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Effects of Administrative Corruption on Democratic Governance In Nigeria

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Abstract

Administrative corruption has become a major issue sabotaging governance and democratic development in Third World Countries. It is a menace that respects no national boundaries. It distorts socio-political life of the people. In Nigeria, administrative corruption has eroded people's trust in government because of the persistent increase in inefficiency and ineffective public service delivery. As revealed in the literature, administrative corruption in Nigerian public institutions has made a lot of the nation's resources mismanaged by the public officeholders despite many policy measures put in place to curtail the menace. Sequel to this phenomenon, this paper examined the effect of administrative corruption on democratic governance in Nigeria. Relying on the ex-post approach where literature was surveyed to explain the extent to which administrative corruption impedes the growth of democratic governance in the country.

¹. Introduction

Democratic governance has been globally recognized as a system of government where public institutions function in line with democratic norms. It involves the process of promoting an enduring capacity for separation of powers, independence of the branches of government, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, and accountability in the administration of the state. Democratic governance is the quality of the political system that consistently generates legitimate government, elected through a credible election.

The paper recommends strengthening of the internal control mechanisms to detect cases of administrative corruption in public institutions. It also suggests the creation of pathways to give citizens the relevant tools to engage and participate in governance towards promoting transparency and accountability in the administration of the state.

Keywords: Administrative Corruption, Democratic Governance, Public Institutions, Democratic Sustainability, Democratic Sustainability

As noted by Biden (2021), democratic governance is a political concept through which the will of the people becomes the authority of the state. It becomes manifested when state institutions, policies, and laws function according to democratic processes especially when those structures are applied and implemented through a responsive democratic system. Democratic governance promotes a suitable leadership process that enhances the strategic narrative of a shared future toward good governance in the country. To establish trust from citizens, democratic institutions must perform with the highest level of transparency, integrity, and accountability.

In Nigeria, the debate on strengthening democratic governance started shortly after the country returned to democratic rule in 1999. According to Olu-Adeyemi (2012), returning to democratic rule was the dawn of the fourth republic in Nigeria after several years of military regime marked by much suffering, infrastructure decay, and institutionalized corruption. Nigerians acknowledged a return to democratic rule as the best option for the attainment of political stability, economic development, social welfare, justice, equity, and a corrupt-free society.

However, years after the Nigerian democratic experience, the aspiration of the citizens for an egalitarian country with an institution of a democratic government became rekindled due to the abysmal performance of elected leaders in meeting up with the yearnings and aspirations of the people. This phenomenon as observed by Garuba (2020) has been associated with corruption occasioned by bad governance, nepotism, and social injustice in the country. The nation's administrative system has been manifesting with corruptive engagement where public officeholders bend the official rules to satisfy their personal interests against the general interest of the state.

As observed by Babalola (2021), administrative corruption has impacted negatively democratic governance in Nigeria by undermining the government's efforts to implement a sustainable welfare policy for the citizenry. Administrative corruption within democratic settings is a life pattern manifested among public office holders despite machinery put in place to curtail the menace in the Nigerian public sectors where it is possible for public office holders to re-direct the nation's resources into rent-seeking activities rather than productive activities for the country.

A typical fact of this phenomenon is a recent case of loss of revenue from the oil sector in Nigeria. This has been the result of corruption in the management of the nation's oil industry where oil theft poses a serious threat to the nation's economic development. Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to conclude that administrative corruption has been a major challenge to democratic governance in Nigeria. It is as a result

of this narration that this paper provides insight into the challenge by investigating the effect of administrative corruption on democratic governance in the country.

2. Review of Literature

Governance

For clarity's sake, governance (as opposed to “good” governance) can be defined as the rule of the rulers, typically within a given set of rules. Governance is the process by which the rule of the political system is designed to solve the likely conflict in the course of an authoritative decision-making model. It projects the proper functioning of state institutions and follows up with its acceptance by the citizens. Governance processes are designed to ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, stability, equity and inclusiveness, empowerment, and broad-based participation. It has to do with a political and institutional arrangement that enables the citizens and political elite interacts together and participate in public activities.

Malapi-Nelson (2017) equates governance with the administration of the state. It is a system that sets the parameters under which the administrative system operates by showcasing the power distribution model and indicates how government policy is being formulated to ensure accountability and efficiency in the administration of the state. It also superintends how public institutions achieve desired policy implementation. Governance includes oversight, the structures, systems, and practices that the government put in place to assign decision-making authorities, define how decisions are to be made, and establish the organization's strategic direction.

It also has to do with overseeing the delivery of public services; the implementation of government policies, plans, programs, and projects; and the monitoring and mitigation of key risks; reporting and appraising the performance in achieving intended results and using performance information to drive ongoing improvements and corrective actions. It is a true mechanism for holding the government accountable to the generality of the people and enables the government to run public institutions legally, ethically, sustainably, and successfully, for the benefit of the people and the state at large.

Bevir (2012) posits that governance is a means of formulating policy and allocating resources. It could also be described as political processes that exist in formal institutions with a body whose sole authority is to make binding decisions in a given geographical system. Governance is a system of administration that provides a policy framework for effective state management. It clearly specifies the process of decisionmaking and identifies the constituted authority that acts on behalf of the people in the administration of the state. In a nutshell, governance is the process that influences institutions' behavior and, in turn, facilitates citizen interactions.

Good Governance

In the development literature, ‘good governance’ is frequently used as a pre-condition for creating an enabling environment for poverty reduction and sustainable human development. The concept emanated from the 1992 report of the World Bank as a means of making lending arrangements for Third World

Countries. It was entitled “Governance and Development”, the idea was propounded as the way in which power is used to regulate the economic and social resources of a country. However, the term good governance has been often used by organizations globally to curtail any forms of corruption, promote accountability and respond to the needs of the people. It is the level to which public officeholders deliver on the promises of effective public service delivery.

According to Pranish (2022), good governance is, among other things, participatory, transparent, and accountable for the promotion of the rule of law. It is a best practice in the administration of the state through which fundamental issues related to the management of public institutions, its processes, and practices are decided upon by the state actors; it is a way of reforming democratic institutions and creates avenues for the public to participate in policy-making through the representatives in government; good governance promotes transparency when decisions and actions are open for public scrutiny with full access to clear information on public matters.

As noted by Pranish (2022), good governance involves processes that enable public institutions to conduct public affairs, manage public resources, and guarantee the realization of the fundamental rights of the people. It relates to political and institutional processes necessary to achieve the goals of development. The true test of good governance is the degree to which it delivers sustainable development by being committed to the creation of a system founded on justice and responsive to the future needs of the state. Good governance is the act of looking after resources on behalf of the people; it is demonstrated by maintaining an organization’s capacity to serve the public interest. Good governance is the process through which institutions conduct their affairs, manage their resources and guarantee the realization of human rights in a manner essentially free of abuse, and corruption, and with due regard for the rule of law.

As argued by Gisselquist (2012), good governance encourages public participation in government, inclusion in law-making and policy-making, and accountability of elected and appointed officials to the people. It enables all-inclusive participation in the administration of the state. It also leads to the wide representation of societal interests and indecision-making; with good governance, women and minorities group in the society are motivated to contribute to the socio-political development of the state. Good governance brings integrity to the administration of the state and promotes impartial and ethical governance for the public interest with full compliance with legislation, as well as instilling high standards of professionalism at all levels of administration.

Democratic Governance

The word “democracy” has been regarded as political situations or phenomena with features of equality and freedom, with traditional terms such as democratic society, democratic political process, democratic style of governance, or democratic governance. It exits with a provision for state institutions to express the will of the state and ultimately for the expression of all the basic questions of social-economic direction in line with the policy-making process of the government. Democratic governance expresses the ability to adapt to new realities arising from an increasingly demanding and participatory society.

Bitar, Máttar, and Medina (2021) observe that democratic governance allow government institution to perform their function optimally by promoting a suitable leadership structure to strengthen the democratic

process with the aim of exercising constitutional power in line with the popular will of the people. Democratic governance represents the act of marinating state power with the consent of the people. It is a way of constructing the rules of democracy in accordance with emerging and future demands of society. Democratic governance also provides an overview of good practices that are applicable to the entire range of democratic systems. It also creates an environment in which political parties perform their essential democratic functions.

Babalola (2021) notes that democratic governance justifies the quality of a political system that consistently generate legitimate government by encompassing ideal situation where those in leadership positions does not arrogate to themselves the wisdom in decision-making. Democratic governance enables the government to exercise its political power through representatives directly elected by the people in a free, fair, and credible election, rather than a cosmetic exercise by regimes of dictatorship or a one-party system. Democratic governance showcases how the legislative arm of government performs its official functions in order to ensure that effective legislative business is done in the parliament.

According to Biden (2021), democratic governance can be anchored in the standard that promotes political pluralism, institutional accountability and responsiveness, an active civil society, human rights, the rule of law, and democratic elections. Democratic governance can also be achieved through increasing the level of women's participation in politics, strengthening parliaments, developing multiparty political landscapes, preventing the abuse of state resources, and effectively implementing recommendations made by election observers in a bid to strengthen the democratic process.

Democratic governance without any exception attaches importance to the unity of democratic institutions and the promotion of public opinion. It also provides the basis for a sustainable democratic system and laid the foundation for the supremacy of people's power in a democratic state. It is a form of suitable leadership process for strengthening democratic institutions within the framework of the rule of law. Lijphart (2012) believes that democratic governance requires the process of safeguarding the democratic system because; the democratic system in practice also depends on a matching value system. Without the entrenchment of such values, it is difficult to imagine achieving "consensus" given diverse and conflicting aspirations.

Administrative Corruption

The literature revealed that the level of corruption varies depending on how influential a position the particular public official holds in the public establishment. Administrative corruption trends where government disobeys court orders; promotes nepotism and represses media and the civil society. Administrative corruption is an unavoidable outcome of modernization in public governance where public office-holders act contrary to rules guiding their official conduct. It is a form of corruptive practice emanating from decadence in the administrative setting and it is the most significant social problem confronting effective public service delivery. Administrative corruption has accounted for a widespread of other related corrupt practices and this has impacted negatively on good governance and effective public service delivery.

According to Samieh and Bastanipour (2016), administrative corruption is an illegal act of engagement of public officials. It is a form of "nepotism and other unfair means where the ruling elites conduct their official

tasks in the public establishments”. It is a form of misuse of governmental positions for parochial purposes and is manifested when service-recipient bribes public officials to receive favorable service delivery. It also exists especially in the area where public officials demand grafts in the course of performance of the official tasks through the manipulation of public service rules. Administrative corruption takes place when government officials demand gratification before performing their official functions. The gratification may be in the form of monetary or reciprocity consideration for service (s) done or intended to do.

As noted by Ijewereme (2015), administrative corruption is unethical conduct frustrating the wheel of development. A consequence of administrative corruption in public governance has been attributed to ineffective public service delivery which decreases the value of policy implementation in the state. The menace has impacted negatively on constitutionalism and the effective administration of justice. Its attendant effect contributes to political violence and other forms of electoral malpractice when it comes to the issue of the electioneering process and promotes inefficiency in the provision of social services to the people. It has negative implications on the administration of the state by incapacitating the desires of the government to provide better social services to the people.

Administrative corruption is therefore a form of unethical practice perpetuated by public officials to undermine good governance and reduce the culture of transparency and accountability in the public setup. It is incipient in all human activities that contribute to retrogression in the effective implementation of government policy. It is an act of nepotism and a way of exacting personal privileges against the interest of the state.

Manifestation of Administrative Corruption on Democratic Governance in Nigeria

Nigeria is a federal republic in the sense that there is both a national government and governments of its 36 states and it utilizes the form of government in which the people hold power, but elect representatives to exercise and utilize that power with the executive power exercised by the president. Nigeria started democratic governance when the military regime of General Abdulsalam Abubakar ended the transition process to civil rule in 1999. This made the citizens express a sigh of relief from dictatorial military rule over the years.

However, the process of sustaining the hard-earned democratic government was later bedeviled with the hydra-headed political culture of graft, bad governance, and administrative corruption. The resultant effect of administrative corruption is that the majority of the citizen has been denied the dividend of democracy despite abundant financial resources in the country. According to the World Bank, in its 2022 Poverty and Prosperity Report, Nigeria contributed three million people to global extreme poverty, while the country is “home to a large share of the global extreme poor.” Nigeria was ranked 103 out of 121 countries, a position that signifies the nation has a level of hunger that is serious (World Bank, 2022 report).

These have made the gains associated with the Nigerian democratic experience overshadowed by widespread of unemployment, insecurity, and weak governance institutions. It has resulted in retrogression in the administration of the state where issues of nepotism; inefficiency; electoral malpractices; embezzlement of public funds; extortion from public service recipients; favoritism and lack of accountability become the subject of democratic governance in Nigeria. This infraction as noted by

Uzochukwu (2017) made the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of Transparency International conclude that administrative corruption formed the larger percentage of the total corruption index ranking of Nigeria over the years.

Garuba (2020) avers that administrative corruption has made it difficult for Nigerians to enjoy the dividend of democracy. It has become an essential obstacle to the socio-political and economic progress of the country. There are several cases of nepotism and other unfair means by which political office-holder conduct their official tasks and made it possible for abuse of official positions and privileges to trend in the country. This is an unavoidable outcome of modernization in public governance where misuse of governmental position comes as a result of consideration for personnel gains. Therefore, cases of administrative corruption in Nigeria have become a functional means through which corruptive activities are taking place in the nation's bureaucracy. The officials take money or other things from the client on the contrary of doing anything for the public service recipient.

Amata (2022) argues that another common way through which administrative corruption manifested in Nigeria's democratic governance is on the issue of electoral fraud which happens through voter intimidation; a strategy that has been employed over the years by political office-holder in keeping those likely to vote for opponents away from the polls while in most instances, political thugs perpetuate this act in conjunction with security agencies who ought to be neutral in maintaining decorum during the electioneering process. There are many instances where this is pulled off successfully with intimidation of voters, the ballot boxes are often snatched and taken away with officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) running for their lives or sometimes whisked away with election materials to undisclosed locations. Several reports of this abound, there is hardly any election in Nigeria where such acts have not been reported.

On the aspect of the revenue drive of the government, administrative corruption has paralyzed the financial capacity of Nigeria through revenue leakages and oil theft. This as averred by Osinbajo (2023) has spelled doom for the country and fuelled unstable public finance where large-scale theft of crude oil has undermined the government's efforts to maximize resources from the oil sector. Osinbajo (2023) notes that Nigeria lost about 4.2 billion liters of petroleum products from refineries valued at over \$1.84 billion at the rate of 140 thousand barrels per day from 2019 to 2021 and the total value of oil lost between 2019 and 2021 is higher than Nigeria's foreign reserves at any point in time and almost ten times Nigeria's oil savings in the excess crude account.

3. Structural Formation of Administrative Corruption in Nigeria

I. Partisan Politics in Government Service: As observed by Iredia (2022), the politicization of the location of governmental projects by political office-holder is part of administrative corruption impeding democratic governance in Nigeria. One obvious example is the awesome power of the legislators, not only in their official area of law-making but in their proclivity to influence any developmental projects to their constituencies without putting into consideration the issue of fairness, equity, and justice in establishment of such projects in their constituencies. This accounted for reasons why National Assembly members

inserted into the federal budget without considering the financial implication of their action on the overall interest of the country.

- II. Abuse of Power by Public Officers: In Nigeria, Falana (2022) notes that it has become a tradition for political officeholders to make use of their official positions to perpetuate administrative corruption. This is done by intimidating citizens for daring to expose them for engaging in corrupt practices and abuse of power. These have been done despite several judgments of domestic and regional courts which have upheld the fundamental right of Nigerian citizens to freedom of expression, the anti-democratic elements in public office behaved as if they are more superiors to the citizens who entrust them with the position of authority.
- III. Government Resources for Partisanship: As averred by Okunlola, Umar, and Hassan (2019), government facilities for the partisan campaign during the electioneering process have become an integral part of administrative corruption in Nigeria. This is in addition to the diversion of public funds for electioneering purposes by public officeholders. The issues of Dasukigate and Diazzani's oil revenue scandals to prosecute the 2015 re-election of former President Jonathan attests to this position. This scenario has cast doubts on the extent to which political office-holders use public office to satisfy their political interests in Nigeria.
- IV. Electoral Fraud: As noted by Amata (2022), since 1999 when Nigeria returned to civilian rule, six general elections have been conducted, and out of these elections, none has been reported to meet both the local and international standards because they were 'fraught with high levels of irregularities and voter fraud masterminded by politicians and the public office holders as accomplished'. This has resulted in the loss of confidence in the electoral processes and to a large extent, political apathy, particularly on the part of the youth who form a larger part of the country's voting population.
- V. Administrative Bureaucracy: This is due to the high centralization of both fiscal and political powers at the center. According to Okunlola et al (2019), the administrative bureaucracy system in Nigeria had, in consequence, encouraged administrative corruption, profligacy, and abuse of office. The politicization of bureaucracy by past administrations in Nigeria also worsened the situation. This has been deeply infiltrated by political appointments and political considerations which in turn impacted negatively on the democratic process in Nigeria.

4.0 Impacts of Administrative Corruption on Democratic Governance in Nigeria

- i. Gross Inefficiency in Resource Allocation and Utilization: Ehiorobo (2018) admitted that bad governance has seriously impeded the effective utilization of resources in Nigeria. With enormous wealth from crude oil, corruption among Nigeria's powerful political elites who view governance primarily through the lens of their enrichment has been making revenue generation from abundant resources in the country a difficult task to achieve. Findings from the study indicate that there has been gross inefficiency in resource allocation due to corruption, bad governance practices, and wasteful spending on frivolous projects by the ruling elites.
- ii. Ineffective Democratic Institutions: Administrative corruption has made it possible to achieve unpopular participation and unequal representation in Nigeria's democratic process. As observed

by Garuba (2020), the major problem adduced for the failure of the nation's democratic institutions is the lack of capacity on the part of the structure, system, and operators of the institutions to achieve set goals for a sustainable democratic process. The ineffective public service delivery by those institutions was a result of the fact that the appointments of their headship were based on ethnic sentiments and those appointed to the position of authority on ethnic sentiment could not adequately manage those institutions to achieve the set objectives of the organization for the benefit of the citizens in the country.

iii. **State-Society Gap:** The state-society gap is a divide that exists between a country's government and its citizens. As argued by Wangare and Simwa (2022), administrative corruption has made it difficult for the Nigerian government to manage its economic, political, and social affairs, the private sector, and other

social groups harmoniously. The state-society gap is occasioned by nepotism, ethnicity, and overcentralization of governmental power among a few political elites. At times, Nigerians feel as if the government is inaccessible and has a poor idea of what is required on the ground to make good governance possible in the country. This leads to other problems that further worsen democratic governance sustainability in Nigeria.

iv. **Crime and Terrorism:** These two vices negatively influence the growth of economic and democratic governance in Nigeria. Public security is an essential aspect of every state, and Nigeria has performed dismally in this respect due to the corruptive attitude of ruling elites (Wangare and Simwa, 2022). Terrorist attacks have been on the rise for decades often tied to Boko Haram activities. The situation is worsened by the regular occurrences of bombings, kidnappings, and attacks on innocent Nigerians. The Global Peace Index recently ranked Nigeria as the 16th least peaceful country in the world. As a result, numerous foreign investors are often skeptical about investing in the nation's economy.

v. **Disregard for the Rule of Law:** Administrative corruption has also made it possible for brazen disregard for the rule of law in Nigeria. As noted by Adibe (2022), considerable evidence indicates undue executive muzzling vitiates the independence of the judiciary, and by its self-imposed afflictions, the Nigerian judiciary has not demonstrated adequate capacity and readiness to effectively discharge its core functions. The interference and disregard for the rule of law have continued to pose a grave danger to democratic governance sustainability in Nigeria. This is in addition to a lack of absolute judicial independence, hoodwinking judiciary, and disobedience to the court order by the government. These have been spelling doom in attracting direct foreign investors to the country.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The effect of administrative corruption on democratic governance cannot be over-emphasized due to the ever-increasing horizon of nepotism, favoritism, and its banefully multifarious implications on governance. Scholars agreed that administrative corruption has become a challenge to good governance and has eaten deep into every segment of society. As noted by Adibe (2022), administrative corruption is not limited to

financial misconduct but is also related to disregard for the rule of law, lack of accountability in governance, low quality of public sector management, and the inability of public officeholders to maintain good relations with the citizens. Those characteristics definitely open up the state-society gap that made it possible for the inability of the government to manage its economic, political, and social affairs effectively.

In Nigeria, the finding of this paper indicates that administrative corruption has been rampant in the nation's public establishments and the phenomenon has impacted negatively on democratic governance in the country. As averred by Garuba (2020), there are cases of illegal deals in Nigerian public service ranging in the attitudes of both career and political office holders. This has been posing a grave danger to governance and effective public service delivery in the country. Administrative corruption has also promoted ethnoreligious conflict and reduced the commitment of the citizens to sustainable democratic governance in Nigeria. At times, the citizens feel as if the government is inaccessible and has a poor idea of what is required on the ground to salvage the situation. This leads to other social problems that further worsen the country's socioeconomic situation presently.

The paper, therefore, recommends the strengthening of internal control mechanisms to detect cases of administrative corruption in the nation's public institutions. A propaganda strategy could also be used to educate public officeholders and citizens about the implication of administrative corruption to democratic sustainability in Nigeria. This can be done by mounting within the government ministries, agencies, and parastatals including all form of stickers that illustrates the negative effect of administrative corruption on socio, political and economic development in Nigeria. Government should also establish a strong pathway towards promoting transparency; accountability and access to information in governance.

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