

Assessment of the Contributions of Transparency International (TI) to the Fight Against Corruption in Nigeria

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Abstract

Corruption remains a deeply entrenched challenge in Nigeria, undermining governance, economic growth, and public trust in state institutions. Despite numerous anti-corruption initiatives, the persistent and systemic nature of corruption in Nigeria continues to hinder sustainable development and democratic consolidation. This situation justifies the present study, which seeks to examine the contributions of Transparency International (TI) to anti-corruption efforts in Nigeria. Survey design was adopted, employing both questionnaire and in-depth interviews as instruments of data collection. Questionnaire responses were quantitatively analyzed using simple percentage methods to identify trends and general perceptions, while data from in-depth interviews were subjected to content analysis to extract themes and insights. The study was anchored on the Good Governance theory as the theoretical framework. The findings reveal that Transparency International is widely perceived as a credible and influential force in Nigeria's anti-corruption landscape, with respondents acknowledging its multifaceted contributions ranging from raising public awareness and informing anti-corruption policies, to fostering institutional transparency and empowering civil society actors. In view of these findings, the study recommends that to leverage the widespread public trust and perceived credibility of Transparency International, stronger formal partnerships should be established between TI and key anti-corruption institutions such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and other civil society groups. This would allow TI's awareness-raising campaigns and policy recommendations to have a direct pathway into institutional action and legislative outcomes.

Keywords: Transparency International, Assessment, Contributions, Corruption, Good Governance Theory.

Introduction

Corruption remains one of the most pressing challenges confronting Nigeria's socio-political and economic development. Despite the country's abundant human and natural resources, widespread corruption has impeded sustainable growth, weakened institutions, and eroded public trust in governance structures. Nigeria has consistently ranked poorly on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), highlighting the magnitude of the problem. In the 2023 CPI report, Nigeria ranked 145 out of 180 countries with a score of 24 out of 100, indicating a significant perception of public sector corruption (Transparency International, 2023). This unfavorable ranking reflects persistent governance issues, weak accountability systems, lack of transparency in public procurement, and inadequate enforcement of anti-corruption laws.

Transparency International (TI), as a globally recognized non-governmental organization founded in 1993, has been at the forefront of promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity in

governance worldwide. TI's contributions to Nigeria's anti-corruption fight span several decades and encompass a range of strategic interventions, including advocacy, capacity building, citizen engagement, corruption monitoring, and policy recommendations. One of its major interventions in Nigeria is through its national chapter, the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC), which has amplified grassroots engagement and policy advocacy. Through initiatives such as the "Corruption Anonymous" whistleblower platform, TI has empowered citizens to report corruption in a safe and secure environment, thereby increasing public participation in governance and fostering accountability (Okeke & Bello, 2022).

The value of TI's work in Nigeria is further reflected in its role in exposing grand corruption scandals, including the Malabu Oil deal and defense procurement fraud. For example, TI was instrumental in spotlighting Nigeria's loss of over \$1.1 billion through the Malabu OPL 245 oil block scandal, drawing international attention to the lack of transparency in natural resource governance (Adebayo, 2023). TI has also engaged with critical government institutions such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offenses Commission (ICPC), and the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) to enhance institutional capacity and advocate for stronger legal frameworks to combat corruption. Furthermore, TI supports periodic corruption risk assessments in public institutions, thereby helping to identify systemic vulnerabilities and recommending corrective policy actions.

In recent years, the Nigerian government has expressed commitment to anti-corruption, evident in the creation of reforms and policies. However, enforcement remains inconsistent and selective, undermining genuine progress. Despite claims of anti-corruption efforts by successive administrations, grand corruption remains rampant, while petty corruption continues to affect citizens in public service delivery. A 2022 Afrobarometer report revealed that 56% of Nigerians believe corruption has increased in the past year, while 65% think the government is performing poorly in fighting corruption (Afrobarometer, 2022). These statistics underscore a deteriorating public perception and the urgent need for sustained efforts by both state and non-state actors.

However, the situation in Nigeria necessitates a critical appraisal of TI's contributions due to the growing complexity of corruption and declining public confidence in anti-corruption institutions. The increasing sophistication of corrupt networks, coupled with political interference in anti-graft agencies, underscores the need for robust, independent, and evidence-driven interventions. TI's work in Nigeria remains central to the broader global effort to promote open governance, particularly in fragile democracies where corruption threatens development and stability.

The objective of this study is to critically assess the contributions of Transparency International to Nigeria's anti-corruption fight. It seeks to evaluate the impact and policy implications of TI's interventions in fostering transparency and accountability.

Statement of the Problem

Transparency International (TI), despite its acclaimed global standing in the anti-corruption movement, has faced significant challenges in contributing effectively to the anti-corruption fight in Nigeria, particularly from 2014 to 2024. A major concern lies in the credibility and local relevance of TI's flagship tool, the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). While CPI rankings—such as Nigeria's decline from 136th in 2014 to 154th in 2022 and a slight rise to 145th in 2023 (Transparency International, 2023)—signal persistent corruption, many Nigerian stakeholders argue that the CPI lacks grounding in grassroots realities. Critics contend that the index's reliance

on elite perception surveys renders it vulnerable to political manipulation, rather than serving as a catalyst for institutional reforms (Agbibo, 2015; Eme & Onwuka, 2021).

In addition, TI's operational capacity in Nigeria has been weakened by limited collaboration with key anti-corruption institutions such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC). Although the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC), TI's Nigerian chapter, plays a role in advocacy, its limited access to official data and institutional cooperation hampers the translation of research into actionable policy recommendations. Political pushback further compounds these challenges. Between 2015 and 2019, Nigerian government officials accused TI of bias and foreign interference, thereby undermining public trust and diminishing its influence in national policymaking (Ojo, 2019).

Moreover, resource constraints have curtailed TI's capacity for sustained engagement, particularly in rural and conflict-prone areas. With an average annual funding gap of 27% between 2014 and 2024, the organization's outreach and monitoring activities were significantly affected (CISLAC, 2022). Security risks have also discouraged whistleblower participation—an essential component of TI's documentation process. Studies show that from 2017 to 2023, over 46% of whistleblowers engaged by TI-Nigeria feared reprisals due to weak legal protections (Adebayo & Ibrahim, 2020). Finally, the politicization of anti-corruption narratives in Nigeria has created a perception that TI's interventions are externally driven or politically biased. Such sentiments, particularly during election periods and high-profile trials, have eroded TI's legitimacy among certain segments of the population. These multifaceted challenges ranging from methodological criticisms and institutional distrust to political resistance and resource limitations raise urgent questions about the extent and effectiveness of TI's contributions to Nigeria's anti-corruption efforts. Therefore, this study seeks to critically investigate the institutional, structural, and contextual factors that have shaped TI's role in Nigeria from 2014 to 2024, with a view to informing more grounded and locally relevant anti-corruption strategies.

Research Questions

This paper is guided by the following questions.

- i) How does Transparency International contribute to the fight against corruption in Nigeria?
- ii) What are the measures put in place by government in Nigeria to combat corruption?

Objective of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to assess the contributions of Transparency International to the fight against corruption in Nigeria. However, the specific objectives of this study are, to:

- i) examine the contributions of Transparency International to anti-corruption fights in Nigeria
- ii) identify the measures employed by government to combat corruption in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

This section provides clarity by offering precise definitions relevant to the study, ensuring a better grasp of the subject matter and enhancing the reader's understanding of the scope and context of the investigation into Transparency International's role in Nigeria.

Corruption

Corruption is a term widely used to describe a range of dishonest or unethical behaviors by individuals in positions of power or authority. It involves the abuse of entrusted power for personal gain or to benefit others in exchange for bribes, kickbacks, or any form of improper inducements. Corruption is typically seen in governments, businesses, and organizations, where officials or employees misuse their positions for illegal or unethical purposes. This behavior may manifest in various forms, including bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, favoritism, fraud, and money laundering (Alatas, 2023). The extent of corruption can vary greatly depending on the context, but its impact on societies is profound, often leading to economic instability, weakened democratic institutions, and widespread social injustice (Kaufmann, Kray & Zoido-Lobaton, 2022).

Anti-Corruption

Anti-corruption refers to the collective efforts to prevent, reduce, and eliminate corruption in various forms within a society, especially in public institutions and the private sector. It encompasses a wide range of activities, including but not limited to, legal reforms, policy implementation, enforcement of ethical standards, and public awareness campaigns. Corruption, which involves the abuse of power or position for personal gain, can take many forms, including bribery, embezzlement, favoritism, and nepotism. Anti-corruption initiatives aim to restore public trust by ensuring that decision-making processes are transparent, accountable, and free from illicit influence (Hassan, 2024). Such efforts typically involve both national and international frameworks, emphasizing the importance of good governance, rule of law, and civil society participation.

Transparency

Transparency is a concept widely discussed across different disciplines, from governance to business, and even in personal interactions. In simple terms, transparency refers to the quality of being open, clear, and honest about one's actions, intentions, and decisions. It involves providing relevant, accurate, and timely information that is accessible to all stakeholders, enabling them to understand the process, the reasoning behind decisions, and the outcomes.

In political and organizational contexts, transparency also plays a critical role. For instance, in government, transparency involves public access to government actions, policies, and records. This level of openness is seen as essential for holding politicians accountable for their decisions and ensuring that they do not misuse their power. Transparency in this context is not just about making information available but also about creating systems that allow for easy interpretation and public engagement. This approach helps to build trust between the public and their leaders and ensures that those in power can be held accountable for any actions that may not align with the public interest (Kim, Lee & Park, 2024)

Ultimately, transparency is about fostering trust through openness, but it must be done with consideration to the context, the recipients of the information, and the possible implications of disclosing certain data. My personal definition of transparency is: Transparency is the open and honest sharing of information in a manner that promotes trust and accountability, while balancing clarity with privacy.

Empirical Review

This section reviews existing empirical studies on the contributions of Transparency International to anti-corruption efforts in Nigeria. It critically examines the impact of TI's initiatives, identifies

key findings, and highlights gaps in the literature, which this study aims to address for a more comprehensive understanding of the topic.

Contribution of Transparency International in the Fight Against Corruption in Nigeria

Akinyemi and Oduro (2021) provide a detailed analysis of Transparency International's role in improving public sector accountability in Nigeria. The authors utilize a stakeholder theory, which suggests that TI's influence is most effective when it engages multiple actors across various sectors, including government, the private sector, and civil society. The study adopts qualitative research methodology, using interviews with Nigerian policymakers and civil society leaders to assess TI's effectiveness in improving transparency in public procurement and financial management. Their findings show that TI's initiatives have led to increased public awareness about financial mismanagement and corruption in the public sector, resulting in greater scrutiny of government contracts and expenditures. The study also highlights the role of TI in promoting transparency in public procurement processes, which have historically been rife with corruption in Nigeria. The authors recommend that TI continue to strengthen its advocacy for policy reforms that promote greater transparency in government spending, and collaborate with Nigerian media outlets to disseminate information on public sector corruption. However, while the study demonstrates the significant role of TI in promoting public sector accountability, it does not fully address the organization's contribution to other sectors, such as education or healthcare, where corruption remains pervasive. The present study fills this gap by examining TI's influence on anti-corruption measures across a broader range of sectors, providing a more holistic view of its impact in Nigeria.

Okorafor (2020) investigates the role of Transparency International in Nigeria's anti-corruption drive. The study adopts a functionalist theory, which suggests that the role of organizations like TI is to influence societal change by holding institutions accountable for their actions. The study employs a qualitative methodology, using case studies and interviews with key stakeholders in Nigeria's anti-corruption landscape. The findings of the study highlight the significant impact TI has had in raising awareness about corruption, especially through its Corruption Perception Index (CPI). TI's global ranking of countries based on perceived corruption has placed Nigeria under intense scrutiny, making corruption a key issue in public discourse. The study recommends that TI should continue to build partnerships with local organizations in Nigeria to strengthen its anti-corruption efforts and enhance the effectiveness of its campaigns. The contribution of Transparency International in Nigeria's anti-corruption movement, as identified by Okorafor, is substantial, particularly through its data-driven approach, which has provided an objective framework for evaluating the country's progress in addressing corruption. However, this study mainly focused on TI's awareness campaigns, without providing an in-depth exploration of the direct impact of these efforts on local governance or policy reforms. This gap can be filled by the present study, which focuses specifically on how TI's initiatives have influenced policy changes and governance in Nigeria. By examining the outcomes of TI's influence on legislation, law enforcement, and institutional reforms, this study offers a more comprehensive assessment of TI's direct contributions to systemic changes in Nigeria.

Measures put in place by Transparency International to Combat Corruption in Nigeria

The Nigerian government has over the years instituted several measures to combat corruption, including the establishment of anti-graft agencies, implementation of fiscal policies, adoption of digital financial systems, and promotion of transparency tools. Scholars have extensively

interrogated the effectiveness of these strategies, offering a variety of perspectives drawn from empirical research.

Akinola (2018) argues that institutions such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) were established with the intent to strengthen Nigeria's anti-corruption fight. However, his study reveals that the effectiveness of these bodies is constrained by political interference and a lack of institutional independence. This view is echoed by Ogbeidi (2012), who, from a historical lens, observes that successive administrations have often manipulated anti-corruption institutions as political weapons, thereby eroding public trust and undermining genuine reform efforts. Contrary to the scepticisms about institutional effectiveness, Okoye and Ezejiofor (2013) focus on fiscal transparency mechanisms such as the Treasury Single Account (TSA) and the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS). Their empirical findings suggest these digital platforms have been relatively successful in reducing financial leakages, especially in civil service payrolls. However, they also note challenges such as sabotage from within the bureaucracy and technological limitations. This perspective introduces a more optimistic tone, indicating that while traditional institutions may falter, technological innovations offer promising avenues for reform. Adding another dimension, Lawal and Tobi (2006) assess broader public sector reforms, including the Due Process mechanism and procurement reforms. While acknowledging their theoretical soundness, they stress that poor implementation and resistance from entrenched interests have prevented these measures from achieving their full potential. Their findings align with Aiyede's (2016) study, which attributes inefficiencies in the anti-corruption architecture to rivalry and lack of coordination between agencies like EFCC and ICPC. Both scholars emphasize that structural reform is essential, not just the proliferation of anti-corruption bodies.

Moreover, the introduction of the whistle-blowing policy in 2016 marked an attempt to involve citizens in anti-corruption. Ocheje (2018) assesses the impact of this initiative and finds that although it has led to significant recoveries (e.g., the Ikoyi cash discovery), its potential is undermined by the absence of strong legal protections for whistleblowers. This reflects a broader problem across many of Nigeria's anti-corruption efforts: good policies often exist without the enabling legal or institutional frameworks to sustain them.

Synthesizing these scholars' insights, a common theme emerges: while Nigeria has introduced a multiplicity of anti-corruption measures, their effectiveness is consistently compromised by political interference, institutional rivalry, inadequate enforcement mechanisms, and systemic resistance from within the public sector. However, certain innovations—particularly financial control systems have shown comparatively better results, suggesting that a shift toward depoliticized, technology-driven, and citizen-centered approaches may yield more sustainable outcomes.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study is rooted in Good Governance Theory, which offers a comprehensive lens for evaluating the role of Transparency International (TI) in Nigeria's anti-corruption efforts. As a globally recognized civil society organization, TI's mission to combat corruption and promote transparency aligns closely with the tenets of good governance. This theory is widely employed in political science and development studies to assess the quality of governance and the effectiveness of institutions in achieving public accountability, rule of law, and citizen participation. Good Governance Theory emerged prominently in the late 1980s,

following the recognition by global development institutions that poor governance was a major impediment to sustainable development, particularly in developing countries. The World Bank (1989) was instrumental in popularizing the term, identifying good governance as a prerequisite for economic growth and poverty reduction in its landmark report titled “*Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth*.” This marked the beginning of a normative framework used by international actors to guide political and institutional reforms in developing countries.

From an analytical perspective, applying Good Governance Theory allows this study to evaluate not just what TI does, but how effective those actions are in transforming Nigeria’s anti-corruption landscape. It enables a critical examination of whether TI’s contributions have led to measurable improvements in transparency, institutional performance, and public accountability. Furthermore, the theory provides a framework for identifying the challenges that continue to undermine governance in Nigeria despite TI’s interventions. Issues such as political interference, institutional weaknesses, and public apathy remain significant barriers to achieving good governance. Understanding these limitations through the lens of the theory helps inform recommendations for more effective anti-corruption strategies

Methodology

This study utilized a mixed-method research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively examine the contributions of Transparency International (TI) to anti-corruption efforts in Nigeria. The target population consisted of 4,487 individuals drawn from three key institutions involved in the fight against corruption—Transparency International, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC). To ensure representativeness while maintaining feasibility, the researchers employed Krejcie and Morgan’s (1970) statistical formula to determine an appropriate sample size, which resulted in 353 respondents. Data collection involved the administration of structured questionnaire on the selected sample. A total of 353 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, and 333 were successfully retrieved, giving a high response rate that strengthened the reliability of the quantitative analysis. The questionnaire responses were analysed using simple percentage techniques. This method allowed the researchers to calculate and interpret the frequency and proportion of responses in a straightforward manner, presenting the data in percentages for clarity and ease of understanding. Such an approach was instrumental in identifying the distribution of opinions, awareness levels, and perceived impact of Transparency International’s efforts among the respondents. In addition to the questionnaire, the study incorporated qualitative data through interviews conducted with key officials from TI, EFCC, and ICPC, as well as with other civil society actors who are actively involved in anti-corruption advocacy in Nigeria. These interviews provided a deeper understanding of institutional practices, collaborative efforts, and challenges encountered in the course of anti-corruption initiatives. The qualitative component helped to contextualize the statistical findings, offering narratives and explanations that enriched the overall analysis therefore, integrating both forms of data, the study achieved a more holistic and evaluation of Transparency International’s role and contributions to anti-corruption fight.

Data Analysis and Results

Table 1: Respondents' view on the contributions of Transparency International to anti-corruption fights in Nigeria

Responses	SA	A	U	D	SD
Transparency International has increased public awareness about the dangers of corruption in Nigeria.	197 (59%)	67 (20%)	4 (1%)	22 (7%)	43 (13%)
Transparency International's annual reports and rankings influence public perception and policy on corruption in Nigeria.	167 (50%)	133 (40%)	5 (1%)	12 (4%)	16 (5%)
Transparency International's collaboration with local institutions has helped promote transparency and accountability	188 (56%)	117 (35%)	3 (1%)	15 (5%)	10 (3%)
Transparency International's monitoring and advocacy efforts have exposed corrupt practices in public institutions	186 (56%)	111 (33%)	6 (2%)	14 (4%)	16 (5%)
Transparency International's presence has strengthened the capacity of Nigerian civil society organizations in anti-corruption efforts.	111 (33%)	178 (53%)	8 (2%)	16 (5%)	20 (6%)

Source: Field Survey, April 2025

Table 1 above reveals the perceptions of respondents regarding the contributions of Transparency International (TI) to anti-corruption efforts in Nigeria, providing a comprehensive insight into public opinion through their responses to five evaluative statements.

The first item assesses whether TI has increased public awareness about the dangers of corruption in Nigeria. An overwhelming majority 197 respondents, representing 59% strongly agreed, while 67 (20%) agreed, cumulatively accounting for 79% affirmative responses. This suggests that the majority of the public believes TI plays a significant role in shaping public understanding of corruption-related issues. Only a small fraction disagreed (7%) or strongly disagreed (13%), while 1% were undecided. These figures highlight the perceived impact of TI's outreach and awareness campaigns in the Nigerian context, where public enlightenment remains a vital tool in the fight against corruption.

The second statement explores whether TI's annual reports and global corruption rankings influence public perception and policymaking in Nigeria. Here, 167 respondents (50%) strongly agreed, and 133 (40%) agreed, resulting in a 90% cumulative affirmation. This extremely high percentage underscores the relevance and credibility of TI's data among Nigerians. The minimal dissenting responses 4% disagreeing and 5% strongly disagreeing suggest that TI's global corruption indices are not only widely followed but also significantly affect both public discourse and the behavior of policymakers. It reflects how international watchdogs can indirectly steer domestic policy through data-driven narratives and global benchmarking.

In the third item, respondents were asked whether TI's collaboration with local institutions has helped promote transparency and accountability. A strong 56% (188 respondents) strongly agreed and 35% (117) agreed, totaling 91% in support of the statement. This response pattern suggests that the partnership model employed by TI is seen as effective and well-received by the public. The relatively low levels of disagreement (5% disagree and 3% strongly disagree) and just 1% undecided reinforce the view that collaboration with domestic actors enhances credibility, adaptability, and impact in governance reform initiatives.

The fourth item focused on TI's monitoring and advocacy activities in exposing corrupt practices within public institutions. Again, responses were overwhelmingly positive, with 56% (186 respondents) strongly agreeing and 33% (111) agreeing amounting to 89%. Only 4% disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed, while 2% were undecided. This reveals the perceived effectiveness of TI's investigative and advocacy strategies in highlighting corruption within the Nigerian public sector. It underscores the watchdog role TI is believed to play, particularly in making systemic corruption visible and urging accountability.

The final item measures perceptions of TI's influence on strengthening civil society organizations (CSOs) in Nigeria. Though the figures here are slightly less concentrated in the "strongly agree" category (33%, or 111 respondents), the "agree" group is the largest at 53% (178 respondents), giving a cumulative 86% agreement. Only 5% disagreed and 6% strongly disagreed, while 2% remained undecided. This implies that TI is seen as a valuable external actor that bolsters grassroots and CSO capacity, thereby fostering a stronger domestic civil society presence in anti-corruption advocacy.

These findings have important implications. The consistently high levels of agreement across all five indicators demonstrate that Transparency International is widely perceived as a credible and influential force in Nigeria's anti-corruption landscape. Respondents acknowledge TI's multifaceted contributions from raising awareness and informing policy, to fostering institutional transparency and empowering civil society. The relatively low percentages of disagreement and indecision further underscore the consensus among the Nigerian public on the constructive role TI plays. This widespread approval suggests that sustained collaboration with TI, and support for its initiatives, may be pivotal in shaping a more transparent and accountable governance culture in Nigeria.

To complement to the above responses from the questionnaire section, an interview was conducted with a Program Manager overseeing Anti-Corruption Projects at the Transparency International Nigeria chapter on 5th May, 2025, the officer explained that:

Transparency International has played a significant role in shaping Nigeria's anti-corruption efforts through its global corruption perception index, advocacy campaigns, and reports that put pressure on institutions to be more transparent. These activities have empowered citizens to demand accountability and provided benchmarks for the government to assess progress. Public awareness campaigns led by Transparency International have helped ordinary Nigerians understand how corruption affects their lives and what tools they can use to fight it. Therefore, through collaborating with civil society and media, the organization has succeeded in bringing corruption issues into public discussion, especially during election seasons when accountability becomes more crucial to voters and civic groups.

Speaking during an interview held on 2nd May, 2025, the Director of Investigations at the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) highlighted that Transparency International has been instrumental in setting international standards against corruption. The officer emphasized that:

Transparency International's reports and data help enforcement agencies like EFCC to evaluate the country's standing and to understand what improvements are needed in the justice system. Although their reports sometimes draw criticism, they reflect real challenges and serve as a mirror for national self-assessment. Regarding public awareness,

Transparency International has contributed immensely by supporting civic education and organizing awareness programs that encourage whistleblowing and integrity in public service. These initiatives, have made the public more conscious of the effects of corruption and the importance of institutions working together to hold offenders accountable.

In an interview with the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer at the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) which took place on 5th May, 2025, the officer noted that:

Transparency International has supported Nigeria's anti-corruption fight by providing research-based evidence that informs policy and reform. TI's global reports help to highlight areas where the country needs to improve, particularly in public procurement, asset declaration, and financial transparency. Their use of simple, relatable language in their campaigns has encouraged more citizens to engage with anti-corruption efforts. This has led to a better-informed public that can hold leaders accountable, showing that TI's impact goes beyond mere statistics and rankings.

In an interview with a Senior Legal Officer working on Anti-Corruption and Human Rights with the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) on 2nd May, 2025, the officer shared that:

Transparency International has played a critical role in raising both local and global attention to corruption issues in Nigeria. By consistently tracking and reporting corruption trends, TI has exposed weaknesses in governance and pressured public institutions to reform. Transparency International has also been a strong ally in the push for transparency in public spending and access to government information. On the subject of awareness, TI's efforts have contributed greatly to changing how Nigerians think about corruption. More people now demand accountability from elected officials and public servants, which is a direct result of TI's educational programs, media partnerships, and support for legal advocacy groups like SERAP.

Data from the secondary sources reveals that Transparency International (TI), through its Nigerian chapter, the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC), has played a pivotal role in combating corruption in Nigeria from 2014 to 2024. This period witnessed a series of initiatives, assessments, and collaborations that significantly influenced the country's anti-corruption landscape.

In 2014, Nigeria was ranked 136th out of 176 countries on TI's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), with a score of 27 out of 100, indicating a high level of perceived public sector corruption. By 2024, the country had improved slightly, ranking 140th out of 180 countries with a score of 26. This marginal improvement was attributed to increased anti-corruption prosecutions, asset recovery efforts, and civil society advocacy Transparency International, (2015).

One of the significant contributions of TI and CISLAC was the establishment of the Trial Monitoring of Corruption Cases project in 2016. This initiative aimed to foster transparency in judicial processes by tracking and evaluating corruption cases in Nigerian courts. As a result, the average duration of corruption cases reduced from eight years to three to four years. The project also led to the creation of Nigeria's first central online and open-source Corruption Cases Database, which has tracked over 4,500 cases and provides live updates of more than 2,000 cases (The Guardian Newspaper January, 2025).

In terms of asset recovery, Nigeria's Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) reported recovering nearly \$500 million in proceeds of crime in 2024, marking its most successful year since its inception. The agency also secured over 4,000 criminal convictions, indicating a strengthened resolve in addressing corruption despite political interference and resource constraints.

TI and CISLAC have also been instrumental in highlighting systemic issues that hinder anti-corruption efforts. For instance, the lack of transparency and accountability in Nigeria's security sector has been a significant concern. In 2022, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) discovered N7.1 billion worth of padded projects and recovered N6.8 billion worth of cash and assets through its Constituency and Executive project tracking initiative.

Moreover, TI's assessments have shed light on the challenges within Nigeria's judiciary. A 2024 report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) revealed that 20% of Nigerians who interacted with the judiciary were asked to pay bribes. This compromised judiciary undermines accountability and fosters impunity, highlighting the need for systemic reforms (Premium Times, 2025).

The objective of this study seeks to examine the contributions of Transparency International to anti-corruption fights in Nigeria between 2014 and 2024. Findings from respondents overwhelmingly indicate that Transparency International (TI) is perceived as a credible and influential force within Nigeria's anti-corruption landscape. Participants consistently emphasized that TI's multifaceted efforts ranging from public sensitization campaigns and corruption perception indices to its policy advocacy and stakeholder engagement have played a pivotal role in raising awareness, shaping discourse, and fostering institutional transparency. Respondents acknowledged the empowerment of civil society organizations through TI's educational initiatives and the organization's role in increasing public vigilance and media scrutiny of corrupt practices. These findings align with Ogundare (2021), who revealed that TI's initiatives substantially raised public consciousness, helped expose numerous corruption scandals, and contributed to a climate of increased public trust. However, Ogundare also observed that TI's impact was somewhat diminished by persistent structural barriers, including systemic corruption and resistance from state institutions, a view echoed by many respondents. From the lens of institutional theory, these findings suggest that while TI operates as a change agent seeking to reshape formal and informal rules, its effectiveness is mediated by the broader institutional context of Nigeria, where entrenched norms and practices often blunt reform efforts.

Conclusion

This study has provided critical insights into the fundamental role played by international watchdogs in enhancing accountability and transparency within the Nigerian governance system. It revealed that Transparency International (TI), through its Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), has become a credible tool for benchmarking Nigeria's progress or decline in tackling corruption. The consistent release of CPI rankings has not only exposed the depth and persistence of corruption in the country but also pressured successive governments to introduce anti-corruption reforms. Despite Nigeria's establishment of various institutions such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), the study found that political interference, weak judicial systems, and selective prosecution remain obstacles to sustainable progress.

However, Transparency International remains an influential actor in Nigeria's anti-corruption landscape, serving both as a mirror and motivator. Yet, the realization of a corruption-free Nigeria requires more than external assessments, it demands genuine commitment from the government, strengthened institutions, and active civic engagement to dismantle entrenched corrupt practices and promote a culture of transparency and integrity across all sectors.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of Transparency International (TI) and improve Nigeria's anti-corruption efforts:

- i. First, to leverage the widespread public trust and perceived credibility of Transparency International, stronger formal partnerships should be established between TI and key anti-corruption institutions such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and other civil society groups. This would allow TI's awareness-raising campaigns and policy recommendations to have a direct pathway into institutional action and legislative outcomes.
- ii. Second, the Nigerian government must take deliberate steps to de-politicize its anti-corruption agenda. The perception that anti-corruption measures are politically motivated significantly weakens public trust and limits cooperation. An independent oversight body free from executive influence and with active civil society representation should be instituted to audit and review all high-profile corruption cases amongst public office holders and beyond and ensure accountability and transparency.

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