

# **AN ANATOMY OF BUREAUCRATIC CORRUPTION: CAUSES, SYNERGISTIC EFFECTS AND THE WAY FORWARD**

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## ***Abstract***

*Bureaucratic corruption has assumed alarming dimension and is sweeping most organizations in African states into various stages of unfruitfulness. This study examines the basic concept of bureaucratic organization as well as causes, types and effects of bureaucratic corruption on the organizations in the poverty-stricken sub-Saharan Africa, and concludes with some useful remarks on way forward.*

## **Introduction**

The high incidence of corruption has continued to attract growing interest and great concern. Bureaucratic organization in Nigeria is no exception to this devastating syndrome. Over the past decade, most organizations, private or public, are closed down because of the worst excess of brigandage of economic form of corruption which has obstructed the normal institutional rules and regulations. These sharp practices facilitate corner-cutting and shorten procedure even with regards to vouchers, bills or the likes.

According to Adamu (1991), corruption in Africa is mainly a problem of routine deviation from established standards and norms by public officers and operators of the multi-national corporations in their interactions with local business people and members of the public. Thus, the activities of these parties, for example, the multi-national corporations from industrial countries seeking business opportunities in Africa, should also be of interest to the researcher and corruption fighters.

### **Literature Review**

Bureaucratic corruption is a universal problem in all formal organizations. The concept has received varied definitional positions. In fact, it has been over-flogged in academic circles. Bureaucratic corruption can literally be conceptualized as a change from good to bad practice or operation. This migration or deviation from the basic bureaucratic norms within an organization in regards to the implementation and execution of assigned organizational tasks is also believed to arise from greed or syndrome of egocentrism.

As *Webster dictionary* (1982), puts it, corruption is a kind of behaviour which deviates from the norms actually prevalent or belief prevailing in a given context. From the foregoing bureaucratic corruption is associated with deviant behaviours with one particular selfish motivation or another. Specifically, bureaucratic corruption involves the violation of established rules of the bureaucratic organization for personal aggrandizement.

*Webster Dictionary* (1982), describes corruption as effort to secure wealth or power through illegal mean-private gain at public expense or misuse of public power for private benefit. Corruption is also seen as behaviours which bureaucratically deviate from the normal rules of the organization. Rose A.S (1978), observed corruption being tied particularly to the act of bribery is not in order. Suffice it to say that corruption relates to misuse of power, power drunkenness, and administrative trespass as a result of individualistic gain which need not be monetary. Public office can also be abused for personal benefit even though bribery occurs through patronage and nepotism,

misappropriation and embezzlement. Bureaucratic corruption is, therefore, the main means to accumulate wealth in Nigeria.

Rozinoniz and Nolfgang (1977), would aptly have many African people see bureaucratic corruption as a practical problem to bureaucratic organization because bureaucratic corruption involves the outright theft, embezzlement of funds or other misappropriation of organization's property, nepotism and grating of favour to personal acquaintance, and abuse of public authority.

It also positions oneself to attract undue payments and privileges. That is why Charles (1989), believed that a corrupt bureaucrat regards his office as a business from which he also has to extract illegal income. In a nutshell, the bureaucrat's total compensation does not depend on the usefulness for the common good, but precisely upon the market situation and his talent for finding the maximal gain of public demand curve.

Odekunle (1986), observed that bureaucratic corruption also obtains in the public sector as well as in the private sector. Many formal organizations fail to realize their noble objective due to high degree of manifestation of bureaucratic corruption.

Charles (1989), opines that bureaucratic organization is human grouping constructed and reconstructed to seek specific goals. But, where there is bureaucratic corruption, the goal is often defeated under all ramifications.

### **Manifestations of Bureaucratic Corruption**

Van and Weder 1997), observed that there are two broad areas where corruption thrives in private and public sector. Corruption affects efficiency and effectiveness in service. It also destroys the goals of the organization. The following are the different types of bureaucratic corruptions.

- ❖ *Embezzlement*: This is a situation where public servant prefers individualistic interest to organizational interest. Embezzlement is a means to pave way or to secure wealth through illegal means by a technocrat.
- ❖ *Misappropriation*: This is a deviant behaviour exhibited by bureaucrats specifically deviating from organizational norms

or specifications. It is regarded as the act of defiling of designed tasks assigned to the bureaucrat.

- ❖ *Falsification of vouchers*: Falsification of amount is another wrong act, through which bureaucrats falsely satisfy their egocentric desires.
- ❖ *Inclusion of ghost names*: Top bureaucrats include the names of non-existent workers (ghost workers) in payment vouchers. This is an act of deviation and could be regarded as administrative corruption.
- ❖ *Sexual harassment*: This is a situation where senior technocrats humiliate junior workers especially the feminine gender that work with them in the same organization. Such situation occurs when the top officers use their office to threaten the female worker towards satisfying their libido feelings through seduction.
- ❖ *Bribery*: This is money given or collected in order to influence decision. This is administrative corruption.

Charles (1989), includes obtaining foreign exchange, import and export investment or production excesses or avoiding pay to taxes.

Other forms and typologies of corruption, according to Odekunle (1986), also include official corruption, which can assume many forms, depending on how the paraphernalia of government is organized or disorganized. Four types of kleptocratic state can be discerned, viz, pure kleptocratic states, bilateral-monopoly states, mafia-dominated states, and competitive-bribery states.

Yaqub shared the same view with Johnson by noting that two types of corruption are common, namely, bureaucratic and political corruption. In his opinion, these types of corruption manifest in the forms of election rigging, militancy, coups d'etat, the manipulation of the transition programmes, favour from bureaucrats through acquiring undue foreign exchange and import license, and the avoidance or reduction of taxes, or the entrenchment of the Black Market/Hoard Syndromes.

### **Effects of Bureaucratic Corruption**

The overall effects of corruption in organization can be enormous and debilitating. As the Nigeria bureaucratic organization continues, endemic corruption can completely destroy not only the economic foundation of the organization but also poison the moral and social fabric of the state structure.

Adamu (1991), posited that corruption has led to bad road and decaying infrastructure, inadequate medical service, poor schools and falling educational standards and disappearance of foreign aid and loans and entire project without a trace (or decayed completion, leading to high costs). Corruption has meant fewer imported goods enter the country than were paid for, foreign exchange earned from exports does not get to government coffers, and repatriated national assets are run down and ruined. Production capacity in industry, agriculture and services has been reduced and repairs of buildings, equipment, vehicles, physical and social infrastructure have been paid for repeatedly but never performed.

It is obvious that corruption can harm efficiency and effectiveness of any business of bureaucratic organization. In the case of Nigeria, the effect has undermined normal functioning of bureaucratic systems under all ramifications. Effects of bureaucratic corruptions are as follows:

- a. *Low esteem and confidence:* The external image of the organization is being undermined and rated very low.
- b. *Recourse mismanagement:* Bureaucratic corruption has led to severe mismanagement, misapplication and diversion of funds. Examples are the Ajaokuta Steel Project, Delta Steel Project, Defence Industries Project Kaduna, Bakolori Irrigation Project and other abandoned and poorly managed projects.
- c. *Distortion and impediments of public expenditures:* Public records are often destroyed to avert the situation of accountability. Most official records that involve misappropriation are destroyed to avert investigation.
- d. *Distortion and prevent administrative rules and procedures:* Corruption can hamper and frustrate legal and administrative

rules in bureaucratic organizations. Rules are changed for a sudden to achieve desired benefits.

- e. *Perpetuate bureaucratic problems:* Corruption helps to perpetuate other bureaucratic problems, since it links to issues of progress. There are strong indications that it may exacerbate other problems in the management of public affairs, such as inefficiency, poor performance, lack of maintenance culture and very low productivity. The cases of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Nigerian National Shipping Line (NNSL), National Electric Power Authority (NEPA), Nigerian Telecommunications (NITEL) and the Nigerian Postal (NIPOST) Services illustrate how bad things can be in highly corrupt public organizations.

### **Eliminating Corruption**

Bureaucratic corruption can be mitigated. In this regard, Government should adapt strong policy against the practices of bureaucratic corruption. Since bureaucratic corruption affects the administrative mechanism and raises fundamental questions of moral and political legitimacy, declaration against bribery and corruption involving bureaucratic offers should be gazetted. This is to check the systematic rampant cases of bureaucratic corruption.

Other measures to control bureaucratic corruption is rightly opined by Odekunle (1986), as follows. There should be no single officer to handle a particular transaction from the beginning to the end. There should be separation of duties assigned to many officers. Also, top management should review payroll to ensure that only legitimate workers are in the payroll. This will avoid the inclusion of ghost workers in the payroll by accounting clerks. Control should be established over inventory management, cash disbursement and receipts of revenue.

Also, periodic reconciliation of bank account and records of cash, accounts payables, and the revenue received should be done by the top management. Against the backdrop, accounting procedure, such as central mechanism, should be adopted to reduce a syndromatic

and devastating effect of the bureaucratic corruption in our public sector.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

This paper has established that bureaucratic corruption is a reality in most organizations. Its manifestations are seen in records, giving of bribes in any form by bureaucrats, inflation of contracts figures, false claims and gratification given to a bureaucrat with the basic union of influencing an officer to carry out his schedule of duties. This situation unfortunately attests to the fact that a public bureaucrat should not be seen as a symbol of justice that is expected to uphold a highest standard of integrity and transparency. However, bureaucratic corruption can be also controlled through proactive measures instituted through internal checks through proper division of labour to disallow a situation of one person performing and monopolizing so many roles in a bureaucratic organization.

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