

IMPACT OF CORRUPTION ON HEALTH CARE DELIVERY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Corruption over the years have posed a serious challenge to the development of Nigeria. It has affected all sectors in Nigeria, especially the health sector. The paper examines the impact of corruption on health care delivery in Nigeria. The paper posits that corruption exists in the health sector and manifests itself in different ways and that successive government have tried to fight the monster but has not recorded positive results. Corruption is responsible for the brain drain recorded in the sector and has made it difficult for the people to enjoy quality health care. The paper recommends the needs for professional bodies in the health sector to join the fight against corruption, establishment of anti-corruption bodies in all government hospitals, establishment of disciplinary committees and encouraging members of the public to speak out on corruption cases as part of the solutions to the problem.

Keywords: Corruption, Health care delivery, Health sector

Introduction

Nigeria over the years has experienced so many social problems which have posed serious challenges to her development and one of them is corruption. According to Mustapha, (2022) corruption is one of the pandemic viruses that hamper or slow the growth and development of Nigeria. Since the attainment of independence in 1960, Nigeria has been battling with corruption as resources meant for national development are being diverted or squandered by those entrusted with leadership at all Federal, State and Local Government Levels.

In the last six decades of Independence corruption is so entered in such a manner that the country has continued to lose a lot of financial, materials and human resources. No wonder, many countries which attain independence with Nigeria such as Japan, Malaysia, India and many others recorded speedy development in contrast to the Nigeria's situation in this 21st century.

Nigeria, the Sixth largest producer of crude oil in the world, imports petroleum for its domestic consumption. The four refineries which were built in the early 70s to provide petroleum for internal consumption became nonfunctional and all efforts by the various regimes to revive the refineries did not yield any positive result because the government lack political will to fight corruption. (Source)?

While Nigerians blames the past military administration for high cases of corruption, the return of democracy since 1999 has failed to stop the monster. In 1999 when the Obasanjo administration came on board, it carried out institutional reforms aimed at dispensing democracy dividends which the country was yearning for. In order to tackle corruption which has eaten deep into the fabrics of the country. Former President Obasanjo established the Economic Financial Crimes Commission

(EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC). These agencies were charged with the responsibilities of investigating, apprehending and confiscating proceeds of corruption believed to have been corruptly acquired by people in government. (Source)

However, successive administration failed to strengthen the war against corruption in the country. EFCC, which was established to go after corruption, suddenly turned to a toothless bull dog. The commission became a tool for political intimidation, government used it to harass or witch-hunt perceived political opponents (Mustapha, 2022).

The case is not different with ICPC as the commission has not been able to perform up to expectation. Upon assumption of the Buhari administration and its promise to fight corruption, many Nigerians expected a paradigm shift in the war against corruption. However, the war under Buhari administration became a joke taken too far. The various pardon granted to various corrupt politicians especially former governors shows the lack of will to fight the monster in Nigeria.

Corruption from all indication have adverse effects on the society as it affects virtually all the sectors in the society, be it politics, education or Health in the health sector, corruption has made it difficult for the citizens to enjoy the good service delivery.

Over the years, the health care system in Nigeria has serial setbacks from the successive government due to corrupt practices by major stake holders. Absence of transparency, nepotism, bribery in the health sector has attracted the attention of the media, and society organizations and the general public as reports are usually made by patients who visit various hospitals across the nation, Nigeria. No thesis/statement of problem

Literature Review

The term corruption is difficult to define given its omnibus nature. It is therefore better described than defined. It has different meanings to different persons in different societies and presents itself in varying forms. Corruption in the view of Nsofor, (2009) is the misuse of public power for private and personal benefit. In the view of Nye (1989), corruption is behavior which deviate from formal duties of public role because of private – regarding (personal, close family, private clique) wealth or status, gain or violates the rule against the exercise of certain types of private – regarding influence. Mnadozie (1999) defined corruption as all vice vices such as stealing, bribery among others. Williams, (1987), viewed corrupt act as those that violate specific rules governing the way public duties should be performed.

Health care delivery is all about providing health care services to the people. It is a role expected of the government of any nation, it includes providing drugs and services to the hospitals. Provision of Health Care services according to Alubo, (2012) is part of development for “a healthy nation is a wealthy nation” (Alubo, 2012).

From the above explanation, it will not be wrong to state, there is a link between corruption and health care delivery in many nations. Corruption manifest in the health and health care services. It

can manifest in the form of fraud in the account sectors of the hospital, supply of fake or adulterated drugs, not willing to come to work by workers especially medical doctors and nurses or diverting patient to private clinics owned by staff of a government hospital and many more. All these acts and many more deprive patients of quality health care services in any society.

Classification of Corruption in the Health Sector

There are different types or manifestation of corruption in the health sector. However, few of them merit attention and are discussed in this paper. According to Nweze, (2008), some of them are:

i. Internal fraud in the account section

This is a dishonest act which involves the alteration of account record with the role aim to deceive or cheat the system, it is a trick, a person who cheats or pretends to be what he or she is not. Internal fraud can manifest in the term of not reporting proper account to the government or supervising ministry.

ii. Purchase and Supply of Sub-standard drugs

This is usually done by the purchasing or procurement unit in the hospital. Staff in the unit deliberately allow the supply of sub-standard drugs for personal gain. It is a dishonest act between the producers of the substandard drugs and the staff in the procurement unit.

iii. Absence from work

This happens when staff deliberately absent themselves from work for reasons bordering on inadequate technical knowledge, apathy work pressure, poor memory, low intelligence lacks of supervision and many more. Some absent themselves from work to pay attention to their private practice and this is common among clinical staff like doctors, nurses and pharmacists.

iv. Diversion of Drugs and Hospital Equipment's

The diversion of drugs and hospital equipment is another form of corruption common in government hospital. Staff divert their drugs to their private clinics or sale the drugs and equipment to interested members of the public without remitting the money to the government

v. Preferential Treatment of Patients

Health worker are sometimes accused of preferential treatment by patients. This could be done based on ethnicity, religion or class. In some situations, it create problems between relatives of patients and health workers. Acts of this nature are noticeable in General Hospital, Federal Medical Centres or Teaching Hospitals where attention is paid to particular, or sets of individual over others, the rule of first come, first serve are discarded. Causes of corruption in the Health sector. There are so many factors responsible for corruption in the health sectors and they can be grouped into three according to Nweze (2008) and they are institutional, social and personal habits.

i. Institutional

This refer to the specific factors that are peculiar to an institution and which engender corruption among the rank and file of staff working in those institutions.

These include:

a. Frustration

Lack of congruence between the aspiration of staff and corporate objectives engenders frustration in the generality of staff which in turn breeds fraudulent tendered or corrupt practices. A sense of job insecurity has also been known to induce brain wave in the direction of fraud and whatever malpractices that can bring quick returns and hurt the organization.

b. Staff Experience

It is already an established fact that corrupt-practices such as fraud are more frequent among employees with little or inadequate experience in relation to the functions assigned to them. Hence, they create avenues for fraud and corrupt practices to take place without knowing it more experienced staff do not create such opportunities unless they are active collaborators, this is common in the accounts unit in the hospitals.

c. Inadequate Training

The need for comprehensive training and re-training not only on the theoretical but also on the practical aspects of the job cannot be over emphasized as this is the only way to equip the staff with confidence and the required level of sophistication to sniff out fraud even when it is still far away.

Many management of the hospital or medical centre should not be induly cost conscious in this recapped as the result of lack of training is often counterproductive, this is very important especially for account staff.

d. Poor Internal Control

Ineffective or poor supervisory control over critical demands such as, security documents, keys and other vital asserts inevitably given rise to corrupt practices.

e. Recruitment Error

This is perhaps, one major cause of corruption in the health sectors which unfortunately, has not received its fair share of attention or publicly. It is common knowledge that background checks are usually not done on applicants before employment and in such situation, incompetent and corrupt staff are employed and this become a problem to the hospital in future.

ii. Social Factors

Several social issues encourage corruption in the health sector. Such factors include but not limited to the following:

- a. Honesty in Offices or Public places are no longer encouraged; on the contrary, such people are often despised and regarded as slow, foolish or stupid and not knowing how to utilize the opportunities at their disposal to make quick wealth.
 - b. Much premium is placed on the accumulation of raw wealth in our society without sparing any thought about the source of that wealth and this encourage corruption.
 - c. Our value system has become so perverted that the noble concept of dignity of labour has been severally eroded and replaced with the get-rich-quick syndrome which is eating deep into the fabric of our society and encouraging corruption in all facets. The health sector has been hit affected by this malaise.
- iii. Personal Habits
- The phenomenon of habit is one of the most difficult personal problems to overcome and this has a strong bearing on the persistence of corruption in the health sector in Nigeria. A habit according to Nwaze, (2008); can be described as a commodity which if the first letter (i.e. “H”) is removed, the person will still have “A bit of it, and if the second letter (i.e. “A”) is pulled out, the person will have “Bit” of it, even if the third letter (i.e. “B”) is removed, the individual who is already possessed must still have IT.
- Psychologically, it is an open knowledge that some individuals possess an endemic appetite for criminal adventures and this has nothing to do with their status in the society. Such individuals will steal if they have the slightest opportunity, couple with an exit sources, which may be created by the organization.
- Again, the influence of colleagues and mentors in the system is also a factor to contend with the junior staff usually learn from the senior staff. So in some cases, if the senior was very corrupt while in service, the junior may take over later in life.

Methodology

This study used the research techniques of content analysis, which is relying solely on secondary data obtained from journals, newspaper, magazines and report from states and federal government of Nigeria. The impact of corruption have cited.

Results and Discussion

The negative impact of corruption in the Nigeria Health System cannot be over emphasized. Corruption is responsible for the poor quality of health care delivery experienced by Nigerians. Corruption which is the absence of transparency promote nepotism in the health sector, it makes it difficult for patients and their relations to trust health workers and it is a common knowledge that, trust is needed in the relationship between doctors and patients or relations of patients and when this is no possible it may affect the healing process.

Government on its part lose billions of naira to criminal minded staff in the health sector because of corruption. Corruption has affected the development of the health sector, creating a bad image

for the country when compared with other countries. The most serious economic impact of corruption was the pariah states Nigeria assumed during the military era, especially during the Abacha years. Foreign aid and investible funds needed for the development of some critical sectors, especially health were denied Nigeria even from international bodies to which Nigeria had membership. Nigeria according to Aku, (2003) was abandoned by its friends and the economy was the worse for it.

Corruption has negative effect on nations, the main effect of corruption in Nigeria is the distortion of social and economic structures. These distortions produced several vices like unemployment, underdevelopment, slum life, high population, secret cults, high cost of living, risk to life and property, civil disturbances and upheavals among others. All these tendencies have negative effects on the health of the people. Based on these facts, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Professional bodies like Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) pharmaceutical society of Nigeria, laboratory scientification and others have critical role to play in the fight against corruption. They need to be sensitized their members on the evil of corruption and to encourage their members to live by the ethics of their profession. Ethics which are code of conducts when practiced encourages integrity among members of a professional group.
- ii. There is need for the establishment of anti-corruption group or society to work in all government hospitals to checkmate the activities of members of staff. The group or society will check mate corruption and build integrity to change the behavior of members of staff towards corrupt practice.
- iii. There is need for the establishment of disciplinary committee in all Federal and State owned Hospitals to try cases of corrupt practice among staff. Membership of the committee should comprise of senior and junior staff of proven integrity. The committee should be empowered to discharge its duties effectively without fear or favor.
- iv. Members of the public especially patients should be encouraged to report all cases of corruption to the management of the hospital, it should be done in such a way that the identity of the reporter is unknown except where there is need for the identity to be made public. The use of functional telephone lines, can be medium to report such criminality in the sector.
- v. Activities of Contractors should be closely monitored especially those supplying drugs to the hospitals if their activities are clearly monitored, it will go a long way to discourage the supply of substandard drugs which also form part of the problem of corruption in the health sector in Nigeria.
- vi. There is also need for mechanism to be put in place by the government to check all the factors listed as being responsible for corruption in the health sector. Factors such as nepotism, poor internal control, inadequate training and recruitment based on quota system.

If all these factors are reduced or completely eradicated by relevant agencies of government, it will go a long way to reduce the prevalence of corrupt practices in the health sector in Nigeria.

Conclusion

This study aimed at assessing the impact of corruptions on health care delivery in Nigeria. Corruption here was defined as the misuse of public power for private and personal benefits. It includes internal fraud in the account section, absence from work, diversion of drugs and government equipment preferential treatment of patient and purchase and supply of substandard drugs.

Literature review as basis for content analysis show that corruption is a social problem that has affected the health care sector in Nigeria and is on the increase despite the federal government efforts at fighting the menace.

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