

# A Sociological Appraisal of Corruption and Sustainable Development from Individuals' Socio-economic Standpoint

OGETTE, Anthony Omokhudu

Department of Sociology, Faculty of Management & Social Sciences  
Edo State University Uzairue, Edo State, Nigeria

Email: ogette.anthony@edouniversity.edu.ng

Telephone: +2347025309152

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## KEY WORDS

Anti-Graft,  
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Development,  
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## ABSTRACT

*This study presents a sociological appraisal of the effects of corruption on sustained national growth and development in Nigeria from the socioeconomic standpoint of individuals and groups. The city of Lagos was purposively selected for the study due to its cosmopolitan characteristics with heterogeneous population. A questionnaire was used to obtain primary data from respondents in three major areas in Lagos namely; Ikoyi, Akoka, and Mushin to represent the three major socioeconomic classes; Upper, Middle and Lower classes respectively. The quota sampling technique of non-probability sampling technique which reserves certain proportion of the sample for certain categories of respondents chosen on the basis of quota factor was adopted. Thus, a sample size of 300 respondents were drawn from the selected three residential areas respectively as follows: Ikoyi (50), Akoka (100), and Mushin (150) to reflect the different hierarchical strata of the Nigerian society. The study adopted descriptive and inferential statistics through the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Three hypotheses were tested and findings reveals as follows: firstly, socioeconomic class do not have significant effect on respondents' views about the effects of corruption on sustainable development in Nigeria, secondly, a significant percentage of Nigerians from upper class background also feel the negative impact of corruption. Thus, suggesting that the negative impacts of corruption cuts across socioeconomic classes in Nigeria, and finally, support for the anti-graft war cuts across socioeconomic boundaries, which further affirm the fact that irrespective of their socioeconomic background, a significant number of Nigerians have confidence in the war against corruption, and were of the opinion that the momentum should be sustained. This study therefore recommends sound moral education and massive re-orientation of the general public on the damaging effects of corruption as well as establishment of special courts to try corruption cases for speedy and accelerated hearing.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1960, when Nigeria gained independence from the claws of the British colonial masters, the whole world especially well-meaning individuals of African descent who were at the forefront of emancipation of the black race heave a sigh of relief that at last the giant of Africa is born. However, 63 years after independence, the Nigerian nation is bedevilled with the menace called corruption which constantly and consistently hinders good governance and sustained social, economic and political development. This is not unconnected with her appalling international image despite its enormous human and material resources as evident in the Transparency International (TI) Corruption Perception Index

published since 1990. This watchdog for global corruption have consistently rated Nigeria as one of the most corrupt and poorest nation in the entire globe.

For decades, among other socioeconomic factors, corruption have been identified as a factor that distorts development in all spheres of a nation's life which propels developmental challenges and can absolutely stagnate as well as wither any nation if allowed unchecked (Adamolekun, 2004), (Adeniji, 2000), (Johnston, 1997), (Ackerman, 1997 & 1992). Corruption is a disease which has so profoundly affected the whole structure of Nigerian society and has bestowed unfair advantages to very few against legal and moral standards. This undermines the attempts made by authorities to provide all the people with sufficient welfare, as the means to do so

are available to few at the expense of the masses (Ribadu, 2003). Therefore, addressing the problem of corruption is of special interest in developing economies like Nigeria where virtually all policies and plans geared towards developmental purposes have absolutely failed due to corrupt practises (Ackerman, 1997).

At 63, Nigeria as a sovereign state cannot boast of attaining any tangible breakthrough or development in any area of its national life due to endemic corruption that has pervaded both public and private sectors of the economy. Corruption no doubt has assumed the posture of a social problem in Nigeria because it has been so defined by a significant number of people as well as a number of significant people. The damaging effects of corruption on sustained social, economic and political growth and development of the Nigeria nation are myriad; it reduces the level of foreign investment by increasing investment risk, as well as depleting public spending on the education of the citizens (Lipset & Lenz, 2000). The high rate of poverty in Nigeria is often linked with corruption because individuals in positions of power and authority often divert public funds meant for socioeconomic growth and development into private bank accounts (Mauro, 1997).

At this juncture, it is safe to posit that corruption remains the major factor restraining sustained socioeconomic growth and development in Nigeria by weakening the structure of the Country and its institutions that facilitates sustained national growth and development (Onakuse, 2004). Therefore, the negative impacts of corruption in Nigeria transcends socioeconomic boundaries by promoting inefficiency, reduces productivity, frustrates investments, fuels inflation and human and financial capital flight, thereby instituting a regime of poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment (Adamolekun, 2004), which promotes mediocrity in all spheres of our National life. It is against this backdrop that this study sets out to investigate the effects of corruption on sustainable development in Nigeria from groups' socioeconomic standpoint.

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## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Corruption has become a major hindrance to sustained growth and development in all spheres of national life. Over the years, several attempts as well as reforms geared towards fighting corruption have been made by successive governments in Nigeria ranging from promulgation of decrees, enactment of acts and policies, as well as establishment of relevant agencies or commissions. Despite efforts at fighting this menace which has consistently hindered sustained national growth and development in Nigeria, the anti-graft war is far from being a victorious one. This is not unconnected with the fact that individuals occupying positions of power and authority who are charged with the responsibility of administering national resources for the benefit of all as well as being the custodian of societal values and bearers of ethical conducts and decency, are themselves reckless looters of public treasury for personal gains, and the cost to the Nigerian nation has been tremendous considering its negative impacts on sustainable development.

However, past and present administration under the leadership of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has in many fora made its intention clear that it would tackle corruption to a standstill due to its undesirable consequences on sustained national growth and development. Thus, the establishment of the Economic & Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), Code of Conduct Bureau, as well as enactment of Independent Corrupt Practises & Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) Act 2000, Money Laundry Act 2004, Advanced Fee Fraud Act 1995, Failed Banks Act 1991 as amended, Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act 1996, and a host of others are in furtherance of this intention and government determination to tackle corruption head-on. However, our desperate desire for a corruption-free Nigeria continue to experience setbacks despite calculated efforts to tackle this menace by past and present government. This is indicative of the fact that individual members of the Nigeria society may have diverse views concerning the effects of corruption on national growth and development, and these views may as a result of differences in their socioeconomic background influence the support they give to these agencies and commissions established to curb corruption. Thus, this study intends to investigate the perception of individuals and groups from different socioeconomic background on the effects of corruption on sustained national growth and development of the Nigerian state.

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## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided this study:

What is the relationship between socioeconomic background and awareness of the effects of corruption on National growth and development?

What is the relationship between socioeconomic background and the negative effects of corruption on wellbeing?

What is the relationship between socioeconomic background and level of support for anticorruption crusade?

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## RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Hypothesis 1: Individuals from low socioeconomic background are more critical of corrupt practises than those from high socioeconomic background.

Hypothesis 2: Individuals from low socioeconomic background are more negatively affected by corrupt practises than those from high socioeconomic background.

Hypothesis 3: Individuals from low socioeconomic background are more supportive of anti-graft campaign than those from high socioeconomic background.

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## REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

### Effects of Corruption on Economic Growth and Development

On the relationship between corruption and economic growth and development, there are opposing viewpoints. The advocates have been divided into two schools of thought based on findings from different studies.

The "grease the wheel principle," which advocates corruption as a means of maximizing economic gains, is also aligned with the first schools of thought, whose business model is based on the concept of "scratch my back and I'll scratch yours," which means you have to offer something in order to receive something else in return. Proponents of this school of thought believe that corruption promotes economic growth and increases a country's productivity. (Huntington, 1968; Acemoglu & Verdier, 1998; Kaufmann & Wei, 2000; Uma & Eboh, 2013). Uma and Eboh (2013) summarized the position of this school of thought into the following points:

- A mechanism for allocating capital that balances demand and supply. It is assumed that successful and cost-effective managers would happily pay a bribe to procure the services and products they need from source points, thus enhancing resource allocation.
- Bribe-paying individuals saves time in purchasing goods and services in exchange for perceived benefits of those commodities.
- Bribery can be used to increase the productivity of monopolistic industries by instilling competition fundamentals for better resource distribution.
- Bribery may be used to circumvent or evade burdensome rules and regulations, inefficient operational patterns, and inadequate legal frameworks.; and
- Because of the higher expense associated with corruption, companies' capital are priced more highly.

Based on this principle therefore, corruption becomes a link in the chain that leads to great economic achievements for nations.

On the contrary, the second school of thought consider corruption to be a riddle, a disease that rots the heart of the economy, as well as deprives a country of efficient resource distribution in areas like health, education, infrastructure development, and provision of other social services. In their respective studies, Krueger, 1974; Mauro, 1995; and Aliyu & Elijah, 2008; show that corruption interferes with market forces, resulting in inefficient and inadequate tax rates due to the public sector's looseness. Furthermore, it leads to a complicated government spending scheme organized by public officials, lobbyists, and leaders who are selfish.

The negative effects of Corruption on sustained economic growth have been studied around the world, as well as in Nigeria. Some observational results have been published by researchers. According to a ground-breaking report on "the impact of corruption on growth rates per capital of 16 countries from 1960 to 1985,"<sup>33</sup> "a one-standard deviation decrease in the corruption index contributes to a rise in annual growth rates of GDP per capital of 0.8 percent." Mauro (1995) asserted in a similar study that corruption in public procurement was more prevalent in sectors where public interest was not centred. This was done at the detriment of education and health care spending. Tanzi & Davoodi (1995), in a follow-up report, derived multi-findings as follows:

- Corruption appears to increase the size of public investment to the point that high-level officials can easily exploit the products of expenditure to collect bribes;
- Corruption shifts government spending away from essential operations and maintenance and into new equipment purchases;
- Corruption skews the composition of public spending away from required health and education funds, as Mauro (1997) found.
- Corruption decreases the efficiency of public spending and the nation's infrastructure.

The dynamic panel estimator was used to analyse data obtained from various African countries in a report on "Corruption, Economic Development, and Income Inequality in Africa." According to the findings, "corruption decreases economic growth directly and indirectly through a drop in physical capital investment; increased corruption is positively associated with income inequality, and the combined impact means that corruption adversely affects the poor in African countries more than the rich."

### Pervasive Culture of Corruption in Nigeria

Culture of corruption in Nigeria refers to the configuration of shared, consensual and learned pattern of corruptive behaviour that is transmitted from one generation to another. Therefore, for this corruptive behavioural pattern to have been sustained, it must have been shared and learned through various elements of our culture such as language, beliefs, values, norms and symbols. While the consensual element of this culture of corruption means simply that many Nigerians share it and agree to its benefits, and transferred from one generation to another.

This culture of corruption have pervaded all spheres of our national life. The most worrisome is the educational sector due to its vital role in the socialization process as well as the transmission of culture from one generation to the next. Hence, education is the foundation and building blocks for long-term socioeconomic development in any nation, and sustainable educational development is the foundation and building blocks for long-term socioeconomic development (Osuji, 2011). In light of this comment, it is worth

noting that corruption in the educational sector could spell disaster for the country.

Corruption has caused the educational system in Nigeria to collapse today. In his ethnographic study of the types and degree of examination malpractice in Imo State, Nigeria, Osuji (2011) discovered that teachers, administrators, and school officials were actively involved in assisting students to cheat during examinations. In addition, each student was required to pay up to 5,000 naira for 'cooperation' in the examination hall, and any student who refuses to comply, would fail all his/her subjects. Therefore, the educational sector in Nigeria, whose responsibility is to inculcate, share and transfer good moral conduct is acting otherwise in geometric proportion.

According to Torulagha (2013), if close study of the current crop of politicians and public figures is made, it is possible to conclude that the current state of corruption and lack of moral concern stems in part from the educational system. He is convinced that Nigerian educational institutions are partly to blame for the types of Nigerian public officials and public figures that exist today.

Corruption is a social fact in Nigeria today, and if the educational sector is corrupt, the entire country would be corrupted. It is obvious that most individuals in positions of power and authority in the country today went through the educational system in an atmosphere where corruption, exploitation, and immorality were commonplace. These individuals made it through school by doing whatever they could to stay alive, including cheating to pass examinations. Products of the Nigerian educational system are becoming uncaring, overly violent, and devil-may-care types of people, because they have been socialized to believe that power is more important than decency, that morals and ethics are unimportant values, and that winning at all costs is necessary (Osuji, 2011). Therefore, the educational system's ability to inculcate anti-corruption culture as well as develop capable leaders is critical to Nigeria's national security. The Nigerian nation will be doomed if the educational system does not produce competent leaders.

study were primary data obtained from the fieldwork through the use of a survey research instrument; the questionnaire. That is, all information was obtained from respondents in three major areas namely; Ikoyi, Akoka/Fola Agoro and Mushin to represent the three major socioeconomic classes; Upper, Middle and Lower classes respectively. The quota sampling technique of non-probability sampling technique was adopted, which involves reserving certain proportion of the sample for certain categories of respondents (Soyombo & Taiwo, 1996) chosen on the basis of quota factor. The quota factor for the study was on gender basis to ensure that both sexes are adequately represented. The study aimed at an achieved sample size of 300 respondents with an estimated response rate of 100%. Thus, a sample size of 300 respondents were drawn and sample from each of the three residential areas representing the three major socioeconomic classes as follows:

Ikoyi (Upper Class)	-	50
Akoka/Fola Agoro (Middle Class)	-	100
Mushin (Lower Class)	-	150

These different sample sizes were chosen to reflect the different strata of the Nigerian society arranged in a hierarchical order where the more favoured but few individuals are located at the top and the less privileged are located at the bottom.

## Test of Hypothesis

There are three hypothesis tested in this study using the Pearson Chi-Square Test to determine how two or more variables could be cross tabulated to establish a relationship between the variable(s) to the occurrence of one or two possible outcomes. The level of significance for the study is pegged at 0.05. Thus, any value that is less than or equal to 0.05 would be accepted while the reverse would be the case for a value above 0.05.

**Hypothesis 1:** Individuals from low socioeconomic background are more critical of corrupt practises than those from high socioeconomic background.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the city of Lagos. The choice of Lagos was hinged on the fact that it is a cosmopolitan city, a prototype of an urban area with heterogeneous population in terms of ethnic, ideological, cultural and socioeconomic composition. Data for the

**Table 1:** *Percentage distribution & cross tabulation of respondents by location and how critical they are about corrupt practises.*

	Corruption is a major hindrance to sustainable development in Nigeria			
	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	

Location				Total
Ikoyi	3 6.0%	2 4.0%	45 90%	50 100.0%
Akoka/Fola Agoro	8 8.0%	1 1.0%	91 91%	100 100.0%
Mushin	17 11.4%	3 2.0%	129 86.9%	149 100.0%
Total	28 9.4%	6 2.0%	265 88.6%	299 100.0%

The above table indicates that irrespective of location and socioeconomic background, a greater percentage of the respondents agreed that corruption is a major hindrance to sustainable development in Nigeria. Thus, 90% of the respondents from Ikoyi agreed with the statement, while Akoka/Fola Agoro and Mushin accounted for 91% and 86.5% respectively. The overall result as indicated in the above table shows that 88.6% of the respondents agreed with the statement while 9.4% of the respondents disagreed. Only 2.0% of the respondents were indifferent.

From the foregoing therefore, it can be inferred that socioeconomic class do not have significant effect on respondents' views about the effects of corruption on sustainable development in Nigeria. A careful comparison of the generated responses from the various socioeconomic groups shows that individuals from lower and middle class background are as critical as those from upper class

background about the effect of corruption on sustainable development. However, contrary to popular opinion that individuals from lower class background are more critical, the above findings points to the fact that though lower class individuals are equally critical, but those from middle and upper class background are more critical.

In view of the above, Hypothesis 1; Individuals from low socioeconomic background are more critical of corrupt practises than those from high socioeconomic background, is therefore rejected.

**Hypothesis 2:** Individuals from low socioeconomic background are more negatively affected by corrupt practises than those from high socioeconomic background.

**Table 3:** *Percentage distribution & cross tabulation of respondents by location and how they are affected negatively by corrupt practises.*

Location	The impact of Corruption have negative effects on my well-being and that of my family			Total
	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	
Ikoyi	14 28%	4 8.0%	32 64%	50 100.0%
Akoka/Fola Agoro	13 13.1%	11 11.1%	75 75.8%	99 100.0%
Mushin	23 15.5%	11 7.4%	115 77.2%	149 100.0%
Total	50 16.8%	26 8.7%	222 74.5%	298 100.0%

The above table shows that 77.2% of respondents from Mushin agreed with the statement that the impact of corruption have negative effects on their well-being and that of their family, while Akoka/Fola Agoro and Ikoyi accounted for 75.8% and 64% respectively. The above table further indicates that the highest percentage of respondents (28%) that disagreed with the statement were residents of Ikoyi. Overall, the result shows that 74.5% of respondents agreed with the statement while 16.8% disagreed. However, 8.7% were indifferent. In comparison, a significant percentage of individuals from lower, middle and upper class background feel the negative impacts of corruption. Similarly, though individuals from upper class background accounted for the lowest percentage (64%) of respondents who agreed that the impact of corruption have negative effects on their well-being and that of

their family, which in turn indicates that a significant percentage of Nigerians from upper class background also feel the negative impact of corruption. Thus, suggesting that the negative impacts of corruption cuts across socioeconomic classes in Nigeria, even though the degree may vary from one socioeconomic class to the other. This finding further buttress previous findings that corruption adversely affects the poor in African countries more than the rich.

In view of the above result, Hypothesis 2; Individuals from low socioeconomic background are more negatively affected by corrupt practises than those from high socioeconomic background, therefore accepted.

**Hypothesis 3:** Individuals from low socioeconomic background are more supportive of anti-corruption crusade than those from high socioeconomic background.

**Table 5:** *Percentage distribution & cross tabulation of respondents by location and their level of support for anti-corruption crusade.*

Location	The anti-corruption crusade is effective in Nigeria and should be sustained			Total
	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	
Ikoyi	13 26.0%	5 10.0%	32 64%	50 100.0%
Akoka/Fola Agoro	30 30.0%	10 10.0%	60 60.0%	100 100.0%
Mushin	28 18.6%	12 8.0%	110 73.3%	150 100.0%
Total	71 23.7%	27 9.0%	202 67.3%	300 100.0%

As shown in the above table, 64% of respondents from Ikoyi agreed that the anti-corruption crusade is effective in Nigeria and should be sustained, while 60% and 73.3% accounted for Akoka/Fola Agoro and Mushin respectively disagreed. Overall, the results indicates that 67.3% of respondents agreed with the statement while 23.7% disagreed irrespective of their socioeconomic background. However, only 9% of the respondents were indifferent. A careful comparison of the responses from the three socioeconomic classes reveals that the support for the anti-graft war cuts across socioeconomic boundaries, which further affirm the fact that irrespective of their socioeconomic background, a significant number of the respondents have confidence in the war against corruption in Nigeria, and were equally of the opinion that the momentum should be sustained.

From the foregoing therefore, it can be inferred that respondents' socioeconomic class do not have significant influence on their support for the anti-corruption crusade.

In view of the above, Hypothesis 3; Individuals from low socioeconomic background are more supportive of the anti-corruption crusade than those from high socioeconomic background, is therefore rejected.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After over six decades of independence, Nigeria the supposed giant of the African continent and the most populous black nation in the world is bedevilled with myriad social, economic as well as political problems among which corruption has assumed an alarming proportion looking at its dimensions and undesirable consequences on sustained national growth and development. However, therefore, Nigerians are critical of the negatives effects of corruption on the nations' sustained growth and development as well as feel the brunt of widespread corruption irrespective of their socioeconomic status. That is, the negative effects of corruption on the wellbeing of Nigerians cuts across socioeconomic boundaries because all

categories of the citizens feel the brunt of the menace of corruption. Most interestingly, the support for the anti-graft war cuts across socioeconomic boundaries, which affirms that irrespective of socioeconomic background, majority of Nigerians supports the war against corruption in Nigeria, and are of the view that the momentum should be sustained.

Unless all hands are on deck to stop the menace, our desperate desire for a corruption-free Nigeria will remain an utopia. The establishment of anti-graft agencies and commissions as well as enactment of relevant acts are evidences of government's determination to tackle this menace called corruption which has penetrated into the fabrics of both public and private sectors of the economy. Thus, our inability to tackle corruption is not lack of anti-graft laws or acts, but government's inability to garner enough support from the general public across socioeconomic boundaries for the anti-graft agencies and commissions. Such support would in no small measure portray these agencies and commissions in good light and erased the perception that that they are hegemonic tool of the elitist political class.

Therefore, our desperate desire for a corruption-free Nigeria can be attained, if the following steps are taken:

There should be calculated efforts towards the inculcation of sound moral values through our educational system at all levels. This would automatically increase the level of moral consciousness of the entire Nigerian society, through the moral qualities of the individual members of the society.

There should be massive re-orientation of the general public on the damaging effects of corruption on sustained national growth and development as well as the need to see every election exercise as an opportunity to elect credible individuals who would be standard bearers of ethical conduct and decency, into positions of power and authority

The anti-graft agencies and commission should continually sensitize the general public across socioeconomic boundaries about their operations in order to gain their support and trust that they are not hegemonic tool of the elitist political class.

Government at all levels should establish special courts to try corruption cases for speedy and accelerated hearing, as well as impose stricter measures or punishment against offenders in order to serve as deterrent to others.

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