

## **CORRUPTION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN TARABA STATE NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

Corruption is a pervasive issue that significantly hampers socioeconomic development worldwide, with particular severe impacts in developing regions. This study examines the social and economic effect of corruption in Taraba State, Nigeria, a region where corruption remains deeply entrenched. The research employs a qualitative approach, relying exclusively on secondary data as source for data collection. Various documentary sources were utilized, including academic journals, newspaper articles, and statistics from Transparency International, along with other Internet - bases resources. The study is descriptive, drawing on observation and data from these sources to provide a comprehensive analysis. Finding reveal that corruption in Taraba state has profound negative effects on governance, public service delivery, economic stability, and overall societal well-being. The study underscores the urgent need for targeted anti- corruption measures tailored to the specific challenges of Taraba state, and it contributes to the broader understanding of corruption's multifaceted impacts in localized contexts. The insights gained from this research offer valuable implications for policy makers, development practioners and anti- corruption agencies in their efforts to combat corruption and promote sustainable development.

**Key words:** Corruption, Socio Economic Development, Nogeria, Taraba State

### **Introduction**

Corruption is a global problem that manifests in varying degrees in different parts of the world. It is a global phenomenon that affects developed, developing and underdeveloped nations. According to Makar, Ngutsav, Ijirshar&Ayaga (2023) corruption is a global problem, and no country of the world is totally free of its menacing grip. Although, corruption is prevalent in almost every country in the world, some countries are more corrupt than others.Ortindi (2022) contends that the nature and dynamics of corruption vary greatly among countries, making it a diverse and complex phenomenon to address. It has been seen as a structural problem of political, economic, cultural and an individual's malaise. It is found not only in democratic and dictatorial societies but also in feudal, capitalist and socialist economies. Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Bhuddist cultures are equally bedeviled by corruption. Corruption exists in the public and private sectors, profit and nonprofit as well as charitable organizations. It subsists both in developing and developed nations but is predominant in developing countries; hence, it remains a symptom of a poorly functioning nation. Unfortunately, it is resulting to poverty and lack of decent living in many countries of the world. This phenomenon has undermined every effort at socio-economic development especially in developing economies for decades. For instance, it is a deeply rooted phenomenon in most poor countries in the South Asian region where poor governance, weak political institutions and poor law and order are common (Alamgir1 &Amin, 2018).

In Africa, it is imperative to unequivocally state that corruption is glaring and palpable, exerting a more pronounced and adverse impact than it does in other regions (Ibrahim, Ayaga, Ijirshar, Ngutsav & Makar, 2023).

In Nigeria, the rate and consequences of corrupt practices on socio-economic growth in the country are assumed to be scaring and tend to deteriorate the whole economy. The Independent Corrupt Practices and other Offences Commission says ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) padded the 2021 budget to the tune of N300 billion. The padding, which they did by duplicating projects, shot the budget to N13.59 trillion. The MDAs also allegedly padded the 2022 budget with duplicated projects amounting to N100 billion. Sadly, there has been no consequences for the lawmakers and the complicit civil servants. This is aside from the N49.9 billion discovered as salaries for 'ghost workers' between January and June 2022. About seven years after a federal high court sitting in Lagos ordered the prosecution of principal officers of the National Assembly indicted in the alleged N481 billion padding of the 2016 budget, not one single lawmaker and their accomplices have been arraigned. A civil society organization, HEDA, in 2021, compiled a list of 25 top corruption cases linked with stolen or mismanaged funds worth N900 billion, which the government was investigating but had been left dormant (Civil society Organization 2021).

In Nigeria, the general consensus is that, corruption has held back this country for too long, seriously impeding socio-economic growth among other sad consequences. Although previous studies attempt to find out the effect of corruption on social and economic development. but to the best of this paper there is no single study that explores the combined social and economic effect of corruption specifically in Taraba State, although (MAIYAKI, el, al, 2023).

### **Corruption**

Within the realms of definition, a succinct yet comprehensive perspective is presented by ojo (2018), who posits that corruption embodies any form of deceitful, unethical, or fraudulent conduct exhibited by individuals in positions of authority or participants in transactions. According to Ortendi (2022), corruption is the abuse of authority or trust for Private benefit, and it a temptation indulged in not only public officials but also by those in positions of trust or authority in private enterprise or nonprofit organizations. Corruption is a form of anti- social behavior by an individual or social group which confers unjust or fraudulent benefits on it perpetrators, and it consistent with the established legal norms prevailing morals ethos of the land and it likely to subvert or diminish the capacity of the legitimate authorities to provide fully for the material and spiritual well-being of all members of the society in a just and equitable manner (Ibrahim el al, 2023). Moji (2018) defined it as an illegal and unethical and unauthorized exploitation of one's official position for personal gain or advantage. According Olaniyan & Okemakinde (2018), it can be seen as anti-social behavior conferring improper benefits contrary to legal and moral norms, and which undermine the authorities ' capacity to secure the welfare of all citizens. Olaniyan & Okemakinde 's (2018) conceptualization of corruption largely captures the ideals espoused in this paper and is therefore adopted as a working definition for the

study, this however, does not in anyway, preclude that other definition as expounded by other scholars are not correct, useful or relevant when dealing with issues of corruption.

### **Socio-economic Development**

Socio-economic development means the improvement of people's lifestyles through improved education, incomes, skills development and employment. Socio-economic development, is also the process of economic and social transformation based on cultural and environmental factors (Ortindi et al, 2022). Socio-economic development refers to the ability to produce adequate and growing supply of goods and services productively and efficiently, to accumulate capital, and to distribute the fruits of production in a relatively equitable manner (Spyromitros&Panagiotidis, 2022)). To Ibrahim, Sanusi&Muddassir (2023), socio-economic development is increase in macroeconomic indicators plus consequential positive relationship with its attendant social indicators. To the duo, when the resources of the state are properly managed to generate self-sufficiency in a sustainable manner, then socio-economic development has taken place. Socio-economic development encompasses improvements in both social and economic aspects of society, leading to overall well-being and progress (United Nations Development Programme, 2020). From an economic perspective, socio-economic development involves sustained economic growth, increased productivity, job creation, poverty reduction, and improved living standards (Ibrahim, 2019). It entails the efficient allocation of resources, the development of infrastructure, and the diversification of the economy (Ogujiuba, 2018). On the social front, socio-economic development encompasses improvements in education, healthcare, social welfare, gender equality, and social cohesion (Olaniyan&Okemakinde, 2018). It aims to enhance human capabilities, promote social justice, and reduce inequalities (Tochukwu, 2023). Thus, socio-economic development used here to mean a situation where the totality of the human person as well as his environment can guarantee good life on a sustainable basis.

### **Theoretical framework**

The paper anchored on Prebendal Theory, the Prebendal Theory was propounded by the American scholar Richard Joseph (1987), posits that state offices are treated as prebends, open to appropriation by officeholders who leverage themselves to generate personal benefits for themselves, their constituents, and kin groups. Elected officials, government employees, and members of ethnic and religious groups to which they belong often perceive themselves as entitled to a share of government revenues (Abada and Oyia, 2020). A pivotal element of Prebendalism, as outlined by Joseph, is the transformation of the office into the personal possession of the officeholder. When applying the Prebendal Theory, it becomes evident that corruption in Taraba State has not only become a commonplace practice but also a deeply ingrained way of life. Corruption has permeated every corner and aspect of Taraba State, evolving into a cultural norm. This phenomenon has been nurtured, sustained, and normalized over time. Leaders Taraba State have gained notoriety for their involvement in stealing, embezzlement, and the misappropriation of resources intended for development (Bakare, 2016). Regrettably, Taraba State stands as a corrupt state, hosting some of the corrupt leaders (CPI 2020). This environment of corruption renders the state vulnerable to

farmers/herders conflict, banditry, kidnapping, religious conflicts, and other factors that exacerbate misery.

This has further worsened the plight of the majority, plunging them into poverty and perpetuating a state of stagnation. If reversed, one can extrapolate that the state could have transcended its current state of underdevelopment. The scale of theft perpetrated by the elites in the state is beyond the survivability of any state; the illicit outflows of funds cripple the state's prospects. Corruption in the state reflects an inhumane and devilish reality, contributing to primitive accumulation of wealth that extends beyond generations. The consequences are dire: extreme impoverishment, heightened insecurity, kidnappings, and various inhumane outcomes. In Taraba State, holding state power translates into access to state resources. Intense competition for political positions often disregards the intended statutory purposes of such offices. Public servants occupying influential government positions see this as an opportunity to secure state resources, primarily for themselves and secondarily for their kin groups. Notable cases, such as that of JoriNyami, the former governor of Taraba State, exemplify the perspective of African elites toward government resources. This prevailing mindset encourages cronyism, nepotism, and other self-serving tendencies, pressuring public officers to utilize their positions for the exclusive benefit of their own groups, often at the expense of others. Abada and Oyia (2020) aptly assert that the rule of law is the shield that protects the individual from government corruption. This manipulation of power for personal gain echoes the core tenets of the Prebendal Theory, wherein state offices are converted into avenues for personal enrichment, perpetuating corruption as an embedded practice in Africa's socio-political landscape.

### **Methodology**

The study, being qualitative in nature, exclusively relied on secondary sources of data collection. To gather data, the researcher made use of various documentary sources, including academic journals, newspaper articles, and statistics from sources like Transparency International as well as internet sources. Therefore, the paper is basically descriptive based on observation and data taken from the above-mentioned sources.

### **Discussion of findings**

Despite the pledge to Nigeria by Nigerians, to be faithful, loyal and honest, to serve Nigeria with all our strength, to defend her unity, to uphold her honor and glory, corruption has remained in all the sectors of the Nigerian society (Aver et al, 2015) and Taraba State is not left out. Corruption in Taraba state manifest in bribery, fictitious names are included in salary vouchers, and the proceeds converted to personal use, kick- backs, political pay offs, extortions and demanding/receiving all kinds of gratifications; unlawful payments for contracts either not executed or poorly executed because the pay officers have been induced; collaboration with contractors to inflate costs of contract value; the Ghost workers syndrome; "sorting out" teachers/lecturers and examiners for better grades, etc.; illegal enrichment of oneself using one's official position, at the expense of the public; alteration of official documents to derive personal benefits at the expense of the public i.e. forgery; demanding offering and acceptance of any form of gratification to obtain unmerited favors or advantages, and such

gratification could be material or monetary; using one's official position to influence policies and decisions, or offering wrong advice for the purpose of personal advantage, or for some other person's advantage, at the expense of the larger public interest; condoning indiscipline and other unwholesome behavior (e.g. drugs faking, violation of ethics governing certain business operations) because the official has compromised his position; aiding and abetting examination malpractices or other related offences. Oyeshile (2000) confirmed that corruption manifests in both the public and private realms of life in the state. Consequently, Corruption is perceived as the means for the primitive accumulation of capital in Taraba State and this has led to the accentuation of the lust positions of state power Iyayi (2001). Government officials ranging from the state leader to the petty bureaucrat have had the power to shape the process of accumulation Goldstein (1999). People mainly seek state power not because they wish to make a contribution to the common good or to improve the well-being of all in the society, but because they want to satisfy their greed and oppressive tendencies. The powers they exercise make them prone to corruption most especially, since they lack the intellectual and moral basis for the proper utilization of this power for the good of all Ujomu (2015).

Furthermore, Hogendorn (1996), says that in Taraba State anyone wanting to do virtually any business must bribe public officials. Hogendorn (1996), confirms that, majority of new university graduates applying for civil service positions want to join departments where bribes are fattest. The present set of the citizenry seem to have inherited from the past one's different categories and tricks of corruption. The present generation has equally accepted corruption as a norm. This portends a generational apathy to corruption. From the foregoing, Osoba (1998), averred that, corruption has developed to its highest possible level so that it has become what can be termed a viable industry in that sense in Taraba State. Aderonmu (2001), affirms that, the state treasury looters and their allies are getting richer, while the masses are wallowing in abject poverty. In the public sector, a band of short-sighted and greedy elite, both military and civilian, have, within a decade, created, nurtured, and perpetuated the conversion of public treasury and national wealth for private uses. These elite eschewed transparency and abhorred rules and regulations, broken laws, violated due processes, and crudely stole from the public coffers Aderonmu (2001). For instance, the investigation and prosecution of the former Governor of Taraba State Jolly Nyame is just to mention but a few. The career and pathology of corruption in the state is widespread and systemic and has reached an alarming rate. It has footprints on the floor of public and private lives including the governor that should be the epitome and symbol of purity and perfection and trickles down to other tiers of government. Every now and then, some politician, government official, business executives and other opportune individuals are being pilloried in the media, castigated in the church or booed in the streets for alleged massive financial misconducts, or appropriation of public funds or some kind of unwholesome attitude despite their religiosity Aderemo (2001).

It is this situation that the former Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) boss Waziri Farida opined that the extent of aggrandizement and gluttonous accumulation of wealth that I have observed suggests to me that some people are mentally and psychologically unsuitable for public office. The unbridled amassing of public wealth had reached a point of madness or some form of

obsessive-compulsive psychiatric disorder (Ogaga, 2010). Corruption has become so pervasive that the entire public service and state has turned into some form of a criminal enterprise. Corruption has been condoned in the public and private institutions that it is hardly possible to differentiate between corruption as a crime and official conduct as a policy (Osoba1998). Those involved are not punished rather, they are idolized, worshipped, revered and honored with chieftaincy titles and honoraria's awards by the custodian of our value system. The general perception today is that government officials occupying public offices work for personal interest and aggrandizement rather than for the public good or interest. They see their places of work as a place to steal public funds or properties as part of their own share of the national cake. Ogaga (2010) averred that, corruption in Taraba State is an enigma because ordinary citizens are always critical and condemn corruption at home, worship centers, schools, commercial vehicles, streets, offices, bars and clubs and cannot hide how much they abhor the phenomenon. But this only happens as long as they are at the lowest rung of the society. Their attitudes suddenly change as soon as they are given an opportunity to occupy any position of authority. They exhibit character worse than those they have been criticizing before they are elevated to the new levels.

Traces of corruption are therefore not difficult to find in Taraba State in as much as they are everywhere in the state. That is why Onyiloha (2014) lamented that our enemies are the political profiteers, the swindlers, and the men in high and low places that seek bribe and demand ten per cent. Those that seek to keep the state divided permanently so that they can remain in office, the tribalists, nepotisms, those that make the country good for nothing before international circles, and those that have corrupted our society and put Taraba State political calendar back by their words or deeds. This suggests 2013 incident, when the 230Km Gembu Road was awarded for reconstruction by the Taraba State government at 36.3 billion (Ogaga2010).

However, years after the contract was awarded, the Taraba State Ministry of Works and Transport dubiously claimed that the project was done, citing the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of the Bali – Serti – Gembu road as some of the achievements recorded in the State. In 2017 also, Governor Darius Ishaku claimed to have completed the Bali – Serti – Gembu road, stating that driving on Gembu road, is a one-hour smooth journey and all trenches that were notorious on the road were also identified and repaired. Similarly, Babatunde Fashola, the Minister of Works and Housing, had in 2021 disclosed that the Federal Government approved N20 billion for the reconstruction of the same road project. Moreover, on May 18, 2022, Mr. Fashola SAN announced that the federal government has approved another N95.232bn for the reconstruction of the Bali –Serti – Gembu road in spite of the N20billion already handed over to him as Minister of Works and Housing by Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation NNPC (Ortindi 2022).

### **Impact of Corruption on Socio-Economic Development in Taraba State**

Corruption in Taraba State has far-reaching consequences that undermine socio-economic development and impede progress in various sectors. It is indeed a frightening problem in Taraba State, as it pervades the state atmosphere and has overwhelmed all levels of government. Public funds

are often arbitrarily handled, used for private purposes, and deposited in personal accounts both within and outside State. Consequently, socio-economic conditions of the people continue to deteriorate. Corruption therefore has negative consequences for the state's socio-economic development. For instance, corruption adversely affects the stability of government, being an obstacle for greater cohesion and unity. As a result, loyalties are divided by thoughts of personal gains and national unities battered as corruption becomes an instrument for promoting divisive tendencies in the state, undermining relationship and destabilizing the institution of state. Corruption undermines integrity and hampers efficiency of institutions both in the public and private sectors of the economy as decision making mechanisms are not only slowed down but become incoherent and most often irrational, thereby raising the specter of a failed state (Ortindi, 2022). In like manner, corruption retard economic development as huge sums of money appropriated for development projects are siphoned to personal accounts, with very little return. The effect of this is that critical infrastructure for example, has deteriorated to the extent that they can hardly support any meaningful economic growth while macroeconomic stability has also been seriously undermined by loss of government revenue and excessive spending.

This has therefore, reduced domestic investment, and reduced foreign directed investment as well as the distortion of government expenditure away from health, education, power and the funding of research. It is clear that the effect of corruption on the economy is indeed devastating. Government contracts are often inflated. This undoubtedly weakens the economy and generates political instability. The sad economic situation is further exacerbated as fund embezzled are stashed in foreign bank accounts making them unavailable to the state for its internal development; thus, making the economy to remain static. This suggests that corruption is inimical to socio-economic development. According to Alamgir and Amin (2018), corruption is the single greatest obstacle to social and economic development. As it directly harms the people of the state, especially the poor by depriving them of their basic access to health and education. In the presence of corruption, people cannot reap the benefit of free trade as corruption levies an illegal tax on the whole economy in the form of bribes and illicit payments. It reduces a state's growth rate by up to one percent each year (Alamgir1 & Amin, 2018). The channels through which corruption reduces growth are by decreasing investment, by increasing cost of production and operation, misallocating public/natural resources, raising uncertainty in decision-making, increasing poverty and lowering tax and custom revenues. In face of corruption, small enterprises are compelled to pay large bribes, thus raising their cost of operation and thereby discouraging investment. Corruption also lowers the quality of public services and infrastructure, distorts government spending decisions, reduces government revenue and damages confidence in the rule of law. Thus, corruption undermines confidence in public institutions and exacerbates budget problems. However, corruption is destructive not only to the economic performance of the state, but also to the social development of the economy. Ortindi (2022) reports that increased corruption is associated with increased infant mortality rate and reduced literacy rate. This is because corruption distorts the size and composition of government spending and distorts funds away from socially efficient activities to rent-seeking activities. Besides, corrupt politicians are

more likely to spend resources on items which provide them lucrative opportunities and on which it is easier to levy large bribes. That means, it is easier to grab large bribes on goods which are produced by firms operating in markets where the degree of competition is low. (Alamgir1 &Amin, 2018). Since education sector has substantially large number of suppliers, it is relatively difficult to collect bribes on textbooks or teachers' salaries. This is why corrupt leaders have an incentive to divert funds away from education. Thus, corruption undermines public trust in higher education, worsens the quality of education, prepares unqualified professionals and undermines the incentives that motivate young people to work hard. More so, corruption has lethal consequences on the quality of education, students 'moral, future opportunities for students and quality of future leadership. Spyromitro and Panagiotidis (2022) attests that the selection systems to higher education face corruption, and corruption is also widespread in the accreditation, licensing and certification process. Thus, due to the high prevalence of corruption in Taraba State, education received by young people is lacking in quality and efficiency. Moreover, poor management means teacher tend to misuse their professional position, accept bribes from students, and use tuition and fees for private benefit Spyromitros and Panagiotidis (2022).

Corruption is also a widespread manifestation in the state public as well as private healthcare services in Taraba State. Incidence of corruption in health care raises the cost of patientcare, reduce access to basic health care for poor, spread infectious and contagious diseases, produce incompetent health care professionals, and force patients to pay illegal fees. All these adversely affect the performance of health care services and will foster ill health and sufferings of people, thus increasing death of patients from improper treatment or lack of access to essential health care facilities. Since education and health play a vital role in shaping the human capital of an economy, corrupt health and education sector undoubtedly have lethal impact on the whole economic performance of the state. Without bolstering these two key institutions, it is unlikely that the goals of reducing poverty, mortality, and morbidity rates which are important objectives of the MDG cannot be achieved. This is because corruption blocks people's access to basic healthcare, increases the cost of medical treatment, produces incompetent health care professionals, thereby setting up a vicious cycle that contributes to ill health and suffering. To sum up, corruption in health sector actually kills people. The difference between life and death, good health and sufferings is determined by corruption Chattopadhyay (2013). This is why, it is often said that corruption is the cancer of the society that eventually retards economic development.

Corruption wastes the limited resources of an economy, increases the costs of doing business thus signaling inflation, hence radically reduce revenues accruing to the state. It also results in poor service delivery, moonlighting or multiple concurrent sources of employment and refusal to perform normal functions without additional payment. Agale-kolgo (2018), asserts that corruption deepens poverty and makes it difficult for ordinary people to get ahead as the result of their own efforts. There is increasing evidence that the social and economic cost of corruption disproportionately affects the poor, who not only suffer from the lack of services and efficient Government, but who are also powerless to resist the demands of corrupt officials.

Systemic corruption is the hydra-headed monster that has held Taraba State captive. This has contributed to government failure and breakdown of institutional infrastructures. The state of



insecurity in Taraba State is greatly a function of government failure, traceable to systemic and political corruption. It has added another dimension of violent conflicts which has eroded national values. Corruption is bad not because money and benefits change hands, and not because of the motives of participants, but because it privatizes valuable aspects of public life, bypassing processes of representation, debate, and choice. It has been described as cancer militating against state's development, because corruption deeply threatens the fabric of the state Nwanegbo&Odigbo (2013). (Ibrahim et.al, (2023), also confirms that corruption alters societal values, shifting the focus from moral virtues to the relentless pursuit of wealth and power. Good conduct takes a back seat, fostering a culture of wealth accumulation. Corruption also contributes to security challenges, as seen in Taraba State's case, where despite substantial security funding, peace remains elusive.

### **Conclusion**

Corruption inhibits socio-economic development in Taraba State in particular, Nigeria, Africa, and Global at large. Although, it has shown direct and indirect effects on socio-economic development in the short-run, the long reign of corruption practices decay or deteriorate the level of socio-economic development in the state. The direct costs of corruption are high in terms of loss of revenue or funds diverted from their intended use, the indirect costs in terms of the economic distortions; inefficiencies and waste resulting from corrupt practices are more problematic over the long-term and thus make it more difficult to address.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the above presented findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. To effectively ascertain the current situation of corruption in Taraba State, it is recommended that comprehensive and regular assessments of corruption levels across various sectors and governmental levels, it should Implement, robust mechanisms for data collection, such as surveys, interviews with key stakeholders, and analysis of corruption related reports and cases, can provide a clearer picture of the extent and nature of corruption in the state. This data- driven approach will enable policy makers and anticorruption agencies to prioritize areas for intervention and tailor anti- corruption strategies according to the specific challenges identify in Taraba State.
2. Given the significant impact of corruption on socio-economic development in Taraba State, it is therefore, recommended to integrate anti-corruption measures into broader development agendas and policies. Strengthening transparency, accountability, and ethical standards within public institutions is crucial to mitigating corruptions', adverse effects on economic growth, public services delivery, and societal well-being. Additionally, promoting civic engagement and awareness campaign among resident can foster a culture of integrity and collective actions against corruption practices. By addressing corruption comprehensively, Taraba state can create an enabling environment for sustainable development and inclusive growth.

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