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Matric no: 19/MHS01/205

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Course: Gst 122

Corruption among Nigerian leaders: The motive, aftermaths and the way forward

First, any discourse on corruption across developing countries like Nigeria in the 21st Century is not to establish its existence, as this is well founded. Rather, it is to ascertain the diverse manifestations, proportions, and patterns of corruption and particularly, practical ways to curb its pervasive threat in order to pave the way for sustainable development. The widely held World Bank definition of corruption as “the abuse or misuse of public office for private gains” portrays the phenomenon as a menace occurring in the public domain alone. However, a cursory look at the reality shows that corruption is ubiquitous, as it pervades both the public and the private sectors, in both the developed and the developing countries of the world.

The existing body of knowledge on corruption in Nigeria tilts to its public, state-centric, official, micro and bureaucratic nature, to the neglect of the private, societal, unofficial, macro and informal side. The informal side of corruption, which has often suffered neglect from scholars and public affairs analysts, has far more reaching consequences on the state, than the widely acclaimed public corruption. The Nigerian state and the larger society have had to grapple with mind-boggling and unprecedented cases of corruption from the early post-independence years, to the most recent happenings in her political history. Indeed, the inefficiency of the first three republics was in connection to corruption, while the present fourth republic is also seriously threatened by this trend. Consequently, the study seeks to provide an overview of the patterns and manifestations of corruption in Nigeria.

Next, majority opinion from this study is that greed is essentially the highest motivation for corruption. A few argued that it could also be other issues such as poverty, economic hardship, quest for fame and recognition, peer pressure, pressure from the family, that may be responsible for engaging in corrupt practices. Several of the participants also believe that soft punishments meted to corrupt persons act as huge motivation to people to indulge in corruption. Some of these opinions are demonstrated in excerpts below. Both male and female participants are unanimous in their opinion on the motivation for corruption although female participants believed men do take undue advantage of women. Also, participants in Rivers State and FCT mentioned the high cost of living as responsible for engagement in fraud and bribery citing house rent and meager salary to meet the family needs as major factors. Participants in Lagos state blamed the situation on poor infrastructure (road) and the clear divide between the rich and the poor evidence with location of residence as major motivations for corruption in Nigeria.

However, effect of corruption in Nigeria hits the low layers of the population. People have to survive in the country where rules can be omitted if you have money. The distribution

of financial resources in Nigeria is inadequate. It leads to the increasing growth of low-income families. The middle-class that should form the majority of the population has no significant effect on politics. The gap between the poorest and the wealthiest citizens is extremely wide. Instead of hiring good managers who could change the country - the government desires to dive into nepotism. It means that Nigerians get highly untrusted government representatives. No progress can be made in Nigeria with corrupted government. Bribery and corruption in Nigeria have a long history. From the very beginning of its independence, the government officials did not miss any opportunity to steal money from the budget of the country

In conclusion, the situation in Nigeria is drastic. According to the American financial researches, if the corruption in Nigeria does not slow down, then by the year of 2030, it will cover about 37% of GDP. It means that every citizen starting from today will lose about \$1000 to corruption every year. By the year of 2030, this number will increase up to \$2000 per person. Still, if Nigeria tackles the problem with corruption in the next decade – Nigerians may expect to have about \$535 billion of GDP by 2030. This tremendous sum can't go without a price. The potential benefits of anti-corruption programs are enormous. It includes increasing number of jobs, conditions of life and wages. Alas, today the numbers provide a completely different picture. The future of Nigeria is bright. Corruption in Nigeria can be dealt with. The desire of eradicating corruption should come not only from politics in high cabinets but also from regular people. Low-income families should be the main power of changes as they are the majority of the population.