

# Combating Corruption and Engendering Good Governance: The Nigerian Paradox and Way Forward

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**Abstract:** *Combating corruption and promoting good governance is at the epicenter of socio-economic and political progress of any underdeveloped/developing nation, as all other ingredients and catalysts revolves around it. The idea of this study is to address challenges of corruption and good governance in Nigeria, with an analysis of the Nigerian Paradox, its implications and solutions. The study was based on the principal-agent theory which provides the bases and scope for explanation of issues relating to corruption and good governance in Nigeria and ex-post facto research design was used to give an exploratory understanding and story to the subject under discussion. The study reveals different challenges that impede the fight against corruption and promoting good governance in Nigeria, which among others, include: weak institutions, lack of accountability and transparency, weak oversight mechanisms, lack of public trust. To tackle these problems and propagate good governance that is responsive and progressive, the study recommends the creation and strengthening of institutions that are free and Independent from political interference, such as independent judiciary and transparent civil service system. Further, it highlighted the importance of promoting transparency and accountability, including through access to information legislation, an independent media, and effective anti-corruption agencies.*

**Key words:** Corruption, Governance, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Politics.

## Introduction

Any sovereign nation who desires to move from where they are to where they want to be, requires strategic socio-economic and political growth and development with good governance as part of the essential ingredients needed for this transition. Good governance prioritizes pragmatic approaches towards positive and cost-effective results in government according to Gana (2006). It ensures the rule of law, promotes due process, improves efficiency, facilitates accountability, tackles corruption, salutes excellence, insists on productivity and delivers high quality services to the people. In this way, good governance is related to the ability to provide effective, efficient and transparent leadership with the aim of achieving and sustaining results, hence changing the socio-economic and even the political landscape of a country. It ensures that policy decisions which impact on the masses are based on consensus and coonsent of the society (Obi, Nwachukwu & Obiora, 2008).

Good governance is a vital component of a socio-political environment upon which sovereign nations stand in dealing and transacting with the international community (Obi & Nwanegbo, 2006); sharing information, technology and exchanging of resources (human, material, financial). Over the years, however, the dividend of good governance has fallen prey to and become inconsequential in the hands of the forces of corruption. This is mostly evident in the third world countries, especially African countries. Corruption is a social, economic, political political behavior, which is artificially inserted, having a tendency to twist and misuse the power for personal interests, in which the ethics and rules which govern the standards of a procedure are put aside. Adebayo, Ojo and Idowu (2019) considered corruption as a complex phenomenon encompassing multiple dimensions, which have causes as well as effects and which can manifest in different forms and functions in various contexts. All aspects of corruption can be viewed structurally as the political, economic, cultural and individual malaise, corrupting countries all over the world, especially African countries; evidently sub-saharan African countries; Akor (2014) noted.

Without eradicating variables that threaten the effectiveness and efficiency, there can be no good governance that can strive or progress. Corruption as has been evidentially see in research studies within the sub-saharan socio-political panorama, threaten the dividends of good governance and as such hampers the growth and development of not only the sub-saharan African nations, but also the African continent as a whole (Olanisakin, 2019). So, fighting the corruption indices would pave the way for free and efficient governance, which will ensure development. However, the problem set has no economic interest only in the corrupt practices and their counterparts created to fight and suppress corrupt practices so as to achieve good governance; rather the challenge and practical problems around the measures that are supposed to curb the corrupt practices and propel good governance, are the issues.

## Statement of the Problem

Corruption is not new to knowledge; it is an ancient phenomenon with dimensions and complexity which makes it more difficult and challenging to be completely eradicated. Although all the energies were invested in fighting the phenomenon of corruption in developing and underdeveloped countries of political climes particularly the sub-saharan African countries over the years, the struggle against the rot has been futile, yet.

Corruption all over the world, embodies similar characteristics of actions and inactions of actors who act or perform certain activities which are unethical and compromises the standards of behavior. Corruption often tends to be systemic and self-perpetuating—which are the key characteristics. To this extent it is 'in the blood' of the structures and institutions of society, to the extent that it allows those who are in the game of corruption to keep playing. These factors are among the most important problems and challenges that developing countries are constantly struggling with in the battle against corrupt practices and corruption as whole.

Corruption erodes the foundation of good governance, fundamentally distorts policies, leads to the misallocation and misappropriation of funds, causes harm to the private sector, distorts social and economic development, most important hurt the poor masses. Although there has been some significant work done in recent years to curb corrupt behaviors in sub-Saharan African countries by introducing some strategic patterns it has been often hindered by several problems. These factors include: weak socio-political institutions, weak oversight mechanisms like the legislature and civil society organizations, lack of transparency and accountability (LTA), political interference, impunity, lack of political will and lack of public trust. These variables are important when addressing corrupt practices/activities and shaping the culture of responsive, effective and efficient governance which yields output and outcome that engender growth and development.

#### **Method of Investigation:**

This study follows ex post facto research and exploratory type of research that exposes variables and data and analyzes them based on past experience and events. The type of research wherein it observes and analyzes the given data instead of performing new data collection activities such as experiments or surveys. The purpose of this type of research design is to find patterns, relationships, effects, as well as make inferences about factors, and variables that may have contributed to the outcome of the event being researched. However, the research study has relied on secondary sources for gathering and assembly of the data relevant on the Study. In other words, all related data existing for the purposes of the study were secured from textbooks, journals, articles, newspapers and magazines.

#### **Conceptual Framework**

##### **Corruption:**

Corruption is a significant a significant impediment to good and effective governance that is deliberate/intentional in promoting socio-political transformation and development. scholarly research has shown that the consequences of corruption and corrupt activities are very critical to the development of any sovereignty nation. UK department for international development (2015) cited in Ngutsav (2018), considers corruption as a many-faced phenomenon and one that is marked by a variety of economic, political, administrative, social and cultural factors. It is a product of interaction, opportunities, strengths and weaknesses of socio-political systems. Yayale (2007) pointed out that corruption can take various forms and extend right from the lowest to the highest echelon of government and Government agencies.

The issue of corrupt practices and activities is not recent and neither did it start recently or few years ago because the histories of it is as old as the world (Ogunrinola & Adejumo, 2019). All empirical experiences have shown that corruption is the order of the day in the public service in Nigeria and that it has many names, faces and dimensions. Corruption is seen by some as bribery, kickbacks, favoritism, nepotism, fraud and embezzlement. This leads to a poor service delivery, bad governance and other negative effects that hinder growth and progress. According to Asom and Ijirshar (2017) Corruption is ubiquitous and transcends all spheres of political and socio-economic activities, is not unique in the country, race or ethnic group where it originates and does not depend on democratic or authoritarian Government system, feudal, capitalist, socialist or communist political economy. So, corruption is more strongly tied to political action a state/nation has been engaged in, such as their model and the way of governing.

Onuoha and Onwuchekwa (2017) sees corruption as an illegal act, which involves inducement or undue influence of people either in public setting or the private sphere, to act contrary to the extent that negates the rules and regulations which normally guides a particular process. Adewale (2011) agreed on the same size of corruption as a universal frame but added that its magnitude and impacts are much more severe and deep rooted in Nigeria as it appears to slow down socio-economic and political development in Nigeria.

##### **Good Governance:**

Governance (as it is defined by the world bank (1997)) is the way in which power is applied in the administration of resource in the economy and society of a country for development. Good governance is a construct used to describe the quality of a government's functions in terms of its ability/capacity to effectively and fairly serve its citizens. It is a broad concept that involves a number of factors such as transparency, accountability, rule of law, respect for human rights (Lawal & Victor, 2012). Good governance is often seen as a pre-condition for sustainable social, economic and political development, as it allows for effective efficient coordination and implementation of policies that promote all round growth and development. The elements or attributes of good governance as identified by Onwubiko and Nwachukwu (2006) includes the following aspects/tenets: Efficiency in public administration, development-oriented leadership, responsibility, responsiveness to the needs of the people, Development oriented planning, ability of government to implement policies effectively, Inclusiveness and equality.

Development cannot come about without good governance. Obi, Nwachukwu and Obiora (2008) cited from Adedeji (1993) stated that: It is generally accepted that it is very difficult (if not impossible) to embrace a process of socio-economic and political change through which genuine and sustainable social, economic and political progress can occur if good governance is lacking. So good governance becomes a sine-qua-non, which necessarily points to the presence of any transformative agenda.

Eminue (2005) gave a set of variables or ingredients that are indicative to good governance; they include:

- i. All governments need to avoid all forms of corruption and render itself answerable to the people about its deeds.
- ii. Predictable, open and enlightened policy-making that has transparent process.
- iii. Effective community-based, civil society or grassroots organizations as well as a free media, a free and independent judiciary, an effective parliament that is able to review budgets and carry out oversight, organized private sector and public institutions (both state and non-state) that are responsible to the needs and aspirations of the people and can criticize alternative policies and actions of the government.
- iv. Strong civil society involvement in public life (including autonomous grassroots organizations) and the protection of the political pluralism/competitive party formation of multiparty elections.
- v. Respect for the rule of law all over and at all levels of government.

Good Governance occurs when it is able to achieve and sustain over time these variables characteristics.

### **Trends and Patterns of Corruption: The Nigeria Paradox:**

The nature of corruption in Nigeria shows that it is a complex phenomenon with elements of institutionalization, inadequate deterrent measures, self-adjustment and social-cultural acceptance. The language of corruption in Nigeria is oftentimes one of the 'Nigerian paradox' outlined and discussed by scholars as a co-occurrence of heightened coverage and campaigns against corruption with continued high prevalence rates of corruption and low governance outcomes. Empirically, this paradox can be seen in the low but stable corruption score of the country as shown by transparency international corruption perception index (CPI) which Nigeria has been a standout low level performer over the last ten years. However, despite reforms, prosecutions and institutional growth, there has been no evidence of appreciable improvements in the perception-based measures indicating that structural and systemic problems are still entrenched.

A key trend in Nigeria's corruption landscape is its systemic and institutionalized nature. Corruption in Nigeria is not an isolated or isolated phenomenon as found in more developed systems of corruption but is built into the political, administrative and economic structure. Ogunrinola and Adejumo (2019) stated that patronage, elite capture and the rent-seeking arrangements are all exemplified and the most common form of corruption in Nigeria, especially in oil and gas sector as well as public procurement and electoral politics. This systemic pattern suggests that corruption is not an aberration from the normal, but rather in many instances, an informal mode of governance—which makes it hard to reform. Another relative pattern is the separation of enforcement and deterrence. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), among others, have racked up impressive numbers of arrests, prosecutions and recoveries. But none of these measures have brought about a corresponding drop in corruption. This is indicative of a general phenomenon of low uncertainty, where criminal investigations that capture maximum media attention are sometimes frustrated by long and burdensome judicial proceedings, plea negotiation or the apparent political 'sporting' of convictions. As a result, many cases of corruption are ongoing, as the value of the expected benefits of adhering to corrupt activities is relatively low.

But this paradox is exacerbated by gains in the formal institutions of governance that have not been accompanied by analogous gains in informal institutions. An array of anti-corruption policies was implemented in Nigeria, such as financial regulations, transparency efforts, and digitalization of the Treasury Single Account (TSA). Although such moves have increased accountability in the

procedures, Opara and Amaechi (2025) argue that corrupt actors are capable of evolving their practices and move into less regulated areas or find new loopholes. This adaptability of corruption suggests its durability and the inability to solve the problem through purely technocratic means when the real institutional reform is not a part of the solution. In the same way there is a gap between the perception and the reality, which also helps to form this paradox. International indices focus on perception-based evaluations, but there are some domestic indices (ICPC) which indicate changes in one or another sector or institution for the better (Tidiane, 2019). But public opinion about them is pretty dim because of such things as experiences of bribery in daily life, media attention on high-ranking scandals and a lack of awareness of the effectiveness of reforms. The levels of perceived corruption in both areas vary and this split may indicate the lack of comprehensive implementation of anti-corruption measures and a more sporadic overall picture of corruption. The relative “normalization” of corruption among the socio-economic actors is another significant tendency. Corruption in Nigeria, to some degree, has become a social and cultural phenomenon, especially at its rudimentary level. Facilitation payments, patron-client relationships, nepotism tend to be rationalized as survival strategies when seen in the context of poor economic prospects and low state capacities. Such normalisation is a key factor that strengthens informal practices of corruption and creates a vicious circle that sees citizens both judge and engage in corrupt practices. Likewise, lack of political will and complicity of the elites also perpetuates the Nigerian paradox. However, Uzoigwe and Rothman (2023), argues that anti-corruption policies are often also directionally based on partisan political interests. This impacts on the credibility and independence of institutions, thereby further supporting public skepticism. Regrettably, if laws are not applied on a steady basis with strong neutrality, then corruption-control tools lose their legitimacy, and government reform measures have lesser impact.

### **Challenges of Combating Corruption: Implications to Good Governance**

In recent time, the issue of corruption and good governance have been a serious concern mostly in the third world countries. There's no sector that's spared as corruption is massively roiling the public service of developing nations. The issues surrounding the fight against corruption on one hand and Promoting Good governance on the other hand, has been a devastating issue facing developing/underdeveloped nations such as Nigeria. In being so deep-rooted, corruption has hit public service over the years, making it largely ineffective and inefficient (Tidiane, 2019). This has serious effects on good governance, high level of corruption has proven to be largely responsible for Nigeria's underdevelopment and increasing socio-political crimes. With regard to the causes of many social, economic and political issues that have felt against good governance and outright transformation within Nigeria, Etannibi (2002) traced and blamed the rampant corruption along this line.

Historical experience has taught that low functioning public institutions is one of the critical problem areas in combating corruption or ensuring good governance as Nigeria has a long history of poor functioning public institutions starting from colonial rule till date (Sunkanmi & Isola, 2014). As a result, there is lack of trust in government and its institutions. This distrust and lack of confidence make reform difficult and policy making that promotes good governance difficult. To a greater extent, corruption can flourish continuously where the state is weak in holding public officials accountable and in a public eye (Tidiane, 2019). Another significant way in which weak public institutions tamper with governance through corruption, is their lack of capacity to enforce the rule of law to the letters. This norm of impunity means that those that commit a crime are most likely the ones that get away with it. This results in a situation of no accountability and is a breeding ground for corruption. Weak oversight mechanisms are another problem and pose a great challenge in promoting good governance. Oversight mechanisms (legislature and civil society groups) play an important role in holding institutions and those in power to account. They uphold a system of checks and balances to ensure that the abuse of power is not possible; they also ensure transparency. But if these mechanisms are weak, it fosters corruption, misuse of power and mismanagement of resources.

In addition, inadequate oversight structures can result in resource wastage and poor resource management. In the absence of effective oversight, institutions and individuals may be tempted to engage wasteful and inefficient practices, resulting in wasted resources. This can turn into serious consequences, undermining the economic development and providing public services. In addition, weak oversight mechanisms can also lead to human rights abuses, as individuals and institutions may act with impunity, without fear of consequences.

### **Leadership & Political Will as Factors of Anti-corruption Governance**

Leadership & political will and are key factors for effective anti-corruption governance in context of systemic corruption in which corruption is entrenched in institutions. Underpinning this dynamic is the ability and willingness of political leaders to create, execute, and maintain pro-transparency, accountability and rule of law reforms. Nwajiuba (2020) shows that the success of anti-corruption is better pronounced in a political environment where there is clear leadership behaviour as shown in the commitment both in words and deeds of anti-corruption. Political will thus goes beyond simply articulating a policy but also entails enforcing it – even when that action raises concerns within the political and economic elites. In this regard, ethical leadership has served as key ingredient in the outcomes of anti-corruption. Opara, Udoye (2025) states that leaders who exhibit integrity, transparency and accountability create a norm that permeates the behaviours of public institutions. Formal mechanisms (codes of conduct, compliance systems, sanctions) and informal mechanisms (personal example, moral authority) create a climate of probity by way of ethical

leadership. On the other hand, if there is of leadership of opportunism, or is selective about enforcement, it legitimatises the wrongful practices and erodes the trust in the institutions. Therefore, ethical leadership is not symbolic and plays a key role in fostering anti-corruption principles in governance institutions. Closely related to leadership, is the concept of governance culture suggesting common values, norms and practices that underlie the behavior within public institutions. History, socio-political context and institutional forces, of which corruption and bribery typically became part, can create a “governance culture” that can greatly affect the effectiveness of anti-corruption policies (OECD, 2019). Formal reforms may have limited effect when the socio-political and economic environment teaches that corruption is a commonplace or "normal" part of the business landscape, or is seen as a needed way to get things done when dealing with government departments. This requires effective leadership to facilitate culture change, through transparency, incentives for integrity and through embedding accountability. Such changes require not only reforms in the legal system but also continuous measures to shift public perceptions and active steps to change the system of administration.

But the leadership–anti-corruption governance relationship is complicated by the power and influence of elites and power structures. In many political systems the elite is in a strong position on access to state resources and decision-making, which impacts upon how policies against corruption are implemented and effective. Political and economic elites may be reluctant to approve reforms or may engage in some form of institutional reshuffling to secure the continuation of gains from these established corrupt structures. This is what leads to such situations as the application of anti-corruption measures against the opposition and not against the aiders of the government (Opara & Udoye, 2025). Thus, the prospect of effective anti-corruption governance hinges on whether leadership can negotiate these points of leverage, engage in confrontation, or reform established points of power. Furthermore, processes of leadership and institutional autonomy play a critical role. Autonomy is a key factor in the media's ability to function as anti-corruption agencies, judicial systems and oversight bodies. In a number of instances, however, their performance depends on the amount of political backing or meddling by the leadership. When there is political will, resources, legal protection and operational autonomy are adequate for these institutions. By contrast, ineffective or ineffective/independent anti-corruption agencies are found to be linked to problems with leadership at the decision-making level within a country or specific institution.

### **To What Extent Does Good Governance Serve as Effective Instrument for Combating Corruption?**

Good governance is a key tool for tackling corruption as it creates a government framework which is transparent, accountable, participatory and based on the rule of law. Basically, good governance aims at making it harder for people to get away with corruption by improving institutional structures and enhancing the effectiveness of the use of public resources. Experience has shown that good and well-observed governance structures lead to appreciable lower levels of corruption, because public officials are accountable to clear standards of conduct and performance. Institutional frameworks are, therefore, central to this process, offering the legal, administrative and procedural frameworks essential for managing public behavior according to the recommendations of Uzoigwe and Rothman (2023). Robust structures like a non-corrupt judiciary and effective audit systems and harmonised regulatory mechanisms bring about legislation as well as impartial implementation. Such frameworks also minimize discretion in decision making, a big source of corruption. But when institutions are weak, politicized and are not sufficiently funded, governance reforms are limited, and corruption still happens despite the formal governance measures (Salihu, 2020). In addition, enhancing the democratic process is also vital to ensure good governance and reduce corruption. Under democracy, citizens are held to account by allowing them to vote their leaders out of office every few years, and by engaging in decision making. Whereas free and fair elections, political pluralism, and respect for civil liberties leave more room to expose and condemn the abuse of power. That said, democratic institutions need to come with strong mechanisms for oversight; without this, elections alone may not suffice in curbing what is commonly referred to as ‘elite capture’ or political ‘corruption’. Furthermore, decentralization and citizen participation ensure good governance by making government more "available to the people". Opara and Amaechi (2025) reports that decentralization enables the transfer of authority and resources to local governments, and thus creates a better opportunity to achieve improved service delivery and responsiveness of local governments to the demands of the communities. If used correctly, it can quell the limitations in power at the central level and reduce the number of bureaucratic hurdles along the way. Citizen participation, on the other hand, it enables individuals and communities to participate in governance by using different channels including public consultation, budget monitoring, community oversight etc. This participatory way enhances transparency and minimizes the risks of unchecked corruption. Moreover, public sector reforms are also an important aspect of good governance. These reforms, as Opara and Amaechi (2025), further considers, tend to be around efficiency, professionalism, and accountability of government institutions. Reducing the opportunities for rent-seeking and favoritism (including through merit-based recruitment, performance evaluation systems, financial transparency and public procurement reforms). Furthermore, the principles of result-oriented management systems help reduce political distortion by assessing public servants against outcomes rather than politics, which is a way to enhance institutional integrity. Similarly, good leadership and integrity mechanisms are key to ensuring that governance arrangements are effective. Ethical leadership fosters a culture of honesty, accountability, and feeling for public service and thus establishes a tone for public behavior at all levels. Leaders exhibit integrity and lead the way in setting standards and norms for anti-corruption behavior. Integrity systems that encourage ethical conduct (codes of conduct, asset declaration policy, enforcement of ethical policy etc.) support the institutional framework for ethical conduct (Bajcar & Babiak, 2019). Even well-designed governance arrangements may fail to obtain the hoped for results without strong commitment by the leadership and integrity mechanisms.

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### Theoretical Foundation:

Generally, theories are set of ideas and proven principles that are used to explain and understand phenomena in the world. Based on the foregoing, Chukwuemeka (2019) said that the theoretical framework gives significance, reason and justification of a study. Chukwuemeka explained that theory puts a study at the advantage. Therefore, the principal-agent theory is used in this study.

The principal-agent theory was first developed by the economist and Nobel Laureate, Kenneth Arrow, in his seminar 1963 paper, "A Difficulty in the Concept of Social Welfare". Any kind of separation between the decision maker (agent) and the person to whom the decision is made (principals) causes a danger that an agent will go for his own goal and not that of a principal. The concept has since been extended and elaborated by others, such as George Akerlof, Michael Spence, Joseph Stiglitz, Barry Mitnick and George Baker.

The principal-agent theory deals with the asymmetric information in markets as discussed by a Nobel prize-winning economist George Akerlof, in the paper "The Market for Lemons: Quality Uncertainty and the Market Mechanism" in 1970. Akerlof's work exposed problems to transaction where one has more information than the other entity. He illustrated how this asymmetric information can result in market failure, such as the behavior of adverse selection, in which the low-quality goods/services are more likely to be available for sale. Akerlof's work gives a sense that the principal (e.g., the employer or shareholder) does not necessarily have the same level of information regarding the nature of the agent's actions or results of the work (e.g., manager or employee). The asymmetry of information may give rise to agency costs, for example moral hazard, failure to put effort into a task because the principal can't observe the agent or failure to take enough risk because the principal cannot observe him.

Additionally, professor Mitnick, Barry, who specializes in business administration, has done important work in the principal-agent theory, especially in organizational behavior and management. Principal-Agent Theory is a way of trying to explain the relationship between two parties, the principal (P) and the Agent (A) and how A acts on behalf of P as Mitnick (2004) states. The problems of this relationship, commonly referred to as agency problems, are a major concern of Mitnick's research and include:

- moral hazard: The agent could take more risks or act less desirably because the principal will suffer the consequences.
- adverse selection: it might be impossible for the principal to discern the high quality agent from the low quality agents, and hence the market may end up with a pooling equilibrium which results in the exclusion of high quality agents.

Additionally, Mitnick states that these "agency problems" can be addressed with a number of different mechanisms, including:

Which of the following is an incentive contract? a. incentive contracts:

i. contract that tie the agent's compensation to his/her performance, such that the agent's interests are aligned with the principal's interests.

ii. **monitoring** : By doing so, the principal can monitor the agent's actions to prevent moral hazard and adverse selection.

iii. **signaling**: agents might signal qualities or capabilities to the principal which aid adverse selection.

Importance of Mitnick's investigations of the principal-agent theory are:

Mitnick signified;

- Understand importance of Agency problems in Principal-Agent relationship.
- how incentive contracts, monitoring and signaling can help to reduce these problems.
- A principals need to design mechanisms and contracts that will keep agents and principals' interests in check with each other.
- The use of the principal-agent theory in other areas such as management, organizational behavior and public administration.

Moreover, George Baker, played an important role in the development of the principal agent theory, especially in the field of performance measurement and incentive contracting. Baker's research studied the design of incentive contracts which have the potential to incentivize agents to act in a manner that reflects the principal's goals.

Baker's main points are:

a). Baker spoke on the importance of having accurate performance measurement in the design of effective incentive contracts. Imperfectly stated performance measures can give perverse incentives, for instance there can be gaming or manipulation, he argued.

b) incentive contracting: Incentive contracting is the term used by Baker to refer to "relative performance evaluation" (RPE) or evaluating an agent's performance against a benchmark or against other people. RPE can help to screen out common shocks and more precisely evaluate an agent's competence.

c. contract design: Baker's work pointed to the importance of taking into account the nature of the principal-agent relationship such as the uncertainty, risk aversion of agent and the goals of the principal.

The principal-agent theory relies on the notion that when there is a great gap between the principal and the agent, there is a potential to aggravate the agency problem. An agency problem arises when the goals of those who are impacted by a decision (the principals) and the goals of the person making the decision (the agent) are not the same, and the agent does not give full effort in acting in the interests of the principals. The theory can be used to understand and analyze corruption and good governance, in terms of the incentives and behaviors of the principal (citizens) and the agent (government). Here, the citizen principle (citizens), has a set of interests or goals that they wish the agent (government) to pursue. But the agent (the government) may have some interests of his or her own which is contrary to that of the principal. Where this conflict of interest does surface, the agent may behave in a manner that is not in the best interests of the principal which can result in corrupt practices and/or corrupt practices and personalities; in either case, the agent's behaviour compromises good governance.

There are several implications of the principal-agent theory to the challenges of combating corruption and promoting good governance. First, for effective responses against Corruption and for the establishment of a good governance, the interest of the government (agent) and citizens (principal) must be attuned with each other. Also, the theory highlights the need for transparency and accountability in government, as it makes it easier for citizens to monitor actions of the government. More so, the theory stipulates design of government institutions as the crucial first step in combating corruption and in ensuring responsive government. In other words, public institutions that are practically decentralized with different levels of checks and balances, are less likely to be corrupt than those centralized with few ineffective checks and balances. Last but not least, the principal-agent theory discusses the influence of the political and economic environment in which corruption takes place. It also indicates that corruption is more likely to permeate those countries that lack strong institutions, high poverty and high inequality; and that the environment these variables provide is conducive for the corruption to grow.

#### **Conclusion:**

The ramifications of the issues encountered in combating corruption and the propagation of good governance in Nigeria and by extension/ implication in Sub-Saharan Africa is of great significance. Corruption undermines socio-economic and political achievements; places money at the mercy of corrupt people and prevents it from reaching the poor and those in need of healthcare and education; it makes it difficult for Government to function and become efficient and responsive. In addition, bribery deters the public from trusting such governments, mostly resulting in instability and conflicting interests. Weak institutions and feeble oversight mechanisms were cited as one of the major challenging factors that breeds corruption and undermines good governance. Lack of trust, transparency and accountability were also other ingredients identified as breeding agents which hinder fight against corruption in Nigeria. This makes it crucial to tackle these challenges and to ensure qualitative governance that is responsive to developmental efforts.

#### **Recommendation:**

Addressing the challenges of combating corruption and promoting good governance is not an easy task, and there is no-size-fits-all solution. However, there are a number of steps that can be taken to address these issues, they include:

The need of the hour is to create effective institutions like a free and fair judiciary, a clear and unambiguous civil service system. However, it does not end with just empowering them to become powerful institutions, but also giving them absolute operational Independence. Moreover, these institutions should also be able to monitor and make public officials and institutions accountable.

2. There is need to promote accountability and transparency, through measures such as information laws and effective anti-corruption agencies. In addition, effective and available measures and mechanisms have to be provided to ensure that transparency and accountability can be reviewed and evaluated effectively by citizens and public officers.

3. It is a priority to speak about the issue of inequality, poverty and under-education and employment. Inequality can result in resentments and the feeling of injustice that can give rise to corruption while, at the other end of the spectrum, proper education can help develop an awareness of the adverse consequences of corruption, possibly leading to a tolerant attitude to corrupt practices. Furthermore, poverty provides an incentive for people to participate in corruption to pursue less basic needs. So implementing anti-poor and anti-inequality policies like welfare benefits, progressive taxation, and access to quality education can make a society much more equal, in which people are less tempted to perform corrupt practices.

4. Need to highlight the role of civil societies and independent media for combating corruption and good governance is imperative. Civil society organizations, such as non-governmental organizations are often the first to identify and expose cases of corruption. They also have a crucial role to play in holding governments to account, calling for policies to boost good governance, and support victims to corruption. Additionally, independent media have a critical role to report against and hold government to account for corruption. They can facilitate the awareness of corruption and its impact on the society as well as serve as a forum for the citizens to share their experience and raise concerns. Therefore, it is vital to recognize and reinforce these functions of the civil society groups and the media in fighting corruption and the realisation of good governance.

5. Last but not the least, there is a need to build up a strong public service culture, which is founded on merit and good working record, not on acquaintanceship or godfatherism.

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