CORRUPTION AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: AN ASSESSMENT OF ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS UNDER THE BUHARI ADMINISTRATION (2015-2023)

Muhammed Jamiu Olaitan
Department of Political Science and International Studies
Bayero University, Kano
08108918011

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the effects of corrupt elites appointees surrounding the administration on Buhari's government (2015-2023). Good governance is based on transparency, accountability, efficient and effective service delivery to the people. Corruption serves as a great detriment for the realisation of the above objectives. Late president Muhammadu Buhari vowed to alleviate corruption to the barest minimum before the 2015 presidential elections due to the nature of corruption under president Jonathan's administration, having won the election, the promise turned out otherwise due to the conduct of political appointees. The paper was guided by three research questions. The study is premised on Political Settlement Theory. The data were collected from secondary source and analysed qualitatively. The findings revealed that the nature of corruption during the late President Muhammadu Buhari's administration was very alarming with most of his ministers and other appointees, which served as a great impediment to his government. The study also found that having put a lot of measures in place, all availing to nothing due to a lot of factors, such as selective probe, lack of proper monitoring and oversight, delay in the court judgement, corrupt elite appointees who engaged in the misappropriation of the public fund, political interference on the activities of the anti-graft agencies, and structural problems. The study therefore recommended for stiff punishment for the embezzlers, restructured of the anti-graft agencies, total independence of the anti-graft agencies, public awareness, involving of the NGO in the fight against corruption, integrity test of the prospective appointees, and merit based appointment.

Keywords: Corruption, Good Governance, Nigeria

Introduction

Across the world, particularly in the last few decades, corruption has become a cankerworm that has eaten deep into almost all the facets of human society. Specifically, the magnitude of corruption differs in manifestations and costs in all nations. Democracies in Africa reflect practical manifestations of indisposition Adeyeye (2011). Since 1995, the Transparency International, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) publishes annually the Corruption

Perception Index (CPI), which measures the degree of corruption among public officials and politicians in nations. CPI is a composite index, drawing on 16 different polls from 10 independent institutions. The countries close to 10 are considered 'highly clean' and those close to zero, 'highly corrupt' (Ogundiya, 2011).

In 2005, CPI revealed that nearly half of the countries score less than three, indicating a severe corruption. Corruption is perceived as most rampant in Chad, Bangladesh, and Haiti. Similarly, countries with high levels of per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) like Poland, Argentina, the Philippines, Zimbabwe, Canada, Indonesia, Ireland, Malaysia, Israel, Slovenia, Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, and Venezuela have lower levels of corruption. There has been a marked increase in the perception of corruption in countries with high income such as Canada and Ireland (Ewerendu, 2013).

Like in most African countries, corruption is at the heart of the intractable problems of poverty, underdevelopment, disease and unemployment in Nigeria (Ogundiya, 2010). Since independence, all facets of the Nigerian society have been blighted by inefficiency and ineffectiveness occasioned by high-level corruption and lack of accountability. This has resulted in the acute underdevelopment and spike in crime rate. Etannabi (2002) posits that most of the soci-oeconomic and political problems besetting Nigeria can be traced to the problem of corruption. This has hindered economic development, social justice, stability, political integration and democracy in the country. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) maintains that good governance, including the absence of systematic corruption, is critical for macroeconomic, as well as inclusive and sustainable economic growth. It asserts that systematic corruption, defined as, "abuse of public office for private gain", is associated with lower growth and investment and higher inequality. Accordingly, dealing with corruption must include policies to limit corrupt practices, be it direct-bribing of foreign officials or indirect laundering of dirty money (IMF Annual Report, 2018).

Higher corruption usually leads to poor governance by reducing government effectiveness, weakening the rule of law, lowering public trust, and hindering economic development. Conversely, weak governance creates more opportunities for corruption. Therefore, reducing corruption is essential for improving governance and public service delivery.

One of the foremost priorities of the late President Muhammadu Buhari upon assuming office in 2015 was the fight against corruption. To achieve this objective, his administration introduced several anti-corruption measures, including the replacement of Ibrahim Lamorde with Ibrahim Magu as Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the implementation of the Treasury Single Account (TSA), the Whistleblower Policy, and the enforcement of public asset declarations by public officials. These initiatives were designed to promote transparency, strengthen accountability, and reduce corruption in public institutions.

Paradoxically, despite these efforts, corruption remained a significant challenge throughout Buhari's administration. Many observers argued that the anti-corruption campaign was undermined by influential political elites and powerful individuals within the government who were allegedly involved in corrupt practices. Consequently, the administration appeared to be engaged in a continuous struggle against corruption while facing resistance from within its own ranks. This study therefore investigates the factors that undermined Buhari's anti-corruption campaign and examines the relationship between corruption among political elites and the attainment of good governance during President Muhammadu Buhari's administration (2015–2023).

The paper thus raises three pertinent questions, which are as follows:

i. What was the nature of corruption during Buhari's Administration?

ii. Why did corruption persists despite anti-corruption measures?

iii. How did elite influence affect governance outcomes?

Literature Review

Conceptual Review of Corruption

According to Akindele (1995), the concept of corruption has been elusive in many dimensions, due to the lack of uniform definition. What is regarded as corruption depends on the existing national laws and regulations guiding certain actions. Some countries define corruption in the broadest form, while others legislate on the narrow definition of the term. However, from an etymological dimension, the word corruption comes from the Greek word "corruptus" meaning an aberration or a misnomer (CLEEN Foundation, 2010).

Corruption is the illegal profiteering (mismanagement of public funds) by a public officer from his/her position as a representative of the government. It wastes resources, distorts budgetary allocation, breeds inefficiency and unpredictability, slows and erodes development and lowersrespect for constituted authority (Ogboru, 2009).

Furthermore, Dikwa (2016) opined that corruption is a systematic vice associated with anindividual, society or a nation which reflects favoritism, nepotism, tribalism, sectionalism, undueenrichment, amassing of wealth, abuse of office, power, position, and derivation of undue gainsand benefits. Also, that corruption includes bribery, smuggling, fraud, illegal payments, money laundering, drug trafficking, falsification of documents and record, window dressing, false declaration, evasion, overpayment, underpayment, deceit, forgery, concealment, aiding andabetting of any kind to the detriment of another person, community, society or nation

Corruption is the criminal misconduct by public servants in the discharge of official duty, whichamong others, may include habitual acceptance of illegal gratification for himself or for

any otherpersons; misappropriation or conversion of property entrusted to him as a public servant orallowing another person to do so; acts of obtaining pecuniary advantage for himself or for any other person (Sharma, Sadana & Kaur, 2011).

Types and Forms of Corruption

According to Ajie and Wokekoro (2012), some researchers have taken a holistic approach on the discussion of corruption by dividing it into several forms. These according to Taylor (2010) include:

i. Political corruption: It occurs when politicians and public decision-makers, who are entitled to formulate, establish, and implement laws on behalf of the people, are corrupt. It also takes place when policy formulation and legislation are tailored to benefit politicians and legislators- as in the case of the controversial huge legislators' wages, and the outrageous pension laws passed by states to favour the Governors and their spouses in Nigeria.

ii. Bureaucratic corruption: This occurs in public administration in the course of public policy implementation. The citizens encounter this kind of corruption daily in service delivery points such as the hospitals, schools, local licensing offices, police stations, the various government ministries etc. Bureaucratic corruption occurs when public sector procedures becomes illegal/ inappropriate.

iii. Electoral corruption: This category of corruption includes the rigging of elections and other frauds in the electoral process. It includes the promise of an office, special favours, coercion, intimidation, and interference with the freedom of election, buying of votes, disenfranchisement, snatching of ballot boxes, victimizing and maiming, mutilation of election results in favour of losers and votes turn up in area where votes were not cast.

iv. Bribery: which includes kickbacks and pay offs etc.

v. Fraud: which could be reflected as trickery, swindling and deceit, counterfeiting, racketing, smuggling and forgery.

vi. Embezzlement: This is seen as the theft of public resources by public officials. It is when an official of the state steals from the public institution, where he is gainfully employed. In Nigeria, the embezzlement of public fund is one of the most common ways of wealth accumulation, perhaps, due to lack of strict regulatory systems.

vii. Extortion: This is reflected as the use of coercion, violence, or threats to to acquire resources. Many in the police force are culpable of this in Nigeria.

viii. Favouritism: This is a mechanism of power abuse- implying a highly biased distribution of state resources.

ix. Nepotism: This is a special kind of favouritism, in which a public office holder prefers his/her kinfolk and family members. Nepotism occurs when there is an unlawful exemption from the application of certain laws or regulations or undue preference given in the allocation of scarce resources (Ajie and Wokekoro, 2012). These types of corrupt practices are very common and widespread, to the extent that it is now seen as an acceptable norms and culture in the Nigeria state.

Causes of Corruption

Corruption occurs in almost all sectors and levels of the Nigerian economy. Corruption are found within the Executive, Legislative and Judicial arm of the government. It also exist in the State-own enterprises/companies, Banks and other financial institutions. The causes of corruption are low wages and salaries or pay inconsistency, political instability, low economic development, undue scramble for resources among the different ethnic and religious groups in the country, lack of social security which pushes people to pile up wealth for themselves, family members and generations unborn, poor transparency and accountability in the national life, inordinate urge and lack of conentment, ethnic and religious biases and poor leadership (Ibikunle, 2014; Oguuguo, 2014;).

Conceptual Review of Good Governance

Every state deserves good governance because the importance of good governance to them cannot be over-emphasised, as it ensures their smooth operation.

The word good governance is a highly contested concept that does not left or submitted itself to any general acceptable definition due to multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary approach to it. But some scholars had tried all their possible best in giving meaning to the word 'good governance'. In the word of Adeosun quoted in Odeh (2012), good governance entails the capacity to manage a country's resources in a transparent, accountable, equitable manner, in response to the needs of the people. A good aspect of this view is the need to recognise and respond adequately to the aspiration of the citizens.

According to UNDP (1997), good governance encompasses the exercise of political, economic, legal, judicial, social, and administrative authority in a manner that meets the aspirations and needs of the citizens. This includes; the government, the private sector and the civil society. It also includes the formulation of policy initiatives that would strengthen institutions and the civil society organisations with the main objective of making government responsible more democratic responsive and accountable.

Furthermore, Olowu and Akinola (1995), provides some parameters for measuring good governance. These, as Adenugba (2013, p. 778) suggested, include "managerial and organizational efficiency, accountability, legitimacy, and responsiveness to the public, transparency in decision-making and pluralism in policy options and choices". This includes

issues such as the rule of law, equity, etc. The concept of good governance according to Nwagbara (2003) encompasses general values and basic freedoms, which include accountability, competence, the reign of the rule of law and the absence of human rights abuse. In the view of Tinubu (2008), the concept refers to issues such as rule of law, equity, responsiveness, effectiveness, efficiency, participation, consensus oriented, transparency, and accountability.

ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSIONS IN NIGERIA

Notable among the anti-corruption agencies are the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Other agencies previously instituted to fight corruption included the Judicial Commissions of Enquiry,The Code of Conduct Bureau, The Public Complaints Commission, Mass Mobilization for Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER), War Against Indiscipline Council (WAIC) and the Independent Advocacy Project (IAP) known as the Good Governance Group (G), Akambi (2001).

Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) was established through an Act of the National Assembly in December, 2002, but began operation in April, 2003 when its Board was inaugurated. Its responsibility specifically included the investigation of all financial crimes such as Advance Fee Fraud known as 419; Money Fraud; Counterfeiting Illegal Cash Transfer; Fraudulent Diversion of Funds; Contract Scam; Forgery of Financial Instrument and Insurance of Dud Cheques. Other responsibilities of the EFCC were coordination and enforcement of all economic and financial crimes laws; adoption of measures to identify, freeze, confiscate and seize proceeds derived from terrorist activities, economic and financial crimes related offences or the properties and values corresponding to such proceeds, determination of the extent of financial loss and such other losses by government, private individuals or organisations collaboration with government bodies within and outside Nigeria which carry out its functions wholly or in part analogues with those of the commission. It is also empowered to effect the following laws:

i. Money Laundering Acts 1995;

ii. The Advance Fee Fraud and other related offences Act 1995;

iii. The Failed Bank Recovery of Debts and Financial Malpractices in Banks Act 1994 as amended.

iv. The Bank and other Financial Institutions Act as amended; and any other law or regulation related to economic and financial crimes, (EFCC Act, 2002).

Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC)

The ICPC was instituted to combat the crime of corruption and presided over by Justice Mustapha Akambi (rtd) in 2000 (ICPC Act, 2000). Its main objective was to enforce policies that would be geared towards controlling corrupt behaviour. The notable offences covered by the Acts establishing the ICPC include gratification by an official, corrupt offers to public officers and corrupt demands by persons in public offices, fraudulent acquisition of property and receipt of property, counseling offences relating to the corruption, power to investigate reports of bribery transactions and information etc.

It is disheartening to note here that finance is the stumbling block to execute these strategies of combating corruption in Nigeria. While lamenting over the inability of his commission (ICPC) to meet the expectation of the public, Akambi, its chairman states that his organization has only been able to investigate 608 out of the 1,270 petitions it had received over the past four years, due to lack of funds. Out of the 608, only 34 cases had been brought to court. He wondered why the government had set up the commission and appointed competent people to run it, only to frustrate it from performing by starving it of funds, Akambi (2001).

Gaps in the Reviewed Literature

Existing literature has extensively discussed the concepts, causes, and forms of corruption, as well as the principles of good governance and the roles of anti-corruption agencies in Nigeria. However, there is limited empirical assessment of how the anti-corruption measures implemented under Buhari's administration (2015–2023) influenced good governance outcomes such as accountability, transparency, rule of law, and effective public service delivery. Furthermore, previous studies have not adequately examined the effectiveness, achievements, and challenges of Buhari's anti-corruption campaign in promoting good governance in Nigeria. Lastly, previous studies have not adequately examined the nature or cases of financial crime corruption under Buhari's administration and the reasons for its failure, despite rigorous measures put in place. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by assessing the impact of anti-corruption efforts under Buhari's administration on good governance in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

In understanding the effects of corruption on good governance in Nigeria, political settlement theory is germane.The theory of political settlement was propounded by Mushtag Khan, a development economist in year 2012.

Mushtaq Khan is a development economist and professor at SOAS University of London. He's known for his work on institutional economics, political settlements, and development theory, particularly in the context of South Asia and Africa.

Khan explains how political and economic power dynamics shape governance and development outcomes in the countries, particularly in the context of corruption, institutional development, and state building. He argued that a 'political settlement' refers to a distribution of power and resources among different groups, influencing institutional development, corruption, and state capacity.

In the case of Nigeria, political settlements have been characterised by elite capture of resources and exclusion of marginalised groups, leading to a high level of corruption. The Nigerian political system is dominated by a few powerful individuals who have hijacked the state's resources and used them for their own personal interests. These elite groups comprises politicians, business people, and bureaucrats, who benefit from informal networks of patronage and nepotism. These networks have been developed through political settlements that have been negotiated among the elites and do not reflect the interests of the broader society. The result of this is a weak state that is unable to address corruption and promote accountability. Using PST to analyze the situation, we can see how political settlements have shaped corruption and good governance in Nigeria. The settlements have resulted in weak and corrupt institutions, including ineffective anti-corruption agencies and a judiciary that is often prone to political interference. As a result, corruption has become entrenched, with many politicians using public funds to build their personal wealth and enrich their networks.

However, the theory of political settlement have been criticised due to the fact that its concept and the manner of its interpretation and application to case studies have become divergent, which generates conceptual confusion among scholars. It has also been criticised for its complexity, as it is very hard to apply or predict outcomes due to complex power dynamics.

Nevertheless, the theory help in understand how corruption can be embedded in power structures and institutions. The theory also highlights power dynamics, as it reveals how powerful groups or elites use institutions to maintain corrupt practices. Lastly, the theory helps in pinpoint groups/elites benefiting from corruption, informing targeted reforms.

Methodology

The study reviewed relevant literature on corruption in a thematic form. The study also adopts a qualitative content analysis of selected news reports from credible Nigerian and international media outlets to examine patterns of corruption and governance during the Buhari’s administration. The data collected from secondary source were analysed qualitatively.

Data Analysis

Effects of Corruption on Good Governance under Buhari's Administration

Although President Muhammadu Buhari came to power in 2015 on a strong anti-corruption platform, corruption remained a major challenge and negatively affected his administration in several ways:

i. Loss of Public Trust in Government

The Buhari administration's anti-corruption campaign was widely criticized for allegedly targeting opposition politicians while protecting allies within the ruling party. This perception of selective prosecution weakened public confidence in the government's commitment to fighting corruption and reduced trust in its anti-corruption efforts (Amannah and Adeyeye, 2018; Mbara, 2019; Thompson, 2020).

ii. Damage to the Credibility of Anti-Corruption Efforts

Cases involving senior government officials, such as Babachir Lawal, Ahmed Idris, and Nsima Ekere, raised concerns about corruption within the administration itself. This in one way or another brought the anti-corruption crusade of the administration into disrepute (Ibrahim, 2022).

iii. Poor International Corruption Rankings

Nigeria’s position in the Transparency International rankings worsened from 136th out of 168 countries in 2015 to 154th out of 180 countries in 2022, suggesting limited success in reducing corruption (Chukwuemeka, 2020; Ibrahim, 2022).

iv. Weakening of Good Governance

Corruption contributed to poor governance outcomes, including allegations of nepotism, favoritism, and unequal treatment of different regions and groups within the country (Adenuga, 2022; Ademola, 2020).

v. Undermining the Rule of Law and Democratic Institutions

The administration was accused of using anti-corruption measures to intimidate political opponents and the judiciary, particularly following the 2016 raids on judges’ residences by the Department of State Services (Mbara, 2019).

vi. Financial Mismanagement and Resource Leakages

Controversies surrounding withdrawals from the Excess Crude Account, continued fuel subsidy spending, and misappropriation of public funds reduced government efficiency and

increased perceptions of corruption (Chukwuemeka, 2020; Ibrahim, 2022; Nwogbo and Ighodalo, 2021).

Cases of Financial Crime Corruption during President Muhammadu Buhari's Administration (Nature of Corruption).

There are a lot of cases of financial misappropriation during the President Muhammadu Buhari's administration despite all the measures and strategies put in place, which as follows:

a. Godwin Emefiele as a CBN Governor

The former CBN Governor, Godwin Emefiele allegedly deposited billions of naira in foreign currencies across 593 bank accounts in the US, UK, and China without approval from the CBN board or investment committee. An investigation led by Jim Obaze found that over £543 million was placed in UK fixed deposits alone. The report was submitted to Bola Tinubu and indicates Emefiele could face prosecution for illegal fFurthermouus activities, including unauthorized currency issuance. The case also links to the controversial naira redesign policy. Additionally, 753 housing units linked to Emefiele were forfeited to the government in 2025 (Punch, 2023).

Other cases of Emefiele, the former CBN governor includes:

i. No Approval for the Naira Re-design

On the side of naira redesign, the investigator found that Buhari didn't approve of the naira redesign. It was Tunde Sabiu who first told Emefiele in September 2022 to consider the redesign of the naira. On October 6, 2022, Emefiele wrote to Buhari that he wanted to redesign and reconfigure N1000, N500 and N200 notes. "The former President tagged along but did not approve the redesign as required by law. Buhari merely approved that the currency be printed in Nigeria. The redesign was only mentioned to the board of the CBN on December 15, 2022, after Emefiele had awarded the contract to the Nigerian Security Printing and Minting Plc on October 31, 2022,'' the documents noted. Emefiele was said to have contracted the redesign of the naira to De La Rue of the UK for £205, 000 pounds under the vote head of the Currency Operations Department after the NSPM said it could not deliver the contract within a short timeframe. The special investigator found that N61.5bn was earmarked for the printing of the new notes out of which N31.79bn had been paid.

As of August 9, 2023, findings revealed that N769bn of the new notes were in circulation. The probe of the CBN also revealed the fraudulent use of N26.627tn Ways and Means of the Apex Bank as well as the misuse of the COVID-19 intervention fund. For instance, the CBN under Emefiele at its 661st meeting held on October 27, 2020, approved that the Consolidated Revenue Fund Account should be debited with the sum of N124.860bn, and the decision was implemented on October 9. Similarly, the Committee of Governors at its 670th meeting held on

December 9, 2020, granted anticipatory approval ‘’pending receipt of a formal request by Mr President and ratification by the board of directors the payment of the sum of N250bn only to the Federal Government of Nigeria to address challenges as a result of low revenue inflow and the payment of salaries. The decision was implemented on December 15, 2020 (Punch, 2023)

ii. Anticipatory approval

Also on December 30, 2020, the CBN investigator discovered that the CBN Ways and Means was abused under the Buhari's administration. The document further said, “In an instance, they (senior CBN and government officials) padded what the former President Muhammadu Buhari approved with N198,963,162, 187. There are instances where no approvals are received from the former president and yet, N500bn is taken and debited to Ways and Means.

“There are more shocking instances where the erstwhile CBN governor and his four deputy governors connived to steal outright in order to balance the books of the CBN. “This was by violently taking money from the Consolidated Revenue account and then charging it to Ways and Means. It was a total of N124.860bn. According to the report, they created the narration as a presidential subsidy and expanded the ways and Means portfolio to accommodate crime. “The CBN officers and even the then acting CBN goviiiirnor could not produce the Presidential Approval of most of the expenses described as ‘Ways and Means.’ When confronted, to provide the breakdown of the supposed N22.7trn that was presented to the 9th National Assembly to illegally securitise as ‘Ways and Means’ financing, they were only able to partially explain a total of N9.063 trn or N9.2trn depending on which official you are considering his submission and an unreasonable attribution of non-negotiated interest element of N6.5tn. “This shows that this was the point where the officers of the immediate past administration as well as the erstwhile CBN governor and his four deputy governors connived, defrauded, and stole from the commonwealth of our country with the aid of civil servants.’’ Continuing, the report said, “The true position of the Ways and Means as documented from the reconciliation between the CBN and the Ministry of Finance at the time is N4,449,149,411,584.54. “This may have been the main reason the past administration hurriedly sought that the advances of N22.7trn be securitised by the 9th National Assembly on December 19, 2022, which they also hurriedly did despite the fact that it contravenes section 38 of the CBN Act, 2007" (Punch, 2023).

b. Abubakar Malami as An Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice

Abubakar Malami, who served under Muhammadu Buhari as Attorney-General of the federation and minister for justice, was a highly influential figure accused of interfering in anti-corruption efforts, particularly by influencing the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to go easy on politically connected individuals. He reportedly clashed with former EFCC chairman Ibrahim Magu over such interference, which allegedly contributed to Magu’s removal and the appointment of Abdulrasheed Bawa.

More recently, under EFCC chairman Olanipekun Olukoyede, authorities traced 41 high-value properties (worth over ₦212 billion) to Malami across Kebbi, Kano, and Abuja. The government has filed money laundering charges against him and his son, accusing them of violating financial crime laws (The Cable, 2025).

c. Hadi Sirika as an Aviation Minister

The former aviation minister, Hadi Sirika was accused of conspiracy, abuse of office, diversion of public funds, contract inflation, criminal breach of trust and money laundering amounting to N8,069,176,864.

Also back in April, the former aviation minister's younger brother, Abubakar Sirika, was arrested by EFCC operatives over alleged fraud in the ministry.

According to the Commission, the sum was for four aviation contracts from the former minister to a company known as Engirios Nigeria Limited, owned by his younger brother. The agency said apart from being listed as the company's MD/CEO, Abubakar was the sole signatory to the company's two accounts, domiciled in Zenith and Union banks.

Sources within the EFCC said Sirika awarded the contracts to his brother Abubakar, knowing that the latter is a civil servant, a deputy director on Level 16 in the Federal Ministry of Water Resources, where he has been working since 2000 till date.

The first of the controversial contracts from the former minister to Engirios Nigeria Limited was on August 18, 2022 for the construction of Terminal Building in Katsina Airport, at the cost of ₦1,345,586,500.

The third contract was on February 3, 2023 for the procurement and instalment of lifts, air conditioners and power generator's house in Aviation House, Abuja, at the cost of N615 million while the fourth was awarded on May 5, 2023 for the procurement of Magnus Aircraft and simulator for Nigerian College of Aviation Technology, Zaria at the cost of N2.2 billion.

The source stated that out of the total contract sum, the ex-minister paid out N3.2 billion to his younger brother's Engirios Nigerian Limited, who upon the receipt of the payment, transferred it to different companies and individuals. There is no trace of work done on any of the contract items till date (Channels TV, 2024).

d. Chris Ngige as Minister of Labour and Employment

The former minister of labour and employment facing trial of alleged abuse of office and money laundering involving N2.2 billion in contracts. Ngige is accused of using his position as former minister to confer undue advantage by awarding different contracts to his associates. Eight count charges were leveled against him bordering on awarding contract to his associates.

According to the charge dated October 31 and filed on December 9 by a team of lawyers, led by Silvanus Tahir (SAN), Ngige was alleged to have committed the offences while serving as Minister of Labour under the ex-President Muhammadu Buhari.

The money was received from Jeff and Xris Limited (Zenith Bank Account Number 1011533930), a contractor with NSITF, while performing his official act as Minister of Labour and Employment. The offences were contrary to Section 17(a) of the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act, 2000, and punishable under Section 179(c) of the same Act (Channels TV, 2025).

e. Saleh Mamman as Minister for Power

The accused person (Saleh Mamman), whilst being the Minister of Power, he allegedly conspired with other officials of his Ministry and some private companies to indirectly convert the total sum of N33.8 billion through various private companies which sums he reasonably ought to have known formed part of the proceeds of unlawful activity, to wit: criminal breach of trust in relation to the funds released for the Mambilla and Zungeru Hydroelectric Power Plant Projects by the Federal Government of Nigeria; thereby commiting an offence contrary to Sections 18(a), 15(2)(b) of the Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act, 2011 (as Amended), and punishable under Section 15(3) of the same Act.

Preparatory to the filing of the charges, the EFCC detained Mr Mamman in May 2023, about 20 months after his removal from office and less than three weeks before the end of Mr Buhari's tenure.

According to another source, report gathered that the EFCC is prosecuting Mr Mamman on 12 counts charges of money laundering and abuse of office. PREMIUM TIMES reported that his arrest in May 2023 linked to alleged diversion of funds from the accounts dedicated to the Zungeru and Mambilla Hydro Electric Power Project during his stint as the minister (Premiumtines, 2024).

f. Hajia Sadiya Umar Farouq as Minister of Humanitarian and Disaster Management

A federal high court in Lagos also ordered Sadiya Umar Farouq, former minister of humanitarian affairs, to account for payments of N729 billion to 24.3 million vulnerable Nigerians. Umar Farouq was a minister from 2019 to 2023 in the administration of ex-President Muhammadu Buhari.

In a judgment delivered by Deinde Dipeolu on June 27, Farouq was ordered to provide the list and details of the beneficiaries who received the payments, the number of states covered, mechanisms and logistics put in place for the payments and list of beneficiaries, details of how the proposed beneficiaries have been selected, the projected payments per state, state whether the payments will be made in cash, through Bank Verification Numbers (BVN) or other means,

explain the rationale for paying N5,000 to 24.3 million poor Nigerians, which translate to five percent of Nigeria's budget of N13.6 trillion for 2021, and the payments per state.

In December also, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) invited the former minister over the alleged laundering of N37 billion by one James Okwete, a contractor who worked with the ministry (The Cable, 2024).

g. Timipre Sylva as Minister of State for Petroleum Resources

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has declared Timipre Sylva, former minister of state for Petroleum Resources and ex-governor of Bayelsa State, wanted over an alleged $14.85 million fraud.

According to the EFCC, Mr Sylva is implicated in a case of conspiracy and dishonest conversion of funds provided by the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) for the construction of Atlantic International Refinery and Petrochemical Limited. The notice follows a 6 November warrant issued by the Federal High Court in Lagos, the EFCC said.

Mr Sylva, 61, from Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, recently had his home raided by soldiers investigating a failed plot to topple President Bola Tinubu. He confirmed the raid but denied any involvement in a coup attempt.

"During the said operation, considerable damage was inflicted upon the property. Despite sustained efforts, I have been unable to ascertain the reasons or authorisation for this raid. "To the best of my knowledge, the officers involved did not provide any categorical explanation for their actions, either at the time or subsequently," his spokesperson, Julius Bokoru, said. Mr Bokoru added that Mr Sylva was not in the country during the raid and did not disclose when he plans to return (Premiumtines, 2025).

h. Ahmad Idris as an Accountant General of the Federation

Idris was charged with accepting gratification worth ₦15,136,221,921.46 (about ₦15.1 billion) from Olusegun Akindele while serving as Accountant General of the Federation between February and December 2021. The payment was allegedly not part of his lawful salary or benefits and was received in exchange for expediting payments of the 13 % derivation funds to oil-producing states through his office. This conduct formed Count One of a multi-count charge and was said to contravene Section 155 of the Nigerian Penal Code Act, which deals with public servants obtaining gratification improperly.

Another major allegation (e.g., Count Eight) stated that Idris entrusted with public property worth ₦84,390,000,000 (₦84.39 billion) diverted or handled it dishonestly. The charge specifies that this money was received from the Federal Government of Nigeria (via Akindele and his company), but was not used as intended, constituting criminal breach of trust. This conduct was

said to be punishable under Section 315 of the Penal Code Act (criminal breach of trust). In total, Idris and his co-defendants faced a 14-count charges including stealing, conspiracy, and related offences related to the alleged diversion of public funds amounting to about ₦109.48 billion.

Idris was arrested on May 16, 2022 by the EFCC in connection with allegations of diversion of public funds and money laundering to the tune of about ₦80 billion through bogus consultancies and proxies; this preceded the formal 14-count arraignment. After arraignment in July 2022, a Federal Capital Territory High Court ordered his remand in Kuje Correctional Centre pending bail and further trial proceedings (Premiumtines, 2023).

Reasons why the Gale of Corruption Still Persists Despite Rigorous Measures put in Place by Buhari's Administration

Despite the introduction of significant anti-corruption measures, such as the Treasury Single Account (TSA), Whistle-blower Policy, public declaration of an assets, strengthening of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), corruption still persisted during the administration of late President Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2023) due to a combination of selective enforcement, deeply entrenched systemic issues, and weak institutional capacity. Key reasons for the persistence of corruption under the Buhari administration include:

i. Selective Prosecution and Political Patronage: Critics and reports indicated that the anti-corruption war was perceived as selective, often targeting political opponents while appearing lenient on members of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC). The "repented" narrative, where politicians with pending corruption cases joined the ruling party and faced less scrutiny, undermined the credibility of the efforts. There was even a time when the former governor of Edo State, and currently senator representing Edo North, Adam Aliyu Oshiomole, publicly declared that 'any opposition party members who joined APC would have their sins forgiven'. So, there are a lot of opposition politicians who joined APC in order to evade the situation of being probed, for example, Musiliu Obanikoro, the former minister of state for defence; Efeanyi Okowa, the former governor of Delta State; Senator Danjuma Goje, the former governor of Gombe State, among others.

ii. The refusal of the anti-graft agency to probe some corrupt politicians due to their political connections: There are a lot of politicians who stole in billions and go unprobed or face little or less scrutiny due to their political connections. Some cases were terminated, e.g., the former governor of Gombe State, Alhaji Danjuma Goje. Mr Malami terminated the N25 billion fraud trial of a former governor of Gombe State, Danjuma Goje, based on political considerations. Mr Goje's prosecution by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) was at its tail-end when Mr Malami terminated it.

iii. Weak Institutional Frameworks and Interference: Despite having agencies like the EFCC and ICPC, the fight against corruption was weakened by political interference, particularly in the management of these agencies. The removal of key anti-corruption officials, such as Ibrahim

Magu, was viewed as a setback caused by political interference, particularly Abubakar Malami, the former attorney-general and minister for justice.

iv. Systemic and Structural Issues: Corruption in Nigeria is deeply entrenched in the bureaucratic and political culture, making it resistant to rapid change. The reliance on patronage networks (nepotism) continued to override merit-based appointments, allowing corruption to flourish in public procurement and administration.

v. Ineffective Judicial System: The slow pace of justice or delay in court judgement and the use of plea bargains allowed many high-profile offenders to avoid stiff punishment, reducing the deterrent effect of the anti-corruption campaign.

vi. Lack of proper monitoring and oversight: Most of President Buhari's ministers and other appointees were not being properly monitored due to the excessive trust that Baba reposed in them. Reports have it that any documents that any ministers and other appointees brought to Baba would be signed without proper scrutiny. This, in one way or another, gives opportunity to his appointees to divert public funds to their private pockets.

vii. Corrupt elite appointees: Another factor that also served as the obstacles in fighting against corruption under Buhari is corrupt elite appointees. Buhari's administration was surrounded by appointees who are corrupt and people with questionable character. According to Hashim Sulaiman (2025), "If the Buhari boys would be subjected to eight years scrutiny like Buhari did to the Jonathan boys, Nigerians will come to appreciate the fact that the latter were just starters in cornering national assets for selfish desires". In supporting his statement, Buhari boys, who are his appointees, have no integrity like Baba Buhari. They betrayed Baba due to excessive trust that Baba reposed on them.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study has shown that despite the anti-corruption measures introduced by President Muhammadu Buhari's administration, corruption remained pervasive in Nigeria due to selective enforcement, political interference, weak institutions, elite capture, and systemic governance challenges. The persistence of high-profile corruption cases among public officials undermined transparency, accountability, and effective service delivery, thereby weakening good governance. Drawing on Political Settlement Theory, the study therefore unequivocally concludes that corruption in Nigeria is deeply embedded in existing power structures and patronage networks, which has a great detrimental effects on good governance.

Therefore, to effectively combat the corruption and achieve good governance, the study recommends that anti-corruption agencies such as the EFCC and ICPC should be reformed to enhance their independence, professionalism, and fairness. Corruption cases should be investigated and prosecuted without political bias, while civil society organizations should intensify efforts to promote accountability. Prospective public office holders must undergo

thorough background checks before appointment. Stronger penalties, such as life imprisonment or a death sentence, should be imposed on individuals found guilty of embezzling public funds to deter corruption. Anti-corruption education should be integrated into school curriculum at all levels to instill values of integrity and accountability. Lastly, the government should improve the welfare of public servants through better salaries and benefits, while strengthening monitoring, oversight, and control mechanisms to eliminate opportunities for the misuse of public resources.

References

Ademola, E. O. (2020). Herder-farmer conflicts and RUGA policy: Why Nigerian stakeholders are at loggerheads over rural grazing settlements. *Ethnic Studies Review,* 43(3), 103-121.

Adenugba, A.A. (2013), "Good Governance and Accountability in Nigeria's Developmental Dilemma", *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences,* Vol. 4 No. 2, pp. 777-782.

Adenuga, G. (2022a). The indigeneity clause and the mismanagement of ethnic diversity in Nigeria. *Dynamics of Politics and Democracy,* 1(2), 97-107.

Adeosun, A.B. (2012), "Nigeria@50: The Role of Good Governance and Effective Public Administration towards Achieving Economic Growth and Stability in Fledging Democracy", *International Journal of Politics and Good Governance,* Vol. 3 No. 3, pp. 30-37.

Ajie, H.A., Wokekoro, O.E. (2012), "The Impact of Corruption on Sustainable Economic Growth and Development in Nigeria", *International Journal of Economic Development Research and Investment,* Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 40-46.

Akambi, M. M. A. (2001, Nov; 5th). "The Effect of Transparency and Accountability on Nigerian Socio-Economic Development" A Paper Presented at the Maiden Lecture of the Polytechnic, Lecture series, Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi.

Akindele, S.T. (1995), "Corruption: An Analytical Focus on the Problems of its Conceptualization", Psychologia , Ife.

Amannah, P. I. and Adeyeye, J. O. (2018). Public perception of media reportage of the anti-corruption crusade of President Muhammadu Buhari. African Research Review, 12(3), 8-24.

Channels TV (2025, December 12th). EFCC Arraigns Ngige on N2.2bn Corruption Allegations. *Channels Television.*

Channels TV (2024, April 23rd). EFCC Quizzes Ex-Aviation Minister Sirika over Alleged N8b Fraud. *Channels Television.*

Chukwuemeka, E. (2020). Anti-corruption rhetoric of the Buhari administration and Nigeria's international image. *Studies in Politics and Society,* 9(1&2), 351372.

CLEEN Foundation, (2010), "Corruption and Governance Challenges", available at www.cleen.org/Corruption%20and%20Governance%20Challenges%20i... (accessed on 27 July, 2014).

Dikwa, M.K. (2016). Basic Financial, Economic and Administrative Reforms in the Nigerian Public Service. Maiduguri: Danladi Press Ltd.

Etannibi, E.O.A. (2002). Tracking corruption and abuse of office in a democratic society. Equal Justice: *A Quarterly Publication of Human Rights Monitor.* 2(7), July.

Enweremadu, D.U. (2013). The Struggle Against Corruption in Nigeria: The Role of the National Anti-Corruption Commission (ICPC) under the Fourth Republic. IFRA Special Research Issue, 2.

Faruk, A and Atobatele, A. J (2017) Nexus between Corruption and Poverty: Evidence from Nigeria from 2012-2014. Social and Administrative Science Review, *UMYU Journal of the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences*, 3(1).

Ibikunle, B. O. (2014). Strategic Measures to Control Fraud and Corruption in Public and Private Organizations in Nigeria. *Journal of Professional Administration*. Vol. 15, No. 1, pages 30-35.

Ibrahim, J. (2022, May 20). Corruption and the Buhari legacy, by Jibrin Ibrahim. *ThePremium Times Online.*

IMF Annual Report (2018) Reducing corruption – Peeling back the many layers of corruption.

Khan, M. H. (2012). Political Settlements and the Design of Anti-Corruption Institutions. SOAS, University of London.

Mbara, G. C. (2019). Corruption and good governance in Nigeria: Zooming the lens on the Buhari anti-corruption crusade. *Journal of Gender, Information and Development in Africa (JGIDA)*, 8(Special Issue 1), 195-219.

Nwagbara, E.N. (2003), "The Globalization Phenomenon and the Increasing Rate of Poverty in Africa: Towards a Cautious Response", in Maduagwu, M.O. and Onu, V.C. (Eds), *Globalization and National Development in Nigeria, Kuru,* pp. 195-211.

Nwogbo, D. C., & Ighodalo, A. (2021). Governance and Corruption in Nigeria. *Journalof Good Governance and Sustainable Development in Africa*, 6(2), 81-97.

Odeh, A.M (2015) Effects of Corruption on Good Governance in Nigeria. *International Journal of Development and Sustainability,* 4(3), 292-307.

Ogboru, I. (2009). Reflection on External Debt, Corruption, and the Nigerian Economy. Jos: *JosUniversity Press. 22.*

Ogundiya, S.I. (2010). Corruption: The bane of democratic stability in Nigeria. *Current Research Journal of Social Sciences.* 2 (4). pp. 233-241.

Okeyim, M.O: Ejue, J.B & Ekanem, S.A (2013) Governance and Corruption in Nigeria: A PhiloPsychological Analysis. *Net Journal of Social Sciences,* 1(2), 24-32.

Premium Times (2023, March 1st) Alleged N109bn Fraud: Former Accountant General, Ahmed Idris' Trial Stalled. *Premium Times Newspaper*.

Premium Times (2024, July 11th) Court sends ex-power minister to prison over alleged N33.8 billion fraud. *Premium Times Newspaper*.

Premium Times (2025, November 10th) EFCC declares former governor wanted over alleged $14.85m fraud. *Premium Times Newspaper.*

Punch (2023, December 22nd) Emefiele operated 593 illegal US, UK, China Accounts - CBN investigator. *Punch Newspaper.*

Sharma, M.P., Sadana, B.L. & Kaur, H. (2011). Public Administration in Theory and Practice. New Delhi: Kitab Mahal Publishers.

The Cable (2024, July 7th) Court orders ex-minister to account for N729b poverty alleviation fund. *The Cable Newspaper.*

The Cable (2025, December 24th) EFCC Traces 41 Properties Worth N212bn to Malami. *TheCable Newspaper.*

Thompson, O. O., Afolabi, A. S., Raheem, A. N., and Onifade, C. A. (2020). 'When I see the broom', I will pass over you': An assessment of President Muhammadu Buhari's anti-corruption crusade in Nigeria, 2015-2019. UJAH, 21(2), 195-232.

Tinubu, B.A. (2008), "Good governance, democracy, and sustainable development", a lecture delivered at the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Ibadan, 15 December, 2008.

UNDP, (1997), "Governance for Sustainable Human Development", United Nations Development Programme, New York.