagir Attahiru, Raymond Dokpesi, Shaibu Salisu, Abbah Mohammed, Haliru Mohammed, Aminu Babakusa on a 47-state count charge bordering on fraud and money laundering of the arms procurement funds to the tune of \$2.1 billion.

Furthermore, the former EFCC boss, Lamorde Ibrahim, in August 2015, announced gleefully that the Commission since its inception had so far secured the conviction of over 1,000 fraudsters in the nation's public and private sectors, while hundreds of other cases were pending (Anayochukwu, 2015). On a more precise trajectory, the EFCC recorded 105, 117, 126, 103, and 125 convictions in 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016 respectively (efccnigeria.org/efcc/publicnotices), i.e. a total of 576 convictions in 5 years. These figures, nonetheless, the efforts of the EFCC have not led to a reduction in corruption levels; Nigeria continues to receive low ratings in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index and the IAG are testimonies to this. Also, a view of the various pending high-profile cases, and the conviction lists found on the EFCC's official website would show one that the share of government corruption over total corruption figures is minute. The government corruption is only more pronounced because it involves persons in whom public trusts have been vested upon and the amount of monies involved. As a matter of fact, the conviction lists exposes that corruption is high in the banking sector especially amongst private individuals who use the banks to circumvent monetary policies and banking processes and to aid the looting of the common good.

Whilst we must give some credit to the EFCC for its recorded successes in prosecuting and convicting corrupt individuals, a long list, however, of yet to be concluded or abandoned and wrongly judged cases still abound. In this vein, we strongly doubt that the activities of the EFCC justify the plethoric praises showered on it. Basically, the EFCC is just a leashed guard-dog, or at best, a paper-tiger seeking attention to show off its 'stripes' as it was told to do by former President Jonathan in the caption of the article by Aminu in Daily Times Newspaper in 2014: "Jonathan told EFCC, ICPC to flaunt achievements". Hence, Nigeria is in trouble.

The premises for our stance include the appalling fact that the EFCC does not follow-up, with gusto, the corrupt charges brought against ex-governors, senators and/or politicians who are the god-children of those in power as well as other political elites (Olusegun Obasanjo being a quintessential elite). It is suggested that possessing the support and endorsement of the Presidential Villa allows individuals to misappropriate and divert resources, but only to a certain degree that such person must be cooperative and obedient to the dictates of the powers that be. This is a reason why most of the corrupt charges leveled against many government officials were (and are still being) dropped or ignored to die natural death. A prime illustration of this is the EFCC's inquiry into Senator Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello in April 2008, concerning her receipt of N10 million (\$100,000) misappropriated from the Ministry of Health. Although the Minister, Mrs. Adenike Grange, and her deputy, Gabriel Aduku, were dismissed from their positions, Senator Iyabo managed to navigate her situation outside of court and ultimately faced no consequences. Both the EFCC and the judiciary have remained silent regarding this matter (Ademola,

2011). The reverse of this is the 2006 indictment of Atiku Abubakar for abuse of office, fraud and embezzlement by both the EFCC and Administrative Panel of Inquiry (Obuah, 2010). This indictment initially led to the disqualification of Atiku's Presidential candidacy by the INEC on March 15, 2007 but it took the irrevocable verdict of the Supreme Court to clear him, Abubakar, of all charges, and by extension, to enable him contest in the 2007 Presidential Elections (an election he lost to the late Musa Yar'Adua). Atiku was gunning for presidency in 2007, while Obasanjo, a third term; so there was a clash of interest. More so, Obasanjo was alleged to have offered up to N50 million (over £200,000) in bribe to legislators to back the amendment of the constitution in order to fast-track his third term ambition (Amaraegebu, 2011) but this case was not pursued.

Furthermore, the Halliburton scandal involving some international conglomerates, Siemens AG (Germany) and Halliburton (USA) which were both exposed for collaborating with various Nigerian officials in corrupt practices to the combined tune of at least \$436 million (Adegbulu, 2010), blemishes the EFCC's acclaimed anti-corruption blitzkrieg. Whereas the USA and Germany succeeded in prosecuting their culprit citizens in the Halliburton scandal in recorded time, the EFCC has, however, gone silent on, and perhaps abandoned the case, one which in many high profile Nigerians were involved. But some questions arise: when the prosecution of collaborators abroad by their home countries is facilitated by the availability and presentation of undeniable documents and oral testimonies, should not the EFCC have communicated with the foreign agencies so as to get the needed information -documents and other related evidences—to fast-track the prosecution of criminals here in Nigeria for the sake of justice and good governance? Can it not then be said without any equivocation that Nigeria/the EFCC are not keen on fighting corruption?

Also, the EFCC has not been able to prosecute high profile cases successfully, except for very few ones such as the conviction of Chief Lucky Igbinedion, Mr. Tafa Balogun, Chief Diepreye Alamieseyigha, and Dr. (Mrs.) Cecilia Ibru, etc. A profound illustration of this is the court judgment of the James D. Ibori case. Whereas he was sentenced to 13-years imprisonment by a Southwark Crown Court in London, he was acquitted of the 170-count charges leveled against him in Nigeria because of insufficient pieces of evidence to jail him. The case of Joshua Dariye, who previously served as the governor of Plateau State, remains unresolved. He has been charged with 23 counts of money laundering, allegedly involving N700 million, and it has been established that he gained C10 million in illicit benefits through criminal actions in London (Dada, 2013). The EFCC has filed charges against Chief Onyema Ugochukwu, who was the PDP's governorship candidate for Abia State in the 2007 elections and previously served as the chairman of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). He is accused of engaging in corrupt practices involving the misappropriation of around N10.2 billion during his leadership at the NDDC, which includes inflating the contract price for a 15-kilometer road in Obehi-Mkpologwu from N250 million to N880 million, as well as increasing the contract value for a road in Umuahia from N180 million to N462 million (Dada, 2013). This case has not progressed further. Furthermore, the ongoing case against George Eider, the head of Avsatel Communications Nigeria Limited, along with former Aviation Ministers Professor Babalola Borishade and Femi Fani-Kayode, regarding the fraudulent handling of N19.5 billion from the Aviation International Fund and the inflation of the Safe Tower Project contract by N4.5 billion (Okoi-Uyouyo, 2008), has been pending since 2008.

Umar (2015) observed that since the revelation and subsequent report of the Farouk Lawal Panel, there have been no prosecutions, aside from the significant events that undermined the credibility of the committee and its findings. Zakari Mohammed, the Chairman of the House Committee on Media and Public Affairs, pointed out a deliberate effort to avoid implementing the Lawal report. The investigation appeared to be designed for failure from the outset, given the controversies and intrigues surrounding it. Consequently, the EFCC appears to be constrained in its ability to prosecute these cases, reflecting a broader lack of political will to pursue justice effectively.

Constraints faced by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)

While the EFCC is making strides in addressing corruption in Nigeria, the battle against this pervasive problem is far from over. This can be attributed to the impediments analyzed below which stands against the effective control of the phenomenon by the EFCC which cannot be pushed aside just with were wave of the hand or wishful thinking. The EFCC has been confronted with some challenges in its anti-graft war. These challenges include but are not limited to the following:

a) It is therefore imperative to note that insufficient funding of the agency pose great challenge to its operations as such may make its staff vulnerable. Because inadequate funding for the agency can put its employees at risk, it is crucial to recognize that it poses a significant obstacle to its operations. It's being said that the commission will create a sufficient budget based on its needs for efficient operation if it has a self-sustaining financial source and is not dependent on the government. Addressing corruption requires substantial financial support from the State. When initiatives aimed at combating corruption are well-planned, adequately funded, and effectively executed, the positive outcomes are evident and beneficial for society as a whole. However, even the most meticulously organized plans will yield disappointing results if they lack sufficient funding. The fight against corruption and economic crimes is inherently expensive. Adequate funding is crucial for securing a competent legal team to handle prosecutions in court. It has been noted that the organization faces significant financial constraints, leading to an inability to compensate lawyers who have previously represented the commission. This has resulted in legal professionals declining to take on cases from the EFCC. Insufficient funding also hampers comprehensive investigations, as the successful prosecution of corruption and economic crimes relies on thorough and diligent investigative efforts.

b) Another thing to consider is constitutional immunity. It guarantees the immunity from litigation of some Nigerian public office holders while they hold their positions. Regardless of the level of their actions, which can be broadly classified as corrupt, the EFCC lacks the constitutional authority to look into, detain, or bring charges against this group of public office holders (the elite) while they are still in office. This protection prevents the EFCC from effectively combating corruption in Nigeria. One is the claim of immunity from arrest and prosecution by the president, vice president, state governors, and their deputies are included in this context. Numerous state governors, along with their legal defense attorneys, have understood the stipulations outlined in subsections 308(1) and 308(2) of the immunity clause in the 1999 Constitution as giving absolute immunity from criminal prosecution while

in office. As a result of this institutional and legalistic argument, it has been difficult to prosecute these governors and also the vice president and the president while in office. This claim of immunity is absurd because it was not the intention of the framers of the constitution to allow elected officials to steal and plunder the nation's wealth. However, although claiming immunity under subsection 308(1), governors can be prosecuted under civil law as provided by subsection 308(2). For instance, Alao-Akala, former Governor of Oyo State, looted over N1 billion in just 11 months, but he could not, however, be tried in court until the expiration of his tenure because he was covered by the constitutional immunity (Mojeed, Affe and Adetayo, 2008). Additionally, there is the suspension of the legal proceedings against Ayo Fayose, the Governor of Ekiti State, who was charged in November 2012 with 27 counts related to the usurpation and mismanagement of public funds amounting to a significant sum N406 million because of the constitutionally backed immunity clause (the accused was elected governor in 2014). Despite this provision, the immunity clause is not absolute; Section 308(2) clearly stipulates the circumstances under which immunity cannot be claimed. Hence, a dedicated agency/government can still investigate and prosecute sitting corrupt President, Vice President, Governors, and Deputy Governors without encroaching on their immunity. This could be achieved if the case is presented, as (Emetulu, N.d.) wrote, in such a way to be considered as in a breach of their official duties, or if they are joined as nominal parties to an action, even though they remain the main target.

c) Undue political interference from the government and the political class: As long as the EFCC is still dependent on the Federal Government and its Chairman is still being appointed and removed by the Presidency, the limit of its effectiveness is already set ab initio, and this makes the EFCC be selective in its work. To prove this, Vanguard of January 30, 2007 reported Nuhu Ribadu to have said "if I don't do what the President asked me to do, he is going to fire me and I don't want to be fired" (Okoi-Uyoyou, 2008).

d) There is a lack of a robust intelligence framework in the investigation of financial corruption cases in Nigeria. It has been observed that certain cases are not been investigated well enough, that case files get abandoned or lost, and that key witnesses, who are supposed to be protected by the agency, are usually found dead or missing. The death of Ma'aji Mohammad Iro and Abdulmalik Dalhatu (two of the EFCC's key witnesses in the N 29 billion fraud cases against Murtala Nyako, former Adamawa State Governor, and his son, Abdulazis), the Halliburton scandal case file believed to have been abandoned, and the insufficiency of evidences to jail James Ibori, are quintessential cases.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It has been the task of this research to examine the causes of corruption and the role of the EFCC in fighting it. Corruption in all its ramifications is severe and has permeated Nigerian society. The prevalence and preponderance of corruption activities dates back to the early independence period, but since the 1980s it has burgeoned to unprecedented proportion. Corruption occurs primarily when there is a failure of established institutions and the lack of capacity by these institutions to manage frameworks of social, judicial, political, and economic checks and balances. The establishment of the EFCC was motivated by the failures of earlier initiatives aimed at addressing corruption and the necessity to enhance Nigeria's reputation to draw foreign investment. As an investigative and prosecutorial body, the EFCC has made significant progress in tackling corruption among public officials. By investigating and prosecuting corrupt public officials accused of corruption and publishing an advisory list of corrupt and unfit candidates, the EFCC hopes to deter Nigerians from engaging in corrupt activities. The article further noted the serious challenges faced by the nascent anti-corruption agency. The subsequent suggestions could enhance efforts to combat corruption in Nigeria:

- 1) Nigeria should pursue a comprehensive reorientation towards a corruption-free value system. This initiative could spark a moral revolution within Nigerian society, transforming public perceptions of materialism and self-interest. Both governmental and non-governmental entities, including the Campaign for Democracy (CD) and the National Orientation Agency (NOA), can play a pivotal role in this endeavour.
- 2) A second look should be given to Nigeria's cumbersome legal system for pursuing corrupt officials. Therefore, in order to prevent future corrupt offenders, judicial reform is required for the prosecution of these cases more quickly. In Nigeria, anti-corruption institutions can serve as catalysts for change, provided they are equipped with adequate personnel and technological resources to effectively address corruption.
- 3) There should be a reduction in the amount of poverty in the entire nation. Good and workable policies should be put in place to create jobs for the masses, provide adequate social services and pay for those who work, and develop rural areas extensively with infrastructure and amenities. All of these goals should be achieved in accordance with the state of the economy and the Human Development Index.
- 4) For the fight against corruption to be effective, the EFCC must operate with greater autonomy. The Commission can avoid relying on the federal government for its day-to-day operations by making sure it generates and manages its own funds. This time, the decision of how far to pursue any matter will be made by the organization on its own. To reduce the propensity for politicization of the Chairman's nomination and arbitrary termination, the Chairman should also benefit from political independence and tenure security.

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