

**ASSESSING THE NEXUS BETWEEN CORRUPTION AND INSECURITY IN
NIGERIA: A PERVASIVE DILEMMA**

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63452/IJAFSSR.2025.3402>

ABSTRACT

This paper, assessing the nexus between corruption and insecurity in Nigeria tries to identify and examine the relationship that exist between corruption and insecurity such as kidnapping, banditry militancy, insurgency etc. in Nigeria. Insecurity is closely tied to corruption, since most of the groups involved complain of deprivation by government in the provisions of their basic needs in spite of the enormous money governments earmark every year for such provisions like schools, hospitals, roads, water, electricity, food etc. The paper relied heavily on secondary source of data. It used the perspective of the strain theory which focuses on disadvantaged groups in the society who feel they have been denied means of achieving their goals in life and thus inclined to crime. The paper concludes that when a government does not respond to its citizens' needs, some of them would look for other ways to satisfy those needs whether legitimately or otherwise. It also recommends among others things that governments at all levels should declare a state of emergency on the provision of basic human needs such as food, health facilities, education and ensure their accessibility and affordability to the common man.

KEYWORDS: - Corruption, insecurity, government officials, crime, kidnapping, militancy, banditry, deprivation.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Corruption is a global phenomenon as even developed and advanced democracies are grappling with it. It tends to retard the progress of any nation that condones it. It is an evil that does nobody

any good as both the corrupt official and the innocent citizens suffer the consequences so dearly. Official corruption denies citizens the opportunity to live a worthy life as resources meant for the provisions of basic needs and social amenities are usually syphoned into private pockets at the expense of public good. Corruption undermines governments' ability to protect its citizens and also erodes public trust and confidence, and more intractable security threats (Transparency International, 2023).Recent reports by TI (2023) also shows that only a handful number of countries are zero corrupt.

Globally, the potency of corruption permeates both formal and informal institutions, only differing in degree or magnitude. In spite of Nigerian government efforts in combating corruption and corrupt practices in the nation through its anti-corruption agencies like the ICPC and E.F.C.C., Nigeria still ranked 154 positions out of 180 countries assessed by Transparency International in 2022 (Nwezeh, 2023).This is a clear indication that corruption in Nigeria is increasing day by day in leaps and bounds. Corruption and corrupt practices have been institutionalized and have become a way of life to most Nigerians. If any effort is made to fight it, it fights back vigorously with a sizeable population of the society directly or indirectly abetting it.

Many communities in Nigeria if not all complain of been deprived of most of the things that make life worthwhile. Some communities and individuals have become so disenchanting with the system that they no longer trust any government, and have resolved to doing things their own way. A bottle of beer is easier found in most communities than a cup of clean water. There is no steady power supply that could make life comfortable, no access roads to ease transportation of goods and services, farm produce as well as the people. Schools where children of the poor are taught are dilapidated and without enough and qualified teachers and learning materials. Hospitals have been turned into regular wailing places as a result of regular corpses that leave daily for lack of equipment that could be used to safe life.

All these are happening not because of the absence of funds to provide them, but for the simple fact that monies meant for such infrastructures and equipment are diverted by public officials entrusted with the task of administering or supervising or monitoring these projects.

The court where the common man should find refuge, and demand for justice, compromises when corrupt monies are shared with the judge(s), and the common man is left in a dilemma, between the devil and the deep blue sea. This situation pushes some people to take wrong decisions and thereby resorting to crimes in order to get what they want or to change their conditions of life.

Political unrest and widening economic inequalities, regional development disparities, as well as cultural, linguistic, and ethnic antagonism, are the bane of modern politics. By every means possible, every country must protect itself from them. When a country is economically and technologically advanced, and is politically and socio-culturally stable, it has a shield to protect itself against most social malaises and crimes (Anand, 2015). But when a nation suffers all these due to widespread corruption, then, it can be said to have nothing to protect itself against any kind of evil, such as civil strife, ethno-religious crisis, armed robbery, internet crimes, insurgency, militancy, banditry, kidnapping etc.

Myint (2000) observed that corruption can undermine a country's efforts to modernize and achieve economic prosperity.

Therefore, this paper aims to study the relationship that exist between corruption and insecurity such as ethnic and religious crisis, farmers and herders' conflicts, Boko Haram, militancy, kidnappings, banditry in Nigeria.

2.0 CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Corruption as a concept is not new and its effect and implications in human existence is a common knowledge in all parts of the world. If corruption breeds any good, that good must be an inevitable evil.

Rousseau had observed that the legitimacy of the state power comes from the people. The government is the executor of the sovereign. Its authority emanates from the people's trust. When the use of public power derailed from the original track, by being abused, issues of corruption arise. And this is in tandem with "the abuse of public office for private benefit". Corruption in this sense is therefore, the exploiting of public position for private benefits or self-interest by a person or a group (Xizi, 2016).

Corruption comes in many faces such as nepotism, bribery, nonfeasance, kick-back, inflating of contracts, God-fatherism, tribalism etc. When any of these is done in order to favour an individual or a group, it is indeed corruption. Conversely in Nigeria, when it favours one or their group, it is termed a favour, but when it favours another person or group, it is termed corruption.

Myint (2000) views corruption as the use of official position, status or rank by an office occupier for their personal benefit. Corrupt behaviour encompasses a range of unethical actions, including: (a) misappropriating funds or resources, (b) forcing others to pay or give something in exchange for a favour or service, (c) deceiving others for personal gain, (d) bribery, (e) giving unfair advantages to family members or relatives, (f) cronyism, (g) appropriation of public assets

and property for private use, and (h) using one's influence or position to secure unfair advantages or benefits etc.

Corruption is defined by Transparency International (2018) as the abuse of entrusted power for personal gain. It continued by adding that corruption erodes trust, weakens democracy, hampers economic development and further exacerbates inequality, poverty, social division and environmental crisis (www.transparency.org/en/what-is-corruption).

Transparency International observed that the growing incidence of money in politics mean political corruption still remains a core governance problem around the world. It undermines public trust in the democratic process and damages individual lives. In countries where democratic institutions remain fragile, political corruption diverts resources from providing basic social services for millions of poor and underprivileged people (Luqman, 2012).

From the above, it is highly tenable to attribute all forms of economic, political and social malaises inflicting Nigeria such as ethnic conflicts, political unrest, religious crisis; kidnappings, banditry, insurgency; yahoo boys, drug trafficking, girls trafficking, oil bunkering, vandalizing of peoples' and government property etc. to corruption, as these corrupt behaviours tend to undermined government efforts in administering social and economic benefits that would make life meaningful to the citizens.

3.0 INSECURITY

Insecurity is an antonym of security and it represents the state of being subjected to danger or injury. It is the anxiety that is experienced when one feels vulnerable and insecure as a result of physical or emotional threat. It is a state of being not secured, lacking confidence or fear'.

The term insecurity suggests a sense of vulnerability or exposure to harm, evoking emotions of fear and anxiety due to perceived lack of safety or security (Vornanen et al. 2009). The uncertainty and unpredictability of life can lead to loss of personal autonomy, affecting many individuals to varying degrees (Abbott, 2000, 2; Wilkinson, 2001, 3).

Individuals have the challenge to try to protect themselves from an increasing "matrix of risks" such as loneliness, personal relationships, crime, health problems, terrorism, and ecological disaster, as well as physical imperfections and personality defects (Threagold& Nilan 2009, 49-50).

According to Karl Marx "Insecurity is destabilizing". This is true in that when a nation is not secure it can lead to the destabilization of the economy, agriculture, governance and increases

criminality in the society. It can also destroy the structures put in place by the government for political stability (Benjamin Ryan, 2008, cited in Udoh, 2015).

From the above, one is confronted with the fact that insecurity is a situation where an individual or a group is being exposed to threat to health, food, and life. That is to say that when there is an outbreak of a disease or a plague; hunger or inflation; armed violence or natural disaster, there is insecurity. Militants, IPOB insurgents, and kidnappers in the South, and bandits/kidnappers/Boko Haram insurgents in the North are all posing threat to life, food and health in the country. Farmers can no longer go to their farms as a result of bandits/kidnappers, who pick them and ask for ransom. This had led many farmers abandon farming in most parts of the North, thereby creating food security threat. The same thing applies to the south. These groups are involved in killing innocent citizens and displacing those alive from their homes, all in the name of agitating for or demanding self-determination, secession, resource control or marginalization and deprivation.

4.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To explain this phenomenon, the strain theory is adopted. The strain theory seeks to explain how societal pressures and limitations can lead individuals to engage in deviant or criminal behaviour. Such societal factors like lack of income, education, recognition, etc. pushes people to engage in criminality. This theory was first advanced in the 1930s by Robert Merton and later by Robert Agnew. The theory focuses mostly on disadvantaged groups in the society who feel they have been denied means of achieving their goals in life and thus inclined to crime. People whose incomes have pushed them below the bread line level and are unable to realize their dreams through legitimate means may be compelled to take the path of criminal behavior to achieve their goals in life. When people are not able to achieve their goals through legitimate means, they experience strain, leading to frustration, anxiety and anger, and finally leading to crime, like kidnappings, banditry, militancy etc.

Corruption within the context of the Nigerian state has put most people under pressure and has limited their access to their most basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, sex, etc. Widespread and increase in criminality in most part is associated with lack of these basic human needs. Monies meant for making life easy and for the provision of basic social amenities are diverted into private pockets by government officials. While at the same time the society sees these government officials living flamboyant lifestyles that are beyond their legitimate earnings. This often push some people who feel cheated and disenchanted to resort to crime in order to live a lifestyle similar to those of public officials whose corrupt practices have led to the deprivation they are experiencing. Ordinarily, most Nigerians will be contented if they are given their fair share of the national wealth. But the strain is triggered when an individual steals what is meant

for millions of people and is neither censured nor punished, but rather celebrated, respected and honored.

There is a strong relationship between corruption and crimes such as militancy, kidnapping, banditry, armed robbery, etc., as these crimes are committed by the perpetrators mostly due to the poverty deliberately imposed on them by government through encouraging and condoning corruption. Most youth are recruited into banditry and kidnappings and are paid meagre amount of money simply because of poverty; a poverty that is rooted in corrupt acts by public officials, and which has been institutionalized and has become anorm in the society.

4.1 The Pervasive Nature of Corruption in Nigeria

A graphical picture of corruption in Nigeria was given by Ngwube and Okoli (2013) when they said that corruption has become a cankerworm in Nigeria as it has eaten deep into the fabric of the country, and that internationally, the perception is that corruption has found a niche in both public and private sectors of lives in Nigeria.

It was said that almost all Nigerian citizens who had interacted with a government official a year prior to a survey conducted in 2019, about 30 per cent paid a bribe to, or were asked to pay a bribe by a government official. This means that, compared to previous survey in 2016, the widespread of bribery in Nigeria has reduced averagely, which then stood at about 32 per cent. Out of the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria, North-East, North-West and South-West have recorded decline in the widespread of bribery from 2016, as the North-West realized a statistically significant decline in the widespread of bribery, from about 36 to 25 per cent, while the other two zones recorded little decreases. Juxtaposing, from 2016 to 2019, the North-Central, South-East and South-South zones recorded increases in the widespread of bribery (UNODC, 2019). This is quite a misrepresentation of the true state of corruption in Nigeria. Nobody seems to be insulated or neutral in this cankerworm including little children who often learn about the act of giving and taking bribes from home and school. The situation is terrible as it has become part and parcel of the norms all over the country. At the primary, secondary and tertiary school levels, students bribe their teachers, and teachers request for bribes from students either in kind or in cash. Parents bribe for their children to be favoured during examination, or even for the examination to be written for their children. Cases are so rampant on sex for marks in our tertiary institutions. Most times, students are the ones who initiate the bribe not the lecturers, simply because they are afraid of failing the lecturer's course. Rarely do lecturers initiate the bribe.

In most offices both public and private, files are hidden in order to collect bribe from owners of the files before they are processed. Projects and equipment of inferior quality are constructed or

procured because an agreed percentage has to be used in settling officials in procurement unit, works unit, store and other management staff.

In our various communities, from traditional rulers, religious leaders, community elders, youths, associations or forums, groups and individuals, using the act of bribing to facilitate a process from government officials is the norm, even when the government official did not directly or indirectly request for it. It is term among citizens as an “appreciative gesture”. This makes these government officials feel unappreciated if they do their job again and they are not giving something in “appreciation”. Tanzi (1998) observed that in truth, there are people who require acts of corruption from government officials and there are government officials willing to receive a price in order to perform their task.

Most Nigerians don’t see anything wrong with the giving or the collecting of bribe in any way or manner, as it is always being encouraged in order for people to have their way in getting things done in their favour or getting it done faster.

Corrupt elements within the justice system have also helped in making crime and criminality to thrive in Nigeria. The weakness of the judicial system occasioned by corrupt tendencies of judges had continued to abet crime and insecurity in the country. When public officials are brought before a court of law over allegations of public looting, the courts compromise when monies exchanged hands. The same applies to kidnappers, bandits, terrorists, and militants etc. who are brought before a court of law. In other words, justice is for the highest bidder in Nigeria, and not for the innocent or oppressed citizen.

4.2 The Nexus between Corruption and Insecurity in Nigeria

The Chairman of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Professor Bolaji Owasanoye, had averred that corruption is one of the factors that abet terrorism and banditry in Nigeria. He further stated that the relatively prevalence of corruption in the country had led to a breakdown of institutions and values that would have engendered the inducement of integrity and moral rectitude in citizens. He continued further noting that the consequence was that the country had become a breeding ground for bandits and terrorists who have exacerbated the milieu of insecurity (ICPC News, 2019).

Kidnapping is traceable to the Niger Delta militants and their agitation against environmental degradation caused by oil spillage and the demand for resource control, where they abduct foreign nationals and demand for ransom (Archibong, 2023). According to Udoh (2015) insurgency is a recent phenomenon to Nigerians. The event that made known the activities of insurgents in Nigeria was that of the Militant Islamic sect widely referred to as “Boko Haram”.

Acts such as shootings, bombings, kidnappings, arsons, car and suicide bombings in many parts of the country are associated with this insurgent group. And their activities have added to the prevalence of insecurity in the country.

It is a fact that corruption and corrupt practices have been the major causes of the aforementioned. Most of the people involved in most of these criminal activities are the poor, mostly disenchanted youths who have lost any hope of living a better life within the political system. Anderson and Tverdova (2003) have rightly observed that when governments are corrupt, they lose the trust and credibility needed to govern effectively, and they often disregard the rule of law. This erosion of trust can lead to widespread disillusionment favourable to violence and social unrest. Violence and social unrest such as banditry, kidnappings, terrorism, militancy, ethno-religious conflicts and other forms of insecurity taking place within the Nigerian state can be linked to the erosion of trust and disillusionment on the part of some citizens who feel marginalized, deprived, cheated, transgressed, etc. Nkwede et al (2017) maintained that since colonial era, corruption has been one of the worst malaises confronting Nigeria, but the increasing magnitude of corrupt practices since the return to democracy in 1999, and particularly under the administration of President Jonathan, the level of corruption was alarming and dreadful. Several cases of alleged scams and scandals of highly placed political office holders and of huge amounts of dollars were investigated and publicized. And it is undoubtedly true that once the political system is corrupt, it affects every sector of the society and undermines a country's developmental efforts and thereby creates chaos, criminality and other forms of insecurity.

The effects of corruption in Nigeria are so glaring. The country is among the highest with out of school children in the world, and illiterate youths are a reservoir for the recruitment of potential bandits, terrorists, kidnappers, militants and other criminal syndicates. Politicians and government officials divert resources earmarked for building and equipping schools into their pockets, thereby depriving poor peoples' children opportunity of attending schools to be educated or acquire skills that will make them useful to themselves and to the society.

Funds meant for developmental purposes are syphoned and laundered by political office holders and other public officials and their families and friends. These are funds meant to provide basic human needs for the Nigerian populace. So many cases abound on this issue.

Ulu (2009) observed that one of the major problems in our society (Nigeria) in the recent past is militancy, cultism and extreme ethnicity... The reason is that in as much as the society in general condemns the ant-social activities of these groups of people and organizations, the truth is that they are equally Nigerians who have equal stake in the nation. For instance, when militants

complain, even though their approach might not get the approval of many people, the truth is that their complaints are not out of place. They complain of the destruction of their living environment, deprivation of the benefits from the resources that is derived from their land, and poor living standard of their people, and lack of adequate industrial capacity to meaningfully engage their graduates...With this, people must question the where about of the billions the federal government keeps spending each year through agencies like Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) for the development of these areas. Corruption is just the only answer.

The funds appropriated for the development of these areas do not get to the targeted people. This often enraged the people and they resort to militancy, kidnappings etc.

Gupta has rightly observed that economic gains are the basic incentives for crime (Archibong, 2023). In other words, making money and living a good life is the driving force behind criminal activities such as kidnappings, militancy, insurgency banditry etc.

According to Albert (2012) insecurity is cause by the following:

1. Resources: a situation where there is lack of resources for all; the question regarding the allocation of the little resources to all; the issue of leaders stealing the little resources and promoting inequality.
2. Leaders' rat race competition for power.
3. Value: a situation where elites promote ethnicity and distorted religious teachings.
4. Communication process: a situation where media outlets spread distorted information and bad news that fuel rumours and conflicts in order to make money.

All the aforementioned causes are viable reasons that foster insecurity. The concern of this work is majorly on the effect of the first cause, which is a resource. Nigerians have found themselves in a situation where resources earmarked for developmental projects and programmes are syphoned by public officials into their private pockets, depriving citizens the basic social amenities that would make them live a meaningful life.

Ulu (2009) relates insecurity to corruption where he opined that misplacement of priorities and agitating irrelevant issues that will not add to the improvement of the lives of people have been the cause of breeding groups such as Boko Haram, MASSOB, OPC, MOSOP, and BAKASSI BOYS recently in Nigeria... Like the militants their agitations are not unfounded. They all complain of one form of deprivation or the other by governments at different levels.

Corruption and insecurity are tied together and facilitates crime such as insurgency, terrorism as well as helps the narratives of the insurgents (Integrity Watch Afghanistan, 2016).

Corruption has severely hindered millions of Nigerians from experiencing the benefits of democracy that they desperately desire, and saying otherwise would be an understatement. It has become a cankerworm that affect every structure and institutions of government at all levels from federal, state and local government in all the geo-political zones of the country. Situations of daylight looting of public funds have become daily news in Nigeria. For instance, the reports on National Integrated Power scam, the National Identity scam, the Halliburton scam and various reports of stealing state funds by state governors still deluge the Nigeria landscape (Luqman, 2012). The Dasuki Gate, Diezani loot, NNPC's un-remitted 48.9 billion dollars alarm blown by Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, the current Emir of Kano, then Governor of the Central Bank that led to his untimely retirement by the Jonathan administration; the depletion of Nigeria's foreign reserved under Jonathan from 67 billion dollars to less than 30 billion dollars despite the oil boom being experience under his administration (Adeniyi, 2017). There was the corruption allegation over the Secretary to the Federal Government, Babachir Lawan, under Buhari's administration that equally led to his dismissal, the Mambilla power scandal during Buhari etc., is still just a few cases of public fund loot in Nigeria.

5.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the devastating effect of corruption has been the major cause of insecurity presently going on in the country. Irresponsiveness and recklessness in the management of funds on the part of government engenders irresponsibility on the part of citizens, in so far as the irresponsiveness deprive citizens their basic needs. When a government does not respond to its citizens' needs, some of them would look for other ways to satisfy those needs whether legitimately or otherwise. Successive governments right from the first republic have been grappling with corruption. All the military coups that took place in Nigeria were triggered majorly to prevent and curb the effect of corruption.

When corruption permeates the basic fabrics of a country's leadership, innocent citizens are doomed. Tanzi (1998) opined thus, when "top political leaders do not provide the right example, either because they engage in acts of corruption, or as is more often the case, they condone such acts on the part of relatives, friends and political associates, it cannot be expected that the employees in the public administration will behave differently". In other words, once the political leaders had set a bad example by engaging in corruption and abetting those who engage in it, subordinates in all other public institutions follow suit, and it spreads like wild fire among the citizens. Corruption creates strain relationship between government and citizens who feel cheated, transgressed, oppressed or deprived by the act. Thus, some people resort to acts of such as banditry, militancy, kidnapping, insurgency as well as ethno-religious crisis to "supposedly" addressed the imbalances or reclaim what has been taken from them.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is a known fact that corruption cannot be completely eliminated as even in advanced countries, it's still a menace. The following are some of the recommendations offered in order to reduce corruption in Nigeria:

1. Stiffer penalties should be administered to any public official or citizen found guilty of corruption by competent court.
2. Nigerian government should endeavour to pay its public servants a living wage. That alone will go a long way in reducing corruption in the land, as some people engage in corruption not because they desire and approve of it, but for their inability to solve little family needs.
3. Government should declare a state of emergency on the provision of basic human needs such as food, health facilities, education and ensure their accessibility and affordability to the common man.
4. An ethical re-orientation should be carried out by governments at all levels and in all institutions to enlighten citizens on the negative effects of corruption. They should know that it is the reason why the country found itself in this vicious cycle of poverty. And the only way out is to fight it individually and collectively.
5. An online or electronic portal should be created by governments at all levels where citizens can petition any public official that is seen spending or living beyond his earnings so that they would be called to explain how and where they are getting the money they are lavishing.
6. Institutions fighting financial crimes and other corrupt practices should be made independent of the executive arm of government that appoint them. Their funding should come directly from the
7. Government should create an enabling and conducive environment for private businesses to thrive so that employment opportunities will increase to absorb young graduates.
8. Vocational schools and other skills acquisition centers should also be encouraged to train both literate and illiterate citizens skills that would make them productive and self-reliant.

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