

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

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CERTIFICATION

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DEDICATION

In loving memory of my elder sister, Mrs Mary Ushang Ogem, a caring, dedicated and virtuous woman who departed without a word on the 23rd of August, 2022 and my younger brother, Pius Ogar Ajaba, a committed servant of God, who left a few months before on the 7th of March, 2022. Sister Ushang and Ogar were special people who would have loved to see me receive a PhD degree and celebrated it as their personal achievement. Unfortunately, they both departed in their prime. In my heart, the two of them will never die.

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ABSTRACT

Globally, corruption threatens good governance, service delivery and the rule of law. In Nigeria, it undermines efficiency in organisations and institutions. Existing studies on corruption examined causes, measurement, consequences, prevalence and strategies for fighting corruption. However, scant attention has been paid to the social construction of corruption. This study was, therefore, designed to identify behaviours defined as corrupt activities; predisposing factors; strategies used to execute corrupt practices; factors that determine people's receptivity to corruption; the role of the media in its construction; and how power relations moderate corrupt practices in Abuja.

The social construction theory provided the framework, while a cross-sectional design was employed. Abuja was purposively selected based on the high concentration of federal ministries, departments and agencies. Three Area Councils (Abuja Municipal, Bwari and Gwagwalada) were randomly selected. Using Yamane's (1967) sample size determination formula, 1300 respondents were sampled. Systematic sampling was used to proportionately administer a structured questionnaire to respondents (aged ≥ 18 years) in Abuja Municipal (438), Bwari (433) and Gwagwalada (429) councils. Twenty-one key informant interviews were conducted with two judges, six lawyers, six civil society groups' officials, and seven community leaders. Thirty in-depth interviews (six with each group) were conducted with lecturers, politicians, contractors, procurement officers and commercial drivers. Nine focus group discussion sessions (three in each) were held with students, journalists and anti-graft agencies' officials to examine the social construction of corruption. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Chi-square at $p \leq 0.05$ while the qualitative data were content-analysed.

The respondents' ages were 34.87 ± 10.82 years, with 47.8% working in the public sector. The majority of the respondents (92.2%) defined certain behaviour – nepotism, conversion of public property to private use, diversion of public funds to unbudgeted projects – as highly corrupt activities. This was significantly related to age ($\chi^2=47.12$), education ($\chi^2=29.86$), occupation ($\chi^2=65.11$) and income ($\chi^2=34.82$). Greed (66.4%), poverty (22.5%) and weak laws (11.1%) predisposed people to corrupt behaviour. Ineffective law enforcement (48.6%) and loopholes in government financial systems (14.9%) made public office holders vulnerable to corruption. Distortion of financial records (98.5%), payment of ghost workers (98.5%) and charging unauthorised fees (97.9%) were strategies reported to be used to execute corruption. Gift-giving culture (86.8%) and payment of fines in lieu of a jail term by corrupt officials (93.6%) strongly determined people's receptivity to corruption. Trivialisation of corrupt cases and biased reportage by the media during trials, due to fear of persecution of reporters, affected how society constructed corruption. When seeking public service, the person with less power was more inclined to offer a bribe than the one in a position of authority.

Greedy, poverty and shabby implementation of anti-corruption laws predisposed people to corrupt behaviour and influenced how they construct corruption. There is a need for relevant authorities to sensitise the public against patronising the culture of corruption.

Keywords: Corruption in Nigeria, Social construction of corruption, Gift-giving culture, Power relations, Nigeria

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AGO	Accountant General Office
AMAC	Abuja Municipal Area Council
AOR	Adjusted odds ratio
ARP	Ashanti Regional Police
B2G	Business-to-government
BMA	Bayesian model averaging
CAPAM	Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management
CBN	Central Bank of Nigeria
CCT	Code of Conduct Tribunal
CISLAC	Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre
CODE	Connected Development
CSG	Civil society groups
CSJ	Centre for Social Justice
DCOP	Deputy Commissioner of Police
EFCC	Economic and Financial Crimes Commission
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FGD	Focus group discussion
FRN	Federal Republic of Nigeria
HDI	Human Development Index
ICPC	Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission
IDI	In-depth interview
KII	Key informant interview
LDCs	Less developed countries
MDAs	Ministries, departments and agencies
MWK	Malawian kwacha
N	Naira
NPF	Nigeria Police Force
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OLS	Ordinary least regression
OR	Odds ratio

PWYPC	Publish What You Pay Coalition
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SERAP	Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises/entrepreneurs
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TI	Transparency International
UBEC	Universal Basic Education Board
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCAC	United Nations Convention Against Corruption
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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GLOSSARY OF EUPHEMISMS USED IN SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF CORRUPTION

Bottom power:	Influence gained by a woman through sexual favours
Brown envelope:	Bribe
Chop, clean mouth:	Stealing and covering up
If you can't beat them join them:	Cooperation in corrupt acts
Kola	Give or receive bribe
Long leg:	Favouritism
Magu-magu:	Illegal deals
Man-know-man:	Favouritism
Play-ball:	Cooperate in dishonesty and fraud
Perform:	Give bribe
Scratch my back, I scratch your back:	Telling someone that if they help you, you will help them
Wuru-wuru:	Cut corners, or under-handed practices
You chop, I chop:	Sharing resources or benefits

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Corruption is complex. According to Luna-Pla and Nicolás-Carlock (2020), it is a persistent feature of human history. Wherever there are humans, corruption exists at different levels and in varied shades and forms. Understanding how corruption is socially constructed remains a major challenge to scholars, policymakers, and development practitioners (Ekici and Ekici, 2021). This is, largely, because of the hydra-headedness of corruption and the dynamic nature of its many ramifications and trajectories. Its drivers and implications are contextually and socially determined, influenced, informed, propelled, and affected (Akanle and Adesina, 2015). While many scholars and practitioners (Burduja and Zaharia, 2019; Barkhouse, Hoyland and Limon, 2018; Page, 2018; Enste and Heldman, 2017) are of the opinion that corruption is a formidable development threat, especially in Africa, the contextual remits of constructing the concept remain poorly examined and insufficiently understood. Most of the scholars agree that corruption brings more harm than benefits to society. Exploring the prevailing social construction – including beliefs about accountability and its perceived riskiness and utility to the perpetrator – in its contexts may hold the key to a sustainable understanding and better management of corruption as a social reality.

The core argument of constructionism is that social realities exist as products of human activities (Taylor, 2018). Within this ontological and epistemic system, corruption is a product of human activities informed by contexts of existence. Social constructionism dates to philosophical and sociological ideas of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Travers, 2017). However, in a more recent study, Mark Granovetter applied constructionism to the theory of corruption, arguing that corruption is not a natural but a social fact (Granovetter, 2007). Corruption in modern society is a product of several processes of differentiation,

between the private and public spheres (Ugwuani and Nwokedi, 2015), between particularistic and universal value orientations (Klitgaard, 2019; Thacher, 2015; Parsons, 1968), and between informal relations and formal organisations (Weber, 1968). Although individuals in society are essentially bundles of impulses, they are bounded by compulsions. That is why culture and norms determine available options for human actions. To correctly examine the relationship between actors and social structure, studies are needed to identify the choices between alternatives that an actor confronts in a given situation and the relative premises assigned to such choices (Sharma and Mitra, 2019).

As an intractable problem from which no nation or region can claim exemption, corruption knows no bounds, and varies substantially among individuals, groups and political systems across different societies and times (Wickberg, 2021). To address the challenges posed by corruption, there is a global consensus to move against it in the areas of criminalisation, prevention, domestic enforcement of anti-corruption laws, and international cooperation, as encapsulated in the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) and the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (Hassan, 2019). There is a need to draw attention to the limitations of current explanations of corruption in Nigeria and the problematic way in which they are framed. Some scholars have seen corruption in Africa as a culture and part of the social fabric, arguing that life in the continent is governed by petty corruption of public officials in services such as health, infrastructure, transport, and the judicial system (Ojo, 2019; Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project [SERAP], 2017; Tormusa and Idom, 2016). These scholars assert that, among other challenges, corruption is crippling development as manifested in poor healthcare delivery, inadequate potable water, falling standards of education and high rates of poverty and destitution. Previous work on the social index of corruption measured greater or lesser permissiveness towards corrupt activities based on citizens' responses to questions prepared abstractly by several alien agencies (Uslaner, 2010). These beg the growing need for an ethnographic approach to the study of corruption in Nigeria.

Even though they pose both material and moral difficulties, most actions categorised as corrupt by legal instruments can be ingrained patterns of permissible activity peculiar to a community, formed and replicated unwittingly and without any intentional search for

coherence (Otaluka, 2017; Olanrewaju, 2015). According to Kukah (2012), Nigeria's political class views politics as a national bazaar. Corruption is not solely a public sector problem, as the banking sector in Nigeria was on the verge of collapse due to corruption scandals before the Central Bank of Nigeria's timely intervention in 2009, following the Stress Test (Udeh and Ugwu, 2018). The consensus in the 2014 National Conference Report is that corruption remains the most formidable impediment to Nigeria's socioeconomic development, with government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) losing trillions of naira each year. Notable examples include the pension scheme scam and the petroleum subsidy scam, as well as several pending court cases involving former governors, ministers and chief executives.

In the opinion of Hassan (2019), corruption undermines fairness, stability and efficiency, as well as the ability of society to provide sustainable development to its members. Corruption should be discouraged, not merely because it is a moral issue and that it is bad for business, but also because people everywhere pay the cost of corruption one way or another, particularly the people of the developing world and countries in transition (Sharma and Mitra, 2019). This is, however, not to say that the developed countries can afford the luxury of corruption, as various scandals in the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Australia have indicated (Rubasundram and Rasiah, 2019; Granovetter, 2007; Roht-Arriaza and Martinez, 2019).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Corruption may be subjectively defined. As a result, its interpretations, through the lenses of related individuals, point to a seemingly distorted worldview. As obviously seen, corruption has proliferated in Nigeria's public and private spaces, thereby posing a great development challenge such that it has become difficult to differentiate between what is corrupt and what is not (Akanle and Shittu, 2021). When viewed from this perspective, the boundaries between corrupt practices and other actions have become so blurred that corruption itself is now difficult to define. In fact, there is little or no doubt that the misconstruction of corruption may lead to formulating ineffective and self-defeating anti-corruption strategies. This is because people's worldviews about corruption are likely a

manifestation of various primordial tendencies, including political affinity, social class, ethnic affiliation, ideological leaning and other ascriptive considerations. Arising from the above, a yearning need exists to understand the conditions that facilitate corruption in Nigeria, because corruption is societal.

In spite of what has been written about corruption by other researchers, knowing who constructs what, and when, why and how, is germane in understanding Nigerians' worldviews about it, which translates to the entire framework and tools that are available or should be created to fight it. There is a whole gamut of media, legalistic attitudes and political discourses which construct corruption as a social reality. Given the ubiquitous nature of corruption and its meaning, dimensions, context and manifestations, it is important to examine how the Nigerian people viewed it before the publication of Peter Ekeh's (1975) "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa", and the later work by anthropologist Daniel Jordan Smith, *A Culture of Corruption*, which has the thought-provoking subtitle "Everyday Deception and Popular Discontent in Nigeria" (Joseph, 2008, 2003; Ekeh, 1975) to be able to contextualise the issue more succinctly. Against this backdrop, corruption has many faces. It is defined by a variety of socio-economic, political and cultural variables. It is not an intrinsic type of action but rather the product of complex relationships among multiple actors. The missing link here is to examine the strategies used to execute corrupt practices.

Even though the construction of corruption in Nigeria has assumed tangible forms, as evidenced in the radicalisation of anti-corruption measures, most studies on corruption (Klitgaard, 2019; Page, 2018; Enste and Heldman, 2017) nevertheless rely on legal and formal criteria to examine typologies of corruption and factors predisposing people to those practices. Since 1995, the international community has invested billions of dollars in the fight against corruption in non-Western countries. Analysts and other stakeholders often refer to these countries as "pervasively" and "endemically" corrupt, based on their low rankings on the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index and other corruption indices. This classification implies varying degrees of corruption and breeds unwarranted pessimism about the likelihood of mitigating corruption in these societies. As a result, Nigeria has a reputation for systemic corruption and other world leaders refer to it in disparaging terms which require an empirical investigation.

Despite the fact that the legal structures of corruption are not fixed, but are rather, largely, the shared expression of what a society or the power group in that society perceives and determines to be destructive to its functioning, the social construction of corruption, which should shed light on whether corruption has always been viewed as a social problem, hence it has not been adequately researched and documented. This gap in literature requires a methodical study of how corruption is seen in society. Therefore, this work will examine the sociology of corruption from a constructionist perspective as an approach to anti-corruption measures. Although a lot has been done by scholars in the area of corruption, the context-specific socio-economic issues such as real data on corruption in a given setting may not apply to other contexts, yet the various ways in which normative gestures may determine people's receptivity to corrupt practices have not been adequately analysed.

The focus of stakeholders and academics on corruption has prompted extensive research on the subject in the past 25 years, mostly by economists, public administrators, journalists, lawyers and political scientists (Ocheje, 2018). Most of these are without sufficient sociological examination and explanation of its social construction. Despite the avalanche of work on corruption (Barkhouse, Hoyland and Limon, 2018; Page, 2018; Enste and Heldman, 2017) and with the massive media reportage on criminal prosecution, there is a dearth of research on the role of the media in its social construction and its context-contingent nature, which should explain how claims about it are constructed. Consequently, there is the need to understand the motives of actors and explain their reasons for engaging in certain actions taking into cognisance the socio-historical milieu. In addition, concepts, interpretations, and causal explanations of corruption that concern the specific historical and social contexts in which they are used will provide a more nuanced understanding of these definitions and perceptions, with both epistemological and ontological implications.

Another gap is that the understandings of the construct of corruption, such as those used by Transparency International, is elitist and the bulk of the data on the subject is obtained from selected elites, while the voices of ordinary people are usually missing from the construction. There is thus a need for studies such as this to provide rich data from the general citizenry to recontextualise the issue of corruption. Therefore, this research bridged the gap in knowledge about how corruption is socially constructed in Nigeria. By dissecting

the issues and studying the process of claim-making, the research gained insight into the power relations underlying existing working definitions of corruption and the intrinsic links among corruption, peace, security and development.

1.3 Research Questions

This study interrogated the social construction of corruption in Nigeria by answering the following questions:

- i. What types of activities and actions do people define as corrupt?
- ii. What are the factors predisposing people to corrupt practices?
- iii. What are the strategies used to execute corrupt activities?
- iv. How do normative gestures determine people's receptivity to corrupt practices?
- v. What is the role of the media in the social construction of corruption?
- vi. How do power relations moderate corrupt practices?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

This study examined the social construction of corruption in Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives were to:

- i) identify activities and actions people define as corrupt;
- ii) investigate the factors predisposing people to corrupt practices in Nigeria;
- iii) examine the strategies used to execute corrupt activities;
- iv) analyse how normative gestures determine people's receptivity to corrupt practices;
- v) interrogate the role of the media in the social construction of corruption; and
- vi) explore how power relations moderate corrupt practices.

1.5 Significance of the Study

While corruption may affect development, sociologists need to do more studies on the social construction of this social problem in context, as the continued aggravation of corruption may be culturally moderated and value influenced (Thacher, 2015). While numerous studies

have been conducted on corruption (Klitgaard, 2019; Page, 2018; Barkhouse, Hoyland and Limon, 2018; Enste and Heldman, 2017), they do not appear to focus on how it is socially constructed in Nigeria. There also remain several unresolved theoretical debates in most of the literature on the concept. In the last two and a half decades, the attention and concerns of donors and scholars on corruption have prompted wide-ranging inquiries, often without empirical sociological explanations. This has resulted in significant methodological gaps in understanding of the issues, especially between those who perceive and those who experience corruption. Therefore, there is a need for empirical research to resolve these gaps regarding the social construction of corruption. Available studies on corruption drew data from surveys, interviews and focus group discussions mainly on public perceptions and purchasable corruption indexes created for political and business-related purposes.

The study unveiled, among other outcomes, a profile of corruption disaggregated by types to enable robust discussions around its causes and effects. This disaggregated profile of corruption has generated suggestions for effective anti-corruption reforms and programmes. What has developed into a global normative order is predicated on the assumption that the determinants of corrupt practices are consistent across contexts, resulting in policy transfer. Unfortunately, such policy transfers have failed in a variety of contexts, casting doubt on the generalisability of results from Western countries. Policymakers will now be able to adapt anti-corruption policies to national and subnational contexts through this research on the social construction of corruption.

Consequently, this work developed novel ways of gaining deeper understanding of corruption and, unlike Transparency International's corruption indices, it provided rich data not only from experts but also from the voices of ordinary people. Additionally, the knowledge gained through this study reflects the dynamics of corruption in Nigeria, and paves ways for successful, contextually appropriate, anti-corruption initiatives. Therefore, it has contributed to the growth of theories of corruption and thus to the body of current knowledge on how corruption is socially constructed.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study examined the social construction of corruption in Nigeria and specifically identified activities and actions defined as corrupt, investigated factors predisposing people to corruption, interrogated strategies used to execute corrupt actions, and examined how normative gestures such as gifts determine people's receptivity or otherwise to corruption. It also interrogated the role of the media in the social construction of corruption considering the agenda-setting function of the media in society and x-rayed how power relations affect and moderate corrupt practices.

Corruption in this work was limited to bribery, embezzlement, influence peddling, misuse of positions of trust, and nepotism. In addition, the location of the study is the seat of the Federal Government of Nigeria which houses all major government ministries, departments and agencies, making it easier to access a wide range of public servants and private sector operators.

1.7 Clarification of Concepts

This segment of the study conceptualises major concepts used in this thesis, to avoid ambiguity:

Corruption is defined as a change in the standing rule or order using power, money or other instruments of coercion. It can also be termed violation of laws stipulated within an agency. Culturally, it is defined in terms of deviations from what is considered to be the norms and values in a particular culture.

Social construction means the recreation of people's understandings about a particular concept based on the meanings they give to their encounters with others.

Prebendalism is a political system in which elected politicians and other employees believe they have a claim to a portion of the revenue of the government, which they use to benefit other citizens, co-religionists and ethnic group members.

Power relations refer to the arrangement wherever one person or group has the power to force, command, direct or influence the lives of others.

Clientelism is the exchange of something for political support, with or without an implied or explicit trade-off. It is characterised by asymmetric relationships among political actors.

Receptivity is the ability or willingness to accept or receive requests, ideas or experiences commonly practiced in a given social setting.

Anti-corruption refers to all activities and strategies used to prevent corruption by individuals, groups of people or organisations.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Chapter Overview

The chapter undertakes a careful literature review and presents a theoretical framework. The section is divided into seven parts: the first six thematically review the literature while the last part focuses on the theoretical framework that guided this study.

2.1 The Concept of Corruption

Corruption needs to be understood in the context of Abuja, as it is likely driven by historical experiences, political existences, prevailing economic realities and socio-cultural dynamics. Conceptualised as the misuse of a position of trust – be it in a private or public organisation – for personal gain (Transparency International, 2019), corruption involves several practices, ranging from bribery, extortion, and influence peddling to embezzlement, which constitute offences in several countries. It also includes practices that have increasingly been the object of reform but still do not rally harmonious disapproval, as well as practices that are often excused from most regulation, such as nepotism and pulling strings. Even though the literature on corruption is loaded with diverse arguments, ranging from the political economy to legalistic and criminal jurisprudence, the social construction of corruption has not been sufficiently examined.

Defined as a wilful violation, for pecuniary gains, of established norms in the exercise of trusted power/authority or when seeking benefits from power/authority, corruption has well-known and documented effects (Agyei-Mensah and Buertey, 2019; Gergen, Gergen and Ness, 2019; Lock, and Strong, 2010). Corruption can also be defined as illegal or dishonest activities carried out by individuals or groups entrusted with positions of authority, primarily to acquire illicit benefits. Corrupt activities often hide among routine social,

political and commercial transactions, making them very difficult to measure. Corruption can also be seen as a set of non-ethical behaviours and practices that benefit the actor(s) directly or indirectly. Suffice to say that a one-line definition of corruption is inherently misleading because it mystifies the extent to which the concept and its components are rooted in diverse ways of thinking about its distinctive nature. Corruption undermines accountability and transparency in the management of public affairs, thereby hindering efforts to evolve a safe, peaceful, tolerant and equitable society. Nigeria, like many other countries in the Global South, is plagued by corruption, including bribery, graft, fraud, manipulation and nepotism, all of which have left the country with an abnormal history of prebendal politics (Nkwede, Moliki and Dauda, 2017; Nmah, 2017; Akanle, Adebayo and Olorunlana, 2014, Akanle, 2013; Joseph, 1987). It is important to note that a search for an all-purpose definition of corruption may be pointless because, while it is critical to be precise about what a person wants to say, it is not necessary and may not be desirable to stick rigorously to a single meaning. Sociologists must continue to engage in various controversies, arguing the same issues from different perspectives. Even though a lot has been said about what corruption means, studies need to identify the meanings of corrupt practices within the Nigerian context, with a view to developing solutions based on the socio-historical contexts of the actions.

Even though corruption has multitudinous causes, assumes different patterns and guises, and cannot be accurately defined, Klitgaard (1988) propounded a corruption formula ($C=M+D-A$) to define it, stating that corruption equals monopoly plus discretion minus accountability. This formula is still useful. In this regard, if the benefits of corruption minus the probability of being caught times its penalties are greater than the benefits of not being caught, then an individual will rationally choose to be corrupt. Officials are therefore corrupt for the simple reason that the potential benefits to them of corruption exceed the potential cost. There is little or no doubt that the effect of corruption on society is far-reaching as Kofi Annan succinctly remarked: "Corruption is an insidious scourge that has a wide range of corrosive effects on societies. It undermines economic performance, weakens democratic institutions and the rule of law, disrupts social order and destroys public trust, thus allowing organised crime, terrorism and other threats to human security to flourish" (UN, 2004:1).

In this study, corruption was limited to few corrupt activities, including bribery, money laundering, embezzlement, trading in influence, abuse of a position of trust, and nepotism in Abuja, Nigeria. The decision to focus on Abuja was influenced by several practical and methodological concerns. Abuja is a multicultural and multi-ethnic capital city and a microcosm of the Nigerian state (Akanle, 2012), Abuja offers a valuable location for this research because its population reflects a range of diversity covering almost all the 250 ethnic nationalities, whereas other regions of the country are largely dominated by particular ethnic and social groups. In addition, the location of the study is the seat of the federal government, and therefore houses all major government ministries, departments and agencies, making it easier to access a wide range of public servants and private sector operators. Aside from the government presence as a categorical factor, the nongovernmental entities as well as informal and formal private activities in Abuja are affected due to profound interfaces of the socio-systemic and institutional relations of state actors and institutions. These diverse views and experiences in the Federal Capital Territory enriched the research. This study did not dabble in the raging methodological and theoretical debates about the measurement of corruption, and neither did it attempt to measure corruption.

According to Raimi, Suara and Fadipe (2013), corruption is the abuse of public office for private gains. To the authors, a public office is abused for private gain when an official solicits or accepts a bribe. It can also be mismanaged when private agents actively offer bribes to circumvent public policies and processes for competitive advantage and profit as well as through patronage and nepotism. Corrupt behaviour is described in this study as unconventional, unethical and inappropriate socioeconomic, political and cultural behaviours that favour the actor directly or indirectly. They include bribery, money laundering, stealing public funds, and nepotism. It must be stressed that corruption is not only in the public service – it is also commonplace in the informal sector. In their research, Onyeonoru, Omolawal and Okunola (2019) found cheating of customers, stealing, deception, tax evasion, selling fake and expired products, tampering with measuring scales, bribery and poor service delivery to be common types of corrupt practices among small and micro enterprises in Ibadan. All in all, although corruption is difficult to define in exact terms, there exists a consensus that it is a product of rational decisions. Shehu (2015:29)

argued that “corruption is like a moving object – the more you probe to understand its mechanics and impact, the more you need to know about it”.

2.2 Factors that Facilitate Corrupt Practices

Corruption does not exist in a vacuum; it is a hybrid of several factors. The theory of prebendalism, which was popularised by Richard Joseph building on Ekeh’s theories of two publics, is critical to the problem of corruption in Africa. This is because of the normative tolerance that the two publics’ dialectic has for public officials who disregard rules of conduct in their duties (Ugwuani and Nwokedi, 2015). Prebendalism highlights how the primordial network operates to undermine the functioning of an ideal Weberian bureaucracy, reducing the Nigerian political system to a fight for power and rights sharing. The only exception, as explained by Amaechi, Amadi and Nnaji (2018), is that the sharing network does not apply only to the narrow definition of the non-state actors captured by Ekeh’s primordial public. Corruption is associated with those practices which are a clear violation of the standing legal rules in the society. If the law does not clarify whether a certain practice is corrupt, then it becomes somewhat acceptable.

Sutherland’s (1947) differential association theory argues that people engage in certain activities because they are exposed to more definitions that are favourable to such activities. Social learning theories (Akers, 2011) suggest that acquired cultural schema translate into concrete behaviours, which are then sustained through positive reinforcement. Empirical studies by Apel and Paternoster (2009) established that individuals are more likely to break the law when exposed to crime-favourable definitions. Similarly, several surveys confirm that citizens are more likely to engage in corruption when they do not define it as wrong (Klitgaard, 2019; Agbiboa, 2013; Tavits, 2010). It is, therefore, expected that people’s beliefs affect their behaviour. The more acceptable citizens think that bribery and gift giving are, the more likely they are to engage in those activities.

Prebendalism denotes the prominence attached to the “struggle to control and exploit the offices of the state” (Joseph, 1987:73). Prebendalism shows that in most instances, state offices are regarded as prebends that can be appropriated by office holders who use them to generate material benefits – so often termed the “national cake” – for themselves, their

constituents and their relatives (Wachs *et al.*, 2019; Ocheje, 2018). Because the state occupies the central position in the economy, providing access to material goods, wealth and power, it becomes attractive for competitive access through which the zero-sum game entitles the winner(s) to exclusive rights to exploit the state office (Joseph, 1987). As Joseph (1987) further defines it, a prebendal system is not only one in which state offices are allocated and then used as benefices by office holders, but also one in which such a practice is justified by a set of political norms and the appropriation of such offices is not merely an act of personal greed or ambition, but also the fulfilment of short-term objectives of a subset of the public (*emilokan then awalokan*). The fascinating point to note about the prebendal theory is that there seems to be a consensus that satisfying the interest of a small group has become somehow legitimated by precedence and norms, thereby informally making what would otherwise be illegal look legal. It has, however, been criticised for its catastrophic effects on economic development and democratic consolidation (Suberu, 2013; Sharma and Mitra, 2019).

Even though clientelism and prebendalism are mutually reinforcing, the former describes the nature of individual and group relationships within the broader social and political space, while the latter is principally a function of competing interests appropriating state offices (Barkhouse, Hoyland and Limon, 2018). Clientelism explains how class power enhances the prestige of the ruling class by legitimising the unequal distribution of wealth for various social classes (Berenschot, 2018). Prebendalism has, no doubt, become an enduring theory of political economy in Nigeria as a result of its insightful analysis of how the prebendal system has gained acceptance, both in written legal codes and unwritten normative practices. Terms such as “zoning”, “federal character” and “revenue allocation formula” are legally designed to “share” the state in terms of recruitment of personnel into the civil service and military and paramilitary services, the appointment of heads of government parastatals, and admission into universities and other training institutions (Amaechi and Amadi, 2018).

However, one clear violation of Weberian ideals is that meritocracy is sacrificed for mediocrity in a preference for candidates to fill bureaucratic positions in the state. To make the matter worse, state office holders are always aware of their route of ascension to such

positions and, in most cases, primordial interests supersede national interests in decisions that should be taken on their merits (Sumah, 2018; Enste and Heldman, 2017). Indeed, patronage and prebendalism are factors that foster corruption and impede national development. Corruption pervades Nigeria's political economy as a result of clientelism (which includes godfatherism, sons of the soil, the comprador elite's dominance, and money politics, among others), which prevents competent and credible candidates from emerging to ensure national development (Sharma and Mitra, 2019).

Conversely, studies have linked age, gender, education and place of residence, as well as the political and economic structure of a particular country, to the social demographic features of individuals and the persistence of corruption (Gök, 2021; Ishola, Kenku and Oyewo, 2019; Debski, Jetter, Möslle and Stadelmann, 2018; Hanapiyah, Daud and Abdullah, 2018; Cera and Sinamati, 2017). In particular, research in several cases has consistently shown that employees' ages affect organisational corruption (Hanapiyah, Daud and Abdullah, 2018; Hunady, 2017). While some of these studies support the fact that age is significantly related to high levels of corruption, others did not. For instance, Cera and Sinamati (2017) used linear regression to investigate the factors that influence how the public perceives corruption in a developing nation. The study placed particular emphasis on the significance of age in shaping public opinion on corrupt activities in Albania. Although corruption was endemic among people in the economically active age category, the study revealed that age was not a significant determinant of public perception of corrupt practices and that it did not significantly facilitate an individual's perception of corruption in Albania (Cera and Sinamati, 2017). Their investigation did not sufficiently capture the important role of age in determining involvement in corruption among those outside the economically active working age category in Nigeria.

As a section of a much larger study that investigated the ethics of bribery and the ethics of tax evasion in 48 countries, McGee and Benk (2023) examined "age and attitudes towards bribery". The study shows that in fewer than 50% of the countries surveyed, age was an important determinant of the population's disposition to bribery. In most cases where there was a significant difference in mean scores, the oldest age categories were strongly opposed to accepting bribes. This finding was contrary to results from Indonesia, Iran and Tajikistan,

where the oldest age group had the least opposition to bribe taking. Although this study found an association between age and corruption, they limited their investigation to the association between age and bribery.

Another viewpoint on demographics is that gender has already been found to be a significant socio-demographic factor that encourages individual engagement in corruption (Debski *et al.*, 2018; Breen, Gillanders, McNulty and Suzuki, 2017). For instance, research from several studies suggested that women are less likely than men to be corrupt (Merkle and Wong, 2020; Breen *et al.*, 2017). Additionally, because they pay fewer bribes and corruption is viewed as less of a barrier in businesses where women are represented in top management, ownership and top managers have a stronger influence, and are associated with less corruption (Breen *et al.*, 2017). They discovered that men were more likely to be corrupt than their female counterparts. This position was justified by the argument that most less-developed nations practice patriarchy, with the majority of families being headed by men who are forced to take on a variety of corrupt activities to fulfil this commitment (Ishola, Kenku and Oyewo, 2019; Cera and Sinamati, 2017).

In a similar vein, Sumah (2018) also highlighted research conducted by the World Bank in 150 countries across Europe, Asia and Africa. According to the survey, women were less likely to commit acts of corruption than their male counterparts. However, UK Aid (2015) noted that there is not any solid proof that women are more vulnerable to corruption than men. The gender differences in corruption engagement in Abuja and the cooperative involvement of both genders have not been adequately reported, even though these assertions may have been sufficient for the places where these studies have been done.

Again, Goel and Nelson (2023), in an article titled “Women’s political empowerment: influence of women in legislative versus executive branches in the fight against corruption”, employed large-sample data for 2018 to 2020. Based on their results, they reported that women representatives in the legislative arm of government exerted significant downward pressure on corruption. But no statistically significant downward pressure was mounted in states or countries where women head the executive arm (captured via female heads of state and female cabinet ministers). Similarly, statistically insignificant results were reported

when an overall index of women's political empowerment was used, and with respect to the longevity of women's suffrage in a nation. However, insufficient attention has been given to the influence of female legislators and female political leaders on corruption in Nigeria.

Similarly, in a study that involved representative samples from 46 countries, Jungo, Madaleno and Botelho (2023) examined the impact of financial inclusion and financial innovation on corruption, while considering the moderating role of education as well as identifying the specific modality of digital inclusion and payments that contribute to corruption reduction. Interestingly, their result revealed that financial inclusion and education significantly reduced corruption in the countries surveyed. Although the quality of Nigeria's education is highly contested, investigation into the role of education in reducing corruption is still minimal.

Additionally, Gök (2021) discovered in a cross-country comparison that corruption and educational level were inversely connected. According to his research, higher tertiary enrolment rates were linked to lower levels of corruption, while lower tertiary enrolment rates were linked to higher levels of corruption. According to the author's conclusion, higher education institutions should have a course on moral principles and ethical values on their curricula to teach students about the meaning of virtue and the long-term benefits of living morally upright lives rather than focussing on corruption's short-term gains. Although findings from the study show that educational qualification was a significant predictor of involvement in corruption among LGA staff, the predictive role of education on state and federal employees' participation in corrupt activities in Nigeria has not been sufficiently investigated.

According to Sumah (2018), the prevailing political and economic structure of a country facilitates people's involvement in corrupt practices. The more centralised, regulated and limited the economic structure of a state is, the greater the possibility of corrupt practices in the country. The powerful political class controls all economic structures in the country and these unchecked powers of the ruling elite and their control over the economy facilitates their participation in corruption. Sumah (2018) further stressed that there is an established nexus between the type of monetary policy adopted by the government and the possibility

of involvement in corruption. While the study established the possibility of corruption in highly centralised and state-controlled economies, it neglected, however, how corruption is facilitated in a free market economy that is out of state control. Meanwhile, Jungo, Madaleno and Botelho (2023) have recognised the importance of critical economic interventions, and found that financial inclusion extends beyond reducing poverty for households as it contributes to macroeconomic stability in Africa and, by extension, discourages involvement in corruption.

However, Ghaniy and Hastiadi (2017) conducted a study that looked at the effect of various political, social and economic determinants, measured through development indicators and various indexes, upon the perceived level of corruption indicated by the corruption perception index of 92 observed countries for the year of 2014. They found that the degree of development, degree of democracy, economic freedom, level of education, political stability and religion had a significant impact on the perceived level of corruption. Notwithstanding this, there were considerable differences in these factors when emerging and industrialised nations were grouped. There does not appear to be any research revealing how much Nigeria's political and economic structure is related to the amount of corruption, despite the fact that it is widely acknowledged that the degree of democracy and economic freedom have a considerable impact on corruption levels.

The Nigerian public sector is blatantly inefficient, and the laws and permits issued by the government are of poor quality. As a result, corruption in this sector has skyrocketed (Ogunlana, 2019). Furthermore, Sumah (2018) explained, government's ineffective and unclear regulations have further increased public servants' involvement in corruption. Government's monopoly of power is transferred to civil servants who willingly engage in corruption because of the superior position they occupy and the fact that corruption has become embedded in the system. This observation did not reveal which cadre of public service is most susceptible to corruption. Similarly, Otalor, Bessong and Kankpang (2015) attributed public servants' participation in corruption to government's pervasive regulations, the excessive degree of discretion granted to government officials (which emboldens them to demand bribes), and private parties' willingness to pay bribes to government officials in order to obtain favours.

Again, the inability of the government to effectively and adequately regulate its agencies has further emboldened public office holders to unnecessarily extend the bureaucratic procedure, resulting in public officials demanding bribes before they carry out their statutory responsibilities (Owusu, Chan and Ameyaw, 2019; Sumah, 2018; Otalor, Bessong and Kankpang, 2015). Owusu *et al.* (2018) offered a slightly different view, citing government's inadequate sanctions on erring public officials as a basis for their continuous involvement in corruption. But Page (2018) proposed a different argument in his article, "A new taxonomy for corruption in Nigeria", where he cited protectionist trade policies of successive administrations as a facilitator of trade-related corruption in Nigeria. The government, in its plan to assist small and medium entrepreneurs (SME), issued certain waivers to local producers, but the monopolists, black marketers and economic elites hijack these waivers for their selfish interests. Ijewereme (2015) opined that bureaucratic corruption thrives in Nigeria because effective punitive measures are not implemented to discourage people from engaging in it. Many people come to the conclusion that participating in corrupt practices has a minimal risk while still yielding large rewards, because there is insufficient information to demonstrate that doing so will result in the worst punishment possible.

Research by Zhang, Le, Xia and Skitmore (2017) specifically aimed to understand the shortcomings of the business-to-government (B2G) tendering process. It was discovered that Chinese construction companies offered government officials incentives to win construction projects. A factor analysis identified six underlying factors, relating to flawed regulatory systems, unfavorable encouragement, a lack of professional ethics and conduct, illegitimate gains, a lack of competitive and equitable bidding practices, and the *guanxi* mechanism. These divergent views explain how corruption is made possible by public officials' ineptitude in the majority of developing nations.

Studies have also revealed structural constraints that affect the perpetuation of corruption (Allen, Qian and Shen, 2015; Jaime-Castillo and Martinez-Cousinou, 2012). An age-old feature of Nigeria's public sector is the demoralising low wages and salaries the government offers public servants, and this has greatly weakened their efficiency as well as encouraging civil servants' participation in corrupt practices in order to augment their take-home pay.

Income level and involvement in corruption among government employees were strongly inversely correlated. In their study “Corruption and competition”, Allen, Qian and Shen (2015) provided evidence in support of this assertion. In their submission, it was determined that corruption results from organisations’, institutions’ and governments’ inability to pay its employees competitive wages that would deter them from engaging in the problem, which is now widespread, particularly in developing nations where there is not enough tax revenue to adequately reward the local officials.

For example, a recent study by Shahaab, Khan, Maude, Hewage and Wang (2023) to gain insights into the relationship between blockchain and operational excellence of public service officers, adopted an action-design scientific research methodology to develop a proof-of-concept blockchain-based application for a public service agency responsible for the registration of companies across the United Kingdom. Importantly, their study found duplication, interoperability and traceability to be operational bottlenecks which are common in public service agencies, and which promote forgery, create room for error and make tracing a transaction history almost impossible.

The amount of household income, according to Jaime-Castillo and Martinez-Cousinou (2012), can be regarded as a significant factor influencing whether a person participates in corruption and activities associated with it. They contend that because bribery is a sign of corruption, it makes sense to consider the resources available to a rational actor. This actor is then presented with a choice between engaging in corruption and refraining from it. The likelihood that home income influences a person’s acceptance of corruption is therefore very high. Numerous studies have been conducted to determine how income affects people’s attitudes regarding corruption. According to one of these investigations, folk with higher income levels have more money available to invest in corrupt practices than those with lower incomes (Jaime-Castillo and Martinez-Cousinou, 2012). Other research showed that, because of their social status and the opportunity it presents, people with high incomes are the biggest beneficiaries of corruption (Dwiputri, Arsyad and Pradiptyo, 2018). These studies show how respective income classes (high and poor) are driven to engage in corruption, but they ignore corrupt behaviour that occurs when the low and high income earners work together.

Several scholars have earlier noted a correlation between the way government ministries and agencies are compensated for their services and the encouragement of corruption through direct (cash or cashless) payments for services rendered (Akokuwebe and Adekanbi, 2017; Hoffman and Patel, 2017; Kankeu and Ventelou, 2016; Saka, Saka, Isiaka and Abdul, 2016; Onah and Govender, 2014). For instance, Onah and Govender (2014) contend that cash payments are somewhat more popular in metropolitan areas, but in rural areas, where poverty is still a problem and recipients of services or their families may be expected to perform menial tasks as payment, cashless or in-kind payments are more common. The establishment of national and state health insurance programs has the unintended consequence of reducing the frequency of out-of-pocket expenses; however, by excluding those with low and middle incomes, direct payments for health services have increased, which is also related to demands for additional informal contributions.

According to past research's findings (Akokuwebe and Adekanbi, 2017; Hoffman and Patel, 2017), direct payment encourages corruption in general. Due to its narrow focus on corruption in the health sector and failure to cast a wider net in its pursuit of corruption in other societal sectors, this investigation's usefulness was constrained. Conversely, Demirgüç-Kunt, Lokshin and Kolchin's (2023) study, which focused on the effects of public sector wages on corruption, found that increasing the wages of public officials could result in declining corruption in countries with insignificant public sector wage inequality. They suggested that increasing public sector wages and tweaking wage distribution policies would help reduce corruption globally.

Beyond the political, economic and socio-demographic facilitators of corruption, the country's age and size is another dimension in unraveling other facilitators of corruption in Nigeria. Goel and Nelson (2010) observed that, among newly independent countries or those with nascent democracies, there is a vulnerability to corruption owing to, for example, underdevelopment of the country's governance systems or rent-seeking opportunities (a situation where the economic elite increases their wealth base by amassing public funds without creating new wealth for the state), created by the privatisation of state assets. The judicial system of the country has not yet completely developed the competence to address corruption cases presented before the courts at this early stage of independence or transition

to democracy. According to UK Aid (2015), there is a positive and lasting association between established democracies and better governance, which is why there are fewer instances of corruption in more developed nations.

The majority of studies have centered on understanding the correlates of corruption among countries, with a small number of studies concentrating on the determinants of corruption at the level of individual countries. These studies either used a cross-sectional analysis or a panel-data analysis. For instance, Kolstad and Wiig (2015) examined the relationship between democracy and corruption in a cross-country study spanning the years 1946 to 2008, using the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) and Instrumental Variable (IV) approaches. The study's findings showed that democracies tend to have lower levels of corruption. The amount of income, the duration of democracy, and democracy in a time of conflict are other characteristics that diminish corruption. When examining corruption, previous studies have rarely taken into account a nation's size, both geographically and in terms of its population. However, new research that has done so indicates that nations with enormous area but sparse population were more likely to experience corruption. Because it is more difficult to keep track of public officials in dispersed places, the underpopulated countries are more vulnerable to many crimes, including corruption (Owusu, Chan, Edwards and Nani, 2021; Tänzler, Maras and Giannakopoulos, 2012; Goel and Nelson 2010; Minogue, 2004; Lovell, Ledeneva and Rogachevskii, 2000).

In a study spanning two and half decades of 20 Latin American and Caribbean countries, Cruz, Jha, Kırşanl and Sedan (2023) observed an inverse association between foreign direct investment (FDI) and corruption. Higher levels of corruption were associated with lower levels of FDI in natural resources. They also noted that corrupt elements in power take advantage of national and global economic crises to disregard financial regulations and attract FDI in natural resources to compensate for the economic crises. Although numerous corruption indictments have been reported in Nigeria's crude oil sector, little is known yet about the extent of corruption in the country's other natural resource sectors and role of FDI in aiding or dissuading the abhorrent practice.

Although some researchers established a nexus between corruption and a country's age and population size (Kolstad and Wiig, 2015; UK Aid, 2015; Goel and Nelson, 2010), their assertions are flawed because they failed to provide a parameter for categorising a country as newly independent or well established. Similarly, their studies failed to address the age at which a democracy is considered to be young or old. Goel and Nelson (2010) also claimed that geographically large and under-populated countries are prone to corruption. While this assertion may have held sway in countries that fit this description, the same cannot be said of a unique country such as Nigeria, with a relatively large land mass and a dense population. Therefore the facilitators of corrupt practices in Nigeria may not be related to the country's age or size.

Additionally, studies have linked high levels of unemployment and underemployment to corruption (Zouaoui, Arab and Alamri, 2021; Adjor and Kebalo, 2018). With the intention of examining the economic, political or social factors that contribute to corruption in Tunisia, Zouaoui, Arab and Alamri (2021) examined whether corruption affected unemployment in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The results from their Bayesian Model Averaging (BMA) model indicated that economic freedom was the key factor influencing corruption in Tunisia. High unemployment rates, which are also getting worse now, were identified as contributing to the high level of corruption, among other things. The high level of corruption in Tunisia was found to be critically influenced by education, the Human Development Index (HDI), and the unemployment rate, all of which are socio-economic determinants. In spite of the fact that this has been shown by numerous other studies, unemployment has continued to be an unacknowledged factor in the context of corruption in Nigeria.

2.3 Strategies Used to Execute Corrupt Activities

The pervasiveness of corruption has led to its manifestation in society's social, economic and cultural spheres. Every effort by succeeding administrations to reduce corruption, especially in Nigeria, has failed; meanwhile, new tactics for carrying out corrupt acts are continually being created. These tactics, however, vary significantly by culture and political environments. Ayawei, Abila and Kalama (2015) succinctly described the methods used to commit corrupt acts in Nigeria. They asserted that Nigerians were skilled at twisting

metaphorical allusions such as “long leg or man know man”, “bottom power”, “you chop, I chop”, “kickback” and “scratch my back” to euphemistically describe their corrupt practices.

Ayawei *et al.* (2015) discuss the various ways in which public officials can engage in corrupt behaviour, which include directly or indirectly accepting or soliciting goods of monetary value or other benefits. This could literally mean the act of offering or accepting bribes. In Nigeria, this kind of unscrupulous behaviour is so widespread that many people simply refer to it as corruption. However, the United Nations (2018) attempted to provide some clarity by defining bribery in the public sector as the offer or promise to give a public official an unfair advantage for the official’s own benefit or the benefit of another person or entity in exchange for the official’s action or inaction in the performance of their official duties. Another definition of bribery is when valuables or money are provided to a willing receiver in an effort to obtain a favor or influence a decision for one’s own benefit (Gaitonde, Oxman, Okebukola and Rada, 2016). Bribes are paid to influence public policy, get decisions made, get around legal processes, and get contracts, judgments or certifications.

While elaborating the magnitude of this form of corruption, Page (2018) quoted a 2016 survey by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) which quantified the bribery collected by Nigerian officials to be worth an estimated US\$4.6 billion. Other strategies identified by scholars for perpetrating corruption include deliberate distortion of financial records to favour individuals or groups, misappropriation of funds, inflation of contracts, kickbacks from contracts, mutilation of account documents for the purpose of concealing illegal acts or deals, and ghost salary payment. Others include commandeering government properties for private use, absenteeism from work, cashing public cheques into a private account, charging unauthorised fees for the public, granting favour to students in school for reasons other than merit, demanding bribes before approving projects, and electoral malpractices (Page, 2018; Bassey, Abia, Attah and Bassey, 2013).

Bribery could also take the form of a public officer or another individual directly or indirectly offering or granting goods of monetary value or other benefits in exchange for a favour, promise or advantage in exchange for any act of commission or omission in the performance of his or her public functions (Fan, Chen and Tang, 2021). Then again, it may

involve the diversion of property belonging to the public. While lamenting the intractable nature of corruption in Nigeria, Nmah (2017) states that corrupt practices can include the use or concealment of proceeds from any illicit act, direct or indirect acts or omissions of one's duties encouraged by provision or promise of any undue advantage to a person or a group concerned. These studies have identified the worth of bribery and why people are tempted to pay bribes, but the researchers' observations (Fan *et al.*, 2021; Page, 2018; Gaitonde *et al.*, 2016; Saka *et al.*, 2016) did not address the factors that sustain bribery in Nigeria's public and private sectors.

Although bribery is widely perpetrated within national boundaries, it remains the most pervasive form of corruption globally. The cross-national pilot study conducted by Dorrough, Köbis, Irlenbusch, Shalvi and Glöckner (2023) offered valuable insights into levels of national acceptance of bribery across countries. The result for the eighteen countries investigated revealed that people offered disproportionately more bribes to their partners from nations with a high level-of-bribery profile than to partners with a low level profile. This offered novel understanding of the cross-country bribery cases. Page (2018) condemns the growing forms of corruption, including deliberate distortion of financial records to favour individuals or groups and misappropriation of funds. The author also laments the growing issues of inflation of contracts, or payment for contracts not executed, as well as kickback from contracts, mutilation of account documents for the purpose of concealing illegal acts or deals and ghost salary payment (that is, inserting fictitious names in the payment voucher). Other nagging taxonomies of corruption are commandeering government properties for private use, cashing public cheques into private accounts, charging unauthorised fees to the public, granting favour to students in school for reasons other than merit, and demanding bribes before approving projects. Additionally, demand for any favour or advantage (such as sex) prior to conducting business, excessive auctioning of government property to oneself, friends or family members, and diversion of salaries and allowances for personal use are included.

In a more articulate manner, Omoḡḡwale and Olutayo (2010) identify a somewhat socio-political menace called clientelism – a concept within the political sphere which hinders development, especially of the rural areas. This network is fuelled by corruption, which

serves as a means of its execution. Clientelism, which approximates the *guanxi* model in China, is a patronage relationship, where patrons give undue (illegal, in most circumstances) access to wealth, political position and other economic benefits for the support, loyalty and submission of their clients. Although it is normally based on contractual terms, this relationship is opposed to established laws of a sane, democratic society. It is a kind of connective cord between the political class and the grassroots. It is a process in which developmental expectations are met through loyalty to the patron and the political elite; that is, using a bit of evil to achieve a greater good. Clientelism is a string attached to the very fibre of corruption, perpetuated through a carefully established network that spans across political administrations.

Amaechi *et al.* (2018), as well as Ugwuani and Nwokedi (2015), discuss prebendalism as another method of committing corrupt acts. It denotes a system in which state officials regard political offices as inherited estates to be used for private wealth and privilege accumulation within a formal constitutional order. Prebendalism is closely related to patrimonialism, a term coined by Weber to refer to a political system in which state officers appropriate their offices for their own and their supporters' benefit. Political offices are viewed as fiefdoms by officials, and the exercise of public authority is used to advance their own and their kin's interests, all of which are overt (or covert) manifestations of corruption. Overall, Ayawei (2015) succinctly submits, as an anchor to the Political Bureau's 1987 ideas, the strategies used to carry out corrupt practices, which are also forms of corruption, are as follows: inflation of government contracts in exchange for kickbacks, fraud and falsification of public accounts in the public sector, examination malpractices in our educational institutions and tampering with public records.

According to Igiebor (2019), the country's electoral system is not immune to the ubiquitous corruption that has bedeviled the nation's social institutions and other important sectors of the society. In nearly two decade of the current democratic dispensation in Nigeria, all elections have been consistently marred by countless forms of electoral fraud, ranging from buying votes with money to constant intimidation of opposition party agents at the polls, as well as disrupting the peaceful conduct of election in areas where the opposition is more popular – they do this by engaging the services of thugs to snatch ballot boxes and stuff

them with already thumbprinted ballot papers (Bassey *et al.*, 2013). Other types of electoral fraud include an excessively large voter list, brigandry, voter intimidation and any kind of electoral violence that results in the killing or maiming of uninformed voters.

Additionally, it entails numerous thumbprints being left on ballots, a large number of minors voting, reporting results for places where no votes were cast, and election winners being declared losers (Ijewereme, 2015). Election fraud in Nigeria has taken many different forms, practically all of these. Many voters no longer have confidence in the electoral umpire's capacity to conduct a fair election in the nation. Previous researchers have cited a number of election frauds plaguing Nigeria (Oke, and Efanodor-Obeten, 2021; Edori, Major Harvest, and Ohaka, 2020; Ijewereme, 2015; Bassey *et al.* 2013), but none of these studies were able to explain how Nigerian security personnel promoted electoral fraud.

Begovic's (2023) investigation of "Corruption in sports: lessons from Montenegro" was a novel attempt at unravelling corruption in sports, particularly in the Western Balkan region. A mixed method approach involving document analysis and semi-structured interviews was adopted for the study. The outcome of the study revealed that, despite Montenegro and the European Union's (EU) attempt to curb corruption, the ruling political entities employed corruption in sport to further entrench themselves in power. The study equally shows that political bigwigs are able to unconstitutionally extend their influence beyond the political sphere by combining exchange of goods and services for political backing (clientelism) and sports corruption.

Studies have also identified nepotism as a tactic for corruption (Nnaemeka, 2021; Dauda, 2020; Page, 2018). Nepotism is the term used to describe the extremely unjust distribution of state-owned benefits to friends, family members and allies. The practice of giving preferential treatment to those who are directly or indirectly related to powerful people or high-ranking government officials is known as nepotism. The public service is of abject quality as a result of the extremely lopsided distribution of contracts, employment recruitment, advancement and appointments to public jobs, all of which entirely ignore the notion of merit (Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management, CAPAM, 2010). Similarly to this, nepotism involves exempting one's friends and family

from the implementation of any punitive laws or rules, which can undermine harmony and confidence. Page (2018) also added that religious and ethnic affiliations are two aspects that drive nepotism in Nigeria.

Furthermore, Wittberg (2023) explored the role kinship plays in an individual's chances of securing public sector jobs in Sweden, an egalitarian and a top-ranked society built on meritocracy. The analysis of the study was based on a detailed register with data spanning 15 years, containing vital information on kinship relations in the country. Interestingly, results from the study proved that the probability of acquiring public service employment increased by nearly six times when a parent was employed in a qualified position at the same agency. Although the result revealed an insignificant level of nepotistic influence on employment in the public service in Sweden, the result is yet to be tested in Nigeria.

Also, nepotism is clearly manifested in appointment, promotion and compensation systems in public offices, and this encourages bureaucratic corruption. In a culturally diverse country such as Nigeria, the practice of nepotism demoralises the citizen and may encourage division and agitation among minority groups (Dauda, 2020). There are instances where nepotism has fuelled secession tendencies among minority groups and cascaded into security challenges that the nation is struggling to control (Uche, Akaighe, Oni and Asekun, 2019). However, the impact of nepotism has only been discussed in relation to human resource recruitment and promotion. These studies failed to examine the security implications of nepotism.

Moreover, extortion has been noted as another method of corruption (Aborisade and Gbahabo, 2021; Page, 2018). According to Page (2018), it is the practice of obtaining goods, services or money using threats or compulsion. The political elite and law enforcement agencies have frequently faced accusations of corruption, which they have been unable to refute. Nigerian lawmakers have been known to seek kickbacks before enacting legislation, and the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) has earned little to no respect among drivers due to their constant extortion of other road users. Another type of extortion that occurs locally in the nation is toll-taking. Local government representatives impose a fee on the populace in order to perform their obligations. Previously, the government had prohibited the

importation of specific goods, but corrupt customs officers stationed at the country's border posts demand bribes from importers in order to exempt their goods from inspection. As a result, the government's attempt to stop the importation of certain goods (to promote local production) was defeated by the corrupt officials' greed. Page (2018) condemned the executive and legislative bodies of government for abhorrent extortion practices. However, the judicial arm of Nigeria was not mentioned in this evaluation.

Another form of corruption is mainly associated with the purchase of essential equipment, gadgets, goods or services. The procurement scam is defined as charging hyper-inflated prices for government purchases or for executing contracts. This criminal act involves government representatives who are saddled with the responsibility of procurement conniving with a contractor or supplier to bloat the cost of executing a project. Thereafter, they prepare a forged receipt to back up their fraudulent act, and the proceeds of this scam are then shared between the corrupt state official and the contractor or supplier (Ijewereme, 2015). Ijewereme's (2015) assessment of the procurement scam in the country merely elaborated the problem but did not explain the role of the National Council on Public Procurement and the Bureau of Public Procurement in stemming the negative tide.

Also, Aja-Eke, Gillanders, Ouedraogo and Maiga (2023), in their work titled *Sextortion and Corruption*, highlighted sextortion as a form of corrupt practice which involves sexual exploitation by people in positions of power of those subject to them. Aja-Eke *et al.* (2023) adopted data from the Global Corruption Barometer for the study, which established that no statistically significant correlation existed between economic and institutional determinants and the share of people who have either experienced sextortion personally or know someone who had. The study also reported higher cases of sextortion in countries with poor rankings on the corruption perception index relative to those with good rankings. Although this finding extended the understanding of sextortion as a form of extortion, it still failed to improve the understanding of the sector with the highest reported cases of sextortion in Nigeria.

Saheed, He and Kohler (2023) observed that the recent Covid-19 pandemic presented new avenues for corruption to infiltrate the health and pharmaceutical sectors globally, increasing health inequities within and between countries. Saheed *et al.* (2023) adopted both

descriptive and qualitative methods, which included 34 academic articles and state policy documents and conducting 16 key informant interviews (KII). The results identified potential risks of corruption in the procurement and distribution of Covid-19 vaccines. The study identified: (a) a lack of transparency and accountability in the operation of the Covax facility; (b) a lack of transparency in the vaccine procurement process; (c) a risk of bribery; and (d) a risk of vaccine theft or the introduction of substandard vaccines at the point of distribution. The Covid-19 pandemic further exacerbated the risk of corruption and bribery in public service. Owing to the unprecedented and devastating nature of the pandemic, funds were urgently released to help stem the tide of rising mortality. Fraudulent public officers deliberately overestimated the funds required to provide palliatives; the excess funds became waste, which these corrupt individuals illegally benefitted from (Dikmen and Çiçek, 2023). Although the study included Nigeria as one of the beneficiaries of Covid-19 vaccines, little is known of the direct involvement of Nigeria's Ministry of Health in the vaccine procurement scandal.

Similarly, corrupt government officials are actively involved in the fictitious recruitment of ghost workers (Igwe and Ikwo, 2019; Nneka and Hezekiah, 2018). This might involve two or more officials colluding to inflate workers' payroll by inserting names of non-existing workers to get huge subventions for salary. The excess salaries are then distributed amongst those involved in this fraudulent act (Ijewereme, 2015). According to Nneka and Hezekiah (2018), the unabated expansion of the public service's personnel force has resulted in a significant increase in the necessity of getting rid of ghost workers who had plundered the service of government at various levels. It is widely contended that the federal government was able to save ₦160 billion in 2014 by removing 60 000 ghost workers from the payroll, and Onuegbu (2015) noted that the Rivers State Universal Basic Education Board (UBEC) was able to save the state ₦200 million per month after removing 1477 ghost workers who were found through the use of biometric technology on UBEC's payroll. There is no doubt that government officials deploy ghost workers as a method of stealing money. As a result, when it comes to paying salaries, it becomes ingrained in the system. Indeed, the federal and state governments' successive administrations have repeatedly raised awareness of the absurdly large sums lost to the recruitment of ghost workers. In the end, Nigeria's Accountant General Office (AGO) found that the government was losing \$39.7 million

every year due to corrupt payments to ghost workers (Page, 2018). In spite of these reports of ghost workers being a technique used for corruption, there remain merely anecdotal reports, as they fail to assess how workers generally construct the concept of ghost worker as a means of corruption.

Deliberate wasteful spending has been identified as a method of corruption (Graycar, 2020). With only a few government agencies being effectively managed, it would seem anomalous to establish new ones. However, past military dictators consistently established costly and unnecessary agencies and the transition to democratic dispensation has not been any different (Fagbadebo, 2019). The executive, in collaboration with the legislature, have approved the establishment of several agencies without clear operational guidelines, and in some cases, the new agencies duplicate the functions of sister agencies. Such deliberate waste by government creates avenues for embezzlement, contract fraud, and patronage distribution among their cronies and loyalists (Page, 2018). This conclusion is limited because Page (2018) did not mention forms of deliberate wasteful action by government beyond the establishment of new ministries, department and agencies (MDAs).

Studies have also shown that the long list of abandoned projects in Nigeria is discouraging for the people as well as for the leaders (Egugbo and Osifo, 2020; Adebisi, Ojo and Alao, 2018). Numerous projects have been started as a result of Nigeria's previous and present politicians frequently making project execution a key component of their campaign platforms. Despite the fact that projects are frequently included in official plans, it has become harder to travel from Nigerian cities to the suburbs without running into a substantial number of abandoned projects. Due to ineffective upkeep or a lack of trained employees, even the few finished projects have become moribund under subsequent governments (Egugbo and Osifo, 2020). Page (2018) noted that the government's carelessness, poor administration and corruption had retrospectively turned a sizable portion of prior spending into intentional waste. In reality, when officials later spend money to rehabilitate or revive them, abandoned projects present a chance for corruption to happen again. Page (2018) was concerned with the endless list of abandoned projects and cited government's negligence, mismanagement and corruption as reasons for this practice. It is true that these reports have shown how projects have been abandoned as a kind of corruption

in the nation, but they have mostly concentrated on government actions that cause projects to be abandoned, leaving out the social construction of the activity among employers and employees.

The Nigerian foreign currency market operates multiple naira-dollar exchange rates and this has created a lacuna from which the elites, businesses, and commercial banks profit (Hoang, 2018). Government's friendly policy of assisting small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) that depend on importation of raw material has also been compromised. Other targeted beneficiaries are students who need to pay their tuition in foreign currencies. The country's apex bank provides foreign currency at a highly subsidised rate, creating an avenue for economic opportunists to take advantage of this subsidised offer by buying foreign currency at a reasonably low price and selling it at the foreign exchange black market for ridiculously high amounts. (This is often referred to as round-tripping). According to Page (2018), the Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) action has produced a brand-new class of foreign exchange subsidy billionaires. This report solely identified the recipients of government subsidies; it made no mention of the flaws in the system or how these flaws encourage corrupt people to make money.

Theft is another form of corruption widely practiced globally (Kratcoski, 2018). It is a fraudulent act that involves taking possession of public resources without permission or right. Gaitonde *et al.* (2016) explained that auto-corruption, which is a one-way flow of stolen resources to an individual, may be difficult to execute, but public office holders sometimes achieve their target of pilfering resources by colluding with providers or suppliers of certain goods to withhold a part of the agreed quantity of goods already paid for by the government. The corrupt official returns to the supplier to receive the monetary value of the goods withheld. Another form of theft cited by Gaitonde *et al.* (2016) involves health workers selling medications or supplies that were supposed to be dispensed for free. The weakness of this study stems from the fact that Gaitonde *et al.* (2016) mainly reported theft in the health sector and neglected theft in other sectors of the economy. Another common form of theft bedeviling Nigeria is the re-looting of recovered funds. The government battles ever so hard to recover stolen funds that previous corrupt individuals have stashed in local and foreign financial institutions. The Nigerian government has

recorded a few successes with the recovery of stolen funds but the poor handling of these funds provide looters within an administration the opportunity to re-loot the recovered funds (Page, 2018).

Theft is the major challenge of Uganda's renewable energy sources. Wabukala, Mukisa, Watundu, Bergland, Rudaheranwa and Adaramola (2023) study the impact of household electricity theft and unaffordability on electricity security in Uganda. The scholars observed significant disparities in the monthly utility revenue collected in rural and urban areas. The revenue from rural areas was almost three times less than that collected in urban areas even though the rural consumption rate was 1.5 times less than that of urban households. These irreconcilable differences showed a clear case of electricity theft.

Misinformation and falsification of records is also a tactic of corruption (Khan, Ahmed and Ahmed, 2021; Kirya, 2019; Onwujekwe, Agwu, Orjiakor, McKee, Hutchinson, Balabanova and McKee, 2019). This refers to boldly presenting false information as a fact or falsifying information for selfish gains. Onwujekwe *et al.* (2019) explained that health sector employees falsified their personal record to get an extended stay in service beyond the years they were meant to spend. They also claimed that some employees presented false certificates to gain promotion; others wrote bogus or forged prescription notes to bill patients they considered wealthy enough to pay. Because of the sensitive position they occupy, health professionals may misleadingly promote certain drugs and products to prescribers and patients (some may include pseudo-trials aiming to market drugs). These assessments of misinformation as a form of corruption did not extend beyond the health, education and security sectors, and it did not give full report of the consequences of misinformation as well as how these are socially constructed as corruption.

Absenteeism, which is widespread and continues to be the main cause of corruption reports globally, is used to carry out corrupt actions (Ngatia, Njoka and Ndegwa, 2020; Hutchinson, Balabanova and McKee, 2019; García, 2019). Absenteeism has become a defining characteristic of public employees in Nigeria as a result of the public service's flawed monitoring mechanism. Employees purposefully underperform for their employer by skipping work, arriving late, showing up but not working, leaving the office before it closes

or working for less time than agreed upon to complete a task (Diestel, Wegge and Shmidt, 2014). In a similar vein, Chimezie (2015) views it as absenteeism when healthcare workers hired by government to serve in public hospitals forsake their primary responsibilities and instead take care of patients in private institutions during work hours. It also describes a situation in which public health professionals accept consulting positions in violation of the terms of their contract with the government.

According to Angell *et al.* (2023) absenteeism is a structural rather than a moral problem. It is the greatest form of corruption bedevilling Nigeria's health system, and it continues to nullify the impact of government's substantial investments in the healthcare sector. While these studies have provided a great deal of information about the rate of absenteeism in both the public and private sectors, they do not facilitate full understanding about how people construct this as a factor that contributes to corruption by both employers and employees.

2.4 Linkages Between Normative Gestures and Corruption in Nigeria

Certain cultural practices, such as gift-giving or kingly responsibilities, have been used to rationalise or justify unethical behaviour (Folarin, 2021). Due to government officials' involvement in kinship networks and the obligations that came with it, such traditional practices were believed to encourage corruption. But many scholars and stakeholders reject this type of argument (Hope, 2018; Chinweuba, 2018; Ashforth and Anand, 2003). The argument of Folarin (2021) is supported by an earlier work by Ekpo (1979), which described how the gift-exchange culture has aided in the practice of corruption within the state apparatus. Numerous studies have confirmed that corruption has a cyclical aspect (Vaughan, 1999; Andvig and Moene, 1990). For instance, Andvig and Moene (1990) examined how people's opinions about usefulness, acceptability and perceptions of corrupt behaviour in society were related, with the idea being that culture influences how people balance the risks and rewards of breaking the law (Vaughan, 1999). According to Ashforth and Anand (2003), the idea that corruption is inevitable is closely related to the idea that it is necessary to achieve particular social objectives. Ashforth and Anad (2003) added that once corruption is accepted as the norm, it can also produce symbolic rewards such as status and self-esteem in addition to utilitarian ones. Accepting corruption can reduce the apparent expenses that

go along with it. For people who believe corruption is normal, the cost of bribery may seem smaller due to the difficulties and discomfort involved in breaking societal standards (Posner, 1997).

In the same manner, scholars have asserted that corruption is a group effort, since citizens' decisions to take part in corrupt activities are influenced by other people's deeds (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2013; Persson, Rothstein and Teorell, 2013). People are more inclined to believe that they will escape punishment for accepting bribes if they know that others are willing to do the same (Cábelková and Hanousek, 2004). Theorists who study the idea of multiple equilibria in the incidence of corruption show that as perceived corruption increases in culture, the risk of being caught decreases (Andvig and Moene, 1990). However, people are less likely to participate in illicit activity when they feel sure about how the social world functions. All of these defences rest on the premise that social standards are artefacts of the conventional past.

According to Nmah (2017), before European colonial incursion into Africa, Nigeria's indigenous cultural values were at odds with corruption. As a result of the colonialists' desperation when their early attempts were greeted with fierce resistance, they influenced indigenous traditions negatively in an effort to control the people. According to Nmah (2017), this is the root of the disastrous consequences evident in the corruption that currently permeates the Nigerian society. It was an intentional assault on the nation's religious and cultural traditions while imposing a British alternative on the populace. The indigenous people are cunningly cut off from their historical, technological and sociocultural stream by the British.

They started by introducing the English language, which helped spread western civilisation and culture, along with presenting rapacious capitalism as the only strategy for gaining economic prosperity. They also blocked the populace from forming its own economic theories. Then there was a huge influx of fanatical missionaries who succeeded in corrupting the indigenous essence of Nigerian socio-religious cultures, with their extraordinary rigid moral rules (Kouassi, 2016). When the indirect rule system was implemented, hooligans and nonentities were given the authority to rule as kings and chiefs. Through these foot

soldiers (British-installed kings), they were able to uphold their nefarious colonial and private interests at the expense of the common good. As a result, this destroyed the morality embedded in Nigerian traditions and gave Nigerians an outlet for their identity problem and for immoral behaviour. The composition of the frail remnants of Nigeria's indigenous cultural heritage and active colonial cultural framework can therefore be used to explain why the country is so notorious for its corruption.

Contrary to Nmah's (2017) assertion that corruption peaked after our encounter with the colonialist, Chinweuba (2018) offered a sobering critique of the contribution of traditional or normative gestures to the country's culture of corruption. After establishing the significant impact culture has on how people behave, Chinweuba (2018) pointed out that there is a traditional connection between the normative practice of achievement at all costs and the pervasive corruption the nation is currently dealing with. As a result, people's cultural orientations may be seen in their gestures, and they observe and interpret the world through the cultural lenses that help to define their diverse ways of life.

As Pierce (2016) went on to argue, the historical unfairness experienced by the middle and lower classes in society is the source of all modern manifestations of corruption in Nigeria. When measuring farms for tax assessment during the colonial era, colonial officials demanded bribes from the local farmers. Farmers who dared refuse to bribe the colonial surveyors would have the value of their farms unfairly inflated, which would lead to greater taxes. Highly respected district and ward heads, who were stewards of the people's culture and traditions, occasionally collaborated with colonial tax masters to inflate specific assessments involving farmers who had different perspectives from their own. In some cases, this led to either the arrogation of the excess funds to themselves or the confiscation of the farmer's land.

The historical and cultural composition of the post-colonial Nigerian state was also emphasised by Hope (2018) as a foundation for corruption. This argument centred on the cultural polarisation that occurred as a result of several decades of colonial control, which split society into two distinct public spheres. These two public spheres were characterised by Hope (2018) as primordial and civic. The primordial groupings, links and attitudes that

have considerable influence and shape a person's public behaviour were described as making up the primordial public world. This public realm is moral, functions under the same moral principles as the private realm, and is based on indigenous cultural norms that existed before imperialist invasion. However, the colonial government has historically been linked to the civic public sphere. It is built on civic institutions like the armed forces, civil service, police, and so forth. It lacks the universal moral principles present in the private sphere and the prehistoric public and is therefore immoral. Most African political elites used this sphere (civic realm) in their nation's post-colonial governance (Hope, 2018). Due to the intrinsic amorality of the civic public sphere, corruption that was not as evident in Nigeria's early public has now grown pervasive in modern times. The atmosphere of unethical leadership and poor governance has created several possibilities for corruption to spread throughout all tiers of Nigerian society, promoting the culture of corruption.

Nwogu and Ijirshar (2016) acknowledge a connection between cultural normative gestures and corruption. They indicate that our society's morals had drastically declined over the past few decades, and that this deterioration corresponded with an increase in corruption scandals. To rid the nation of the scourge of corruption, they counsel it to start a conscious value reorientation. They linked Nigeria's shocking surge in corruption to the erosion of societal values, but did not provide examples of how this erosion of values has led to the rise of particular types of corruption in the country. Jun, Kim and Rowley's (2019) perception, instead of identifying collectivism, high power distance and high masculinity as cultural traits that favour corruption in South Korea, diverges from those who charged colonial hegemonies with adulterating their cultural systems and thereby promoting corruption. But if the study had been conducted on a different population, such as Nigeria, Jun, Kim and Rowley's (2019) claim might not hold true.

The cultural practice of individualism was cited as the cause of increased national prosperity by Stanfill, Villarreal, Medina, Esquivel, de la Rosa and Duncan (2016). According to reports, corruption was higher in less developed nations with less of a, or no, culture of individualism. Their research was concentrated on Latin American cultures, which are known to be very collectivistic (low individualism), embracing the important roles that family and friends play in their lives and being willing to engage in corruption to advance

their own in-group at the expense of the out-group. The limitations of Stanfill *et al.*'s (2016) results include their exclusive focus on Latin American cultures and their inability to provide a sufficient justification for whether Nigerian people exhibit high levels of individualism or high levels of collectivism. Agyei-Mensah and Buerterey's (2019) description of human behaviour encapsulates quite succinctly how values and norms guide character formation. The scholars used three pairs of value orientations to describe culture using Schwartz's framework: (a) conservatism/autonomy, (b) hierarchy/egalitarianism, and (c) mastery/harmony. Social order, respect for tradition, safety in the family, and wisdom are examples of the value-type conservatism. A conservative culture upholds the status quo, values modesty, and encourages moderation in behaviour. It also discourages behaviour that might disturb the peace or the established order (Agyei-Mensah and Buerterey, 2019). The pursuit of personal interests was the focal point of the autonomy value type. Hierarchy and egalitarianism make up the second pair of value orientations. Cultural focus is predicated on maintaining an unequal distribution of power, positions, resources, authority, and wealth in hierarchically structured societies. Egalitarianism, in contrast, is associated with qualities such as fairness, freedom, accountability and honesty. The third pair of cultural value categories identified by Schwartz is mastery/harmony. Active self-assertion, ambition, success, bravery and competence are qualities that define mastery. Contrarily, the harmony cultural value type promotes oneness with nature and accepts the world as it is.

Individual choices and actions are guided by these groupings of values. For instance, civilisations with strong egalitarian institutions, conservative values and mastery are likely to have fewer corruption incidents. But if a community fosters a hierarchy of autonomy, harmony and equality as its core ideals, corruption incidents are likely to be greater than average (Agyei-Mensah and Buerterey, 2019). Yeboah-Assiamah, Asamoah, Bawole and Musah-Surugu (2016) commented on the connection between cultural values and corruption, citing the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCOP) and Commander of the Ashanti Regional Police (ARP), and they blamed the spread of public sector corruption on the Ghanaian people's cultural environment (which encourages gratitude and reciprocity). Realising that people typically give in to sociocultural pressures of gratitude and reciprocity by favouring their kin excessively, participating in unethical behaviour, dominating the system, and deactivating and suspending due procedures is not difficult (Yeboah-Assiamah

and Alesu-Dordzi, 2015). In the current Nigerian society, the validity of these ideas (Yeboah-Assiamah *et al.*, 2016; Yeboah-Assiamah and Alesu-Dordzi, 2015) is debatable.

Ingram and Urle (2004:12) made the case that people on the Cook Islands would choose to deal with the repercussions of corrupt politicians rather than take the chance of losing their jobs due to “fears of retaliation” by connecting cultural traditions, normative gestures, and corrupt activities. Similarly, Shuster (2004) reports that it is difficult for people in Palau to correct, punish, or even report a friend, parent, or co-worker who is acting dishonestly. They prefer implied scorn to overt rebuke and regard indirectness as a positive characteristic (Obamuyi and Olayiwola, 2019). Nigeria’s socioeconomic inequality is made worse by endemic societal corruption, which causes a generalised feeling of fear and insecurity throughout the country. According to Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah, the seeming calm in Abuja exists “because politicians have gradually picked up the notion that in Abuja, one does not chat while eating and there is an awareness that it is ‘our turn to chop’ and that if one is patient, their turn would come as well” (Kukah, 2012:9). It has been suggested that people put up with corruption for a variety of reasons, such as a desire to protect the families of those involved, harm to society’s social fabric, and strained relationships. Ordinary people reject corrupt practices but contribute to or benefit from corruption when they directly or indirectly gain from it, claim Roht-Arriaza and Martinez (2019).

Furthermore, according to Hope (2018), culture affects institutions and social norms since it governs how people interact in a society and determines the type of corruption that spreads. Recently, a subtle aberrant culture of corruption has emerged, undermining society’s cultural framework on a regular basis. This culture has now become ingrained in the behaviour of members of society and has become a major norm. Africans’ interpersonal interactions are mostly governed by the normative behaviours and traditional values that are part of their cultures. By extension, these standards also come into play when they interact in ways that are political and economic, which may encourage or dissuade them from engaging in corruption. According to Agyei-Mensah and Buertey (2019), corruption may be viewed as a cultural phenomenon because it depends on how a society interprets the laws and what behaviour is regarded as a deviation. The sociocultural context of Nigeria and the

abnormal behaviours that are universally disapproved of were not captured by this perception.

Nmah (2017) explained that it is a traditional normative gesture of culturally inclined Nigerians to go with various gifts when approaching the deities or when consulting diviners as part of the normative gesture for corruption: one was not to approach his superior without anything to offer. He stated that the traditional behaviour of approaching the gods while carrying gifts does not indicate that someone is trying to buy off the gods. The gods disapprove of presents offered with the hope of receiving unjustified favours, though. The long-standing African custom of offering presents to deities, prophets, and rulers may be the reason that individuals frequently ask for gifts (bribes) before carrying out their obligations, or offer gifts (bribes) in exchange for favours. This seemingly innocent social custom is used by society's corrupt members as cover to seek kickbacks and bribes (Nmah, 2017). Nmah (2017) concentrated on the sociocultural environment of Nigeria; nevertheless, his analysis of the cultural practice of gift-giving was limited to the traditional religion. This viewpoint ignored the fact that the vast majority of people in the nation are Christians or Muslims, who have distinctive gift-giving customs that set them apart from traditionalists and are equally crucial to the comprehension of the connections between religious standards and corruption.

The social structure also plays a role in the high levels of political corruption in Nigeria and many other southern states, particularly the extended family system. Each African public official, according to Otite (1986), owes a double duty to the people who belong to his/her tribe, which may be denoted by his/her family, home, or other clannish ties. It is obvious that these responsibilities are burdensome because they invariably lead to cronyism, clientelism, and nepotism. Experimentation, particularly in the developed world, unequivocally demonstrates that societies with an extended family structure, where the public official frequently takes care of the needs of a large number of dependents, do not promote nepotistic and clientelistic corruption to the same extent. Without a doubt, from a "prebendal" perspective, the foundation of Nigerian politics and public relations is the patron-client network technique. In his 1987 book, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: the Rise and Fall of the Second Republic*, Richard Joseph emphasises this claim.

“A dishonest society welcomes bribery and coercion as appropriate coping techniques” when poverty is pervasive and there is little chance of escaping its unbearable effects (Aiyede, Simbine, Fagge and Olaniyi, 2011:213). However, silence or concealment are condemned in light of Nigeria’s current official understanding of corruption, which makes it a felony to fail to disclose any incident of inducement to the proper authorities.

It is important to note that the “loud silence” that accompanied the rise of sycophancy, hero worship and boot licking, particularly during the protracted period of military rule from the mid-1980s to the late 1990s, made a significant contribution to the brazen and ravenous nature of political corruption in Nigeria at the time and for several years after. Notably, all military heads of state at the time were Muslims, who were taught to despise corruption and all its manifestations in Islamic teachings. However, corruption has negatively affected almost every facet of Nigerian culture. In conclusion, the most important lesson to learn from all of these factors is the glaring weakness of social and governmental enforcement mechanisms, regardless of whether the issue is a lack of a strong sense of national community or the blatant failure of social and governmental compliance mechanisms. To put it another way, it appears that there is a widespread belief, particularly among senior public officials, that even if their wrongdoings are discovered and punished, they will escape serious punishment because of Nigeria’s unsatisfactory governance systems in almost every area of public life.

Another factor that contributes to the success of corruption in the majority of civilisations is greed. Using a sizable data set of civil wars, Collier and Hoeffler (1998) investigated the greed theory. They found, among other things, that the availability of natural resources nearly always makes the situation worse and that civil war is primarily a problem in low-income countries with low opportunity costs for rebel labour (that is, natural resources are easily stolen by armed rebels or soldiers). Wade (1985) reflects on the hierarchical structure of corruption in his old work titled “The market for public offices in India”, by describing a corrupt irrigation corporation. According to him, officials demand bribes from villages, but in order to be posted in a position from which they can demand bribes, they must first pay off a superior. This leads to a chain of corruption that ends at the level of the local politician, who has the ability to manipulate bureaucratic postings and who needs bribe

money for campaign influence (Wade, 1985). In this context, the society's acceptance of corruption is a massive manifestation that grew worse under military rule in Nigeria. It is a prime example of how the traditional communitarian ethos, which gives public concerns top priority in practically all of Nigeria's traditional communities and cultural groupings, is deteriorating. Following the country's first military takeover in January 1966, which was largely motivated by corruption in public offices, corruption became a significant public problem in Nigeria. Meanwhile, both during the time of colonialism and the post-colonial age, corruption has been rampant (Nwosu and Adeshina, 2021).

On the other hand, there are a number of problems with the ideas about corruption brought on by culture. First, despite the fact that loud anti-corruption movements and resistance to corruption have a long history in many traditional communities, this position implies that corrupt social practices are widespread in Africa (Enste and Heldman, 2017; Obasanjo, 1994). The second drawback of norm-based reasoning is its propensity for tautology. This is due to the risk of making the false assumption that a country's high degree of corruption proves its social norms must have encouraged corruption arising from the lack of a clear definition of norms or empirical evidence of their existence (Asri and Ali, 2019). Finally, this kind of thinking ignores the economic and even anti-corruption benefits that interpersonal, racial, and religious ties can have. The same civil society norms and networks that have been regarded by others as encouraging corruption are, in fact, strongly associated with lower levels of corruption in Italian local government (Ocheje, 2018).

The debate over the significance of social norms is still ongoing, and the outdated theory that social norms inherently encourage corruption is simply too oversimplified to be useful in today's discussions. There is no doubt that informal norms and institutions shape people's behaviour, but until sufficiently developed methods for assessing the existence of norms independent of the effects they are portrayed as having are available, it will be difficult to assess their role in encouraging or deterring corruption (Vannucci, 2015; Fadairo and Ladele, 2014; Rothstein and Varraich, 2014). Despite the criticisms levelled against cultural relativism, cultural notions are nevertheless important for figuring out how people in various countries view and respond to corrupt behaviour. According to Kukah (2012), the type of violence and extremism that gave rise to the Boko Haram terrorist organisation in Nigeria

is a direct result of the government's failure and is unmistakably a symptom of what happens when the state's architecture is burdened and damaged by corruption and inefficiency.

As connotative observable variables, Raile (2016) indexed people's behaviours, expectations, and belief systems. According to Raile (2016), those who benefit from or anticipate receiving benefits from acts of corruption conceal those activities from prying eyes, making corruption an unsolvable moral aberration in society. The existence of corruption in Nigeria may be attributed to the fact that personal obligations and loyalties frequently take precedence over those of the country, the public, or the general populace. Ekeh's (1975) idea of "the two publics", which highlights the part colonialism had in splitting the state and society in Nigeria, had a significant impact on this formulation. The results of the investigations into the conduct of Senate President Bukola Saraki and other members of the Code of Conduct Tribunal (CCT), in which ethnic, religious, and other sectional factors were openly revealed, indicate how widespread Ekeh's two publics are in Nigeria (Ekeh, 1975).

No Longer at Ease, written by Chinua Achebe in 1969, captures the post-colonial era's lack of ideological or emotional attachment to governmental structures. It begins with a query addressed to the protagonist, Obi:

Have you received a job offer yet? The narrator continues, In Nigeria, the government was referred to as 'them' and had nothing to do with you or me, even when it might be taken advantage of. Since it was an 'alien organisation', it was up to the populace to profit from it as much as they could without raising difficulty (Achebe, 1969, p. 38).

Undoubtedly, skewed appointments and recruiting processes more than two decades after the start of the twenty-first century demonstrate that Nigerian public institutions are still frequently abused for personal gain (Yagboyaju, 2016).

2.5 The Role of the Media in the Social Construction of Corruption

The media is critical in any society's dissemination of information, education, and entertainment. Among other functions, Chibnall (1977) argues that recognising issues and

assigning blame are a key element of reality construction, which aligns with Greer's (2010) and Kitzinger's (2004) classification of the media's agenda-setting function. The media's agenda-setting role affects the public, encouraging them to pay attention to the most important news stories rather than the less important ones (Školkey and Itoková, 2016). This suggests that if a news story is regularly and conspicuously covered by the media, the public will assume that it is important. The public is drawn to a social issue and is persuaded that it is essential by the frequency of news coverage of the subject.

Indeed, the media is also given the polytheistic function of informing the public, conducting their own investigations into corruption instances, and serving as a watchdog for corrective action to deter future wrongdoing (Manoli and Janečić, 2021). Although these have had some success, there have been attempts to stop corruption by tackling it from a legal and punitive standpoint. As Nišić and Plavšić (2014) revealed, the media play a crucial role in influencing how society constructs reality through the deliberate selection and presentation of particular news. Based on the facts in a news report and its placement, the public learns not only about a particular topic but also how much importance to accord to it (Reese and Shoemaker, 2016). In an ideal world, media outlets would inform their audiences about the larger social forces that shape their daily lives. The overwhelming conclusion is that, rather than encouraging active citizenship and engagement, the media instead promote apathy, cynicism and passivity.

On the other hand, according to Školkey and Itoková (2016), the media has failed in educating the public about social reality, particularly when it comes to news on corruption. They contended that the media, instead of reporting on corrupt realities, filters and reshapes the news and occasionally misdirects the public's attention by emphasising entertainment, sports, fashion, and other less significant realities. Školkey and Itoková's (2016) viewpoint on the media's agenda-setting function contrasts with that of Komolafe, Nkereuwem and Kalu-Amah (2019), who held that the topics that the media in Nigeria focus on are determined by the electoral cycle. The media tends to focus more on corruption during election seasons in Nigeria since it frequently appears prominently in party platform manifestos.

Le Moglie and Turati (2019) shared this viewpoint, contending that the frequency of media reports on corruption is influenced by the electoral cycle. The informational value of corruption news typically increases in the run-up to a national election; this is not unusual, because voters decide whether to keep the incumbent in office or to replace them based on their performance and relative involvement in corruption (Le Moglie and Turati, 2019). During the run-up to an election, there will be a greater demand for politically relevant news (a demand-side effect). Although Komolafe *et al.* (2019) and Le Moglie and Turati (2019) concurred that the electoral cycle affects how intensely the media covers corruption, their research did not address how the 2019 election cycle in Nigeria affected how the media covers corruption. This implies that the media's impact on corruption extends beyond electoral cycles and into the social milieu.

Mancini, Mazzoni, Cornia and Marchetti (2017) looked into the portrayal of corruption in British, French and Italian newspapers using a sizable database of newspaper stories (107 248 items) covering nine years. According to their research, corruption cases involving national public officials or politicians stimulated the Italian press's interest more than other types of stories. The British media tended to focus on international or sports corruption scandals rather than domestic corruption issues, which received less attention depending on the influence of market forces (Mancini *et al.*, 2017). The French media mostly focused on corruption involving business companies and foreign actors, but they also covered incidents involving domestic politicians. This is similar to how the British and the Italian media cover corruption.

In their analyses of media coverage and the cost of television and social media coverage of corruption scandals, studies (Komolafe *et al.*, 2019; Le Moglie and Turati, 2019; Mancini *et al.*, 2017) have primarily focused on print media publications. Corrupt practices are a worldwide problem. Meanwhile, the corrupt activities are present in all human societies to some extent (Rotimi, Obasaju, Lawal and Iseolorunkanmi, 2013; Adebawwi and Obadare, 2011). It is simply described as the careless use of public resources or the abuse of authority or position in order to secure unjustified favours (Ijewereme, 2015). However, evidence suggests that most less-developed nations, including Nigeria, have higher rates of corruption, which is why the Nigerian constitution makes a point of ensuring that the state

is aware of the vital function that has been allocated to it: putting an end to all forms of corruption and misuse of public office (Comparative Constitution Project, 2022), even though corrupt practices are not precisely defined in the document. Otite (2000) defines corruption as the pervasiveness of truth through bribery or deprivation.

However, corruption has spread to the point where it actually signifies a breach to even acknowledge it. Specifically, this refers to breaking a law or a system of rules and regulations. A study by Komolafe *et al.* (2019) found that media reporting in Nigeria is becoming more voyeuristic, which undermines the ability of the media to give the general public accurate information and usually creates inaccurate perceptions regarding corruption. In Mpfu, Tshuma and Msimanga's (2023) opinion, the failure of the media to adequately focus their searchlight on corruption leaves a vacuum that further emboldens the continued perpetration of corruption. In order to plug any potential gaps that may profit corrupt agents, Purnamasari (2023) advocated for independent practitioners to take the option of whistleblowing in order to keep public attention on corruption.

Despite this, the media is crucial to society because of the advocacy role it plays and the way it can define social and political issues. For this reason, the media is frequently referred to as the fourth estate of the realm. However, a comprehensive view of society will show that corruption is pervasive, but the media bear the primary responsibility for reporting on, exposing, and influencing public perceptions of corruption (Akani, 2017).

Furthermore, according to a 2018 study by the OECD, more than 2% of accused persons in foreign corruption trials were found guilty based on prior media reports of their alleged involvement in corruption. As a result, media reporting is the most significant source for raising public awareness and the most important method for spotting corruption (Chêne, 2019). Scholars (Akani, 2017; Chene, 2019) have clearly discussed the main obligations of the media on a national and international level, but these studies did not concentrate on media responsibilities in a country's capital city, such as Abuja, in relation to their roles in the social construction of corruption.

Conversely, the limited funding available to media organisations has severely impeded their ability to play crucial roles in the development and handling of corruption crises in Nigeria and other less developed nations, as Akani (2017) and Manoli and Janečić (2021) have

highlighted. For advertisements and political jingles, the media is compelled to significantly rely on patronage from influential businessmen or business moguls and politicians (Beattie, Durante and Knight, 2017). The media finds it difficult to report on these businesses' alleged involvement in corrupt activities when they are accused of it. When the media unwillingly exposes such corrupt behaviour, they do it out of compassion for the parties concerned and there is a chance that one or more media allies may have the news slanted (or what is known in Nigeria as "panel-beating" news). These studies (Akani, 2017; Beattie *et al.* 2017) indicated that the media's reliance on patronage and financial constraints hindered their ability to report on corruption objectively. These studies, however, did not make recommendations for how the media may become financially self-sufficient and totally free of corrupt sponsorship.

While individuals who engage in corrupt behaviour want to do it clandestinely, the media has a duty to the public to report on and expose illegal, covert activities that endanger the country's corporate social life. Because of this, media narratives and news framing have the power to either support or undermine the State's efforts to quell the raging beast of corruption. For example, Omotosho (2023) introduced a unique perspective to the manner in which corruption is constructed by the media. This perspective seems to suggest that contemporary media have resolved many corruption cases involving women. According to Omotosho (2023), the media is pivotal in feminising corruption by political office holders. Feminisation of corruption refers to recent trends which involve labelling women as corrupt and making more women visible among the corrupt across political spaces. In view of this, it is sufficient to say that the media is responsible for starting public discussions on social, political and economic issues when it was previously proven that the media plays a crucial role in the identification, investigation, framing and reporting of criminalities. Using media frames, the media may bring these issues to the public's attention.

Corrupt practices tend to be covert, so they could go unnoticed until the public becomes aware of them through the media. Here, the media directs the social reconstruction, also known as the framing and reframing, of the concept of corruption (Berti, 2018). While conducting research on corruption metaphors in the news media coverage of seven European countries, Bratu and Kaoka (2018) made the case that the media are not only

responsible for reproducing scholarly discourse on corruption; they also play a more creative and socialising role in providing descriptions as well as the language of corruption. Bratu and Kaoka (2018) argued that using metaphors to describe abstract concepts (one of which is corruption) improves the construction of corruption. This is significant because metaphors offer vivid images that are more suited for outlining abstract concepts in straightforward language.

According to Komolafe *et al.* (2019), Nigeria's media coverage of corruption is superficial or unsophisticated and lacks depth when it connects corruption to new social issues. Their overall impression of Nigeria's print media's coverage of the country's corruption was the least favourable (which they consider to be lacking strategic structure). Even though there is an increased focus on corruption coverage during Nigeria's election cycle as suggested by Le Moglie and Turati (2019), these media outlets rarely make an effort to place specific stories in the context of larger issues or to offer in-depth analyses that will help create a framework to direct voters in their choice of candidates at the polls. The study did not mention whether media organisations in Nigeria employ metaphors in their construction of corruption or what particular metaphors they can promote, despite Bratu and Kaoka (2018) advocating the use of metaphor in the social construction of corruption.

The effectiveness of media roles has been hampered by a number of variables, despite the media's involvement in moulding the social construction of corruption (Komolafe *et al.*, 2019; Bieber and Kmezcic, 2015). It is difficult for the media to sufficiently investigate and cover corruption in the nation since certain countries have not yet ratified the freedom of information statute, and the government is now in charge of media regulation. For instance, Bieber and Kmezcic (2015) found that widespread government restrictions on the media in the region led to corruption scandals festering throughout the Balkan region of Europe. This assertion was in line with Manoli and Janečić's most recent findings in the area, which indicated that the number of independent media outlets covering corruption is declining. As a result, the public is given a more negative impression of corruption than was provided in an earlier report (Bieber and Kmezcic, 2015) about the Balkan region.

Due to this, the financial buffer needed for the media to operate continuously is mostly provided by the advertisements and sponsorships they are able to secure. Business moguls

and the government are the ones having such a resource bank. These patrons will use their power to shape and occasionally control how corruption issues that concern them are covered in the media (Vogel, 2015). Despite the fact that research by Bieber and Kmezcic (2015), Vogel (2015) and) revealed important issues regarding the lack of media independence, these studies were largely focused on the Balkan region of Europe and ignored other developing democracies such as Nigeria in the reportage of corruption.

Dolzhenkova, Mokhorova, Mokhorov and Demidov (2023) added sentiments similar to those of previous authors that the state exerts significant influence on media coverage of perceived corruption in the country due to the media's dependence on the state. The scenario in many developing countries is that the media are state-owned; this disadvantaged position does not allow them to properly cover problems which directly affect the well-being of the nation, namely the problems of corruption, if this information contradicts the interests of certain socio-political structures (Dolzhenkova *et al.*, 2023).

Another challenge faced by the media in their reportage of corruption is that every media organisation has an innate political allegiance or affection for a socio-political group. Media outlets follow these political interests while reporting on corruption in the nation. The political allegiance of media operators was determined by Komolafe *et al.* (2019) to be directly responsible for the disparate coverage of corruption crises in Nigeria. Media outlets occasionally report corruption cases involving people of a similar geographical origin with caution, and vice versa when the person in question is from a politically opposing region. This supports the submission of Dolzhenkova *et al.* (2023) that the connection between the media and the ruling political class is a significant factor that determines the negative or positive impact of their weak coverage on the destiny of the society.

According to Le Moglie and Turati (2019), print media coverage of corruption in Italy is influenced by political ideology. In the weeks preceding the general elections, a right-wing ideological weekly named *Il Giornale* published many more articles about corruption scandals involving left-wing politicians than it did about scandals involving political neutrals. Conversely, between four and eight weeks before the elections, *La Repubblica* (a left-wing ideological newspaper) increased the number of reportage about corruption scandals involving politicians who held opposing ideological preferences, but carried fewer

corruption stories about those who did not during the final week before the elections. While Le Moglie and Turati (2019) favoured Italian media over Nigerian media in their research on the role of political ideology in the coverage of corruption, Komolafe *et al.* (2019) concentrated on corruption scandals from 2014 and 2015, while ignoring more recent occurrences.

Studies have also consistently revealed that breaking the news of corruption is sometimes risky for reporters (Gonzalez, 2021; Laidlaw, 2019). It is risky for the reporter and the media outlet that breaks such stories to publish corruption scandals involving powerful people. Covering corruption or whistle-blowing entails a major personal danger for the reporter, according to Manoli and Janečić (2021). Their findings indicated that many journalists in the Balkan region avoid covering corruption scandals due to a lack of support from the government and other influential institutions; the few journalists who dare to cover such scandals are veteran journalists who are nearing retirement and well established in their field.

Dingli (2018) pointed out that the government has to help journalists who risk everything to expose corruption scandals in sports in order to encourage more widespread coverage of these issues. Although the reporters' and their media's varied difficulties are acknowledged, there is still a gap in how they report corruption-related news to affect the reconstruction or deconstruction of corruption in Nigeria. But in order to fight corruption holistically, Manoli and Janečić (2021) have argued that it would be important to comprehend the media's perspective on corruption and that of its representatives in every culture.

2.6 Power Relations and Corrupt Practices

The evolution of political agencies and responsibilities has created additional opportunities for corruption (Pozsgai-Alvarez, 2020). This is more a case of institutional corruption, in which invested powers in institutions are abused. This is the basis for several definitions of corruption, such as “misuse of entrusted power for personal gain” (Pope, 2000:4). The power relationships between the parties involved are critical to the instigation of corrupt practices. For instance, public employees request bribes in exchange for services, and politicians misuse public funds to sponsor personal projects (Sheridan, 2019; Roohi, 2022;

Setiadi, Ekawati and Habib, 2022). These acts are made possible by the authority conferred on political offices and the civil service.

As explained by Scholl (2013), power is a fundamental component of all forms of social relations. In the words of Weber, who defined power as “any chance to actualise one’s own will within a social relationship, even against resistance, no matter how this chance is built”, (translated from Weber 1921/1972:34), power is typically thought of as a relational potential. It is important to understand that having power only as a possibility has no bearing on whether or not it will really be used, either with or against resistance. Both individual and institutional power can be employed in a positive, constructive manner while honouring the rights and autonomy of others. When exercising this style of control, known as *promotive control*, powerful individuals try to win over the opposing party. Examples include providing knowledge and sound advice, acting fairly in competition, and looking for win-win solutions in disputes and negotiations (Scholl and Schermuly, 2020).

The use of power can also be hostile or ignorant, neglecting and violating the rights and liberties of others. With this form of power usage, known as *restrictive control*, strong individuals seek to compel the other person’s acquiescence or to end presumptive resistance, such as by hitting children, issuing commands without their permission, hoarding information from coworkers, or deceiving superiors. Targets always see the affiliation dimension of another’s use of power as more or less friendly (embracing their autonomy) or hostile (breaching their autonomy), and this determines whether they will cooperate or resist (Scholl and Schermuly, 2020). The effects of these two methods of exerting power on all parties involved – the targets, the agents, and each social unit – are very different. Most likely, all people have experienced and been able to discern between the promotional and restraining uses of power by their parents when they were young, and later among peers, inside hierarchies, or between nations. In order to determine if relevant others are more powerful, equal or weaker than them, and whether their affiliation tendencies are friendly, neutral or hostile, individuals, organisations and nations always rank these factors (Scholl and Schermuly, 2020).

As succinctly captured by Scholl and Schermuly (2020), corruption is a prime example of exploiting one's position of authority to exert restraint over others while disregarding and violating their equal rights and claims as well as the interests of the general public. The moral corruption has a material component as well. Scholl and Schermuly (2020) reformulated Baron Acton's famous quote to distinguish between the level of power as a potential and the use of such a potential in a promotional or restrictive way:

Superior power tends to induce people to use their power for their own advantage restrictively, i.e. against the interests of the other, and thus it corrupts those moral considerations which respect the autonomy of others. Absolute, uncontrollable power is most likely to be used restrictively, it corrupts absolutely (Scholl and Schermuly, 2020:5)

This means that more corruption results from larger power disparities.

It is little wonder, Scholl and Schermuly (2020) suggest, that these inclinations are restrained by personal traits as well as by the shakiness of the power dynamic, the degree of accountability, and cultural influences. For instance, nations with greater power disparities and steeper hierarchies, such as dictatorial and autocratic governments, offer more opportunity to benefit oneself at the expense of others because there is less fear of being discovered, publicly accused, humiliated, or punished. In a similar vein, someone with both political and economic power is more likely to have more possibilities for their personal advantage than someone with neither political nor financial influence. The inference is that there is a higher possibility that individuals in positions of greater power will use that authority against those in positions of lesser power in order to carry on corrupt activities.

Li (2021) confirmed this and noted that there are corrupt forces that take into account the power dynamics that define a manager-subordinate relationship, particularly when taking into consideration upward information-sharing that is frequently hampered by relative power imbalances. Although those in positions of power have been shown to be more aware of situational goals and to be more adaptable in their behaviour than those in positions of weakness, there is little evidence to support the idea that those in positions of power are more likely to initiate corrupt behaviours in a dyadic relationship than those in lesser

positions. Again, there are still few studies that demonstrate how both societal construction and perpetuation of corruption affect the acts themselves.

In Nigeria, for instance, the constitution vests executive powers in the heads of the Federal and state governments. The constitution, on the other hand, vests the judicial authority of the federation and the states in the courts, not in the office of the heads of the courts (Maduekwe, Ojukwu and Agbata, 2016). While executive authority is delegated to individuals, legislative and judicial authority are delegated to institutions. This individualisation of executive power is predicated on institutional composition. The executive has some control over the legislative process through the ability to veto legislation. Though this authority is not absolute, it serves as an invitation for legislators to review legislation. This is a constitutional design that establishes the independence of each branch of government with the goal of stimulating coordinated efforts toward good governance in a system of distinct but shared powers.

Scholars have engaged in a number of disputes regarding power dynamics and corrupt behaviour, particularly in respect to the class and caste systems (Roohi, 2022; Sheridan, 2019). With a focus on Andhra Pradesh (India), Roohi (2022), for instance, deconstructed the national debate on corruption and placed it within the regional specificities of caste, class, and state politics. He examined how powerful and dominant castes and classes trade power in narratives of corruption. Using data gathered through an ethnographic method between 2011 and 2019, it was found that the narratives of the two dominant castes, the Kamma and Reddy castes, had changed. It was discovered that both of these castes had developed strong political alliances in the lead up to the 2014 and 2019 state elections. Members of the Reddy and Kamma castes have occupied Andhra Pradesh's top political positions ever since India attained independence. As Roohi (2022) concluded, the narratives of the power struggles between the two ruling classes produced three interconnected arguments. First, there is a strong regional and temporal component to the corruption narrative; second, debates about the ethical and moral meaning of corruption and its practical implications have the potential to forge cross-caste and class alliances; and third, despite the formation of these alliances, the outcomes disproportionately benefit the dominant castes.

Gupta (2012) argues that the configuration of corruption is generally important to the running of the Indian state, as welfare services to the underprivileged citizens or lower castes were reliant on the lower caste's ascent to power (Witsoe, 2013). According to Roohi (2022), there is a shift in the gaze from the poor or lower class to the other end of the spectrum, where the powerful and dominant castes and classes narrate corruption alongside their less powerful counterparts. This shift occurs in the power exchange between the lower castes or classes and the dominant classes and castes. In fact, he claimed that the evolving narratives around "wholesale" or high-level corporate or governmental corruption in the state of India, in general, are in contradiction to the prior myths involving the state's retail corruption. Although the narratives of corruption in Andhra Pradesh fluctuated between 2011 and 2019, Roohi (2022) concluded that these fluctuations were limited by the ways in which each of the two dominant castes carefully appropriated national discourses on corruption and tailored them to locally dominant contexts. The discourses were actively engaged with by other caste groups, who sometimes accepted the mediated versions and sometimes rejected them. Their proactive involvement not only resulted in a reflexively developed understanding of the (im)morality of corruption and its connection to patronage politics, but also had an impact on the formation of caste alliances in the two elections.

According to Roohi (2022), politics in Andhra are articulated and conducted explicitly in terms of caste, in contrast to other regions of India where the state and government are understood in terms of region. As a result, these particular conceptions of politics, the state, and government are intertwined with the narratives of corruption as well. It was discovered that, in its particulars, there is a generalised understanding of corruption along class and caste lines such that, despite the fact that the powerful, such as politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen, tend to accept bribes, there are some significant differences in their perceptions of the morality involved in retail and wholesale corruption. Retail corruption is seen by many members of the disadvantaged castes as a necessary prerequisite for developing a patron-client relationship with the bureaucrats or politicians, who are frequently members of the dominant castes. Although coercive measures are morally ambiguous, it is the responsibility of oppressed groups to establish these connections because they rely on the "good will" of office holders and leaders who are frequently not from their own caste and class (Roohi, 2022).

With regards to the power dynamics in corruption, Roohi (2022) revealed that scholars had a thorough understanding of the *Jajmani* (inter-caste relations) system, yet viewed it as exploitative despite being unavoidable. While the nature of caste dependency has moved from a restricted dilemma of subsistence to a wider one as a result of higher education levels, urbanisation, and migration among the marginalised groups, it still overwhelmingly benefits the dominant caste groups. The engagement with retail corruption resulting from unequal inter-caste relations was either suppressed or accepted as a "fact" and not given much thought by the strong agrarian castes. This impression resulted from how patronage relations between dominant and disadvantaged castes were perceived and actualised in a profoundly unequal manner. In fact, the dominating castes frequently flipped the idea of retail corruption, viewing the non-performance of their "duties" by members of the "lower" caste as corruption. In marked contradiction to these ideas of retail corruption, the discussion of wholesale corruption brought the issue of morality into sharp focus (Roohi, 2022). When these narratives are applied to the social construction of corruption in India, it is clear that people who belong to the caste system perceive power relations in corruption in terms of its morality, whereas those who belong to the class system read it differently.

On the other hand, Silitonga, Anthonio, Heyse and Wittek (2016) investigated how institutional change and public leaders' corruption increased corrupt practices in Indonesia, where regional governments have more authority and autonomy to manage local resources. While Silitonga and colleagues (2016) have suggested that informal relations, in addition to formal power relations, are important for initiating and sustaining corruptive transactions, and that corruption necessitates a distinct social capital base in various institutional configurations, the study found that the nature of corruption networks in the country has changed as a result of decentralisation, and was primarily characterised by dyadic and multiplex relations that have an overarching goal of maximising profits. This suggests that there is a chance that people with greater authority are more likely than those with less power to have access to resources to maintain informal networks so as to perpetuate and sustain corrupt behaviour.

Using a case study that examined tax collectors' informal methods and justifications during their encounters with citizens, Nicaise (2019) explored the dynamics of local power and

petty corruption in Burundi using the two districts of Bukeye and Mabayi. The investigation also looked at local governance to comprehend how informal behaviours are acknowledged, given legitimacy, and even encouraged by local authorities. Nicaise (2019) noted that there was a shifting balance of power as well as various restrictions and flexibility employed by local agents when interacting with tax payers. A tax enforcement inquiry also provides a foundation for gauging the disparity between formal good governance norms and standards of behaviour on the one hand, and informal techniques created by local civil servants and officials on the other. It was shown that corruption is mainly a social phenomenon, in contrast to its legal definition, which typically exclusively refers to the pursuit of personal gain. It is systemic and a component of Burundi's existing governance structure, which depends on the politicisation of the public sector, cooperative networks, and socioeconomic considerations.

Setiadi *et al.* (2022) used a series of participant observations, interviews and archival documents in several villages in Bojonegoro Regency, East Java, to investigate the origins of local government corruption practices in rural Java (Indonesia). Strong local values, including the village head's followers' allegiance to him, stable harmony, and the village head's capacity to project himself as an ideal leader, were shown to be the primary contributors to corruption in the community. In order to maintain power for themselves and their organisations, such principles create cordial relational models. These values, however, permitted the rulers to continue their corrupt practices while subjecting the governed to their whims and caprices. Therefore, Setiadi *et al.* (2022) reached the conclusion that non-values-based elements that exacerbated the financial administration system through supralocal interventions had a greater impact on the deterioration of the divergence in budget usage. This implies that the strong local values of the followers – to be subjugated without recourse to challenging authority – strongly support the subjection of the subjects to the leaders' divergence in budget usage.

Sheridan (2019) investigated minor corruption among Chinese migrants in Tanzania by observing how they faced inspections by bureaucrats on the street which were frequently handled by giving "tips". Although it was discovered that the Chinese migrants believed the bureaucrats wanted them to pay bribes, they consistently felt they had to consent to the

payment of bribes because they saw it as the most practical method for them to carry on doing business in Tanzania. The fact that Tanzanian officials were always willing to accept bribes from Chinese migrants on the one hand and that the Chinese migrants were equally willing to pay bribes in order to keep their businesses operating suggests that there is ambiguity regarding who of the two groups initiates bribe payment. Since the advantages to them appear to outweigh the moral and legal costs of accepting a bribe, this appears to be a rational decision on the part of both parties.

Taking into account Nawaz's (2012) claim that the Malawi Police Service is consistently ranked as one of the three most corrupt organisations in Malawi, Chingaipe's (2013) claim that 95% of citizens surveyed admitted to paying bribes to police officers the previous year, and the University of Malawi's Centre for Social Research's (2010) finding that more than two-thirds (83%) of Malawians believed that corruption was a major barrier to their country's development. Robinson and Seim (2018) disentangled the influences of money and power on exposure to bribery between the police and the population in Malawi, while examining who is to be targeted. While acknowledging that corrupt government officials, before engaging in the act of bribery, typically weigh the potential advantages and disadvantages of accepting a bribe using minimal information about a citizen's ability to pay and also to punish, it was found that political connections reduce exposure to bribery, while relative wealth only protects citizens from corrupt practices when wealth serves as a proxy for power at traffic police roadblocks.

In Malawi, a country with widespread low-level corruption, confederates interact with actual traffic police officers while disentangling the effects of socioeconomic and political connections on exposure to corruption. As the confederates pass through police roadblocks without displaying evidence of insurance coverage, this gives a chance for traffic police officers to ask for a bribe. Confederates are randomly assigned to seem to have either high or low socioeconomic status, conveyed by clothing, accessories, and vehicle make and model, in order to determine the effect of socioeconomic status on rates of bribe solicitation. Using confederates who had been independently assigned to signal political links by wearing pins from Malawi's ruling party, the researcher was able to evaluate the impact of political relationships. The results showed that the practice of traffic police officials

soliciting bribes from stopped drivers is quite frequent, accounting for 45% of all observations (Robinson and Seim, 2018).

Further research by Robinson and Seim (2018) showed that some drivers were more frequently the targets of police attention than others. Particularly for drivers from lower-level socioeconomic groups, political connections protected citizens from being bought off. Among stopped drivers, signalling political connections dramatically lowered the rate of bribe solicitation from 91% to 81% and lowered the size of the bribe requested by 15% (from 2197 MWK to 1868 MWK). Robinson and Seim (2018) discovered that socioeconomic class had no bearing on the likelihood of bribe solicitation or the magnitude of bribes requested once a vehicle was stopped. In contrast to those signalling low socioeconomic class, who were stopped more frequently by traffic police (57%), those signalling high socioeconomic class were stopped less frequently (47% of the time) for a visible offence. These results suggest that officials strategically chose when to commit acts of corruption, giving special preference to those who are relatively wealthy and lack political influence. Additionally, they indicate that, before beginning the payment of bribes at roadblocks, the traffic police typically strategically took into account the political connections and socioeconomic level of the citizen. It also suggests that corrupt public officials frequently had a choice in who they targetted because they frequently took the socioeconomic position of the citizens into consideration.

Conversely, several studies have shown that those who are wealthy encounter greater corruption, both because they are more appealing as targets due to their relative wealth and because they have contact with government officials more frequently than those who are poor (Rose and Peiffer, 2013; Hunt and Laszlo, 2012). There is evidence, though, that wealthy people are better able to protect themselves from corruption. For instance, Fried, Lagunes and Venkataramani (2010) show that, although a higher average bribe payment was expected from rich drivers in Mexico, they were less likely than poor drivers to pay bribes to traffic police, and as a result, their overall corruption burden was lower. Robinson and Seim (2018) argued that one reason it is challenging to identify patterns of corruption across socioeconomic groups is because wealth in cultures with extreme inequality gives corrupt officials contradictory signals. Rich people are particularly desirable candidates for

corruption because their obvious riches signal a higher ability or desire to pay. However, relative wealth is also a good predictor of political connections, making wealthy people particularly vulnerable targets for corrupt officials who are afraid of the repercussions of going against the powerful. In fact, according to Fried *et al.* (2010), police are more likely to seek bribes from poorer people because they associate money with the power to impose retribution and are hence more likely to demand payments from them. Therefore, it is challenging to assess the impact of relative wealth on corruption exposure, especially with such observational data.

Alternatively, it has also been discovered that economic framing take an objective group of deviant practices. Doshi and Ranganathan (2018) examined the geography of corruption as an alternative to economic framings that view corruption as an objective collection of deviant behaviours while documenting a significant geography of corruption and power in late capitalism. Corruption is viewed as a historically moving, subjective debate about the abuse of authority that mostly affects states in the Global South. Expressly, the narratives about corruption have been politicised and linked to geographical, material, and symbolic power structures. This is in line with the views of Setiadi *et al.* (2022), who held that corruption was sustained and perpetuated by societal norms that subjected followers to the whims of the leaders. In other words, the leaders in rural communities are influenced by societal values to maintain corrupt practices to the detriment of the followers without resistance to leaders' authority. Even though it is impossible to gauge how willing persons on the outside of power relations are, they work together to get around barriers and get access. According to Transparency International (2020), corruption may affect anyone and happen anywhere, especially in the shadows. This indicates how municipal rules' gaps give corrupt behaviours a place to hide. Additionally, corruption has been seen to evolve along with advancements in technology, law, and regulation. This illustrates the reason that unethical behaviour has survived through time and across sectors.

In Lord Acton's letter to Bishop Creighton in 1887, he stated that "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely". This remains a classic quote that demonstrates the relationship between power and corruption. Tully (1998) also noted that law enforcement officers have the same amount of power as they do responsibilities, and they become more

prone to misconduct and corruption the more integrated they become into the system and get sufficient power at their disposal. Amundsen (2019) holds a nearly identical view of political corruption in Africa. He explains how the ruling elites extract and reinvest power. This extends the argument about greed-driven corruption to include power as a motivation for engaging in corrupt practices.

The authority vested in the Nigeria Police Force serves as a benchmark. The police force's expansive responsibilities provide access to unifying power that is both fluid and limitless. This is because the police force's authority is not limited to the Police Act, but also to other enabling legislations that vest them with additional responsibilities (Nwazi and Ogon, 2018). In contrast to Tully (1998), Igwe (2014) explains that it is viewed as a norm for law enforcement officers to abuse their positions in Nigeria, as new recruits learn to bribe training officers to ensure that they pass. Additionally, the police force's power becomes attractive to criminals who want to use it to further their criminal activities, making the force more susceptible to corruption (Igwe, 2014).

Chiweshe (2015) also identified corruption as a function of power. According to him, power within the broader network creates avenues for access and exclusion, whereas corruption becomes a tool for gaining access to and inclusion in specific rooms, spheres and forms of social standing. This is consistent with Foucault's view, according to which power is not owned but rather serves as a means and strategy. The power dynamics and relationships that currently exist in society demonstrate that corruption has evolved into a survival strategy. When people begin to see power as not only concentrated at the centre but also pervasive throughout society, they begin to understand the extent to which corrupt practices have permeated it.

To Foucault (1980), power is a network of relationships. Thus, eradicating corruption entails a shift in power relations, not in those in positions of power. At all levels of society, power relations exist, and it is the capacity of one social group to exert influence over another. While the expression of dominance can be imprecise in some situations, such as between supposed friends, it becomes more obvious in others, such as those between bosses and

subordinates. The civil rights movement and feminism have shaped our understanding of power relations, but there is no universally accepted conceptual framework.

Warburton (2013) aptly argued that corruption arises from actors' desire to satisfy their needs, goals, desires and interests. According to Juraev (2018), corruption is a continuous utility-maximising problem that generates a requirement for corrupt practices, and a rational person's willingness to accept corrupt income is contingent on a variety of factors, including the official wage rate, the severity of the punishment, awareness of those penalties, the possibility of being discovered, and the likelihood of being indicted. In support of this assertion, Jaakson, Johannsen, Pedersen, Vadi, Ashyrov, Reino and Sööt (2019) studied the role of costs, benefits and moral judgment in private-to-private corruption among one thousand managers, to explore the extent of business managers' perceptions on bribery within their lines of business, and possible explanations for these perceptions in Denmark and Estonian companies using structural equation models. Based on the idea of rational choice and cognitivist theories, in combination with moral judgment and instrumental rationality, the results show that managers find corruption less likely when they perceive it as a breach of their own moral judgment. It was found that context is also essential among managers in Denmark and outside capital cities in both countries, as they perceive bribery as less common, and this is not because they are personally less tolerant of bribery. Although the costs of bribery do not matter, the benefits from bribing play a marginal role in the perceived extent of bribing. The consequence is that, before committing any act of corruption, managers consider the rewards and probable costs. While also considering the probabilities of the rewards and probable costs of soliciting bribes, Nicaise (2019) added that power is necessary to accomplish such acts. This is because the resource holders and power seekers are seen as additional parties involved in corruption. As a result, resources must be exchanged to acquire usable power in order to satisfy personal interests. In essence, corruption is a means to an end, not an end in itself (Warburton, 2013).

2.7 Theoretical Framework

The social construction theory guided this study, with focus on the arguments of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann. Social constructionism studies how individuals'

interactions with their societies and the world around them give meaning to otherwise meaningless things and shape reality. It is a theoretical movement concerned with how knowledge is historically situated and embedded in cultural values and practices. Meanings, according to this viewpoint, are socially constructed through the coordination of people in their various encounters (Gergen and Gergen, 2012).

The theory was popularised by the 1966 publication of “The social construction of reality: a treatise in the sociology of knowledge” by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann. The theory hinges on the basic tenet that people make and are made by their social and cultural worlds. Social construction of reality is a theory that states that people constantly create a shared reality that is experienced as objectively factual and subjectively meaningful through their actions and interactions. To put it another way, the social world is not simply given; it is not natural, it is not revealed, and it is not even fully determined. It is created and recreated by people. People learned from other humans what they could not learn from their senses, instincts, or intelligence. What people’s senses tell them is greatly affected by what other people have told us. The social context can be modified. As a result, a social fact, as it has been throughout history, can be constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed. Berger and Luckmann argued that humans and human interaction, which they refer to as habituation, create society, which means that as actions are frequently repeated, they become cast into a pattern, and so can be repeated in the future in the same manner and with the same economical effort (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). People not only build their own society, but they also accept it as it is, because others built it before them. Society is, in fact, a matter of habit.

The theory begins with the argument that reality is socially constructed, and thus focuses on how meanings are created, negotiated, sustained and modified. Proponents share the goal of conceptualising the world of lived experience through the eyes of those who inhabit it. That is why constructionists regard knowledge and truth as created rather than discovered by the mind (Schwandt, 2003) and believe that being a realist and a constructionist are not mutually exclusive. The fundamental role of language and communication is understood by social constructionism, and this understanding has contributed to the linguistic turn. Language, according to many constructionists, creates social reality. The meaning, notion,

or connotation placed on an object or event by a society and adopted by the inhabitants of that society in terms of how they view or deal with the object or event is thus referred to as social construction. In that regard, a social construct as an idea would be widely accepted by society.

When people interact, they understand that their respective perceptions of reality are related, and as they act upon this understanding, their common knowledge of reality becomes reinforced. Since this knowledge is negotiated by people, institutions come to be presented as part of an objective reality, particularly for future generations who were not involved in the original process of negotiation. For example, as parents negotiate rules for their children to follow, those rules confront the children as externally produced givens that they cannot change. The work by Berger and Luckmann draws attention to what people conceive to be real and what is taken for granted while conducting everyday life. Social construction of reality is an element in the production and reproduction of social life.

Social constructionism suggests that how people understand and perceive the world is a product of how the world is represented or produced through language, and depends upon the culture and times that they live in. Knowledge and understanding are, therefore, not absolute or final but are framed by interactions which often reflect the ideas of powerful groups in society. Nonetheless, because discourse is time and culture specific, it can change over time, often producing social transformations. Berger and Luckmann (1966) view society as existing both as objective and subjective realities. The former is brought about through the interaction of people with the social world, and the social world in turn influences people, resulting in routinisation and habitualisation. This means that any frequently repeated action becomes cast into a pattern, which can be reproduced without much effort. With time, the meaning of the habitualisation becomes embedded as routine, forming a general store of knowledge. This is institutionalised by society to the extent that future generations experience this type of knowledge as objective.

The logic of the social construction is simple: society must be grasped in its duality as an "objective" and a "subjective" reality. The objective social reality, although produced by social action, appears to the individual as separate and independent from him or her. The

subjective side consists in the consciousness an actor has shaped in pervasive processes of socialisation and sustained and modified in daily interactions. In this duality, the seeming dichotomy of Durkheim and Weber was reconciled, and the basic question for sociological theory could be put as follows: “How is it possible that subjective meanings become objective facticities?” (Berger and Luckmann, 1967:30). It is one of the main theses of social construction that cultural constructs are socially stabilised by institutional structures. Constructions are thus not the subjective business of singular individuals. The idea of bringing together seemingly conflicting sociological models into a theory that recognises the importance of both subjectively meaningful human activity and the objective facticity of society became a staple of some of the most influential sociological theories of which the social construction is a forerunner to Pierre Bourdieu’s structural constructivism and Giddens’ structuration theory. Giddens’ (1984) theory of structuration – which aimed to relate concepts of action, meaning and subjectivity to notions of structure and constraint – and his conceptualisation of the recursivity between human social activities and the structural properties of social systems could be read as an expansion of Berger and Luckmann’s project of a sociological theory that seeks to explain how meaningful human activity produce a world of objective facticities (Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

The social constructionists concentrate on socialisation, indoctrination and moral influence, changes in meaning and ways of acting in the world. The theory insists that people take a critical stance towards their taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world (including self). It invites individuals to be critical of the idea that their observations of the world unproblematically yield its nature to them, to challenge the view that conventional knowledge is based upon objective, unbiased observation of the world. It is, therefore, in opposition to what are referred to as positivism and empiricism in traditional science—the assumptions that the nature of the world can be revealed by observation, and that what exists is what people perceive to exist. Social constructionism cautions about assumptions regarding how the world appears to be. This means that the categories with which human beings apprehend the world do not necessarily refer to real divisions. The ways in which humans commonly understand the world and the categories and concepts used are historically and culturally specific.

The interactions between people in the course of their everyday lives are seen as the practices during which shared versions of knowledge are constructed. Therefore, what is regarded as truth varies historically and cross-culturally. That is, the current accepted ways that humans understand the world are a product not of objective observation of the world, but of the social processes and interactions which people are constantly engaged in with each other. Knowledge and social action go together: these “negotiated” understandings could take a wide variety of different forms, and one can, therefore, talk of numerous possible ‘social constructions’ of the world. But each different construction also brings with it, or invites, a different kind of action from human beings (Giddens and Sutton, 2017).

For example, before the Temperance movement, drunks were seen as entirely responsible for their behaviour, and therefore blameworthy. A typical response was imprisonment. However, there has been a move away from seeing drunkenness as a crime and towards thinking of it as a sickness, a kind of addiction. Alcoholics are not seen as totally responsible for their behaviour since they are the victims of a kind of drug addiction. The social action appropriate to understanding drunkenness in this way is to offer medical and psychological treatment, not imprisonment.

In his classical book “Mind, Self and Society”, Mead (1934) reveals that people construct their own and other people’s identities through everyday encounters with each other in social interaction. Reflecting his interest in the dialectic between structure and the way people construct social reality, Bourdieu labels his own orientation “constructivist structuralism” which he defines as the analysis of objective structures (Bourdieu, 1990:14). Bourdieu subscribes, at least in part, to a structuralist perspective and simultaneously adopts a constructivist position which allows him to deal with the genesis of schemes of perception, thought, and action as well as social structures. Bourdieu seeks to bridge structuralism and constructionism, and succeeds to some degree, but there is a bias in his work in the direction of structuralism. It is for this reason that he (along with Foucault and others) is thought of as a poststructuralist. There is more continuity in his work with structuralism than there is with constructivism. Unlike the approach of most others (such as phenomenologists and symbolic interactionists), Bourdieu’s constructivism ignores subjectivity and intentionality. He emphasises the way people, based on their position in social space, perceive and

construct the social world even though their actions are animated and constrained by structures (Hvinden and Halvorsen, 2018).

Despite being criticised as having an overly narrow focus on society and culture as a causal factor in human behaviour, excluding the influence of innate biological tendencies, constructionism is relevant to guiding this study because, as Coleman (1990) argues, individuals make choices within the limits of their information and understanding, restricted by available options and guided by their preferences and tastes. In making choices, individuals seek to maximise or to gain the most at the least cost. By noting that individuals act “within the limits of their information and understanding”, Stark and Finke (2000: 37-38) emphasise that their concern is with “subjective” rationality – action is rational if it is based on what the individual considers “good reasons” or that it “rests upon plausible conjectures”. Behaviour may not be rational where there is no choice; but as it relates to corruption, it is generally the case that people can choose. Although Stark and Finke (2000) admit that people are constrained by norms and culture, they argue that such matters can only be theorised if the analysis begins with actors free of such constraints. Even though information may be imperfect, risks may abound; but individuals are assumed to do the best they can within the constraints imposed by society (Rose-Ackerman and Palifka, 2016). There is an axiom: “corruption is a crime of calculation, not passion. True, there are both saints who resist all temptations and honest officials who resist most. But when benefits associated are large, the chances of being caught is small, and the penalties if caught, insignificant, many officials will succumb” (Klitgaard, 1998:4).

Traditionally, the term corruption was used to indicate a degenerative process operating at a macro-social level, through the perversion of certain constitutive features of an institutional system. In this macro perspective – which obviously requires a preliminary normative judgement, that is, a value-based distinction between “better” and “worse” institutions – the theoretical focus is on the general premises and consequences of the state of degradation of political systems as a whole and the social values underlying them (Owusu *et al.*, 2018). A different approach– which is dominant in the social sciences– takes corruption as a specific social practice having distinctive features which can be defined at micro level, minimising value-laden implications and requirements (Hvinden and

Halvorsen, 2017). Corrupt officials act based on their interests or societal values and are conscious of their actions since they are directed to an expected end. In Nigeria, people often do not really care how wealth is acquired; insofar as such a person is wealthy, respect is accorded to the individual. In order to gain respect, people acquire wealth by whichever means is possible, including corrupt acts. Social constructionism, therefore, explains the meanings ascribed to activities and actions considered corrupt, as well as the people's worldview about corruption in Nigeria.

Corruption occurs primarily in two distinct social, political, and economic contexts. The first is when people abuse their positions for personal gain. This type of corruption occurs in a modern, rational, Weberian bureaucratic system with a clear separation of public and private lives (Ekeh, 1975). In this case, social values support bureaucratic procedures that emphasise equal treatment based on the impartial application of laws. Corrupt behaviour violates bureaucratic procedures, laws and societal expectations for appropriate behaviour in such a system. In the second case, the issue is not crooked individuals, but a system in which corruption is embedded. Here, corruption is institutionalised and it becomes the norm rather than the exception (Giddens and Sutton, 2017). The extensive literature on patronage and "big man politics" (a situation in which corrupt public officials are glorified and become role models) attests to the fact that, for many African observers, corruption is a fundamental component of the state and society (Lipset and Lenz, 2000). While the bureaucracy serves a legal function in patronage systems, the norms, expectations, and actions of public institutions and their officials are based on differential application of rules, unequal access to services, and preferential treatment. In other words, the patronage networks to which public officials belong uphold the value of appropriating state resources to advance the interests of family, clan, ethnic, or religious groups (Kwemarira, Ntayi and Munene, 2021; Cox, 2005). Corruption survives as a learned behaviour because the organisation has learned (and it has become internalised tacit knowledge) that such behaviour is justified. Stopping corruption does not begin or end with identifying the criminal act of the individual, but rather with identifying the cultural behaviours that encourage it. That is why constructionists do not claim that corruption and other observable aspects of life exist only as shared fictions among members of groups. Rather, they argue that the practical significance of such activities is inextricably linked to the social meanings that people associate with them.

By applying the social construction of reality, corrupt activities are continuously created, through human actions and interactions collectively experienced as objectively factual and subjectively meaningful. What can be established is that facts are socially constructed, meaning that the way people see reality is only partially influenced by the objective truth and a lot of times, social processes end up affecting how we think about reality and what we think truth really is. The question is: what makes corruption real? It is a construct to the extent that corruption and many aspects of the world are not real in themselves. Corruption exists only in the context of human society because humans gave it reality through social agreements. Therefore, corruption is conceptually mediated and influenced by socio-cultural factors.

Figure 2.1 illustrates diagrammatically how peoples' socio-demographic attributes link to the study's specific goals, in order to show how corruption is socially constructed within the socio-economic context of their cultural existentialism. Conjecturally, it explains how a person's sex (or gender), marital status, level of education, occupation, length of stay in study area (Abuja), ethnicity, place of residence and income relate to how corruption is understood, whether through externalisation (interactions), objectivisation (habits or habitualisation), or internalisation (legitimation) to determine the strategies for carrying out corrupt practices, which include the use of "long leg" (the use of a powerful figure to further one's own interests), "you chop I chop" (the custom that dictates that if one person benefits, the other must as well), "scratch my back, I scratch yours" (a practice in which assistance is expected to be returned), recommendations from influential individuals for help, and gift-giving. This means that all socio-demographic factors connect to how people see corruption to shape their opinions about the strategies used to commit corruption in their specific socio-economic setting.

The figure goes on to explain how these socio-demographic factors relate to how corruption is implicitly construed vis-à-vis externalisation (through interactions), objectivisation (through habits or habitualisation), and internalisation (through legitimation) in the understanding of various factors that predispose people to corruption. It describes people's ideologies in relation to how societal factors such as peer pressure, "god fatherism", political clientelism, prebendalism and poverty lead to corrupt behaviour. This demonstrates that

people's ideological stance on the factors that predispose people to corruption is shaped by socio-demographic factors and how they understand corruption within their sociocultural environment, regardless of the legal and normative definition of corruption in itself.

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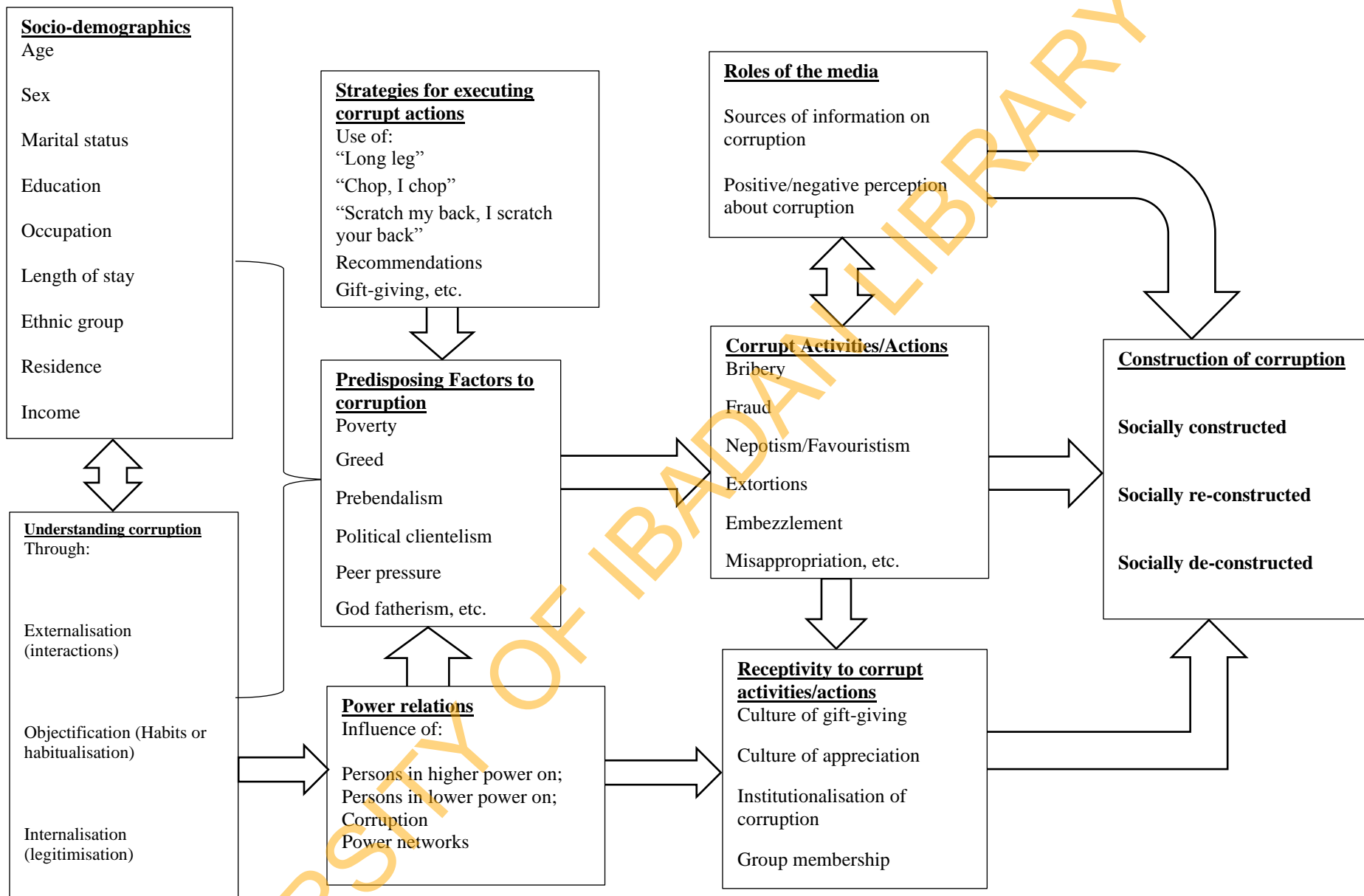


Figure 2.1: The Conceptual Framework Describing the Social Construction of Corruption based on Socio-Demographic Variables and other Associated Variables in Social Construction Theory

Source: Field Survey (2021)

While the two variables – socio-demographic and understanding corruption variables – are presumed to be linked in order to adumbrate the factors that predispose people to corrupt practices, similar explanations and linkages are provided diagrammatically in order to illustrate how they shape power relations in terms of how people in positions of higher or lower power influence corrupt practices through their power networks. This implies that the degree of power influence, based on socio-demographic factors and how they perceive corruption, has a significant role in determining who exercises greater power or influence in situations such as the collection of bribes and illicit commission on official or unofficial deals.

After demonstrating how socio-demographic factors and people's perception of corrupt practices influence their execution strategies, predisposing factors, and power dynamics in corruption, figure 2.1 also explains how they relate to determine whether an action is corrupt or not. By extension, it elucidates how the culture of gift-giving and the institutionalisation of corruption, among other things, contextualise corrupt actions such as bribery, fraud, nepotism, extortion, embezzlement and misappropriation, and receptivity to them. Once more, the figure illuminates how both activities are connected to the media's function, positive or negative, in terms of the information they share, to determine if corrupt practices are constructed, re-constructed or de-constructed.

Even while it appears that the media plays a more significant role in the social construction of corruption in Nigeria than any other organ, it is assumed that socio-demographic characteristics and how corruption is perceived, especially people's receptivity to it, do not conflict with one another. This is due to the fact that they are inextricably bound up to one another when creating the social construction of corruption, as shown in the framework, from which it can be deduced that it is socially constructed, re-constructed or de-constructed. However, the illustration essentially underlines that unless the social, political, and economic environments are taken into account, no one can independently conclude whether a behaviour is corrupt or not. For instance, David Cameron, a former British prime minister, remarked during a 2016 Anti-Corruption Summit that Nigeria is fantastically corrupt. Even the late President of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, once took a swipe at his countrymen, claiming they acted like Nigerians who need bribes to carry out their official

tasks. Until there is an empirical explanation through the lens of a socially constructed paradigm, what the duo perceived to be corrupt might not actually be so.

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CHAPER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Chapter Overview

This section detailed the procedures, context and methods employed in executing the study. It examined the research design, research setting, study population, instruments of data collection, sampling technique, methods of data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.1 Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. The researcher employed the exploratory sequential approach where the qualitative data was collected and analysed before the collection of quantitative data just at one point in time. This design is relevant given that the social construction of corruption remains relatively underexplored particularly in the context of sociological discourse. This enabled the researcher to engage in deep examination of corruption as a social construct (de Vaus, 2014; Babbie, 2013). A triangulation of qualitative and quantitative methods was also employed in order to complement the inadequacies inherent in the two methods (Guthrie, 2010).

This means that mixed-methods of data collection were utilised in this study. According to Pring and Vrushi, (2019), mixed methods/triangulation are important for complementarity which brings convergence and dissonance to the fore in a constructive manner. Mixed methods allowed the researcher to combine the big picture representativeness of the quantitative survey with the real-life resonance provided by the key informant interviews and focus groups to get a more complete picture of the problem (Mok and Clarke, 2014). The power of qualitative data lies in the uncovering of the respondents' understanding and interpretations of the social world. These data, in turn, will be interpreted by the researcher

to reveal the understanding of meanings and interpretive processes that shape respondents' thought and action (Jespersen and Wallace, 2017).

Therefore, the study benefited from using the strengths of both methodologies to provide a broader understanding of how corruption is constructed, conceptualised, institutionalised and tackled in Nigeria. A survey approach alone will not afford the opportunity of covering in great depth the subject of corruption (Neuman, 2006). To obtain an accurate assessment, therefore, it is essential to obtain information from as many sources as possible and to ensure diversity in the sources and methods used. Consequently, biases or errors due to falsification, sampling or other problems were identified, considered and/or eliminated.

3.2 Study Area/Research Setting

The research setting was Abuja, Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory (FCT). A multicultural, multi-ethnic setting Abuja is a microcosm of the Nigerian state and therefore an appropriate location for this research. It serves as the research locale based on several practical and methodological concerns. Its population largely reflects a range of diversity covering almost all the over 250 ethnic nationalities, whereas other regions of the country are largely dominated by particular ethnic and social groups. Aside from the government's presence as a categorical factor, the nongovernmental entities, informal and formal private activities in Abuja are largely impacted due to profound interfaces in the socio-systemic and institutional relations of the state actors and institutions. These diverse views and experiences in the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria enriched the research.

Abuja, Nigeria's capital city, is also referred to as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). It is located in the country's north central region. The Federal Capital Territory was created on 3rd February, 1976 from portions of the former states of Kwara, Niger, Kaduna and Plateau, with the majority of the landmass carved out of Niger state. In contrast to other states in Nigeria, where the governor is elected, the FCT is administered by a minister appointed by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN). Abuja (FCT) had a total population of 1,406,239 people in 2006, with 733,172 males (52.1%) and 673,067 females (47.9 per cent). FCT is 7,315km² in size and has a population density of 487.2 inhabitants per KM². Abuja is geographically located in the country's centre, between latitudes 8.25 and 9.20

north of the equator and 6.45 and 7.39 east of the Greenwich Meridian. The FCT is located in the Savannah region, which has a temperate climate. Abuja is divided into six (6) local area councils, including Abaji, the Abuja Municipal Area Council, Gwagwalada, Kuje, and Kwali (Nnamdi, 2016).

The Federal Government was granted land rights to the territory by Decree 6 of 1976. Prior to the government takeover, the population density was low, with 120,000 residents living in 840 villages, the majority of whom were of Gwari ancestry. Residents were relocated to towns on the outskirts of the territory, including Suleja in Niger State and New Karshi in Nassarawa State (Nnamdi, 2016). Abuja consists of six Local Area Councils (LACs), namely; Abaji, Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Bwari, Gwagwalada, Kuje, and Kwali. Since it was practically impossible to cover the entire LACs, the researcher clustered the city, and three LACs were randomly selected. These LACs are enumerated below:

- a. Abuja Municipal Area Council, consisting of twelve (12) wards: City Centre, Garki, Kabusa, Wuse, Gwarinpa, Jiwa, Gui, Karshi, Orozo, Karu, Nyanya and Gwagwa.
- b. Bwari Area Council, with ten (10) wards: Bwari Central, Byazhin, Dutse Alhaji, Igu, Kawu, Kubwa, Kuduru, Shere, Ushafa and Usuma
- c. Gwagwalada Area Council has ten (10) wards: Dobi, Gwagwalada Centre, Gwako, Ibwa, Ikwa, Kutunku, Paiko, Staff Quarters (Phases 1, 2 and 3), Tungan Maje and Zuba

3.3 Study Population

The study population included adults from the age of eighteen (18) in various occupations in the study area. The choice of adults only was informed by the understanding that this category of people would effectively account for corrupt practices and the resultant effects in their environment than younger people. The study engaged all individuals as the unit of analysis, males and females, including government officials, administrators of public and private enterprises, anti-corruption agencies, market women, students, menial job workers (such as artisans and bricklayers) and other groups of individuals. The motive for the choice of population is justified by the objectives, as the study does not set out to replicate the

popular views of corruption as contained in the literature but proposes to identify, among other things, the way corruption is socially constructed by different groups in Nigeria.

3.4 Sample Size

This study adopted a mixed-method approach, which can also be termed as methodological triangulation. This consists of the use of both qualitative and quantitative approach in gathering and analysing data. Hence, the determination of the sample size was based on the two approaches that have been adopted in the research.

3.4.1 Quantitative Sample Size

The quantitative sample size for the study was drawn using Yamane's (1967) sample size formula based on the projected figures from the 2006 National Population Commission Census figures which puts the total population of Abuja, FCT at 1,406,239. However, based on the selected LACs for the study (Abuja Municipal Council, Bwari and Gwagwalada), the calculation of the quantitative sample size was based on each Area Council's population – 776, 298; 229, 274 and 158, 618 as extracted from the 2006 National Population Commission Census. In terms of sample size for the study 1,300 respondents were drawn as determined by the use of Taro Yamane's (1967) sample size determination formula in addition to the assumed proportions of attrition (10%) in each LAC:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2} \quad (3.1)$$

Where
n = Sample size
N= Total population of study
1 = Constant
e = Margin of error (0.05).

The sample size was broken down by local councils in Table 3.1. Only 438 copies of the administered questionnaire were retrieved and utilised to represent the council in the study's analysis, despite the fact that AMAC had 772, 298 inhabitants and a calculated sample of 440 subjects. Similar to Bwari, only 433 copies of the administered questionnaire were retrieved from the respondents, while 440 subjects were arrived at in the sample size

calculation for Bwari with a total population of 229, 274 people. Therefore, for the purpose of the study's analysis, only the copies of the administered questionnaire that could be retrieved for Bwari were considered. Additionally, according to Yamane's (1967) sample size calculation formula used in each council, the calculated sample size for Gwagwalada was 440 out of a total population of 158,618 people. Despite this, only 429 of the copies that were retrieved were processed for the study's analysis in the council. Against this backdrop, a total sample size of 1,300 respondents were arrived at and adopted for the analysis of the study.

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Table 3.1: Quantitative Sample Size Calculation

S/N	Local Councils in FCT Abuja	Population according to NPC 2006	Calculation of Sample Size	Calculated Sampled Population	Actual Sampled Population (retrieved)
1	*AMAC	776, 298	$n = \frac{776298}{1+776298(0.05)^2}$	440	= 438
2	Bwari	229, 274	$n = \frac{229274}{1+229274(0.05)^2}$	440	= 433
3	Gwagwalada	158, 618	$n = \frac{158618}{1+158618(0.05)^2}$	440	= 429
**	Total	1, 406, 239		1, 320	= 1, 300

*AMAC = Abuja Municipal Area Council

3.4.1.1 Inclusion Criteria (Quantitative)

- Male and female aged 18 years and above: The 18 years minimum bar was adopted; it is believed that respondents are mature and knowledgeable enough on the issue of corruption.
- Respondents must have been residing in Abuja and in the selected political wards for at least three (3) years preceding this study. This benchmark was based on experience and findings during the pilot study conducted for this research (see abridged report of the pilot study in appendix V).
- Respondents must be mentally and physically fit and also healthy to respond to the questionnaire and other interview guides.

3.4.2 Qualitative Sample Size

The total sample size for the qualitative study comprised 58 sessions, which included 21 key informant interviewees, 30 in-depth interviewees and 9 focus group discussion sessions. Table 3.2 shows that the researcher held 5 FGD sessions, 10 IDI sessions, and 12 KII sessions in AMAC. It was also revealed that the researcher conducted 2 FGD sessions, 10 IDI sessions, and 5 KII sessions in Bwari LAC. Finally, it was indicated that the researcher held 2 FGD sessions, 10 IDI sessions, and 4 KII sessions in Gwagwalada LAC. This suggests that qualitative research methods used in the study were not evenly distributed across the selected LACs. The reasons were based on the fact that not all the selected LACs have the presence of the participants purposively chosen across the LACs.

Table 3.2: Distribution by Qualitative Sample Size

S/N	Local Councils in FCT Abuja	FGD	IDI	KII	Total
1	AMAC	5	10	12	27
2	Bwari	2	10	5	15
3	Gwagwalada	2	10	4	16
**	Total	9	30	21	58

NB: FCT = Federal Capital Territory; AMAC = Abuja Municipal Area Council

3.4.2.1 Inclusion Criteria (Qualitative)

- Lawyers and judges that were selected in this study must have been practising in the last three years (3) preceding this study. This threshold/benchmark was based on experience and findings during the pilot study conducted for this research.
- Lawyers and judges that were included must have handled at least one corruption case in the three (3) years preceding this study. This threshold/benchmark was based on experience and findings during the pilot study conducted for this research.
- Law enforcements/anti-corruption agents, traffic wardens, commercial taxi drivers/motorcyclists and contractors that were included in this study must have been working in FCT at least six (6) months preceding this study. This threshold/benchmark was based on experience and findings during the pilot study conducted for this research.

3.5 Sampling Technique

The research employed a multi-stage sampling procedure here-under-enunciated with five stages:

Stage 1: Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory, was purposively selected based on the aforementioned reasons highlighted in the research setting section 3.2.

Stage 2: This stage involved the use of cluster sampling for the selection of three Local Area Councils out of the six LACs. In this process, Abuja was clustered according to the six LACs existing in the territory out of which Abuja Municipal, Bwari and Gwagwalada Area Councils were randomly selected for the study.

Stage 3: This stage adopted a random sampling method for the selection of wards from the selected LACs. This technique gave the entire political wards in the selected LACs equal chance of being included and selected for the study. This technique makes for representativeness by which every element has the probability of being selected. This also helps the researcher to make empirical generalisation. It further increases the reliability of the research.

Thus, in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), the political wards used were City Centre, Garki, Kabusa, Nyanya and Wuse. For Bwari LAC, Bwari Central, Dutse Alhaji, Kubwa, Kuduru and Usuma were selected. Finally, in Gwagwalada Area Council, Dobi, Gwagwalada central, Kutunku, Paiko and Zuba were all selected.

Stage 4: Systematic sampling technique was utilised for the selection of households in the selected wards based on the sampling frame for each wards. In each of the wards, first house was randomly picked before the next house was selected based on the n^{th} interval of the sampling frame for each ward until the sample size for the wards were proportionally completed.

Stage 5: The simple random sampling technique was used to select respondents in each of the selected households for the administration of the structured questionnaire, while purposive sampling was used to select participants for the KIIs, IDIs and FGDs respectively. Figure 3.1 presents the sampling flow chart. The Figure depicts the steps in the selection process, which began with Nigeria, the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja, Local Councils, wards, and households before reaching the actual respondents.

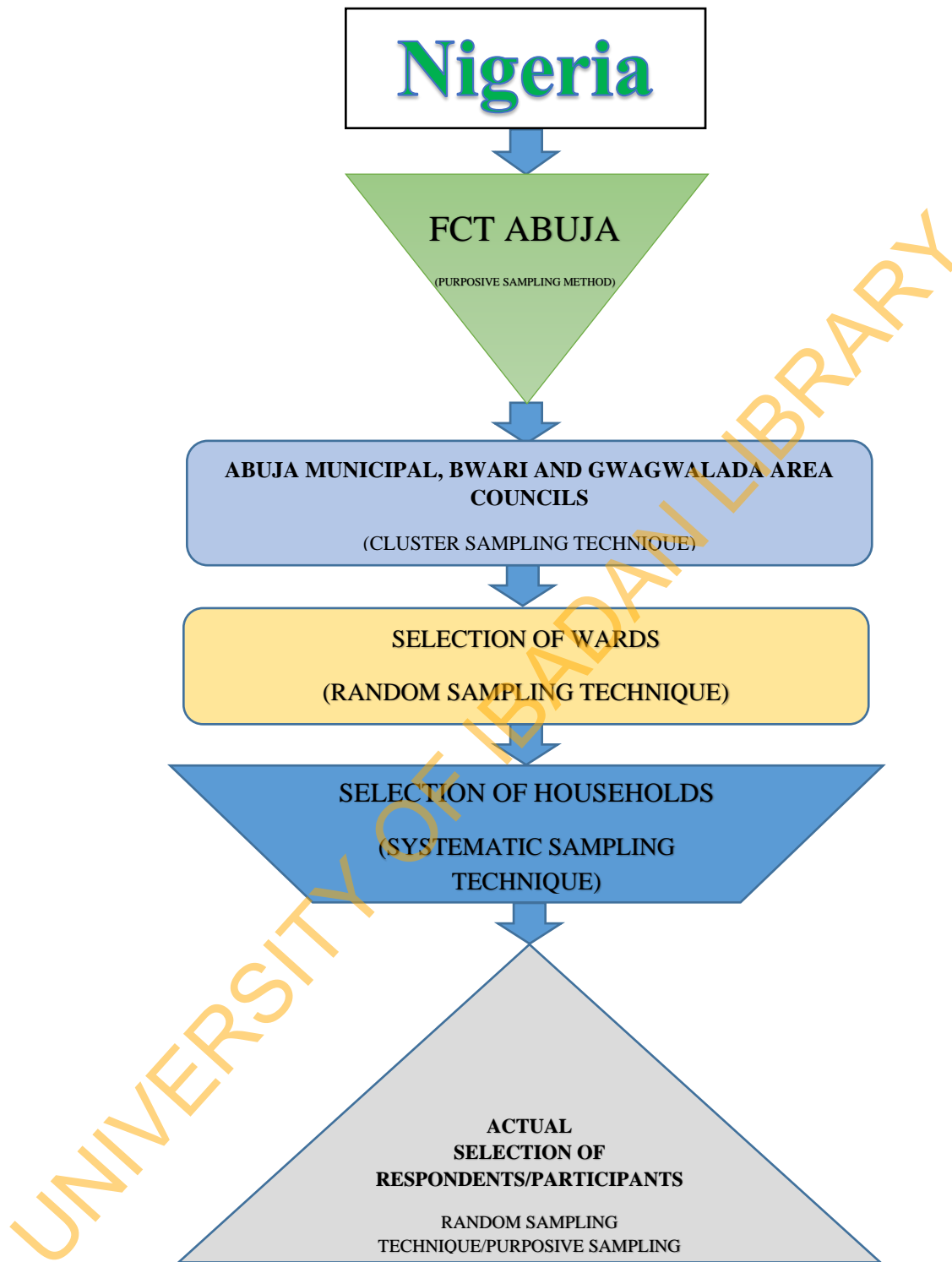


Figure 3.1: The Sampling Flow Chart

Source: Field Survey (2021)

3.6 Methods of Data Collection

The methods that were employed to elicit information from the respondents/participants was the structured questionnaires for quantitative data gathering, while key informant interviews (KIIs), in-depth interviews (IDIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs) were used for the qualitative data collection. The need for the triangulation of methods was the complementary roles of the two approaches which would enrich the data output from them.

3.6.1 Survey Method: Structured Questionnaire

The structured questionnaire was the research inventory in the survey. The questionnaire generated easily quantifiable responses due to the ease with which it can be coded numerically and analysed for patterns of responses and relationships between the variables being asked (Hesse-Biber, 2018). Throughout the course of this study, 1, 320 copies of the questionnaire containing various questions were distributed to randomly selected respondents. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) argue that using the survey method enables a researcher to collect data from a larger sample size than would be possible with an interview or an experimental study. This is the rationale for this method.

3.6.2 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Three different professional groups in the research area participated in a total of nine (9) focus group discussions (FGDs) sessions. These Focus Group sessions were held among students, journalists and members of anti-graft agencies (such as Economic and Financial Crime Commission [EFCC] and Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Offences Commission [ICPC]). Three groups of students (male and female) of higher education institutions between the ages of 18 and 35 were recruited for the first group, one from each of the three LACs. The second group of professionals was made up of a group of journalists, one from each of the selected LACs. Their participation in reporting corrupt cases and anti-graft laws across the media was the basis of their involvement in the FGDs. Also, their opinions in the study provide first-hand knowledge of the various reports of corrupt behaviours that have influenced how the general public perceives corruption.

The third set of professionals was made up of three groups of anti-corruption officials, including EFCC and ICPC members. While the first group of anti-graft organisations comprised of individuals in their lower cadres, the second and third groups were made up of people in their middle and upper cadres. The basis for their inclusion in the FGDs was informed by their roles in the fight against corruption in Nigeria as well as the depth of knowledge they have about anti-graft policies of the Federal Government of Nigeria in the implementation of such policies.

3.6.3 In-depth Interview (IDI)

A total of 30 in-depth interviews, ten in each study LACs, were conducted with a variety of officials in different lines of work, including six lecturers (two for each LAC); six contractors (two for each LAC); six commercial drivers/motorcyclists (two for each LAC); six civil servants (two for each LAC); and six politicians (two for each LAC). Their inclusion in the study is justified by the fact that they play societal roles that expose them to corruption more than other demographic groups do (clue from pilot study). Therefore, in comparison to other categories of people, they seem to be more vulnerable to corrupt activities than other groups of people in the society.

3.6.4 Key Informant Interview (KII)

The researcher purposively selected 21 key informant interviewees based on their positions and roles in the fight against corrupt practices in Abuja and Nigeria as a whole. The participants for the KIIs included two judges, with each from the Federal High Court and Magistrate Court Abuja respectively; seven community leaders, namely; *Aguma* of Gwagwalada, *Agora* of Zuba, *Sa'payi* of Garki, *Auta* of Jabi, *Dogo* of Pigba, *Esu* of Bwari and *Sarki* Bwari. Others include six lawyers, with two from each of the selected LAC, as well as six officials of civil society groups drawn from Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC), Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), Publish What You Pay Coalition (PWYPC), [CODE], Connected Development BudgIT, and Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP). These individuals were purposively recruited to participate in the study based on their positions and the fact that they were key in providing relevant information on corrupt practices across various corrupt actions in the study area.

Generally speaking, however, the conduct of qualitative data collection in this study is justified by Pring and Vushi (2019), who argue that qualitative data allows for a more in-depth examination of the research subjects' perspectives.

3.7 Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

The validity of the instruments used for this study was considered to ensure that they were consistent and dependable to measure what they intended to measure. Based on this, the face and content validity was used to validate all the instruments, which involved the researcher taking a critical look at all the questions to ensure that they were consistent with all indicators in the specific objectives. The questions were also examined by a number of qualified scholars in the field of development studies and measurement to ensure their validity. Pre-testing the instruments in a different location was done as an additional effort to evaluate the instruments used for data collection. As a result, the researcher was able to make necessary modifications before proceeding to the study location to gather the actual data.

When it comes to the reliability of the structured questionnaire that was used, reliability refers to the evaluation of internal consistency of what a variable claims to measure in the indicators. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was utilised to measure the reliability of the questionnaire used for data collection in this study. The questionnaire's overall reliability coefficient, based on its average inter-item correlation was $\alpha = 0.947$, indicating a high level of internal consistency. The reliability of the measures on the identified and defined corrupt activities, on the other hand, revealed that it yielded a reliability coefficient of $\alpha=0.870$, that predisposing factors yielded a reliability coefficient of $\alpha=0.880$, and that strategies used in carrying out corrupt actions yielded a reliability coefficient of $\alpha=0.895$.

3.8 Procedure for Data Collection

Several procedures were properly followed when gathering the data. Research assistants were recruited and trained on the instruments and the procedures for data collection after the instruments were pre-tested and modifications made. The next step was to send out all trained research assistants to gather qualitative data from each eligible participant for

processing non-numerical data. The qualitative data were gathered using KIIs, IDIs and FGDs.

Additionally, after collecting non-numerical data, tablets were provided to each research assistant so they could distribute structured questionnaires proportionately to all eligible respondents in accordance with the inclusion criteria. This data collection was supported and maintained by ArcGIS Survey123, a technologically based database. It should be noted the focus of administering the structured questionnaire to eligible respondents digitally was to collect numerical data that would be appropriate for analysis and the testability of different hypotheses. The researcher oversaw all sessions used to gather the qualitative data and took notes. Their responses were also audio-digitally recorded for the sake of retrieval, transcription, translation, and analysis.

3.9 Data Management

All interviews were digitally recorded and preserved for transcription and later analysis so that they could be retrieved more easily. All copies of the structured questionnaire, which were digitally administered using ArcGIS Survey123, were kept electronically utilising internet database technology. NVIVO 12 software was used to analyse all transcripts during the data analysis process, while the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 21.0) was used to analyse the quantitative data after cleaning and editing.

3.10 Definition and Measurement of Variables

In this study, corrupt practices have been defined as illegal or dishonest activities carried out by individuals or groups entrusted with positions of authority, primarily to acquire illicit benefits. It was, therefore, limited to fraud, bribery, theft (conversion of public properties), money laundering and misappropriation. Other corrupt practices considered include embezzlement, diversion of public funds to personal or other uses, trading in influence, abuse of a position of trust, nepotism and forgery (falsification of public records or presenting falsified documents).

In identifying corrupt practices, however, 20 questions with response of YES/NO/DON'T KNOW was developed which ranged from acceptance of gift items by officers before service delivery to the offerer; Acceptance of gift items by officers after service delivery to the offerer; acceptance of pay-off for service delivery; acceptance of tips in cash or kind for service delivery by officers before service delivery; acceptance of a promise to be rewarded by officials before service delivery; acceptance of a promise to be rewarded by officials after service delivery; acceptance of fee/commission before service delivery by officers; acceptance of fee/commission or fee/commission after service delivery by officers; acceptance of kick-backs from contract awarded; falsification of financial records by officers; falsification of certificates for promotion/appointment; stealing of public funds or property by officers; undue conversion of public funds/property to personal use by officers; preferential treatment of people by office holders in official service delivery; acceptance of fee/commission before consideration for employment/appointment and promotion; acceptance of fee/commission after consideration for employment/appointment and promotion; to diversion of public funds to unbudgeted projects.

Dependent variables: There are four dependent variables considered in this study. The first dependent variable was based on the level of activities/actions identified and defined as corrupt. This was also achieved through the re-categorisation of a 20-item corrupt activities into lowly corrupt "0"/highly corrupt "1", which made it suitable for Chi-square test.

Independent variable: The independent variable of the study was based on the social construction or reality of corruption measured by how respondents could best describe information about corrupt practices in general – (1) externalisation (through interaction), (2) objectification (through habitual things) and (3) internalisation (through what they believe). In addition, this study considered all socio-demographic variables of the respondents as the covariates, which range from age (1=18 – 29; 2=30 – 39; 3=40 – 49; 4=50 – 59; 5= \geq 60), sex (1=Male; 2=Female), marital status (1=Married/cohabiting; 2=Separated/divorced; 3=Single; 4=Widow/widower), education (1=No formal education; 2=Below tertiary education; 3=Tertiary not completed; 4=Tertiary completed), occupation (1=Student; 2=Public sector employee; 3=Private sector employee; 4=Professionals; 5=Traditional rulers/civil society officials; 6=Unemployed), length of stay (1=3 – 5; 2=6 –

9; 3=10 years and above), ethnic group (1=Hausa; 2=Igbo; 3=Yoruba; 4=Northern Minority; 6=Southern Minority), residence (1=Slum area; 2=Semi-urban; 3=Urban), income (1=Below 30000 naira; 2=30001 – 70000; 3=70001 and above).

3.11 Methods of Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analysed with the aid of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 21.0) while the qualitative data were analysed with the aid of Nvivo 12 software. Univariate and bivariate analyses were undertaken for the quantitative approach. While the univariate interrogated the frequency and percentage distribution of variables, the bivariate analyses (cross-tabulation and chi square) considered the association that existed among variables at $P \leq 0.05$ being the statistically acceptable significance threshold in Social Sciences for inferential statistics.

The qualitative data collected for the study, on the other hand, was analysed using Nvivo 12, a qualitative software for thematic and content analyses. Emerging themes from the responses were used as a bases for explaining findings based on the specific objectives they refer to. The qualitative data was consequently subjected to content analysis as well as ethnographic narratives and interpretations. As a result, the use of mixed methods has made it possible to triangulate the survey data with data from focus groups, in-depth interviews, and key informant interviews in order to improve the reliability of the findings. With regards to the FGDs and KIIs, thematic analysis has been employed to analyse the data. In line with the practice of Social Sciences, the major point in the analysis of data collected from both quantitative and qualitative approach focused on the interpretations and inferences drawn from the findings (Valdovinos-Hernandez *et al.*, 2019; Yagboyaju, 2017; Babbie, 2013).

Table 3.3: Data Analysis Matrix by Variables and Instruments

S/N	Objectives	Indicators	How it was examined	Instruments used	How it was analysed
**	**Socio-demographic characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender • Marital Status • Level of Education • Occupation • Ethnic groups • Average income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender • Marital Status • Level of Education • Occupation • Ethnic groups • Average income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured Questionnaire (Q101-Q109) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mean • Simple percentage
i.	Identify activities/actions people define as corrupt in the context in Nigeria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bribery • Fraud • Nepotism/favouritism • Extortion • Embezzlement • Misappropriation of public funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering of gift items • Acceptance of tips • Acceptance of a promise • Acceptance of kick backs • Falsification of records • Actual stealing of funds • Diversion of funds, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured Questionnaire (Q201-Q209) • KII • IDI • FGD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple percentage • Cross-tabulations • Thematic and content analysis
ii.	Investigate the factors that predispose people to corrupt practices in Nigeria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty • Greed • Marginalisation • Prebendalism • Existing laws • Political clientelism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty • Party politics • Cultural practices • Peer/Community pressure • God-fatherism • Poor enforcement of laws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured Questionnaire (Q301-Q306) • KII • IDI • FGD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple percentage • Cross-tabulation • Thematic and content analysis
iii.	Examine the strategies used to execute corrupt activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrimonialism • Prebendalism • Gift items • God fatherism • Excessive auctioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of 'long leg' • Use of kickbacks • Staff short-change • Falsification of records • Gifts offer, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured Questionnaire (Q401(i) – Q401(xx)) • KII • IDI • FGD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple percentage • Cross tabulation • Thematic and content analysis
iv.	Analyse how normative gestures determine people's receptivity to corrupt practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture of gift-giving rituals • Favouritism • Institutionalisation of corruption • Community perception about corrupt officials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gift offer • Influence of religion on corrupt practices • Positive/negative perception about corrupt officials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured Questionnaire (Q501-Q503) • KII • IDI • FGD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple percentage • Cross-tabulation • Thematic and content analysis
V	Interrogate the role of the media in social construction of corruption.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kind of media reports on corruption • Media mostly reporting corrupt practices • Perception of media report on corruption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources of information about corrupt practices • Most media reporting corruption • Positive/negative perception about media reports on corrupt practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured Questionnaire (Q601-Q605) • KII • IDI • FGD • Newspapers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple percentage • Cross-tabulation • Content analysis
Vi	Describe how power relations affect corrupt practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power relations among the 3 arms of government on corrupt practices • Individual power • Official power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles of power networks • Categories of power in corrupt practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured Questionnaire (Q701 – Q706) • KII • IDI • FGD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple percentage • Cross-tabulation • Thematic and content analysis

NB: FGD=Focus group discussion; KII=Key informant interview; IDI = In-Depth Interview

3.12 Ethical Considerations

In order to maintain high ethical standards in the conduct of social research such as this, certain ethical principles were duly observed for the purpose of scientific integrity, respect for human rights and dignity, and cooperation between science and society. These principles guarantee that research subjects are given a choice, are informed about the study, and are kept safe. The following guidelines were adhered to when conducting this study to guarantee that the ethical criteria were met:

- a. **Individual respect:** All participants participated voluntarily, without coercion or undue influence, and their rights, dignity, and autonomy were respected and adequately protected.
- b. **Beneficence and non-maleficence:** The researcher's primary goal was to maximise the research's benefit while minimising the risk of harm to participants and researchers. Robust precautions were put in place to mitigate all potential risk and harm. The researcher also worked towards mitigating the potential risks of psychological harm, physical harm, legal harm, social harm, and economic harm while pursuing their associated benefits.
- c. **Justice:** The researcher ensured that a high level of fairness was maintained in order to uphold the principle of equal treatment and the principle of human dignity.
- d. **Informed consent:** Research staff and participants were provided with adequate (a) information about the research (b) in a comprehensible manner (c) free of duress or inappropriate inducement. The information included the research procedure, the objectives, the risks and anticipated benefits, alternative procedures, and a statement allowing the participant to ask questions and withdraw from the study at any time.
- e. **Confidentiality and data protection:** Individual and group preferences for anonymity were honoured, just as participants' requirements for the confidentiality of information and personal data. The research data were securely stored in accordance with applicable legislation and institutional policy.
- f. **Integrity:** The research was designed, reviewed, and conducted in accordance with established standards of integrity, as well as to ensure its quality and transparency.

Additionally, the researcher also left his telephone number and e-mail address in case a respondent requests a summary of the final report.

3.13 Limitations to the Study

Despite the thoroughness with which the investigation of the social construction of corruption was conducted, there were some limitations. First, the sample size for the study's analysis was based on the 2006 Population Census estimate. Even if the research result was based on a mathematical formula, this could fraught its generalisability. Second, the data used in this study's analysis was derived from self-reported information, which could be prone to bias.

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CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter focused on the presentation of analyses and interpretations of data gathered from the field of study. The data analysed and interpreted were mainly sourced from primary sources. The explorative method was used to combine the qualitative and quantitative data. While the qualitative approach sourced data from 21 key informant interviewees, 30 in-depth interviewees, and nine (9) focus group sessions; the quantitative data consisted of 1,300 respondents: AMAC (438), Bwari (433) and Gwagwalada (429). The purpose of the exploratory sequential approach in this study was to clarify, corroborate and complement the methods of data gathering in order to reach a logical conclusion on the topic of the social construction of corruption in Abuja, Nigeria.

In addition, of the 1,320 respondents calculated as the sample size and successfully surveyed in the three randomly selected councils of the FCT (see the methodology), only 1,300 respondents are found valid and used for the analysis of the quantitative aspect of the study. This suggests that the response rate for the study yielded 98.5%; and thus perfectly fits in at the margin of acceptability for this research following the observed systematic procedures adopted in data collection procedures as well as the criteria for inclusion. At the presentation of results and interpretations of the quantitative data, however, tables and charts were used; while content-analysis method (narrative approach) based on the themes and sub-themes generated from participants' responses were used for the qualitative aspect of the study.

4.1 Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4.1 shows the distribution of the respondents by socio-demographic characteristics. The age distribution revealed that respondents' age is 34.87 ± 10.82 years as the highest

proportion of age group is found within 30 – 39 years (36.1%), while the least age group was 60 years and above (2.2%). This implies that most respondents were still in the working age range and might be working in either the public or private sector to comprehend the social construction of corruption from different perspectives. In terms of the distribution of respondents by sex, male make up 63.7% of the total, while female make up 36.3%. Despite the fact that males make up the majority of the respondents, it is still reasonable to draw a logical conclusion based on the proportion of female respondents included in the analysis.

In the distribution of respondents by marital status, more than half (60.7%) report that they are married or cohabiting, followed by those who are single (35.5%) and separated/divorced or widows (3.8%), who make up the least number of respondents. This implies that the majority would share a knowledge of how corruption is socially constructed. Regarding their highest level of education, about two-thirds of the respondents (67.8%) have completed their tertiary education. These respondents were followed by those who have not finished their tertiary education (16.7%), and those who have no formal education (1.2%) making up the lowest proportion. In view of the large percentage of people who have had tertiary education, this shows that there is a clear knowledge of how corruption is socially constructed.

The respondents' occupational distribution shows that the majority of them (47.8%) are employed in the public sector, followed by the private sector (27.9%), and students making up the least proportion of the respondents' occupational distribution. More than half of the respondents have lived in the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja for at least 10 years, according to data on duration of stay, while other categories of respondents have resided for between 3 and 5 years (24.5%), and between 6 and 9 years (24.5%), respectively. These findings imply that respondents were fairly distributed across professional groups, and that participants had a greater level of familiarity with the study environment based on their length of stay.

Table 4.1: Distribution by Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Variable categories	Frequency (n=1300)	Percentage
Age <i>Mean age=</i> <i>34.87±10.82 years</i>	18 – 29 years	449	34.5
	30 – 39 years	469	36.1
	40 – 49 years	247	19.0
	50 – 59 years	106	8.2
	≥ 60 years	29	2.2
Sex	Male	828	63.7
	Female	472	36.3
Marital Status	Married /cohabiting	789	60.7
	Separated/divorced/widow/widower	50	3.8
	Single	461	35.5
Highest Level of Education	No formal education	16	1.2
	Below tertiary education	186	14.3
	Tertiary not completed	217	16.7
	Tertiary completed	881	67.8
Occupation	Student	231	17.8
	Public sector employee	622	47.8
	Private sector employee	363	27.9
	Unemployed	84	6.5
Length of stay	3 – 5 years	318	24.5
	6 – 9 years	322	24.8
	10 years and above	660	50.8
Ethnic Group	Hausa	135	10.4
	Igbo	326	25.1
	Yoruba	296	22.8
	Northern Minority	363	27.9
	Southern Minority	180	13.8
Residence	Slum area	56	4.3
	Semi-urban	269	20.7
	Urban	975	75.0
Income level (in Naira)	Below 30000	419	32.2
	30001 – 70000	165	12.7
	70001 and above	716	55.1

Source: Field Survey (2021)

NB: Figures in parenthesis are in %

According to the respondents' ethnicity, the highest proportion of them (27.9%) are members of the northern minority, which is then followed by the Igbo (25.1%), Yoruba (22.8%), members of the southern minority (13.4%), and Hausa (10.4%). This implies that respondents are fairly represented in terms of ethnicity and that their perspectives about the subject matter will be taken into account when drawing logical conclusions.

More than two-thirds of respondents (73%) indicate that they are from the FCT's urban area, followed by those who indicate semi-urban residence (20.7%), while the least proportion of respondents (4.3%) state that they are inhabitants of the FCT's slum areas. This implies that a greater grasp of how corruption is socially constructed at all levels of the study setting is suggested by this representation of the dichotomy between urban and slum areas. On a monthly basis, more than half of the respondents earned an income above ₦70,000, while the lowest proportion earned less than ₦30,000. This indicates that at least a majority of the respondents make a fair earning, permitting them to interact with peers and obtain information from social media that will influence how they perceive corruption in Abuja.

4.2 Identification of Activities/Actions People Defined as Corrupt Practices

This section of the study attempts to present the analysis and interpretation of a 20-item identified activities and actions people define as corrupt practices. Table 4.2 displays the distribution of respondents by the 20-item identified activities/practices people define as corrupt practices. The table reveals that more than two-third of the respondents agree that acceptance of gift items by officers before service delivery to the offerer (94.2%); acceptance of gift items by officers after service delivery to the offerer (77.6%); acceptance of pay-off for service delivery (77.8%); acceptance of tips in cash or kind for service delivery by officers before service delivery (91.1%) and acceptance of a promise to be rewarded by officials before service delivery (91.2%) are corrupt practices.

Table 4.2: Distribution by Activities/Actions People Defined as Corrupt Practices

S/N	Activities/Actions	Response categories		
		Corrupt (%)	Not corrupt (%)	Don't know
1.	Acceptance of gift items by officers before service delivery to the offerer	1224 (94.2)	54 (4.2)	22 (1.7)
2.	Acceptance of gift items by officers after service delivery to the offerer	1009 (77.6)	237 (18.2)	54 (4.2)
3.	Acceptance of pay-off for service delivery	1012 (77.8)	187 (14.4)	101 (7.8)
4.	Acceptance of tips in cash or kind for service delivery by officers before service delivery	1184 (91.1)	92 (7.1)	24 (1.8)
5.	Acceptance of a promise to be rewarded by officials before service delivery	1185 (91.2)	82 (6.3)	33 (2.5)
6.	Acceptance of a promise to be rewarded by officials after service delivery	1105 (85.0)	144 (11.1)	51 (3.9)
7.	Acceptance of fee/commission before service delivery by officers	1182 (90.9)	84 (6.5)	34 (2.6)
8.	Acceptance of fee/commission after service delivery by officers	1114 (85.7)	131 (10.1)	55 (4.2)
9.	Acceptance of kick-backs from contract awarded	1233 (94.2)	33 (2.5)	34 (2.6)
10.	Falsification of financial records by officers	1283 (98.7)	9 (0.7)	8 (0.6)
11.	Falsification of certificates for promotion/appointment	1226 (94.3)	64 (4.9)	10 (0.8)
12.	Stealing of public funds or property by officers	1287 (99.0)	7 (0.5)	6 (0.5)
13.	Undue conversion of public funds/property to personal use by officers	1280 (98.5)	9 (0.7)	11 (0.8)
14.	Preferential treatment of people by office holders in official service delivery	1247 (95.9)	36 (2.8)	17 (1.3)
15.	Acceptance of fee/commission before consideration for employment/appointment and promotion	1277 (98.2)	13 (1.0)	10 (0.8)
16.	Acceptance of fee/commission after consideration for employment/appointment and promotion	1229 (94.5)	59 (4.5)	12 (0.9)
17.	Diversion of public funds to unbudgeted projects	1269 (97.6)	19 (1.5)	12 (0.9)
18.	Using official time for personal business	1236 (95.1)	39 (3.0)	25 (1.9)
19.	Using official car for personal trips and errands	1180 (90.8)	85 (6.5)	35 (2.7)
20.	Reporting to work late and closing before official time	1178 (90.6)	89 (6.8)	33 (2.5)

Source: Field Survey (2021)

NB: Figures in parenthesis are in %

Further analysis of corrupt activities/actions indicates that over two-third of the respondents agreed that acceptance of a promise to be rewarded by officials after service delivery (85.0%); acceptance of fee/commission before service delivery by officers (90.9%); acceptance of fee/commission after service delivery by officers (85.7%); acceptance of kickbacks from contracts awarded (94.2%); falsification of financial records by officers (98.7%) and falsification of certificate for promotion/appointment (94.3%) are identified and defined as corrupt practices. In addition to the identified corrupt activities/actions, it was also signified that more than two-third of the respondents accepted that stealing of public funds/property by officers (99.0%); undue conversion of public funds/property to personal use by officers (98.0%); preferential treatment of people by office holders in official service delivery (95.9%); acceptance of fee/commission before consideration for employment/appointment and promotion (98.2%) are corrupt practices.

In a similar vein, nearly all the respondents subscribed to the acceptability of the fact that the acceptance of fee/commission after consideration for employment/appointment and promotion (94.5%); diversion of public funds to unbudgeted projects (97.6%); using official time for personal business (95.1%); using official car for personal trips and errands (90.8%) and reporting to work late and closing before official time (90.6%) are corrupt practices. When compared to the percentage of respondents who claimed that the 20 items were not corrupt, it appears that the majority of respondents had come to terms with the fact that the actions associated with the 20 items are socially constructed as corrupt.

Based on the degree of corrupt practices, three categories were created by re-grouping the 20 items that were recognised and designated as corrupt activities and actions: lowly corrupt (0–6 items), moderately corrupt (7–13 items), and extremely corrupt (14 – 20 items). The respondents' distribution by categories of corrupt practices is shown in Figure 4.1. According to the Figure, the majority of respondents (92.2%) agreed that these actions can be categorised as extremely corrupt, while just 6.8% and 0.9%, respectively, of the respondents are categorised as moderately and lowly corrupt. Since the majority of respondents have identified each of the 20 items as corrupt, the conclusion is that the reclassification of the items still reflects the extremity of what they describe as corrupt.

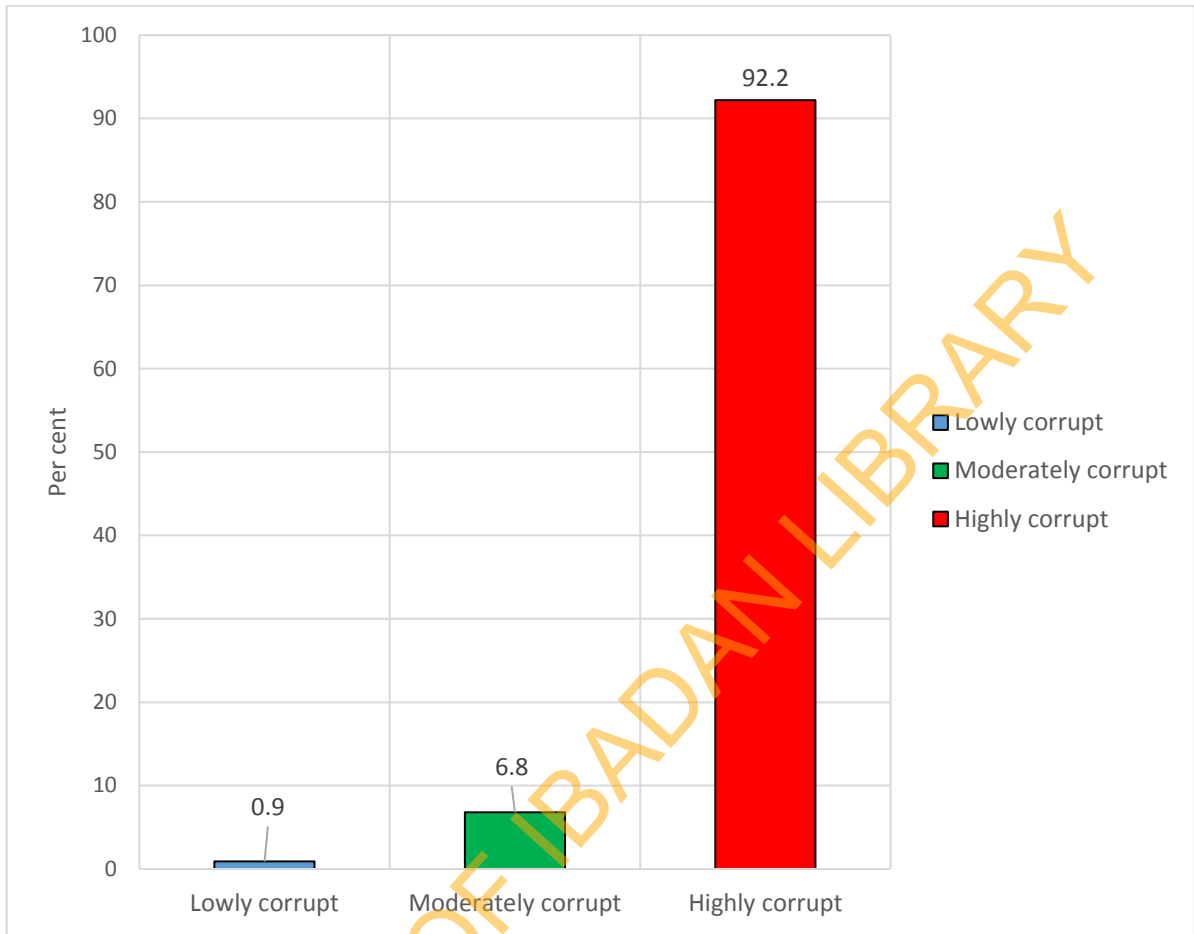


Figure 4.1: Distribution of Respondents by Identification of Corrupt Activities/Actions Based on Three Categories

Using a chi-square statistics test, Table 4.3 shows the relationship between the medium of understanding corrupt activities/actions, demographic characteristics and level of identification of corrupt practices. It was revealed that the medium of understanding corrupt activities does not significantly relate to the level of identification of corrupt practices/actions by the respondents, but the age of the respondents significantly relate to the level of identification of corrupt activities/actions by the respondents.

Although the sex of the respondents have no significant relationship between identification of corrupt practices, findings indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between marital status and the level of identification of corrupt practices. Also, the level of educational attainment of the respondent is significantly related to the identification of corrupt practices. This also means that as individuals advance in the level of education, the more likely to identify corrupt practices. Similarly, there is a significant relationship between occupation and the identification of corrupt practices.

While the length of stay, ethnic affiliations and residence of the respondents are not significantly related to the level of identification of corrupt practices, income level of the respondents significantly relate to the identification of corrupt practices. The likelihood that a person will notice corrupt behaviours increases as their income level rises. This is due to the fact that people's exposure to the environment and their income level can cause them to become aware of corrupt behaviours.

Table 4.3: Relationship Between Medium of Understanding Corrupt Activities/Actions, Socio-demographic Characteristics and Level of Identification of Corrupt Activities/Actions

Variables	Variable categories	Level of corrupt actions		
		Lowly corrupt (%)	Highly corrupt (%)	Chi Square Test
Medium of understanding corrupt activities	Externalisation	11 (2.0)	534 (98.0)	2.505; p=0.286
	Objectification	9 (1.9)	465 (98.1)	
	Internalisation	10 (3.6)	271 (96.4)	
Age*	18 – 29 years	28 (6.2)	421 (93.8)	47.121; p=0.000
	30 – 39 years	2 (0.4)	467 (99.6)	
	40 – 49 years	-	247 (100.0)	
	50 – 59 years	-	106 (100.0)	
	≥ 60 years	-	29 (100.0)	
Sex	Male	19 (2.3)	809 (97.7)	0.002; 0.967
	Female	11 (2.3)	461 (97.7)	
Marital Status*	Married/cohabiting	3 (0.4)	786 (99.6)	26.894; p=0.000
	Separated/divorced/widow/widower	1 (2.0)	49 (98.0)	
	Single	21 (4.6)	437 (95.4)	
Highest Level of Education*	No formal education	1 (6.2)	15 (93.8)	29.858; p=0.000
	Below tertiary education	8 (4.3)	178 (95.7)	
	Tertiary not completed	14 (6.5)	203 (93.5)	
	Tertiary completed	7 (0.8)	874 (99.2)	
Occupation*	Student	20 (8.7)	211 (91.3)	67.670; p=0.000
	Public sector employee	3 (0.5)	619 (99.5)	
	Private sector employee	2 (0.6)	361 (99.4)	
	Unemployed	-	84 (100.0)	
Length of stay	3 – 5 years	11 (13.5)	307 (96.5)	3.495; p=0.174
	6 – 9 years	4 (1.2)	318 (98.8)	
	10 years and above	15 (2.3)	645 (97.7)	
Ethnic Group	Hausa	5 (3.7)	130 (96.3)	2.105; p=0.716
	Igbo	7 (2.1)	319 (97.9)	
	Yoruba	8 (2.7)	288 (97.3)	
	Northern Minority	6 (1.7)	357 (98.3)	
	Southern Minority	4 (2.2)	176 (97.8)	
Residence	Slum area	2 (3.6)	54 (96.4)	2.240; p=0.326
	Semi-urban	9 (3.3)	260 (96.7)	
	Urban	19 (1.9)	956 (98.1)	
Income level (in Naira)*	Below 30000	24 (5.7)	395 (94.3)	34.818; p=0.000
	30001 – 70000	4 (2.4)	161 (97.6)	
	70001 and above	2 (0.3)	714 (99.7)	

*Significant at p=0.05**

In addition to the findings from the numerical data gathered from the respondents, findings from the qualitative aspect of the study further clarify activities/actions identified and defined as corrupt practices. In this regard, definition of corruption stems from three main themes namely: public opinion, public interest and law centeredness.

4.2.1 Public-Opinion Centred Definitions

From the purview of public opinion, corruption is considered a major or slight redesign of what one ought to do or has taken responsibility for. It also involves carrying out an action or instruction in a manner that deviates from the normal process it ought to have gone through. This signifies that the process is as important as the end result. Although those who benefit from this crooked or deviant path would not see it as a corrupt act. As one of the participants noted:

In my opinion, corruption means not taking action or performing a task at the time it is ought to be done. Additionally, when this individual eventually carries out said task, they do not perform to the best of their ability and without due diligence. The beneficiary, at the time, might not classify themselves as corrupt, but that is what they are **(IDI/Male Civil Servant/46 years old/Garki/AMAC/2021)**.

Another participant corroborated the previous statement, stating that corruption is anything that is viewed as any intentional act of dishonesty or an illicit conduct carried out with the intent to further one's own interests at the expense of the interests of the group. He continued by describing how leaking information that should be preserved in the official public realm to the unofficial public domain is an act of corruption. In his definition:

From my point of view, corruption is any deliberate act of dishonesty or an illicit act carried out with the intent to obtain personal gain to the detriment of collective interest. When people trade with public decisions that should not be for sale, say leaking information to a bidder in a procurement process, they are engaging in corrupt activities. Essentially, corruption transpires when someone wants to achieve results through crooked or untoward means **(IDI/Male commercial motorcyclist/32 years old/Bwari Central/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

Some people view corruption as a betrayal of confidence and a defiance of trust, particularly when it comes to leaders who have been accorded positions of responsibility based on the belief that they have what it takes to do the right thing. Such people can be categorised as corrupt when they don't act with honour and integrity, and their deeds can also be

categorised as corrupt. In the opinion of one of the male business participants, it was stated that:

Corruption could be any illegal action taken with the sole aim of obtaining personal benefit. It can also be a state of mind which means the absence of integrity. For example, when somebody who is entrusted to deliver a good and such a person betrays the trust reposed on him or her, the individual is corrupt **(IDI/Male Contractor/40 years old/Gwagwalada Centre/Gwagwalada LAC/2021)**.

In agreement with the foregoing participant, another participant believes that corruption refers to more than just betrayal and also implies intentional behaviour on the part of individuals. This intentional behaviour occurs when individuals appear to act loyally on the outside while actually serving their own interests by betraying the institutions they purport to represent. In his precise statement, it was described that:

Individuals are said to be corrupt when they pretend to be loyal while betraying the institutions, organisations, groups or bodies they represent. Such individuals always factor in personal interest in anything they do, but pretend to act in the best interest of the collective. In reality, corrupt representatives prioritise their selfish interest over group interest. In this country, corruption is a tsunami **(IDI/Female Contractor/47 years old/Garki/AMAC/2021)**.

From a professional standpoint, corruption is not necessarily about money but can also include other forms of stealing such as intellectual property theft. Therefore, while in the larger society, corruption is believed to include money and the exchange or moving of funds, within certain professions, there are also deviant ways of achieving end goals which can be considered as corrupt. In the expression of this respondent:

Corruption is not restricted to the illicit exchange of money for personal gain. In the academic field, corruption can be defined as the stealing of another individual's intellectual property in order to further one's selfish agenda. For example, a professor that wittingly plagiarises the published work of another professional in the same field to complete their personal project **(IDI/Male Lecturer/46 years old/Wuse/AMAC/2021)**.

Money has been recognised as the most commonly reported important element of corruption, and Figure 4.2 further highlights the key factors in each definition of corrupt activities/actions. Why does this matter? It means that anything anyone does, whether on an

individual or group level, in attempt to persuade or betray others for personal gain like money during their official engagements, as in the case of government agencies, or unofficial engagements, as in the case of interactions with friends, colleagues, or relatives, is considered corruption.

Figure 4.2 further demonstrates that the definition of corruption encompasses culture, laws, context, time, space, occupation of an office which is then abused and personal opinions from which they are observed. However, the most important component peoples' definition of corruption is determined by their orientation and indeed the centrality of monetary or financial gains.

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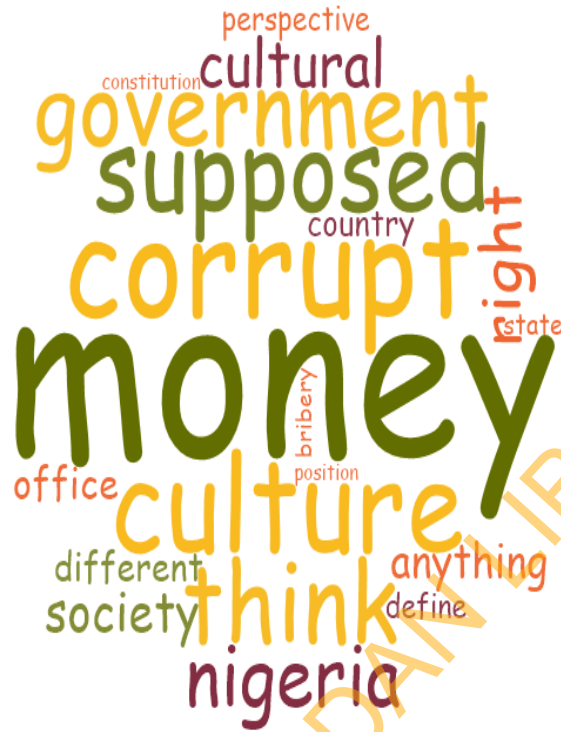


Figure 4.2: Word Cloud Showing the Key Elements Contained in the Definition of Corruption

Source: Field Survey (2021)

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4.2.2 Public-Interest Centred Definitions

Corruption can also be defined from the perspective of public interest in terms of what is regarded as the norm in a particular culture. Therefore, corruption can be described as deviant behaviour against the norms and values of a people displayed by those people and other members of the community. One of the participants who was asked to describe corruption in terms of culture stated that it is a collection of behaviours that deviate from what is considered acceptable by members of the same community or culture. Here, what is considered is whether the action taken by the individual being examined is in the interest of the public. In his words,

Corruption can also be defined culturally in terms of what is regarded as the norm in a particular culture. Therefore, corruption can be described as deviant behaviour against the norms and values of a people displayed by those people and other members of the community (IDI/Male Lecturer/45 years old/Nyanya/AMAC/2021).

One of the participants who was asked to describe corruption in terms of culture stated that it is a collection of behaviours that deviate from what is considered acceptable by members of the same community or culture. In his words:

Culture is said to be the accepted way of life of people. So, corruption is an action or series of actions that deviate from what is culturally acceptable. Corrupt personages or bodies act in ways that do not align with the norms and values of the society. Thus, in my opinion, corruption is any form of behaviour that falls short of cultural expectations in the society (IDI/Male Lecturer/46 years old/Zuba/Gwagwalada LAC/2021).

Another respondent, a lecturer, stated that corruption is defined as an action that the culture and people in a certain community forbid. It also refers to some behaviour that members of a certain group of people engage in that stray from cultural norms. In his statement:

To me, corruption is not simply defined as the stealing of money or embezzlement. Corruption means doing what you ought not to. When a culture forbids an act and members of that society practise it, their actions are seen as corrupt. So, culturally speaking, corruption occurs when members of a group act in ways that stray from their cultural practices (IDI/Male Lecturer/45 years old/Nyanya/AMAC/2021).

Using historical examples, a participant explained how the cultural concept of corruption has changed through time in contrast to the narratives presented above. It was stated that while ostracising accused corrupt individuals and their families to eradicate corruption in Nigeria and other societies, this strategy has not worked effectively in modern times because even family members are increasingly relying on corruption to further their own interests. Therefore, what was historically regarded as corruption may not be considered corruption anymore, as a respondent expresses below:

The Nigerian society from back in the day differs from what it is now. Back then, people were ostracised and even shunned for acting out of the norm. We heard about communities that treated corrupt individuals with detest. The castigation was so intense that other members of that society rejected food from these individuals because they did not want to associate with anyone that had a history of stealing. Unfortunately, this practice has been swept away by recent happenings where communities now defend corrupt individuals and even boast about their methods of illicit acquisition of wealth **(IDI/Male Contractor/43 years old/City Centre/AMAC/2021)**.

In line with the above narratives of what corruption means from a cultural perspective, another participant made the observation that corruption was frowned upon before, but that is not the case today, as mothers collaborate with their sons to commit internet fraud and other corrupt acts. As a result, the definition of corruption now differs greatly from what it was in the past. As he stated:

In the society where my grandparents hail from, corruption was frowned upon. Back then, even stealing, one of the lowest levels of corruption, led to ostracism. People could not believe the culprit was raised by someone of upstanding behaviour in the society. From a cultural point of view, individuals look at corruption as unacceptable conduct in the society. However, the same cannot be said about contemporary times. I remember reading a story in the newspaper on how a mother collaborated with her son to perform internet fraud. When comparing society of old and now, there are disparities in how corruption is regarded **(IDI/Male Lecturer/46 years old/Zuba/Gwagwalada/2021)**.

In the opinion of one of the participants in a focus group discussion who hailed from Akwa Ibom State, it was explained that Akwa Ibom natives frown at corruption at all level. It originates from the families and the rules they set. As they shared in the group discussion:

I'm from Akwa Ibom, and in my state, we downright frown at any act of corruption. We discourage acts done by family members as well because I believe corruption originates from families and the rules they set. People from my state view corruption as the illegal doings of the government and embezzlement of funds. We do not like it at all and try as much as possible to stop it **(FGD/Students/18-35 years/Kabusa/AMAC/2021)**.

Different cultural definitions of corruption may exist. According to one of the participants who was interviewed, the culture of gift-giving comes with the idea of the brown envelope, which is almost supported and institutionalised to sustain relationships. As a result, what is considered corrupt at some time may be thought to be not corrupt. As he stated:

Human beings are not born corrupt, seeing as they do not possess genetics to make them inherently corrupt. What is observed is that at some point, corrupt behaviours are fostered by a culture that promotes individual gains above collective interest. In time, the behaviour becomes rooted as part of that cultural practice. From the culture of gift giving, for example, comes the corrupt notion of 'brown envelop' **(IDI/Male Commercial motorcyclist/32 years old/ /Bwari Central/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

Another participant described how corruption persists in a culture from their point of view. It was revealed that these trainings are firmly embedded with the incorrect knowledge that is taught to children from an early age. The majority of socialisation processes do not support all of the dos and don'ts, even while it is common practice to teach children the dos and don'ts of particular behaviours, such as do not lie, break the law, or accept bribes. It means that even while people are aware that they should not indulge in corrupt practices, they still engage in behaviour that is contrary to societal norms that frown at it. Below are the participant's words:

Culture does not accept corruption as a norm. In the Yoruba culture, this notion is deep-rooted. Children are strictly trained from a tender age to understand what is acceptable and what is not. One behaviour which is not acceptable is corruption. We are trained not to give or take bribe, not to bend the rules, not to lie. Therefore, we have the knowledge that corruption is wrong **(IDI/Male Contractor/42 years old/Kubwa/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

According to a different respondent, even if the cultural definition of corruption considers it to be dubious and illegal, people continue to engage in the practice. The "Nigerian factor"

of corruption will predispose people to the act of corruption even when they are not ready to indulge in it. In the view of this participant:

Basically, our culture has affected how we think and see things. Even though we understand corruption to be dubious and illegal, it has become part and parcel of our everyday life. People usually talk about the 'Nigerian Factor,' and what they mean is corruption. In some cases, when you try to act properly or follow the rules, people will ask, 'are you not a Nigerian?' This means you should know that corruption makes things work faster and even benefits all parties involved. This is why corruption has become enticing and normal in the country
(IDI/Male Contractor/40 years old/Gwagwalada Centre/Gwagwalada LAC/2021).

Despite this culturally averseness to corruption and structure put in place to avoid it, traditional leaders who ought to be custodians of cultural norms and values have been found to also participate in corrupt actions. This is borne out of either the quest to dominate and lead such that they put themselves or appoint people into positions they are not qualified for or a hungry state which make the traditional rulers sell out their hold on cultural values to allow for anything. A respondent stated:

Traditionally, it is common with our local leaders like chiefs and other groups in the society. For example, candidates in our villages who want to dominate and lead but are not qualified for the job. Therefore, they go the extra mile to cover up their incompetence by gifting money and other items to individuals willing to collect and help them achieve their malicious goals. I think that is where corruption comes in
(FGD/Students/18-35 years/Kabusa/AMAC/2021).

Given the above interpretations of cultural definitions of corruption, various perspectives on the social phenomenon in the society appear to exist. In spite of the fact that some cultural groups disapprove of corruption in general, there are nonetheless actions that are part of the subculture that encourage it. This implies that, despite the fact that corruption is condemned within the entire system, the original concept of corruption, which was *hitherto* frowned upon to be a part of the cultural practices, has been de-constructed to be known as "Nigerian Factor." The inference drawn from the data is that the absence of a clearly established national interest in Nigeria makes it difficult to hold public officials to account. This absence of national interest no doubt undermines good governance and allows operators of the system the use of discretion which engenders corruption.

4.2.3 Law-Centered Definitions

Few participants were able to correctly identify the meaning of corruption as it is defined by laws. Using power, money, or other forms of coercion, corruption is defined as a shift in the established rule or order. For example, in one of the held focus group discussions, it was described as any act that violates any of the recognised laws. Precisely, the participants held that:

There are stipulated laws established for different agencies, bodies, and parastatals. Any act that violates any of those laws should be seen as corrupt. These laws are set in place for a reason, and that is to create a free and fair society. So, any person or group that tries to undermine these laws is definitely looking out for their selfish interest (FGD/EFCC/ICPC 1/25-50 years/Wuse/AMAC/2021).

According to the definition of a male respondent who works as a project manager, corruption is the use of authority, position, or any other tool to influence the law. As he noted:

To the best of my knowledge, from a legal standpoint, corruption is an individual trying to change a standing rule using power, position, or any other instrument. The individual knows that with the resources at their disposal, they can achieve their goals, no matter how illegal they may be (KII/Male Judge/58 years/Federal High Court/Wuse/AMAC/2021).

Violations of stipulated laws within an agency is also termed corruption. For example, a respondent states that according to the constitution, workers in public offices, in carrying out their duties are not expected to accept any gift from anyone:

The constitution prohibits public servants from accepting anything, be it money or property, to carry out their legitimate duties. After all, it is in their job description, and they do get paid for their services at the end of the month (KII/Male Lawyer/Male/51 years old/Garki/AMAC/2021).

However, it is reported that lawyers who are in charge of interpreting these laws to the ordinary citizens are found to be culprits, exchanging truth for material substance. This has made it difficult to appropriately delineate what is corrupt and what is not as there are now a lot of greys, including the exercise of rights as stated in the constitution being interpreted in a manner that suits some selected few, as noted below:.

Corruption comes in different ways, and they often do not want to see the truth. Sadly, that is the Nigeria we are living in today. It is not just the lawyers but our leaders as well. They enjoy burying the truth in exchange for material things (FGD/Journalists/25-45 years/Gwagwalada Central/Gwagwalada/2021).

From the group of another set of participants who was not sure whether the law of the land defines corruption describing that there are situations where the constitution states that no one is above the law, but the challenge of people who are brutalised by the police are not always considered as corruption. As they shared:

I do not know if our law defines corruption because our law does not explicitly define corruption. According to our law, there are cases where freedom of speech is classified as corruption; so, when you talk, you are corrupt. Our constitution says that no one is above the law, so when you go above the law, you are corrupt. They say the police are your friend, but they are brutalising people; that too is corruption (FGD/EFCC/ICPC2/25-50 years/Garki/AMAC/2021).

There appear to be different meanings of corruption based on the descriptions of its legal definition provided above. While it is commonly accepted that corruption refers to any behaviour that violates the rules, other people consider it as a tool of social oppression. What does this imply? People in positions of authority appear to be above the law, while those in lesser positions go penalised. In other words, individuals in positions of authority interpret corruption from angles that benefit them, to the detriment of those who are oppressed. Therefore, how an act is classified as corruption under the law is determined by the degree of power a person has.

4.2.4 Differentiations

There are however ways that people try to differentiate which type or form of corruption is acceptable in certain situations. For example, a respondent talked about a legal way of misappropriation of funds which involves multiplying the exact needed amount to have more leeway to spend for other purposes. This respondent also tried to differentiate between misappropriation and embezzlement, analysing that the technicality no longer matters as they are executed the same way. Below are his words:

Misappropriation of funds in a legal way is when an individual takes some funds meant to be appropriated for a specific purpose and uses them for another purpose. But, embezzlement in government affairs is when an individual finds a way to claim money that does not belong to them into their personal bank account. However, these two have come to be intertwined in Nigeria, and now the technicality doesn't matter because that is our way of life **(IDI/Male Lecturer/45 years old/Nyanya/AMAC/2021)**.

Another respondent also reports that 'long-leg' or what some have called 'connection' is not really a corrupt activity nor is it corruption in itself. He goes ahead to explain that having the connection in itself is not corruption but then how it is used in terms of not following the process because one knows someone in authority becomes corruption, as stated below:

I do not classify long-leg as corruption. It all depends on how an individual decides to use their relationship with the person. For example, me knowing a minister does not make me corrupt. But, if I apply for a job at their ministry and try to use long-leg to avoid following due process, then that's when corruption comes in. So, in my opinion, knowing someone in power is not corruption. Corruption is when you use that connection wrongly **(IDI/Male Politician/45 years old/Kubwa/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

In terms of using public properties for private use against the purpose for which it has been given. A respondent explains that when such property, for example a house, is given to an official who does not really need it, he can as well rent it out. This is stated to not be directly an act of corruption as long as at the end of the tenure the property is not converted but returned back to the organisation. A participant notes:

If I choose to sell the house or turn government property into a personal venture, I assume that if caught, I would be asked to return the property. So, if I have to return the house and everything else, I do not necessarily see it as corruption. I am not saying auctioning or selling the property is the right thing to do, but I can choose to rent it out if I would not be staying there for the duration in which the property was given to me. It is seen as personal property by virtue of the fact that I am working with them. If there were a condition stipulated expressly in the agreement that I am not to auction the property nor rent it out but defaulted on the deal, then it can be said to be corruption. On the other hand, if there was no agreement, it simply means the property can be used at my discretion until my tenure in that position ends. Then, I can return the property in good shape. Hence, I don't see it as a corrupt act **(FGD/Students/18-35 years/Kabusa/AMAC/2021)**.

There was also a differentiation between petty corruption and grand corruption wherein one considers the gravity of the offence that has been committed before one judges it a corrupt act. There are also activities such as exploitation which happens at the ground level which people do not often consider to be a corrupt act. Sometimes, corrupt practices are therefore determined from the perspective of the one looking at it.

They all fall under two umbrellas. We have what we call petty corruption and grand corruption. Grand corruption is usually about the amount of money involved, which is why political leaders typically have eyes on them. On the other hand, petty corruption is when you find the poor exploiting the poor. If you go to a petrol station with your keg to buy fuel for five hundred Naira, most of them charge a fee of fifty Naira for nothing (KII/Male Lawyer/41years old/Wuse/AMAC/2021).

In another perspective, a group of participants is of the opinion that corruption is subjective such that corruption is perceived in different ways. As they described:

Corruption is categorised in different ways, and as such, a lot of people see it differently. We all have various perceptions of what we classify as corruption. To some, corruption is all about stealing money, while to others, it also involves breaking the rules. Therefore, corruption is subjective and depends on the individual's point of view (FGD/EFCC/ICPC3/25-50 years/Wuse/AMAC/2021).

Another respondent explains that poor people from their perspective would consider anything involving rich men to be corruption because they do not have. However, when such corrupt activities are favourable such as when the corrupt individual pays their children school fees, provide food items, culturally, such a person is not described as corrupt, especially within their immediate community. A respondent stated:

If they have someone who reached out, paid their children's school fees, and provided food for them, they would never see such a person as corrupt because said person is taking care of their problems. This is truer when the corrupt person is from their community. Take El Chapo, for example. El Chapo, the drug kingpin was extradited to the US for drug trafficking. If you go to El Chapo's hometown, he is seen as a hero because he provided what the government could not. He provided for them in terms of development and infrastructure. Therefore, the people in El Chapo's community view him in a completely different light than those outside the community (FGD/EFCC/ICPC2/25-50 years/Garki/AMAC/2021).

In addition to the above statement, a male entrepreneur said that corruption is generally seen as a bad thing, but the poor and the rich view it differently based on their disposition to it. As he stated:

Here, we all generally look at corruption as a bad thing, so any act of corruption is seen as bad. Most of us here are poor, so when you see a rich man doing someone a favour, we just see it as corruption. When we see something that involves a huge amount of money, we see it as corruption **(IDI/Male Politician/38 years old/Dutse Alhaji/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

Yet another respondent explains that people would only term someone corrupt when they no longer grant favours as they used to. As long as one is also not caught in the act, it has not become corruption, and even after being caught, people gave devious means to ensure that appropriate judgment is delayed or dismissed such that there is no public labelling of corruption. This is expressed below:

Most of us do not classify someone as corrupt until they no longer do things that favour us. When a person performs an act of corruption for the first time, they call it “God sent” and continue to carry out this act until they are caught. Even when they are caught, they find ways to evade judgement. When it’s time to face the law, you see them claiming to be at the hospital just to prolong the case, and before you know it, the matter has died down **(FGD/Journalists/25-45 years/Kubwa/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

Taking into account the many viewpoints on corruption based on class, professions, and socioeconomic status, it is suggested that the subjective judgment of the individual who interprets an act is crucial in the construction of corruption. While the rich may not always view it that way, the poor appear to view giving huge amount of money to another person as corrupt. To put it another way, those who engage in corruption frequently vary their actions in ways that benefit them. From this perspective, the concept of corruption in such a social setting is reconstructed based on the class and socio-economic status of such an individual.

Figure 4.3 displays a word cloud of the important terms that people use to differentiate the term ‘corruption’ depending on their point of view. Here, the central place of money and financial gains in facilitating, accelerating, or cheapening a procedure and thereby

promoting corrupt practices is highlighted. While some interpret corruption as giving money to people who have not worked for it, using the term bribery, embezzlement of public funds, or more accurately, the misappropriation of funds, extortion, among other things, others do not consider these actions to be corrupt practices. This suggests that how corrupt activities are conceptualised depends on whether the person to whom they are applied has a high socioeconomic status or a low one. Money, bribery, extortion, giving and taking bribe, fraud, positions of authority, nepotism, context/location are terms related to corruption.

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Figure 4.3: A Word Cloud Illustrating the Key Elements Contained in Differentiation of Corruption

Source: Field Survey (2021)

Conversely, the medium through which respondents come by the understanding of corrupt practices is critical in drawing insights to the subject matter. Therefore, respondents were asked how they come to understand activities/actions as corrupt practices. Figure 4.4 displays the result. Three ways through which they come by the understanding of the activities/actions identified as corrupt practices were pointed out. The highest proportion of the respondents indicated that it was through externalisation (interaction) (41.9%), followed by those who signified objectification (habitual things) (36.5%), while other believed that it was through internalisation (what beliefs) (21.6%).

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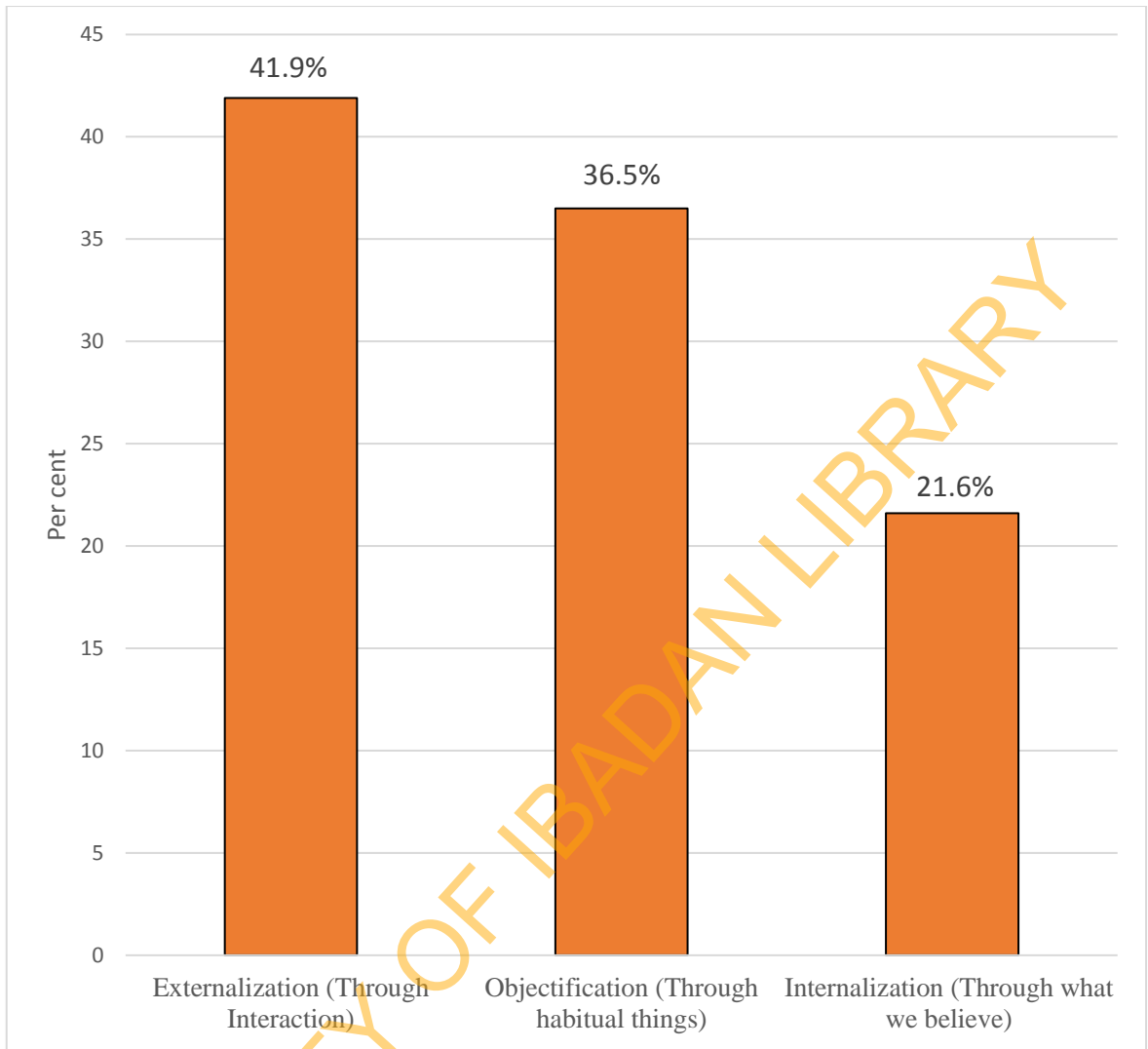


Figure 4.4: Percentage Distribution by How Respondents Come to Understand Activities/Actions as Corrupt

Peoples' perspectives on corrupt activities/actions in Area Councils (FCT Abuja) and Nigeria as a whole was ascertained. Five different constructs were created. Table 4.4 presents the results. It was revealed that the majority agreed that corrupt activities/actions are a BIG problem in the Area Councils of residence as well as being a BIG problem in Nigeria as a country (98.5%). Respondents were also asked 'if some or all the corrupt activities/actions are totally eradicated from Nigeria, the country will not function well'. The report showed that two-third of the respondents did not agree that 'if some or all the corrupt activities/actions are eradicated from Nigeria, the country will not function well' (69.6%).

On the other hand, 1 in 10 respondents (24.2%) agreed that the country would not function well if some or all corrupt activities/actions are completely abolished from Nigeria. More than half of respondents (54.2%) disagreed that corrupt practices can ever be eliminated in Nigeria, while 45.8% agreed. Almost all respondents agreed that corruption should be eliminated from Nigeria, with only 3.4% disagreeing. This implies that no matter how hard the government and those of position of authority work to combat corruption through anti-corruption strategies, the only thing that will be accomplished is that the level of corruption will be reduced while it still exists and continues to operate at the lower levels.

Table 4.4: Distribution by People’s Perspectives on Corrupt Activities/Actions in Area Council and Nigeria as a Country

S/N	People’s viewpoints on corrupt activities/actions	Response categories		
		Viewpoint supported (%)	Viewpoint not supported (%)	Not Sure whether supported or not (%)
1.	Corrupt activities/actions are a BIG problem in the Area Council of residence	1243 (95.6)	57 (4.4)	-
2.	Corrupt activities/actions are a BIG problem in Nigeria	1280 (98.5)	20 (1.5)	-
3.	If some or all the corrupt activities/actions are totally eradicated from Nigeria, the country will not function well	315 (24.2)	904 (69.6)	81 (6.2)
4.	Corrupt practices can ever be eliminated in Nigeria	596 (45.8)	704 (54.2)	-
5.	Corruption should be eliminated from Nigeria	1256 (96.6)	44 (3.4)	-

Source: Field Survey (2021)

NB: Figures in parenthesis are in %

4.3 Examples of Activities/Actions Identified as Corrupt Practices

Having identified activities and actions people defined as corrupt practices, there is a need to give examples of some of the activities/actions. Thus, several examples have been highlighted by respondents and participants. As one of the participants narrated, there are various activities that people define as corrupt and they give examples of this different activities and the manner in which they occur. Some of these activities, like bribery have even become official such that going against this would then look like the abnormal. For example, the concept of 'kickback' is referenced to have become more entrenched in the public sector during the Military administration of General Ibrahim Babangida as after being awarded a contract, the contractor comes back to give some of the proceeds to officials in the organisation. This is even done before the contract is awarded, changing the concept to 'kick front', as a respondent revealed:

In the Babangida era, there were situations where contractors were expected to pay back part of the contract sums they were awarded as gratuity. This is known as "kickback. However, it has now been changed to a fee paid even before you are awarded the contract, hence the title "kick front" **(IDI/Male Lecturer/55 years old/Bwari Central/Bwari LAC/2021).**

This kickback or kick front is also a form of bribery which is a corrupt activity/practice because it also means the most qualified contractor might not be selected for the job but the one who is able to pay the officials the most. This bribery is not only found in offices but also on the street when police officers who ought to enforce the law allow offenders go scout free because they have been bribed. In the precise example as explained:

Bribery has become a part of our society, from the policeman collecting a bribe to allow vehicles gain access to paying bribes for students to gain admission. In most cases, we do not even see them as wrong because we have adapted to that way of life **(IDI/Male Lecturer/46 years old/Wuse/AMAC/2021).**

Corroborating the viewpoint of the above participant from another perspective, this bribery is also witnessed in the educational institution. People who do not even go through educational institution try to cut in through the National Youth Service Corps to show proofs that they have completed requirements even when they haven't. In his statement:

My sister's husband is an accountant that works with NYSC, and I noticed that each time a batch is mobilised, he collects packages from different people. So, I eventually asked him why he does that, and he told me these people didn't graduate from the university but want to put on the NYSC uniform to convince people they have served. I asked him how it works, and he said he talks to people in charge of the uniforms and collects the ones he needs. There are people who pay to wear NYSC uniforms just to lie to others, and this is also bribery **(IDI/Male Civil Servant/48 years old/Kutunku/Gwagwalada LAC/2021)**.

Other behaviours such as going against traffic rules or any other guideline for behaviour set in place by an organisation or government are also seen as corrupt activities. As this male respondent explained:

Beating traffic lights is corruption. If you work in a private firm, government parastatal, or ministry and exhibit any attitude that is not in line with the guidelines, that is corruption. Anything done outside the proper and official guidelines is corruption, whether it is running a traffic light or paying for admission; some people even pay to get a Master's degree or PhD **(IDI/Male Commercial driver/motorcyclist/25 years old/Wuse/AMAC/2021)**.

This also includes making payments instead of going through a particular process, for example paying for marks, or paying to get a certificate without taking the required courses is seen as corruption. Sometimes this is referred to as pulling the strings such that things fall in your favour. Precisely:

I am a software developer, and I am chasing a contract with a government organisation. There are other contractors pursuing the same contract too. Most times, organisations would want to give you an edge when you are able to 'appreciate' an official. Doing so might turn things in your favour because they would pull a string or two to ensure you secure the contract. However, there are times when you might bribe someone, but another contractor who is able to offer something higher receives the contract. Basically, contractors find methods to get an edge when bidding for contracts, especially government contracts. In most cases, these methods are bribes **(IDI/Male Contractor/44 years old/Dutse Alhaji/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

Although doing the right thing should mean that no one has to pay bribe, Nigeria is reported to have an organised system of corruption such that without changing the rule, everyone

knows what to do to get things done. And this often-involved corrupt practices of ‘wetting the ground’ – another term given to bribery.

If you do the right thing, you would not need to bribe people. So, if you need to bribe people, then you did the wrong thing. In Nigeria, we operate on organised corruption. We believe in a system where a contractor who visits a public servant to apply for a contract already knows to wet the ground before applying. Most times, bribes are necessary because the person has not done the right things to secure their contract **(IDI/Female Civil Servant/50 years old/Wuse/AMAC/2021)**.

Activities that display favouritism and nepotism are also considered to be corrupt activities. In instances of nepotism, one gives those of ones’ tribe or ethnic group preference in selection even when they are not competent to occupy such positions. As described:

Another type of corruption is nepotism. This is an act of corruption whereby officials favour certain people over others even though they are not competent nor qualified because the person is from their tribe or ethnic group. They select the person, leaving out those who are skilled enough to carry out the job. Corruption can also be as a planned action by a person or group of people to unlawfully appropriate the wealth of another person or the diversion of resources or the deliberate bending of the rules to benefit relatives and friends **(IDI/Male Contractor/44 years old/Dutse Alhaji/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

This also occurs when people who go against the rules are not properly sanctioned because of their affiliations to those in authorities. In his narratives:

So, favouritism has been settling within Nigeria for a while now, and the government knows the people behind it. However, they refuse to do anything about it because officials do not want to sanction people from their tribe. Therefore, favouritism has set in and taken full effect **(IDI/Male Commercial driver/motorcyclist/28 years old/Kubwa/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

There is also the link between some of this activities. For instance, in explaining an example of fraud, this respondent talks about a contractor who is unable to deliver the standard of work which he has been contracted for. And this would also link back to having used part of the funds for the contract to settle some officials within the organisation. In his statement:

Fraud is also an act of corruption because it is an obvious deception in which the actor misrepresents what he or she can actually deliver. When we talk about fraud, it has to do with deception or an inability to provide a service or product to a certain standard. For example, a contract is awarded to a construction company, which states that the road should be five kilometres long, but the company builds a four-kilometre road. Also, from their proposal, the company said the road would last for twenty years, but the road went bad in less than two years. It is an act of fraud, which is also corruption (**IDI/Male Civil Servant/46 years old/Garki/AMAC/2021**).

Another respondent gives an example of this fraudulent activity occurring even in the banking sector. Here he narrates the experience of a friend who had his account wiped out even though he had his debit card with him. To this individual, whoever would have done this would be a member of the financial institution:

A friend of mine who, at the time, was in Abuja with his ATM card in his pocket got a bank alert for a withdrawal in Kano. It was unbelievable because he had his card with him in Abuja. An act like that should be classified as corruption in the banking sector. I say this because no one else is capable of doing that except the financial institution. After all, he only had one card, and it was with him in Abuja, but that same card was apparently used in Kano. He reached out to the financial institution, but they told him someone had used his card and they would not be reversing the money that was withdrawn (**IDI/Male Commercial driver/motorcyclist/33 years old/Gwagwalada Centre/Gwagwalada LAC/2021**).

There are also the examples of embezzlement, where money released for a particular purpose is hidden or carted away for personal use, as another respondent comment:.

Embezzlement can be defined as being given money to carry out a task, but when that money comes in, the individual takes part of the money or hides it for personal gain. For example, when an official is given government money for a specific purpose, but they hoard the money for themselves without the knowledge of others (**IDI/Female Civil Servant/36 years old/Kutunku/Gwagwalada LAC/2021**).

There are also ways that some people are cleared out or eliminated out of a chain of events, kept in the dark because they are not willing to give in and make some exchange. This lawyer discussed how even though approved as a solicitor, he is still expected to make a special appearance to the chairman before briefs could be passed through his firm. He

emphasises that this is even from a supposed organisation that ought to be fighting against such acts:

My firm was registered as an external solicitor to the ICPC in 2007. But, to date, not a single brief has been given to me. After sending several letters, I was advised to go and 'see' the chairman and was assured that the briefs would start to flow once I saw him. Why should I go to 'see' anyone before a brief is given to my firm? Remember, we are talking about ICPC (KII/Male Lawyer/51 years old/Garki/AMAC/2021).

The examples mentioned above imply that there are numerous instances of corrupt behaviour that might be cited. These include not only financial theft, bribery, and fraud, but also attitude-based behaviours, such as running red lights and failing to complete tasks on time. This indicates that both the act of corruption and its perpetuation do not acknowledge the office of individuals who practice law or other professions. In fact, the "Nigerian Factor" has changed the fundamental connotations of corruption in every sphere of social existence. Indeed, it can be best described as a social construction of corruption in all dispositions. The various definitions of corruption distilled from the data in this work align with the conclusion of Heidenheimer (1970) that corruption can be black, white, or gray.

According to the author, black corruption involves actions considered by both the public and public officials as particularly abhorrent and therefore requiring punishment. White corruption, on the other hand, refers to acts deemed corrupt by both the public and officials, but not severe enough to warrant a sanction. Gray corruption involves those actions found to be corrupt by either one of the groups, but not both. Taken together, it can be explained that what may be corrupt to one citizen, scholar, or public official may just be politics to another or discretion to a third. The point being emphasised is that if a society defines certain behaviours as corrupt and then supports the legal system in enforcing that definition, then, and only then, will the legal system be able to enforce ethical standards effectively and over a long period of time. However, if a society defines certain behaviours as not corrupt but the legal system defines them as corrupt, the legal system may not be able to enforce legal standards of ethical behaviour.

4.4 Factors Predisposing People to Corrupt Practices

This section examined the factors predisposing people to corrupt practices. However, before highlighting the various factors predisposing people to corrupt practices, the viewpoints on corrupt practices of the respondents were ascertained. Table 4.5 presents the distribution of respondents by people's viewpoints on corrupt practices. It was indicated that nearly all the respondents view acceptance of gift items by officers before service delivery to the offerer (95.5%); acceptance of gift items by officers after service delivery (81.3%), acceptance of pay-off for service delivery (80.8%), acceptance of tips in cash or kind for service delivery by officers before service delivery (94.3%) and acceptance of a promise to be rewarded by officials before service delivery (91.8%) as corrupt practices as compared to other respondents who saw it as not corrupt or didn't know.

In a further analysis of the respondents' viewpoints, it was also reported that the majority indicated that acceptance of a promise to be rewarded by officials after service delivery (87.0%); acceptance of fee/commission before service delivery by officers (94.2%); acceptance of fee/commission after service delivery by officers (89.4%); acceptance of kick-backs from contracts awarded (96.2%); falsification of financial records by officers (98.7%); falsification of certificates for promotion/appointment exercise (98.9%) and stealing of public funds/property by officers (98.8%) were perceived as corrupt practices compared to other categories of respondents who perceive them as not corrupt.

In addition to these, reports revealed that over two-third of the respondents viewed undue conversion of public funds/property to personal use by officers (98.5%); preferential treatment of people by office holders in official service delivery (97.4%); acceptance of fee/commission before consideration for employment/appointment (98.2%); acceptance of fee/commission after consideration for employment/appointment and promotion exercise (95.7%) and diversion of public funds to unbudgeted projects (97.8%) as corrupt practices, while others did not.

Table 4.5: Distribution of Respondents by People's Viewpoints on Corrupt Practices

S/N	People's viewpoints on corrupt practices	Categories of viewpoints		
		Corrupt	Not Corrupt	Don't Know
i.	Acceptance of gift items by officers before service delivery to the offerer	1241 (95.5)	43 (3.3)	16 (1.2)
ii.	Acceptance of gift items by officers after service delivery to the offerer	1057 (81.3)	198 (15.2)	45 (3.5)
iii.	Acceptance of pay-off for service delivery	1051 (80.8)	150 (11.5)	99 (7.6)
iv.	Acceptance of tips in cash or kind for service delivery by officers before service delivery	1226 (94.3)	43 (3.3)	31 (2.4)
v.	Acceptance of a promise to be rewarded by officials before service delivery	1194 (91.8)	76 (5.8)	30 (2.3)
vi.	Acceptance of a promise to be rewarded by officials after service delivery	1131 (87.0)	120 (9.2)	49 (3.8)
vii.	Acceptance of fee/commission before service delivery by officers	1225 (94.2)	43 (3.3)	32 (2.5)
viii.	Acceptance of fee/commission after service delivery by officers	1162 (89.4)	99 (7.6)	39 (3.0)
ix.	Acceptance of kick-backs from contract awarded	1250 (96.2)	31 (2.4)	19 (1.5)
x.	Falsification of financial records by officers	1283 (98.7)	11 (0.8)	6 (0.5)
xi.	Falsification of certificates for promotion/appointment	1286 (98.9)	7 (0.5)	7 (0.5)
xii.	Stealing of public funds or property by officers	1284 (98.8)	11 (0.8)	5 (0.4)
xiii.	Undue conversion of public funds/property to personal use by officers	1281 (98.5)	14 (1.1)	5 (0.4)
xiv.	Preferential treatment of people by office holders in official service delivery	1266 (97.4)	18 (1.4)	16 (1.2)
xv.	Acceptance of fee/commission before consideration for employment/appointment and promotion	1276 (98.2)	16 (1.2)	8 (0.6)
xvi.	Acceptance of fee/commission after consideration for employment/appointment and promotion	1244 (95.7)	40 (3.1)	16 (1.2)
xvii.	Diversion of public funds to unbudgeted projects	1271 (97.8)	15 (1.2)	14 (1.1)

Source: Field Survey (2021)

NB: Figures in parenthesis are in %

For the purpose of clarity, Figure 4.5 displays the distribution of respondents by the general people's viewpoints (perception) on corrupt activities/actions based on less negative and highly negative. It was clearly shown that nearly all the respondents perceive it as highly negative compared to only 1.5% of the respondents who agreed that it was less negative.

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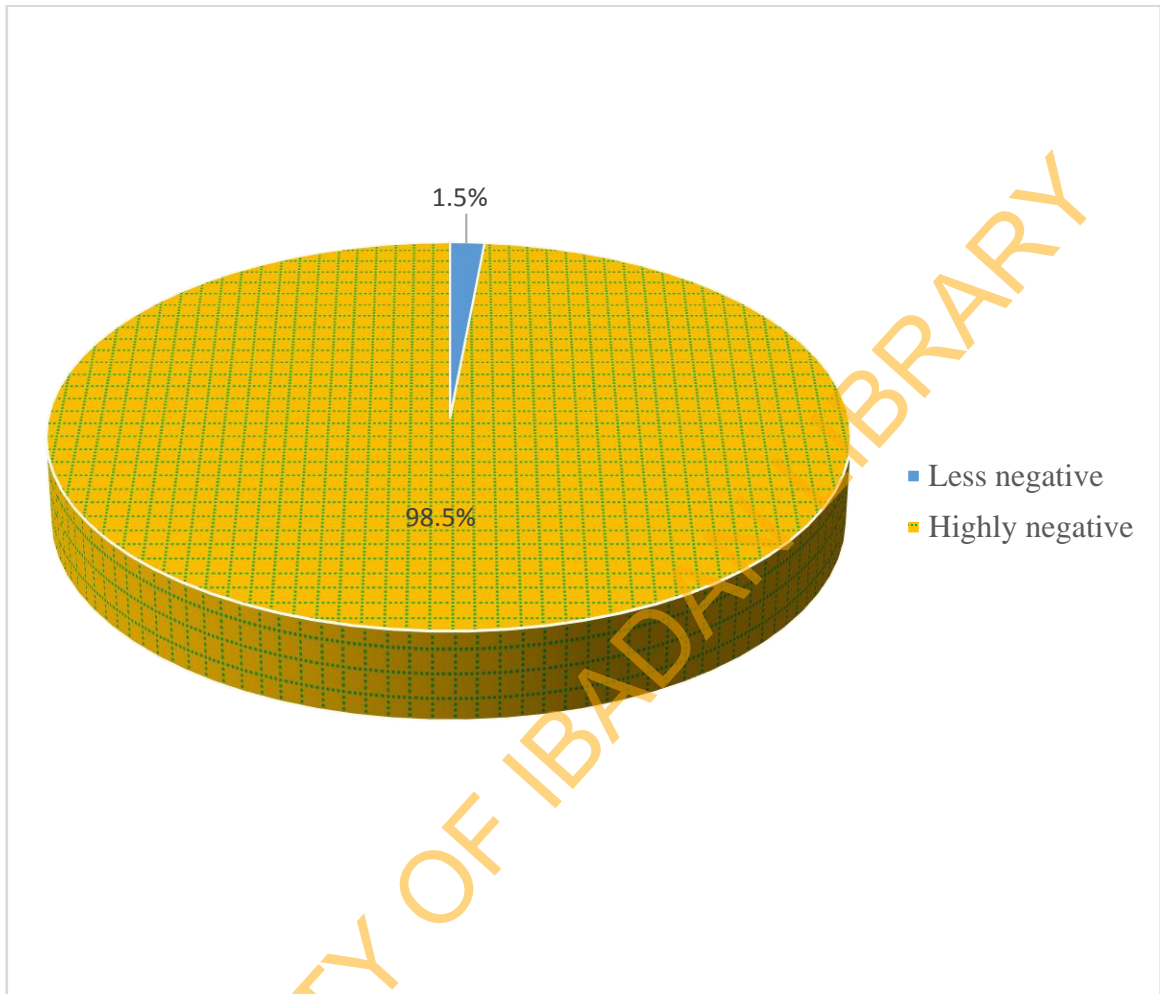


Figure 4.5: Distribution of Respondents by the General People's Viewpoints on Corrupt Activities/Actions

In a bivariate analysis of the medium of understanding corrupt practices, socio-demographic characteristics and viewpoints (less negative and highly negative), Table 4.6 presents the relationship between medium of understanding corrupt activities/actions, socio-demographic characteristics and people's viewpoints on corrupt activities/actions. The table shows that there is a significant relationship between age ($\chi^2=32.905$), marital status ($\chi^2=39.095$), highest level of education ($\chi^2=11.803$), occupation ($\chi^2=47.475$), income level ($\chi^2=32.336$) and people's viewpoints.

Other variables such as medium of understanding corrupt activities (externalisation, objectification and internalisation), sex, length of stay in Abuja, ethnicity and place of residence were not found to be statistically significantly related to people's viewpoints on corrupt practices. This is a clear indication that these variables do not determine whether people's viewpoints are perceived less negatively or highly negatively.

Table 4.6: Relationship Between Medium of Understanding Corrupt Activities/Actions, Socio-demographic Characteristics and People's Viewpoints on Corrupt Activities/Actions

Variables	Variable categories	Corruption viewpoints (%)		Chi Square P-Value
		Less Negative	Highly Negative	
Medium of understanding corrupt activities	Externalisation	8 (40.0)	537 (42.0)	$x^2=4.704$ P=0.095
	Objectification	4 (20.0)	470 (36.7)	
	Internalisation	8 (40.0)	273 (21.3)	
Age**	18 – 29 years	19 (95.0)	430 (33.6)	$x^2=32.905$ P=0.000
	30 – 39 years	1 (5.0)	468 (36.6)	
	40 – 49 years	-	247 (19.3)	
	50 – 59 years	-	106 (8.3)	
	≥ 60 years	-	29 (2.3)	
Sex	Male	12 (60.0)	816 (63.7)	$x^2=0.120$ P=0.729
	Female	8 (40.0)	464 (36.3)	
Marital status**	Married /cohabiting	3 (15.0)	786 (61.4)	$x^2=39.095$ P=0.000
	Separated/divorced/widow/widower	1 (5.0)	40 (3.1)	
	Single	16 (80.0)	445 (34.8)	
Highest level of education*	No formal education	1 (5.0)	15 (1.2)	$x^2=11.803$ P=0.008
	Below tertiary education	3 (15.0)	183 (14.3)	
	Tertiary not completed	13 (65.0)	204 (15.9)	
	Tertiary completed	3 (15.0)	878 (68.6)	
Occupation**	Student	15 (75.0)	216 (16.9)	$x^2=47.475$
	Public sector employee	-	396 (30.9)	
	Private sector employee	2 (10.0)	296 (23.1)	
	Unemployed	2 (10.0)	246 (19.2)	
Length of stay	3 – 5 years	7 (35.0)	311 (24.3)	$x^2=4.468$ P=0.107
	6 – 9 years	1 (5.0)	321 (25.1)	
	10 years and above	12 (60.0)	648 (50.6)	
Ethnic group	Hausa	2 (10.0)	133 (10.4)	$x^2=0.946$ P=0.918
	Igbo	5 (25.0)	321 (25.1)	
	Yoruba	6 (30.0)	290 (22.7)	
	Northern minority	4 (20.0)	359 (28.0)	
	Southern minority	3 (15.0)	177 (13.8)	
Residence	Slum area	2 (10.0)	54 (4.2)	$x^2=1.981$ P=0.371
	Semi-urban	5 (25.0)	264 (20.6)	
	Urban	13 (65.0)	962 (75.2)	
Income level (in Naira)**	Below 30000	18 (90.0)	401 (31.3)	$x^2=32.336$ P=0.000
	30001 – 70000	2 (10.0)	163 (12.7)	
	70001 and above	-	716 (55.9)	

Significant at $p < 0.01$ ** or 0.05*

Source: Field Survey (2021)

People's perceptions regarding corruption from the study's qualitative component are also investigated, supporting the respondents' points of view from the numerical analysis. It was discovered that people's perceptions of corruption changed through time, and this was evident in their beliefs about what it is, what it implies, and the various responses to the idea or deed. Despite being accepted as a way of life, corruption still has an adverse impact on the various areas of the economy. This applies to the fields of education, health, and the economy. In addition to the internal degeneration of the national sectors, corruption is said to cast a negative image on Nigeria within the global community. From the viewpoint of one of the respondents, it was narrated that:

In Nigeria, corruption is seen as a way of life, and it not only affects the economic sector of the country but the health sector as well. This is because individuals siphon the money for themselves instead of spending money on the health system. Furthermore, it affects the educational sector as well because the money that should be used to build schools and provide better infrastructure in schools has been stolen **(IDI/Male Lecturer/46 years old/Wuse/AMAC/2021)**.

Another perception is that some people have the authority to stop corruption but are unable to do so. However, this menace is thought to be detrimental to both the nation and a person's capacity for rational thought.

As an individual, I lack the power to curb it. Some people have the power to do so but refuse. When people like myself see that they do not have the ability to effect change, it is disheartening and reduces one's idea of their self-worth. It is quite unfortunate because it kills the land and soul of any nation **(IDI/Male Politician/38 years old/Dutse Alhaji/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

Approaching from a historical point of view, this respondent states that corruption is responsible for the kind of negative development of institutions that in Nigeria. This is mostly attributed to the type of governance and politics practised since 1999. In his statement, it was stated that:

If you do an analysis of the country from 1999 to date, and then compare it with 1983 to 1998 in terms of development, you will see that the country has deteriorated a great deal because of what is currently happening. More money means more looting, so politics is not about developing Nigeria. When politicians come, they not only promote corruption but institutionalise it. This is the only country where you

finish serving 4 or 8 years as a governor, and while still receiving a pension, you move to the senate and start collecting a salary **(IDI/Male Lecturer/45 years old/Nyanya/AMAC/2021)**.

There is also the viewpoint that corruption is now a cultural phenomenon and should not be eradicated since it is an integral component of being Nigerian. As one of the participants noted, there is a significant disparity between his salary and that of politicians. Despite the fact that their salaries are different, they nonetheless have more opportunities to steal and embezzle money. People perceive it as a component of the system as a result because even though found guilty, they do not face the wrath of the laws the same ways others will be prosecuted. As he described:

If I have any opportunity to have access to public funds, I will use the money to solve my problems. Look let me tell you, when I got employed in 1979 my salary was ₦28,000 today my salary is ₦370,000.00. Whereas, politicians and their cronies are stealing the country blind without repercussions. Exemplification is a language of method of solving any problem. Now, who among the criminal elites in this country is in jail for corruption as we speak? Forget about those in the 1960s, name a political thief currently in prison in Nigeria today. Even the very few convicted by the courts have been granted Presidential Pardon. Is that not laughable? Until something drastic changes in Nigeria, the plundering will continue. Show me one public official high up there in this country who is righteous. Forget it, there is no need to pretend. But I believe that when God begins to deal with this country a lot will change until then, we are heading nowhere. Personally, if I get out of this country, I will not look back. **(IDI/Male Lecturer/46 years old/Zuba/Gwagwalada LAC/2021)**.

For many of the participants in the FGDs and interviewees, anti-corruption campaign slogans are not only deceptive but mere uninformed sloganeering. They reasoned that as a construct, corruption is a social practice, and the activities defined as corrupt will continue insofar as corrupt individuals who have done no business except holding public office and stolen money are hailed thereby enabling them to parade themselves as moral icons.

I am a beneficiary of corruption. It is a cultural thing, so I will not abandon it. It is part of us, and we all do it. From the people at the top to the everyday pedestrian, we all reap the fruits of corruption, which is why I said it is an integral part of us. Seeing as many people and I benefit from it, I do not see a reason to stop **(FGD/Students/18-35 years/Zuba/Gwagwalada LAC/2021)**.

There are many justifications for corruption on the part of individuals. But it all starts with

a distorted perspective. A corrupt thinking will undoubtedly result in corrupt behaviours. Therefore, if the mind is contaminated, the acts that follow will unavoidably be corrupt as well. As this respondent puts it:

Corruption can happen anywhere, and it can happen for any reason. Once a person is innately corrupt and has that mind-set, it is inevitable for the person to do things that would not bring about corruption. These actions could lead to more significant acts of corruption or conscript others to partake in the act **(FGD/Journalists/25-45 years/Wuse/AMAC/2021)**.

Even when people are aware that this is a corrupt act, they would still engage in it for the benefit - especially monetary benefit - it brings. In this narratives, it was pointed out that:

In my opinion, a majority of Nigerians are corrupt. Theoretically, if a Governor goes to an area and gives everyone money, even if that person is actually corrupt, they would all vote for him simply because he bribed them. I agree with the premise that corruption is a terrible thing, but some people do not see it that way because of what they benefit from it. However, I see it as a bad thing, and even before God, it is a bad thing **(FGD/EFCC/ICPC 1/25-50 years/Wuse/AMAC/2021)**.

For those who participate in corruption, especially in the case of those who bought votes to get into political power, the belief is that it was an investment which they would get their returns on investment when they take the seat of position. A respondent noted that:

This is why they spend five years in office doing nothing. They believe they made an investment while vying for that position by using money to buy votes. So, they try to recoup their investment. In the end, you find out that both the villagers and the person are now accomplices **(KII/Male Lawyer/41 years old/Wuse/AMAC/2021)**.

Given the various perspectives on corruption, it appears that there are elements of institutionalisation of corruption at all societal levels, particularly among those who hold political power. This is due to the fact that politicians frequently exploit their positions to embezzle funds for their own benefit and at the expense of people who do not control the course of events. This also means that the view that Nigerian society as a whole is corrupt and that, as a result, it has become a part of the system and cannot be simply purged from the system. From this viewpoint, it is clear that everyone wants money and corruption is thought to be the only strategy for eradicating poverty. As a result, it is believed to be

impossible to amass wealth without turning to corruption.

Furthermore, this respondent believes that everyone is involved in corruption, even the most religious person. However, she also believes in the functionality of corruption stating that without it, the country would not be able to move forward. For her, there has to be darkness for us to appreciate light and that is what corruption does for us. Yet she confirms that currently corruption is at an all-time high, giving the impression that the usefulness of corruption is however at a certain level after which it becomes harmful. She observed:

Without corruption, I do not think this country can even move forward. Corruption helps people in many ways. No matter how religious you think you are, as long as you live in Nigeria, at some point, I think you will be involved in corrupt practices, whether you like it or not. Currently, corruption is high and becoming a nuisance to society. It is causing damage to the society, but good things can actually come from it. People need to be bad for others to see the good in them. If everyone is good, people will not value or see the importance of being good (FGD/EFCC/ICPC3/25-50 years/Wuse/AMAC/2021).

Another respondent however believes that human beings who see corruption as a way of life are actually not normal and are without conscience. No matter how appealing it is, people with conscience would look for other options rather than engage in corruption, as stated below:

No normal human being will see corruption as a way of life. Yes, it will favour you, but deep down, you know it is not the right thing to do. Only those without a conscience see corruption as normal. Those with a conscience know that it is not the way to go, no matter how tempting it might be (IDI/Male Commercial driver/motorcyclist/30 years old/Zuba/Gwagwalada LAC/2021).

According to a different participant, people who view corruption as a way of life are actually not normal and lack conscience. And he went on to state that if someone has said that corruption is a way of life, that person lacks conscience. As one of the commercial drivers interviewed stated: *No normal human being will see corruption as a way of life. Yes, it will favour you but you know deep down in your heart that it is not the way to go. Unless you don't have conscience because so many people don't have but if you have conscience you know that this is not the way to go.*

Based on religious beliefs, corruption is also believed to be bad and a punishable offence, which God would even punish the offender, apart from the law. However, this belief is changing as people are instead seeing the offenders get away with it. In his words: *As a Christian, I see corruption as a bad thing, and anybody that is into corrupt practices must be punished by God. But here, people see corruption as a way of life. They do it because someone else did it and evaded punishment.*

These results imply that there are various corruption perceptions. Again, the differences in people's views of corruption are closely related to the moral stance of the person conceptualising such corrupt actions. While those who believe corruption has permeated society and cannot be abolished appear pessimistic and insensitive to the moral standards of society, those who feel individuals who partake in it have no conscience appear optimistic about its eradication if strict rules are put in place to do so.

4.5 Predisposing Factors to Corrupt Practices

Figure 4.6 displays the distribution of the respondents by reasons why most of the officials/people engage in corrupt practices. Three key factors were identified, and the highest proportion of the respondents (66.4%) signified that greed is responsible for the reason why most officials/people engage in corrupt practices, followed by poverty (22.5%) and weak laws (11.1%). The implication of this data is that persons, institutions and the subsystem of the Nigerian social structure as currently constituted inherently supports the sustenance of corruption.

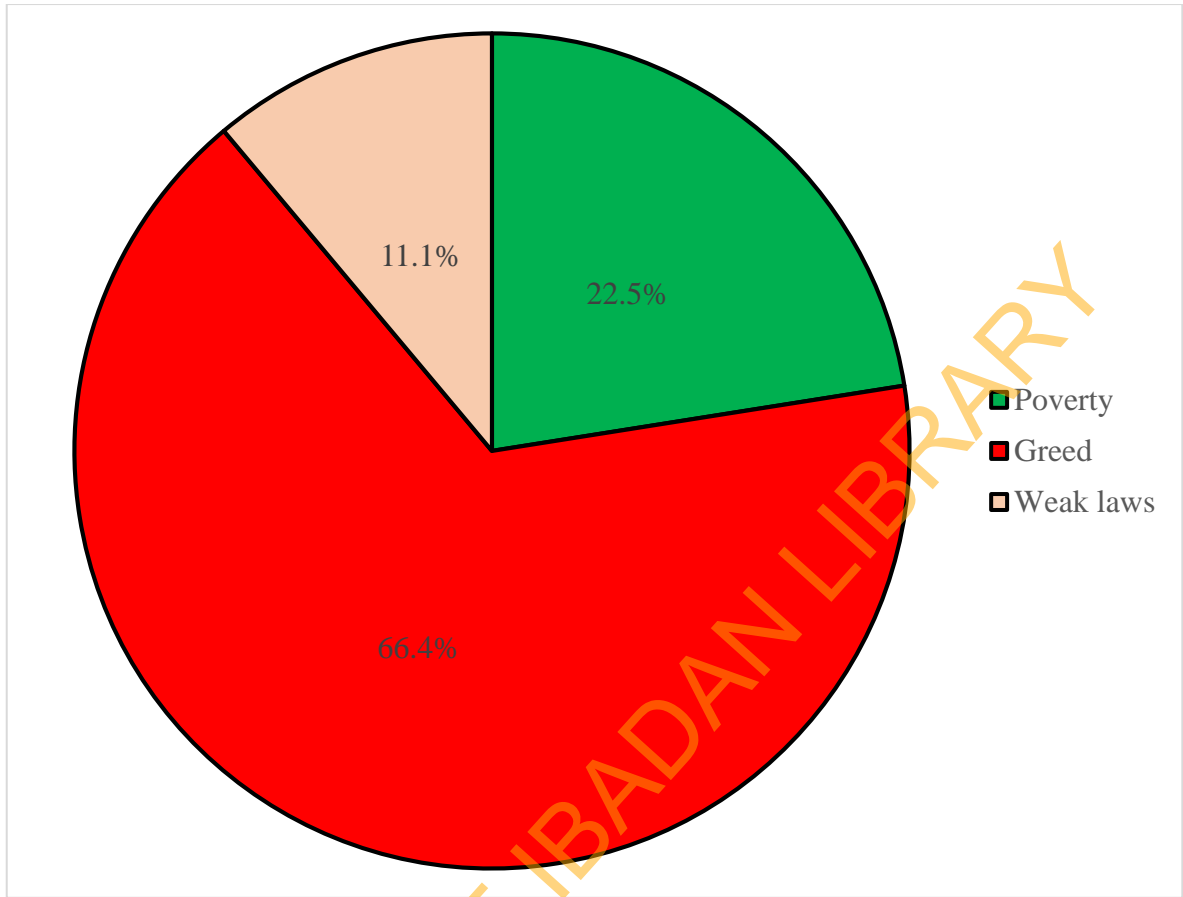


Figure 4.6: Distribution by the Reasons Why Most of the Officials/People Engage in Corrupt Practices

Figure 4.7, on the other hand, presents the report on the distribution by what the respondents would also add that will result in a cause of corrupt practices among corrupt officials and people. Three factors were also identified, and the majority of the respondents indicated that lack of fear of God (68.2%) is the most potent factor, followed by community/family pressure (22.7%) and peer pressure (9.0%). In other words, the fear of God is believed to moderate actions and engender probity and accountability in public affairs.

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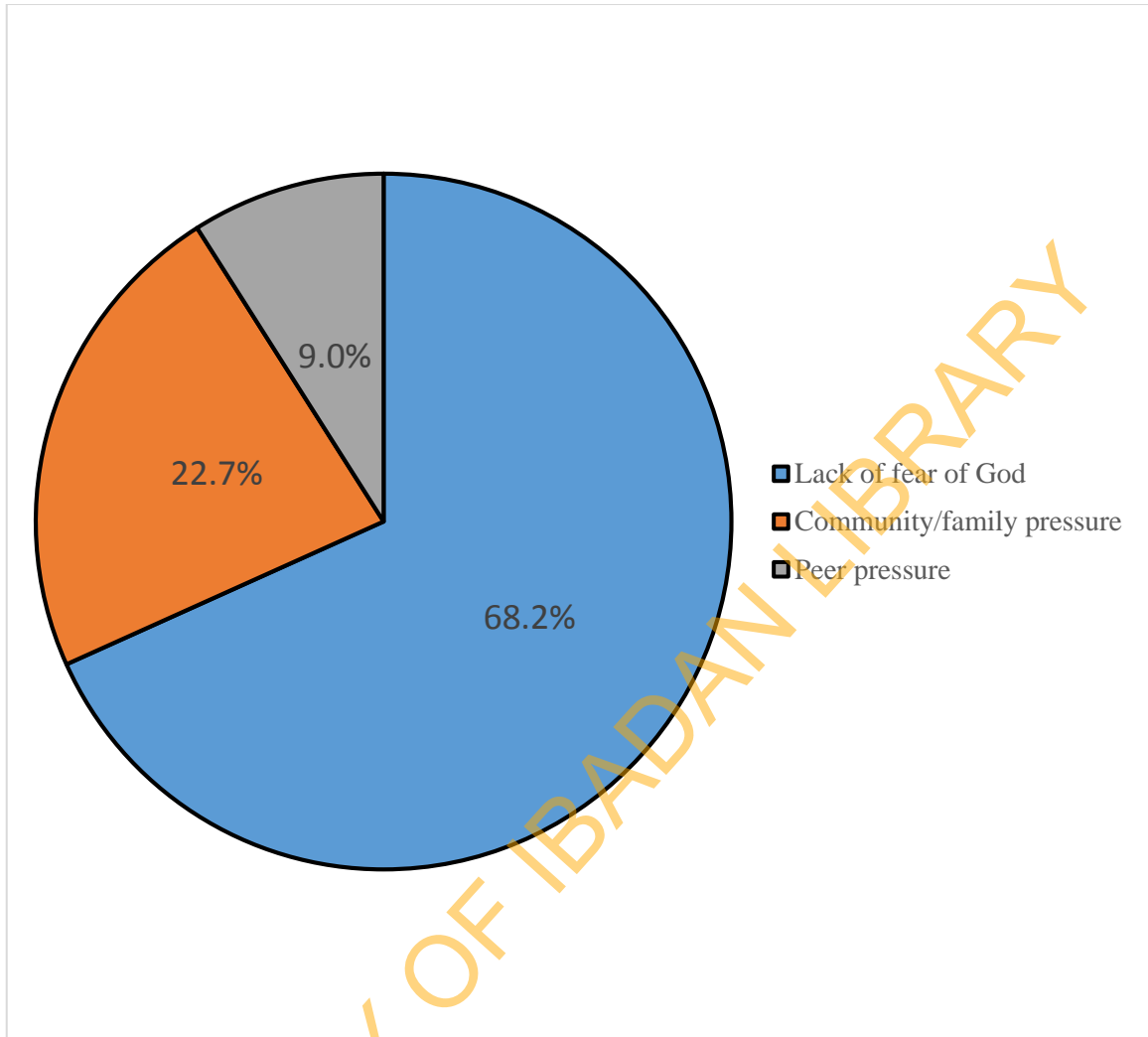


Figure 4.7: Distribution by what Respondents would also Add that will Result in a Cause of Corrupt Practices among Corrupt Officials/People

The perceived reasons why political appointees and public office holders largely engage in corrupt practices were ascertained. Figure 4.8 shows that different reasons accounted for why political appointees and public office holders are corrupt. Among other factors, the highest proportion of the respondents signified that poor enforcement of anticorruption systems (48.6%), followed by party politics (16.0%), porous government financial systems (14.9%) and compatibility of Nigerian cultures with corruption (9.9%). From the foregoing the lacklustre enforcement of anticorruption regimen by the various agencies account for why public officials are corrupt given that they are embolden by the tendency to get away with the crime.

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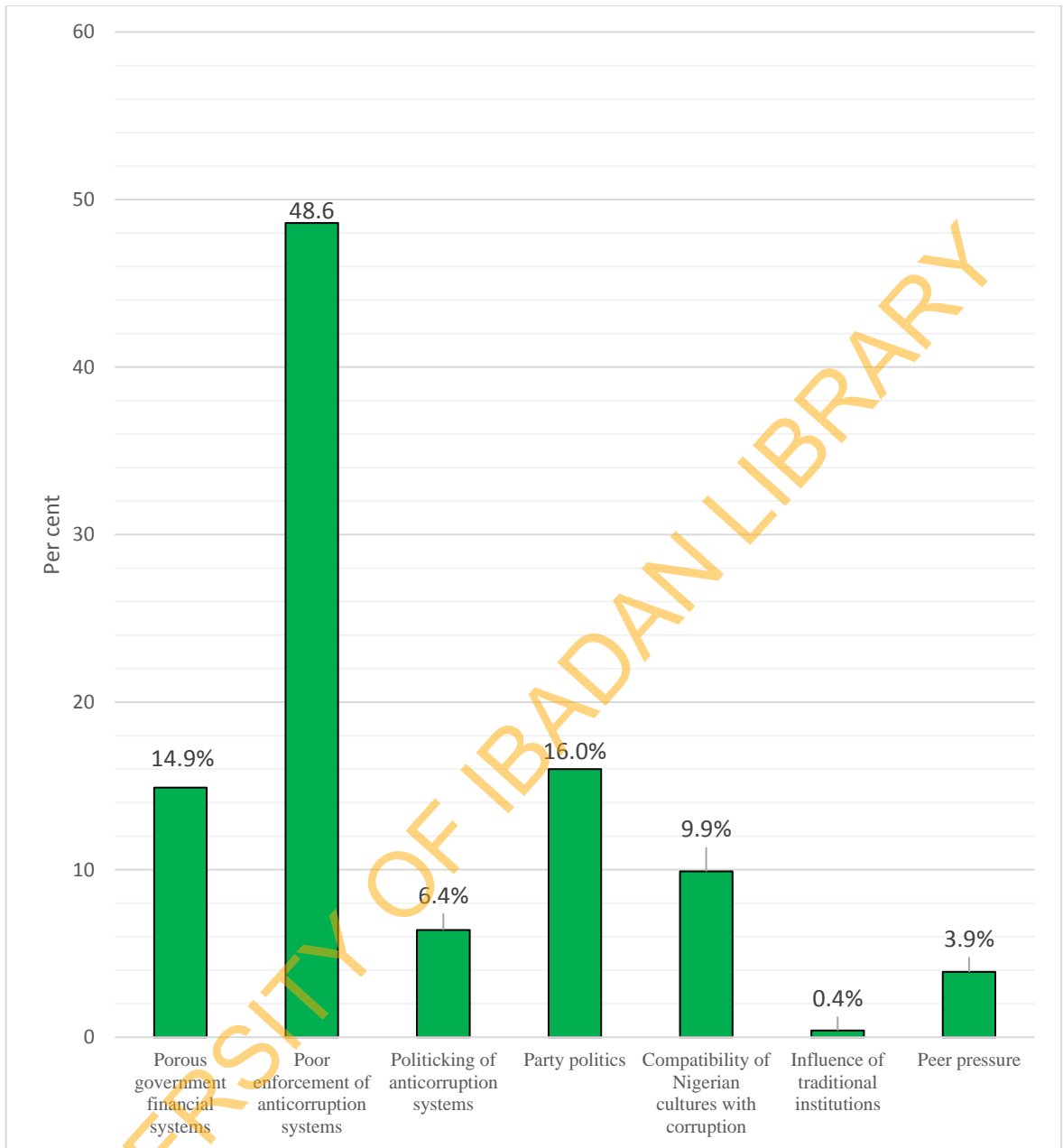


Figure 4.8: Distribution by the Perceived Reasons why Some of the Political Office Appointees and Public Office Holders Largely Engage in Corrupt Practice

Several reasons were given by respondents for why people engage in corrupt behaviours, according to the qualitative findings. While none of them shared a personal account of engaging in a specific corrupt activity, they did provide several personal experiences that would lead someone to consider engaging in various forms of corruption. The issue of insufficient remuneration or compensation is paramount among these considerations. This respondent states that there is a connection between an organisation's level of corruption and its wage structure; a good pay structure would therefore lower the rate of corruption. If one takes the part played by greed into account, the argument about improved remuneration alone will however not suffice. The respondent stated:

There is a lack of adequate salaries everywhere in Nigeria. For example, if you go to an institution that pays a decent wage, you will discover that corruption there is minimal. However, if you visit the Federal Civil Service, Ministries, among others, you will immediately know that these places are corrupt. Those who get to the top believe that they are about to round up their service, so they become greedy and start accumulating wealth unlawfully. This is the only country where civil servants are richer than businessmen. In government establishments, everything is about survival because of low salaries, which is shameful. It comes as no surprise that some people collect bribes. For example, look at a policeman's salary and welfare packages; they are nothing to write home about **(IDI/Male Lecturer/46 years old/Zuba/Gwagwalada LAC/2021)**.

People usually fall prey of the belief that engaging in corrupt practices has a better pay-off when it offers more than their salary. Furthermore, bribes become appealing when the current earnings are not even enough to take care of one's family expenses per time. This has led to cases of people selling out their companies to gain more to themselves. A fall in income levels could also cause people to engage in corrupt activities such as bribery to balance out what comes in for them. This respondent revealed:

Poverty is another factor that encourages the act of corruption. For example, a person in Grade Level nine who has been working for the past fifteen years has a monthly salary of less than fifty thousand Naira. He has four kids who are all supposed to attend school. He is paying rent because he does not own a house. His salary is not enough to pay rent and meet his family's needs. If someone walks up to him and says, 'I want to use your company's letterhead for something. Give it to me, and I will pay you five hundred thousand Naira.' The man would consider that five hundred thousand Naira a lot of money, and it would

take ten months' worth of salary to make that amount. Therefore, the money becomes appealing because he has several responsibilities to take care of. He would take the offer, not caring that it is an act of corruption **(IDI/Male Civil Servant/45 years old/Gwagwalada Centre/Gwagwalada LAC/2021)**.

Another respondent, a lecturer, stated in his stories that when a person's take-home pay is insufficient to support the family in relation to the wages earned at work, there is a great possibility that the person will also get bribes in addition to the monthly salary obtained. He described his experiences studying abroad and how his earnings as a lecturer are lower than what he received as a student. This can entail accepting bribes to increase monthly income. He recounted:

When I was a student outside this country, I had a very spacious office, a laptop, and a salary of over eight hundred thousand Naira, and I did not even have a PhD then. When I was finally employed in Nigeria, my salary became less than three hundred thousand Naira, which cannot feed myself and my family. What would happen when I take home something lesser than what I earned as a student? I would eventually start collecting bribes should the opportunity arise **(IDI/Male Lecturer/55 years old/Kubwa/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

There is also the aspect of the nature of the society which comes with responsibility even when one does not have enough. This comes in forms of responsibility to the larger family especially for ceremonies such as marriage, naming and burials which are culturally important. The expenses incurred to organise these ceremonies have been discussed to contribute to people's quest to make more money from whatever means to meet up with the expectations, as noted below:

In the society we live in, we have people who would get married, have children, then ask you for "contribution." Another common lousy practice occurs during burials. Even those not working are asked to chip in large amounts of money. The pressure from these cultural practices leads many people to corruption **(IDI/Male Lecturer/Gwagwalada Centre/Gwagwalada LAC/2021)**.

For others, the pressure is mostly from within wherein one believes that a new status should be commensurate with some certain behaviours. This respondent reports that this would lead an individual to go above his means and engage in corruption to sustain that image, as seen below:

Pride also leads to corruption. Imagine someone who works in the Federal Ministry planning on returning to their community. This person would want to show off to the members of their community. However, to do so, they would have to lead a lifestyle that costs more than they make, and that would lead to stealing, which is an act of corruption **(IDI/Male Civil Servant/44 years old/Kubwa/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

Some have also identified greed as a predisposing factor to corruption. For some, it is not that they do not earn enough but rather that they want more than their current earnings could afford. In other cases, this greed is fuelled by access to much money and resources after one has experienced a period of poverty. One respondent shared that while people might blame poverty as a reason why they had no option but to engage in corrupt practices, yet even when they become rich, they still exhibit these behaviours. The respondent stated:

Greed is everywhere, and most people have it in them. The opportunity has just not presented itself for them to showcase their covetousness. A poor person would blame poverty for their terrible judgement, but this same person would end up rich and keep stealing. This goes to show that they were greedy all along **(KII/Male/Judge/55 years/High Court/Bwari Central/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

This participant added that one of the causes of poverty is greed, supporting this point of view. He stressed that a minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria amassing a fortune for himself and his family without considering how to improve the lives of the people in society is motivated by greed. He stated thus:

Only greed would make someone work as a Minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria not to better the country but for themselves and their family. This person knows what it is like to be poor, so they try to avoid it at all costs. Some people believe that poverty is a reason to become corrupt, but to me, it is not **(IDI/Male Lecturer 47 years old/Bwari Central/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

A respondent who works as a project manager noted, in support of the foregoing argument, that persons who engage in corruption typically do so because they are driven by greed. As a result, they use that as a means of maintaining the wealth they have already accumulated because of a fear of never being poor again. As he explained: *Greed, too, is part of it. However, the Nigerian economy is not helping either. You see people receiving incomes barely enough to sustain them. People like these feel like they have no choice but to engage in corruption.*

The lacunas in the law, which means there are easy ways to navigate out of getting punished for corrupt offences have also spurred the continuity of corruption in Abuja. This, coupled with greed existing in the human mind, shaped into a mind-set also endears people to corrupt practices. A respondent quipped:

Mind-set is another factor that comes into play. Our law is porous and encourages us to act corruptly because there is no punishment, as our system here in Nigeria is not holistic. Without greed, nobody would engage in corruption. In a situation where everybody is satisfied with what they have, there would be no need to go to extreme lengths to enrich oneself. To some extent, starvation and joblessness increase the need to engage in corruption. There are two types of poverty. We have poverty of the mind and financial poverty, and it depends on the kind of poverty, but both can lead to corruption **(IDI/Male Contractor/43 years old/City Centre/AMAC/2021)**.

Another dimension of poverty shown in hunger is also identified as a factor that predisposes people to corruption. For some, it is the inability to feed their family because they lack the resources to do so or do not have a job that provides for their needs. Sometimes this people who do not have much do not also learn to manage their resources or stay within their means and thereby use corrupt practices to salvage their shortfalls. A respondent noted:

Hunger can lead a man to do anything. If a person and their family have not eaten for two days and are asked to do anything for food or money, they would do whatever it takes. They would not bother with the morality or consequences of their actions. All they care about is surviving **(KII/Male Sa'payi of Garki/65 years old/Garki/AMAC/2021)**.

In support of the above assertion, a male respondent who was a driver also mentioned poverty and stated that poverty can bring about hunger and hunger can in turn bring about corruption. As he noted:

Hunger can make one turn to corruption in the blink of an eye. Besides hunger, some do not know how to manage their resources. So, if they do not cut their clothes according to their size, they would end up living above their means, which leads to corruption **(IDI/Male Lecturer/55 years old/Gwagwalada Centre/Gwagwalada LAC/2021)**.

Adding to the above viewpoint, this narrative supports the idea that joblessness can bring about poverty. And when joblessness sets in, the possibility of being poor and resorting to corruption is high. As a participant shared in one of the FGDs held:

Lack of job or joblessness can lead to corruption because they say, ‘idle hands are the devil’s workshop.’ If you have people who rely on you for food and money, and you do not have a source of income, trust me, you would jump at any opportunity to make money regardless of how unwise it is **(FGD/Journalists/25-45 years/Wuse/AMAC/2021)**.

In a similar vein, a female respondent described poverty as a factor that makes people more susceptible to corruption. No mother can rest until her child is adequately fed, she said. This indicates that when a nation fails to feed its people, corruption results because everyone wants to have something to eat. As it was stated:

Once poverty sets in and affects you intensely, nothing would be off limits in order to curb your dilemma. As most people would say, ‘a mother cannot rest unless her child has eaten properly,’ which is why you see people engaging in all manners of activities just to get through the day **(IDI/Female Politician/65 years old/Garki/AMAC/LAC)**.

On the flipside, there are people who participate in corrupt practices not because there is a need for it but because they believe it is the system of operation. Some people also if they do not go that route, there might be no leeway into what they aim to achieve. There is also the culture of shaming those who cannot engage in corruption to satiate the thirst of their family and community by siphoning funds from national or state treasuries. As noted below:

Due to the environment we live in Nigeria, people see that nothing good comes from being an upstanding citizen. Doing so means you end up poor, hungry, or begging in the streets. Therefore, most people opt for corruption. After all, others do it, and so can they **(FGD/EFCC/ICPC 1/25-50 years/Wuse/AMAC/2021)**.

Apart from these factors mentioned, there are also factors like peer influence where a friend or peer member is tempted by the success of the other engaged in a corrupt activity especially when he has envied that success for a while. Since such individuals are perceived to have gained a better deal with no immediate consequence, following that pattern becomes tempting. And in some instances, it is just the selfishness of an individual who wants everything for himself that leads them to corruption. A respondent asserted:

Some other factors that lead to corruption might be personal or your peers. You see your friend making money, and you do not know what they are doing to make this money, but you are intrigued. Eventually, you discover they are not getting the money through legal means. Even though you do not want to engage in corruption, the money they make is considerable, so you might get tempted. Ultimately, peer pressure can predispose people to corruption (**IDI/Male Civil Servant/44 years old/Kubwa/Bwari LAC/2021**).

Viewing it from another perspective, one of the participants explained that selfish interest can lead to corrupt practices. As this male participant noted, anyone who is not always satisfied with what one has, is liable to be corrupt. As he noted: *Sometimes, it is built into them. Someone who is born selfish is insatiable. They are never satisfied with what they have and always look for other things to accumulate. They do so with total disregard for those around them* (**IDI/Male Commercial driver/motorcyclist/32 years old/Nyanya/AMAC/2021**).

Little or no accountability within the government system also gives room for corruption to prosper within the public sector, especially among those in politics. There is poor investigation of allegations on corruption, neither is there proper supervision of roles and responsibilities. This has even become one of the appeals of working in the public sector, which a respondent revealed:

There is less accountability in the government sector and a lesser level of responsibility. They investigate the appropriation of funds with laxity and do not supervise properly. This is why everybody wants a government job. With a government job, you are free to misbehave and be lazy, and these are things that bring about corruption (**IDI/Male Commercial driver/motorcyclist/25 years old/Wuse/AMAC/2021**).

Following the different narratives shared by each participant, it can be concluded that the causes of corruption can either be internal or external to the perpetrator of the act of corruption. When greed is the driving force, for example, corruption may be personal, but it may also be socially motivated in cases where peer pressure, deprivation, and government neglect have encouraged it. Whatever the cause of corruption, however, the society is experiencing moral decay, which needs to be addressed by everyone in the society.

As shown in Figure 4.9, the most significant risk factors for corruption in society are poverty

and a need for financial security. It indicates that when societal values have changed, it is inevitable that personal priorities will also be altered. Therefore, a change in how corruption is conceptualised must eventually take place.

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Figure 4.9: A Word Cloud Describing the Key Elements Identified as the Predisposing Factors to Corrupt Practices

Source: Field Survey (2021)

4.5.1 Reasons and Justification

Some have justified their engagement in corrupt activities based on the injustice they see happening in the society. The fact that people who engage in corruption go scot-free without any consequence serves as an encouragement for others and helps them justify their behaviour. This is the position of a participant in a focus group discussion:

If the written laws are not being adhered to and there is impunity, people would steal from the organisation and go free. There is nothing like queries, prosecutions, or penalties. Even those who engage in the most heinous acts of corruption are not reprimanded. This kind of system encourages others to act corruptly as well (FGD/EFCC/ICPC 1/25-50 years/Wuse/AMAC/2021).

In addition to the justification and rationale given by the participants in the focus group discussion, it was observed that injustice is one of the major reasons why people undertake activities to support corruption. People's propensity for unfairness and disregard for fairness, lead to corrupt practices. As they shared: *Injustice is one of the factors that can lead people into corruption. Where there is no fairness in everyday dealings, people do anything they can to gain an advantage. In some cases, you cannot really blame the corrupt individual* (FGD/Journalists/25-45 years/Kubwa/Bwari LAC/2021).

For some others, it is the belief that certain positions require certain characters and behaviours such as taking financial responsibility for a bulging family tree line even when their remuneration cannot handle this. The ideology that certain people in certain positions cannot be poor and the desire not to remain in poverty is used by some people to justify corrupt actions. A respondent stated:

In this country, once you are appointed to a position of authority, for example, a Minister, your friends, family, and kinsmen would have certain expectations of you. They expect you to care for everyone in your community because they believe you have hit it big. However, they do not realise the position you occupy is for the Nigerian people, not just you or them. They believe that you have all the power to divert government funds towards them. These expectations inherently bring about corruption. Also, if the person appointed is perceived as poor and starts hearing statements like 'you cannot be in this position and be poor,' they would have a desire to get rich, thereby motivating him or her to engage in corrupt manipulations (IDI/Male Lecturer/46 years old/Wuse/AMAC/2021).

Another respondent had a similar opinion that many people continue to engage in corrupt behaviours because those who commit corrupt acts constantly strive for more so they won't have to suffer. As such, the desire not to suffer any more predisposes them to corrupt practices. One of the male civil servants stated:

They want to have more and more, so they never have to suffer. Therefore, they begin accumulating illicit wealth as a fallback when they leave the position of power. Invariably, the desire to continue to enjoy affluence even when their tenure expires drives people to get more by falling further into corrupt activities **(IDI/Male Civil Servant/44 years old/Kubwa/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

There are others who have justified using corrupt practices to stay ahead because they believe their tribe or region has been marginalised and the only way to get something for themselves is to remain in that position, by whatever means, including corrupt practices. This aligns with the argument about a fractured over-centralised structure in Nigeria A respondent shared his observation as follows:

I noticed that many see some parts of this country as more vital and educated than other regions or tribes, including theirs. They believe there is nothing for them once they leave power, so they do all they can to hold on to that power. This need to stay in power leads them to engage in corrupt practices **(IDI/Male Contractor/44 years old/Dutse Alhaji/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

Yet one of the respondents believes that people who have a dead conscience are the ones who would actually go ahead to engage in corruption, as captured below:

Everyone has a conscience, but it depends on the person's conscience. A person's conscience can be dead or alive. If you have an alive conscience, there are many things you will be sensitive to and avoid, but if you have a dead conscience, there is nothing you cannot do **(IDI/Male Civil Servant/44 years old/Kubwa/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

There is a challenge inherent in the norms that have seeped into cultural practices, as seen by the many narratives for the justification of individuals to corruption, which range from the want to have more and the fear of future lack to the devoid of conscience. This suggests that a number of justifications for corruption stems from the desire for personal gain, regardless of what serves the entire society. Nonetheless, it is still important to foster moral values that oppose the continuation of corruption at any level of society.

As it is essential to document the predisposing factors to corruption within the context of the study areas and Nigeria in general, it is expedient to uncover whether if an act is practised without knowing the law, the person who performed the action is corrupt. Figure 4.10 reports the summary of the distribution of respondents by whether ignorance of the law is an excuse to determining whether the person who performed an action is corrupt or not. More than half of the respondents agreed that if an act is practised without knowing the law, the person who performed the action is not corrupt, while 31.6% of them went in the contrary. It follows that if someone commits an act of corruption while being unaware of the law, the majority will automatically label it as not corrupt. This may imply that an individual's consciousness should be taken into account when determining whether or not an act is corrupt.

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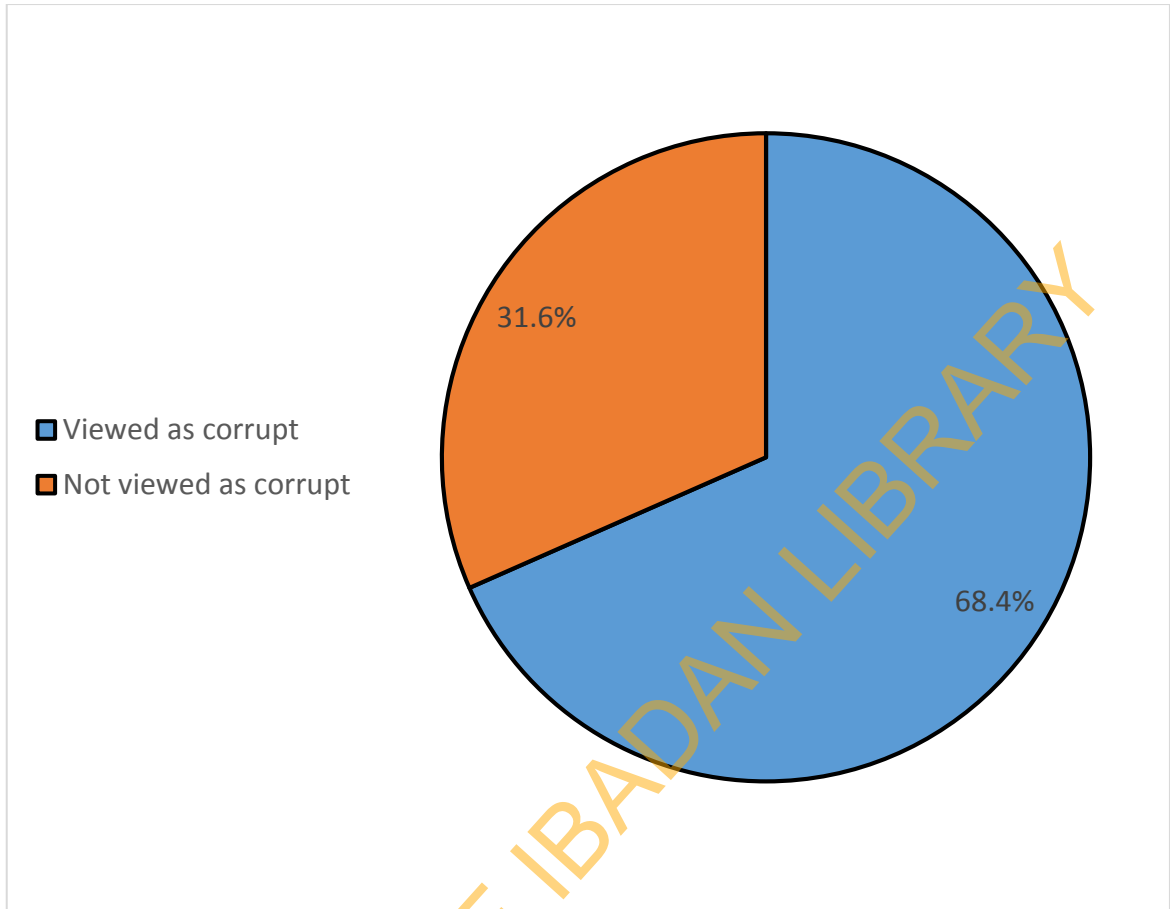


Figure 4.10: Distribution of Respondents by whether if an Act is Practised without Knowing the Law, the Person who Performed the Action is Corrupt

Table 4.7 presents the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and whether if an act is practised without knowing the law, the person who performed the action is corrupt. While it was observed that the age, sex, education, ethnic group and place of residence had no significant relationship with whether if an act is practised without knowing the law, the person who performed it is corrupt or not; there is statistically significant relationship between marital status ($\chi^2=28.990$), occupation ($\chi^2=11.397$), length of stay ($\chi^2=18.051$), education ($\chi^2=11.803$), income level ($\chi^2=10.447$) and whether if an act is practised without knowing the law, it cannot be said that the person who performed it is corrupt. What these suggest is that the marital status, occupational category, educational attainment, the length of stay and the income level of an individual are strong factors that determine whether a person views the performance or practice of an act without knowing the law as corrupt or not.

Table 4.7: Relationship Between Socio-demographic Characteristics and Whether if an Act is Practised without Knowing the Law, the Person who Performed the Action is Corrupt

Variables	Variable categories	Constructed status (%)		Chi Square P-Value
		Not corrupt	Corrupt	
Age	18 – 29 years	33.1	37.7	$x^2=5.165$
	30 – 39 years	36.3	35.5	P=0.271
	40 – 49 years	19.5	18.0	
	50 – 59 years	8.4	7.5	
	≥ 60 years	2.7	1.2	
Sex	Male	65.4	60.1	$x^2=3.359$
	Female	34.6	39.9	P=0.067
Marital status**	Married /cohabiting	63.4	54.7	$x^2=18.761$
	Separated/divorced/widow/widower	2.5	6.8	P=0.000
	Single	34.1	38.4	
Highest level of education*	No formal education	0.7	2.4	$x^2=11.803$
	Below tertiary education	13.8	15.3	P=0.008
	Tertiary not completed	15.5	19.2	
	Tertiary completed	70.0	63.0	
Occupation*	Student	16.0	21.7	$x^2=10.604$
	Public sector employee	48.7	46.0	P=0.014
	Private sector employee	29.6	24.3	
	Unemployed	5.7	8.0	
Length of stay**	3 – 5 years	27.4	18.0	$x^2=18.051$
	6 – 9 years	22.2	30.4	P=0.000
	10 years and above	50.4	51.6	
Ethnic group	Hausa	11.6	7.8	$x^2=4.864$
	Igbo	24.2	27.0	P=0.301
	Yoruba	22.6	23.1	
	Northern Minority	27.9	28.0	
	Southern Minority	13.7	14.1	
Residence	Slum areas	3.9	5.1	$x^2=1.349$
	Semi-urban	21.3	19.5	P=0.509
	Urban	74.8	75.4	
Income level (in Naira)*	Below 30000	29.7	37.7	$x^2=10.447$
	30001 – 70000	14.1	9.7	P=0.005
	70001 and above	56.2	52.6	

Significant at $P < 0.01$ ** or 0.05*

Source: Field Survey (2021)

Figure 4.11 shows the distribution of response to whether respondents will consider an act corrupt if it benefits them directly. Nearly two-third of the respondents subscribed to the fact that ‘they will still consider the action corrupt even if they are direct beneficiary (68.7%), while 31.3% of them indicated that they will not consider the act corrupt if they benefit from it directly.

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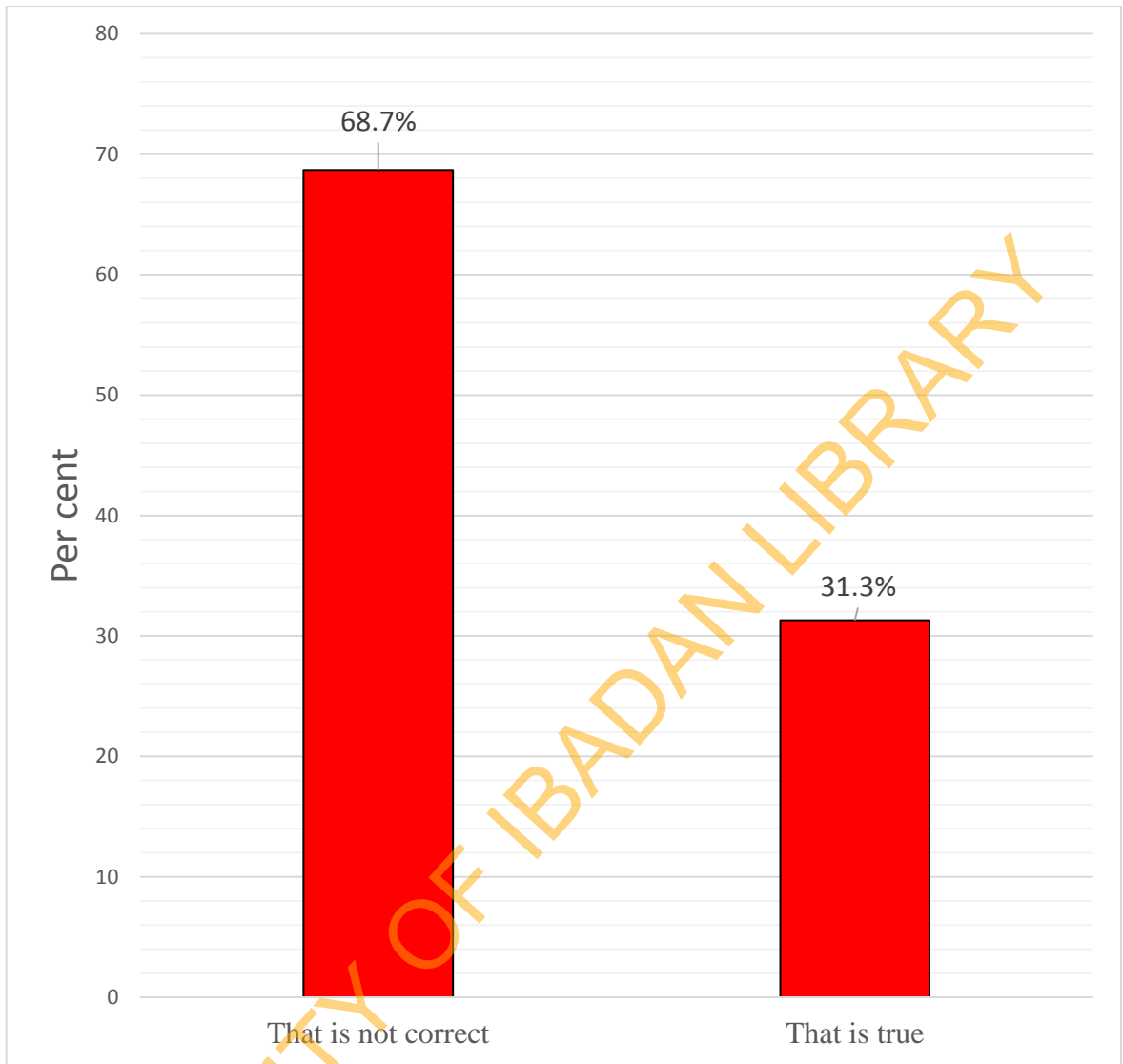


Figure 4.11: Distribution by whether Respondents will Consider an Act Corrupt if it Benefits them Directly

Table 4.8 shows the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and whether an act that is beneficial to oneself directly cannot be considered a corrupt practice. Here again, while it was observed that the age, sex, occupation, ethnic group, place of residence and income level had no significant relationship with whether if an act is beneficial to oneself directly, it cannot be considered a corrupt practice. There is statistically significant relationship between marital status ($\chi^2=14.210$), education ($\chi^2=16.925$) and length of stay ($\chi^2=34.640$) and whether if an act is beneficial to oneself directly, it cannot be considered a corrupt practice.

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Table 4.8: Relationship Between Socio-demographic Characteristics and Whether if an Act is Beneficial to Oneself Directly, it cannot be Considered a Corrupt Practice

Variables	Variable categories	Beneficial but regarded as corrupt action (%)		Chi Square P-Value
		That is not correct	That is true	
Age	18 – 29 years	34.8	33.9	$x^2=0.933$
	30 – 39 years	35.3	37.8	P=0.920
	40 – 49 years	19.5	17.9	
	50 – 59 years	8.2	8.1	
	≥ 60 years	2.2	2.2	
Sex	Male	63.2	64.9	$x^2=0.352$
	Female	36.8	35.1	P=0.553
Marital status*	Married /cohabiting	61.9	58.0	$x^2=7.265$
	Separated/divorced/widow/widower	2.9	5.9	P=0.026
	Single	35.2	36.1	
Highest level of education**	No formal education	0.6	2.7	$x^2=16.925$
	Below tertiary education	12.8	17.7	P=0.001
	Tertiary not completed	16.9	16.2	
	Tertiary completed	69.8	63.4	
Occupation	Student	17.4	18.7	$x^2=1.488$
	Public sector employee	48.5	46.4	P=0.685
	Private sector employees	27.3	29.2	
	Unemployed	6.8	5.7	
Length of stay**	3 – 5 years	28.6	15.5	$x^2=34.640$
	6 – 9 years	21.2	32.7	P=0.000
	10 years and above	50.3	51.8	
Ethnic group	Hausa	10.9	9.3	$x^2=1.212$
	Igbo	24.7	25.8	P=0.876
	Yoruba	22.6	23.1	
	Northern Minority	27.5	28.7	
	Southern Minority	14.2	13.0	
Residence	Slum area	3.9	5.2	$x^2=1.309$
	Semi-urban	21.2	19.7	P=0.520
	Urban	74.9	75.2	
Income level (in Naira)	Below 30000	30.5	36.1	$x^2=4.741$
	30001 – 70000	12.5	13.01.20	P=0.093
	70001 and above	57.0	22 50.9	

Significant at $P < 0.01^{**}$ or 0.05^*

Source: Field Survey (2021)

4.6 Strategies Used to Execute Corrupt Activities

This section examined the various strategies used to execute corrupt practices which respondents provided when they were asked the strategies most officials and people use to execute corrupt activities. Table 4.9 presents the distribution of respondents by the strategies used to execute corrupt activities. These strategies, therefore, ranged from use of long leg (95.3%) to use of bottom power (91.2%), use of you chop, I chop (96.8%), use of scratch my back I scratch your back (97.5%), use of kickback in the award of contracts (95.7%) and offering of gift items before or after service delivery (91.7%).

Further analysis showed that the majority of the respondents also identified rendering of unofficial services to the superior in exchange for favour (93.0%), recommendations from very important personalities, popularly known as VIPs (89.4%), direct monetary reward in exchange for favour (96.5%), outright stealing of public funds/property (98.2%) and short-change of staff/employees' salaries and wages.

Other identified strategies include direct conversion of public funds/property to private use (97.6%), distortions of financial records (98.5%), charging of unauthorised fees (97.9%), excessive auctioning of government property (94.2%), diversion of employees' salaries and allowances to personal use (98.5%), payment of ghost workers (98.2%), demand for favour or advantage (such as sex) before official services are rendered (98.2%), god-fatherism in politics (95.6%), exam malpractices (97.8%) and offering of financial aids to support politicians (90.6%).

Table 4.9: Distribution of Respondents by the Strategies Used to Execute Corrupt Activities

**	Strategies used to execute corrupt activities	Frequency (n=1300)	Percentage (%)
a.	Use of 'long leg'	1239	95.3
b.	Use of bottom power	1185	91.2
c.	Use of 'chop, I chop'	1258	96.8
d.	Use of 'scratch my back' I scratch your back'	1267	97.5
e.	Use of 'kickback' in the award of contracts	1244	95.7
f.	Offering of gift items before or after service delivery	1192	91.7
g.	Rendering of unofficial services to the superior in exchange for favour	1209	93.0
h.	Recommendations from VIPs	1162	89.4
i.	Direct monetary reward in exchange for favour	1254	96.5
j.	Outright stealing of public funds/property	1276	98.2
k.	Short-change of staff/employees' salaries and wages	1262	97.1
l.	Direct conversion of public funds/property to private use	1269	97.6
m.	Distortions of financial records	1280	98.5
n.	Charging of unauthorised fees	1273	97.9
o.	Excessive auctioning of government property	1225	94.2
p.	Diversion of employees' salaries and allowances to personal use	1281	98.5
q.	Payment of ghost workers	1276	98.2
r.	Demand for favour or advantage (such as sex) before official services are rendered	1276	98.2
s.	God-fatherism in politics	1243	95.6
t.	Exam malpractices	1272	97.8
u.	Offering of financial aids to support politicians	1178	90.6

Source: Field Survey (2021)

The qualitative data helped clarify the perspectives on the methods used to carry out corrupt practices from the quantitative findings. The data showed that there are many methods and styles used by different persons to carry out corrupt practices. Some of these methods are regarded as appropriate or even make the transaction covert so that only those involved would be aware of it. The utilisation of connections, sometimes known as "long legs or man know man" is one of the frequent methods of carrying out corruption that respondents mentioned. This style involves courting the favour of someone in a particular position – mostly public positions – based on existing personal relationships. Such person seeking the favour of the official might even be coming up with suggestions on how the person in position could use his power to get them what they want. As a respondent stated: *There are many ways through which people engage in corruption, but to each his own in terms of how they carry out these acts. Some carry it out covertly, while others act corruptly with blatant disregard for who is watching* (IDI/Female Politician/46 years old/Gwagwalada Centre/Gwagwalada LAC/2021).

In supports of the above respondent, another respondent who was a lecturer stated that the issue of long-leg popularly known as connection expands the scope of corruption. As he narrated:

The issue of long-leg is also known as connection. This concept also expands the scope of corruption. If you are a civil servant or a public office holder, those close to you automatically think they have long-leg. Sometimes you might not want to cheat or commit foul play, but those people will tell and show you the different ways you can cheat and steal money. Some might even go as far as to offer their company so that money can be embezzled. By doing so, you end up putting yourself in trouble, whether you like it or not. In essence, these people lure others into corrupt practices (IDI/Male Lecturer/Gwagwalada Centre/Gwagwalada LAC/2021).

This connection acts as a technique of implementing corruption in some circumstances, or perhaps even most cases, as described by respondents, as it is utilised to obtain things even when one does not meet the qualifications or has the necessary skills for the position As observed below:

I was discussing with someone, and they mentioned having long-leg just for visitations. I had never heard the term, so I asked, 'what do you

mean by long-leg? He said long-leg means you have someone in power, either good or bad, who is willing to assist you in any way they can. Even though you do not have the requirements or competency for the job, these people are willing and able to help **(IDI/Female Politician/65 years old/Garki/AMAC/LAC)**.

In one of the FGDs conducted, the participants explained that long-leg is used to get a job even where the candidate is not qualified enough to be employed. As they shared: *In Hausa, we say 'namu, namu,' which translates to 'long-leg.'* This means that if you know someone in an organization, they can give you a job opportunity whether or not you are capable enough to handle that responsibility (FGD/Journalists/25-45 years/Wuse/AMAC/2021).

People also use their influence to fraudulently embezzle funds out of an office. Since the junior staff are not empowered to keep their bosses accountable, they do their wishes without any questioning even when they know it is wrong. In this respondent's opinion, it is top, highly placed individuals who are able to effectively use the long leg and enjoy its benefits. There is also the system of godfatherism which sometimes is a system which officials even put in place to ensure that whatever they do would be acceptable and not countered. The respondent revealed:

Long-leg is usually enjoyed by people in high places, not ordinary people. Long-leg is when you know somebody that knows somebody, thereby giving you some level of influence. There are approvals that we do not know where they originate from. All we know is that the boss appends their signature and releases funds to specific accounts. Although people want to question the origin and destination of these funds, they do not have the power nor influence to do so **(IDI/Male Politician/39 years old/Dobi/Gwagwalada LAC/2021)**.

Another respondent corroborated the same point of view, claiming that godfatherism, the idea that individuals in positions of power in a certain organisation promote the advancement of those who are behind, is a cover for corruption. As this civil servant noted:

They carry it out based on godfatherism in the public sector. When you have overstayed in a particular position of authority, you groom your 'boys' so that whenever you do something, be it good or bad, they do not counter you. Instead, they would stand by you because they see you as their chairman **(IDI/Female Politician/46 years old/Gwagwalada Centre/Gwagwalada LAC/2021)**.

This does not apply to institutions and corporate organisations alone, but parents also use what they have to get what they want for their children, paying bribes to get their children through educational institutions till they get a good paying job. In this regard there is an exchange of money, not only social capital as in the previous narratives. A respondent disclosed thus:

That is why in Nigeria today, parents would bribe their children's way from primary school to secondary school. They would pay bribes so their children pass WAEC and NECO, but they do not stop there. They would also pay for their children to get into the university. To top it all off, they would still bribe officials so their children could get jobs at organisations like Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation or the Central Bank of Nigeria. So, that is a taint we need to get rid of **(IDI/Male Lecturer/46 years old/Wuse/AMAC/2021)**.

One of the respondents believe that carrying out corruption often means bending the rules to achieve a desired result. This bending of rules is also done within the judiciary system, expected to uphold the law and give appropriate judgment when an individual is found guilty of corruption. There was the example of one judge making judgment available for sale to the highest bidder in a particular case, as a respondent disclosed:

First of all, to carry out the act of corruption, they usually bend the rules. They try to circumvent the rules and, in some cases, change them. For example, a situation with The Nigeria Judicial Council where the council has to suspend one judge because the judge always writes two judgments in every case he handles. He does this to make money. He would write two judgments; one to favour the accused and the other to favour the defendant. If the accused brings more money, he will read the one that favours him, but if the defendant brings more money, he will read the one that favours him **(IDI/Male Contractor/44 years old/Dutse Alhaji/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

Bending the rules also includes using a company vehicle or any other equipment for personal purposes. According to this respondent, corruption is taking place because public funds are being misused. From his own perspective:

If you work in a company and are given an official car, that car is for official purposes only. Using that car for anything other than an authorised purpose is an act of corruption. The car was given for the service of the company; therefore, doing anything personal such as sending the driver to take your wife to the market or carry your children, is an act of corruption. It is a misuse of public fund **(IDI/Male Civil**

Servant/45 years old/Gwagwalada Centre/Gwagwalada LAC/2021).

Some of this rule bending occurs even when an official is trying to retire and in fear of not getting her/his pension early try to amass funds and resources to serve as a soft landing for themselves. From the view of this participant, it was explained that:

We used to have government cars, but now we do not because they say there are no resources to buy the car. Greed is involved, but the system encourages it. This is a country where you retire, and before you start receiving your pension, you must pay bribes **(IDI/Male Lecturer/46 years old/Zuba/Gwagwalada LAC/2021).**

Officials also tend to act in a manner that makes people coming into the office feel that they need to tip or bribe them to get their attention and what they seek. This is a method of withholding what they want for what you have. The transaction of giving and receiving to gain the attention of the official which should have come normally is a corrupt transaction. This comes about because the official is in a position of influence and the applicant must pass through that office to get what they want, as expressed by a respondent:

In a scenario where I need a job and apply, the official has all the power. They would keep pushing me aside and not giving me attention so that I know I need to bring something to get that job. So, in the end, me giving him that thing and him collecting it means I got his attention by giving him a gift. This means corruption has taken place **(FGD/Students/18-35 years/Zuba/Gwagwalada LAC/2021).**

Apart from within organisations, the internet is now a tool that is being used to execute corrupt practices. The interconnectedness of the world has made it easier even to execute corrupt practices from any place in the world. This respondent reveals that:

People use the internet to commit a lot of corrupt practices. So, you can virtually do anything on your smartphone with the internet. You can talk to anybody anywhere in the world and convince them to witting or unwittingly aid your corrupt practices **(IDI/Male Civil Servant/44 years old/Kubwa/Bwari LAC/2021).**

There is also the doctoring of documents to fit a particular purpose which can be classified as a corrupt practice. This includes falsification of age or doctoring of reports for personal gain. This respondent gives examples of old men working in the public service past the age

of retirement, or in the situation of manipulating data to get more funds for a project, as noted below:

If you go to the Federal Civil Service, you will see some older men. Typically, these men are old enough to retire and move back to their hometowns, but they are still in office. Even if you question the credibility of their employment status and check their records, you would find that all their details check out. Of course, these records were doctored at one point or the other (**IDI/Male Lecturer/45 years old/Nyanya/AMAC/2021**).

Another respondent reinforced the preceding viewpoint by stating that falsifying records is another way to carry out corrupt acts. And examples of this includes altering data, statistics, and facts for the purpose of getting the desired results. As he noted:

Falsification of records is an act of corruption because you are not showing the reality or the truth. You are changing statistics, data, and facts. If you are asked to count the number of people or take the statistics of the poorest homes, and you discover that there are ten for each category, but you increase the number to twenty, then you are corrupt (**IDI/Male Contractor/40 years old/Gwagwalada Centre/Gwagwalada LAC/2021**).

An intriguing result from the focus group discussions is that, given the circumstances in Nigeria, 100% of the participants claimed they would do everything to make money, including buying jobs and bribing authorities to win contracts. In a similar vein, 87% of them claim that they are afraid of facing backlash if they speak out for what they believe in. The implication is that, regardless of the tactics used by those who engage in corruption, the majority do it in their own interests. When they are not favoured, an act is considered corrupt; yet, when they are favoured, it is not recognised as corrupt. This suggests that there are a variety of tactics used, including bribery, gift-giving in exchange for something more valuable, kickbacks, and the use of one's position, among others. This shows that, in the context of the Nigerian society, corruption-related tactics are complex.

4.6.1 Location/Situation

Respondents in this study also identify places and situations where corrupt practices are executed. One of them reports that the time of occurrence, the situation, the condition and existing connection between the receiver and giver affects how corruption is executed.

Sometimes, it is not even a one-off occurrence but occurs over a period of time. It is also possible that such acts are not discovered until years later. A respondent shared her perspective:

The timing that exists in identifying the connection between the receiver and giver varies. It is usually peculiar to how an act of corruption is executed. Sometimes, corruption could be detected in the process of committing the act or immediately after the act. Note that corruption encompasses all aspects of human activities. Therefore, corruption is not only giving and taking or stealing public funds, and as such, in some circumstances, it could take a day, a month, a year, or even ten years to detect an act of corruption **(IDI/Female Lecturer/47 years old/Bwari Central/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

Time is also considered to be of essence when one wants to engage in corrupt practices in the future. In such a situation there is a buying off of a political aspirant with gifts such that on getting to the position, the political office holder will remember this good turn when one comes begging for favours. In the words of a respondent:

From my point of view, I think society has a more significant role to play in tackling corruption. For instance, it has become common knowledge that when someone is vying for a political appointment, all of a sudden, everybody will want to identify with that person. Sometimes, they would mobilise gifts such as cars and more for the intending public office holder. They do this with the mind-set that they would leverage those gifted items to get favour from the person when he gets to public office. So, when the person finally succeeds, his primary concern would be to reciprocate the favours of those who supported him during the political race. Therefore, corruption will become imminent **(IDI/Male Commercial driver/motorcyclist/28 years old/Kubwa/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

However, another respondent disagrees, stating that whatever the time, the fact that an act is corrupt doesn't change. Therefore, whether a gift is given a year before or a day to or whatever time of the day, once the final aim is to unduly gain favour, then it is corruption.

The respondent stated:

Corruption is wrong, no matter the degree, time of commission, where it took place, or who was involved. Timing of the act, whether day or night, does not matter. All that matters is that an act of corruption has taken place. Any act of corruption should be condemned in its entirety **(FGD/EFCC/ICPC2/25-50 years/Garki/AMAC/2021)**.

Also, in a situation where people are made to pay for services that ought to be free, it is considered that corruption has taken place. Other scenarios include an elected government official using public funds for personal use, using connections to gain admission for relatives and friends and inappropriate spending of public funds for private individuals. This are all situations considered as aiding corrupt practices. In a respondent perspective:

Jobseekers, admission seekers, contractors, and even pensioners are made to pay for services that ought to be free. A scenario where corruption occurs is when a Governor sets aside as much as five billion Naira monthly as 'security vote' and spends it on trips to Dubai for his girlfriends. Another example is a situation where a member of the National Assembly is given slots to send in his or her preferred candidates for employment. Alternatively, a scenario where a minister has his list of candidates to be admitted into a public university. Lastly, a situation where religious pilgrimages are undertaken or subsidised at public expense. Some states even conduct weddings and public holidays with public funds (**IDI/Male Lecturer/46 years old/Wuse/AMAC/2021**).

Within the public service it is possible to see the recurrence of expenses which ought to have been made once, or for a particular duration being repeated every year. For example, cars bought in the civil service which can serve the office for a duration of 5-6 years is used within a year and disposed-off at sometimes as low as only 10% of the actual cost price, as this respondent revealed:

Another form of corruption in the civil service is when the government makes a budget for new cars every year. For example, they write a budget to buy a car worth four million Naira, but it is actually worth four hundred thousand Naira. What happened to the remaining three million and six hundred thousand Naira? This is the same car that would last for five to six years if an individual used their salary to buy it. However, in the civil service, they have a budget for cars and buy them yearly because that is how stealing will flourish. Ordinarily, when one is leaving an organisation, it is expected that the car should be left for whoever would take over from the outgoing staff, but that aspect is ignored because of the stealing that is going on in the civil service (**IDI/Male Contractor/36 years old/ Kutunku/Gwagwalada LAC/2021**).

In other cases, approved funds given to a contractor could also be resized such that some part, in some cases almost half or total project cost, is used to pay off public servants who worked on the file. This results in substandard materials being used for projects making it

more expensive as such projects might need to be awarded again after a limited space of time. A respondent noted that:

If they needed to procure an item, they would use half of the money awarded to settle people and use the other half to execute or procure what they must. That might lead to using inferior materials to execute contract deals or procuring office items less efficient than what the office needs. This leads to more frequent contracts being awarded to replace these substandard materials and the cycle continues **(IDI/Female Contractor/47 years old/Garki/AMAC/2021)**.

This situation where corrupt practices are executed, however, do not exist only within public or private organisations. One of the participants identifies that they also occur within religious bodies, e.g. the church and even among friends; thus:

Corruption can be carried out at any time and place. This does not exclude the church. Go to any church, and you will likely find a corrupt person or two. Even among friends, corruption still takes root. So, no sector or faction is free of corruption **(FGD/Journalists/25-45 years/Wuse/AMAC/2021)**.

Given that the context and circumstances dictated which actions are to be classified as corrupt practices, this only implies that the time of the actions is essential to determining whether or not a given action is corrupt. Additionally, it expands to locations where people do not really think corruption can operate, such as places of worship. By way of explanation, the context in which an action is performed is crucial to understanding how corrupt behaviours are conceptualised or constructed. Figure 4.12 illustrates how corruption can also occur during public elections and the circumstances surrounding them, even though most cases of corruption occur when contracts are awarded. All of these together make up the tactics employed to carry out corrupt practices.

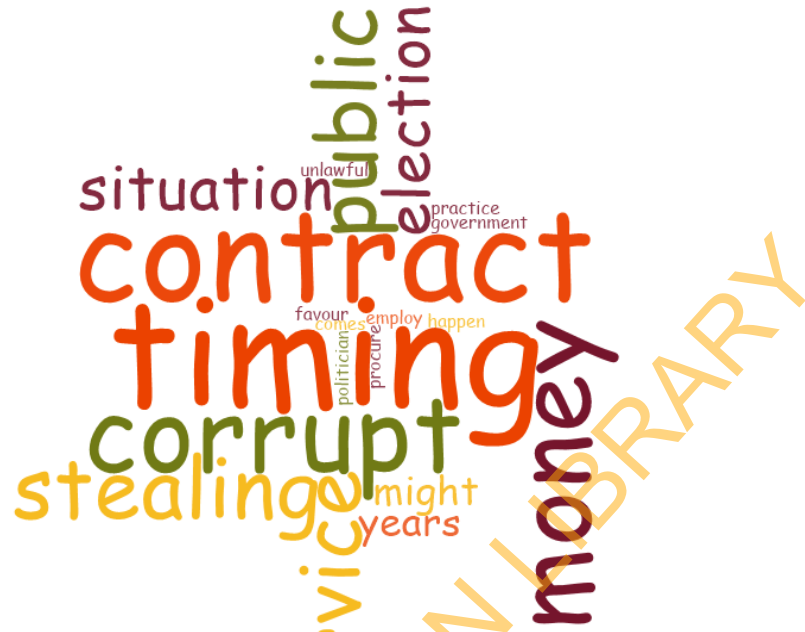


Figure 4.12: A Word Cloud Illustrating the Key Elements Described in Location and Time for Corrupt Practices

Source: Field Survey (2021)

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4.6.2 Means (Gift/Money)

The most common way of executing corruption is through cash/money. Some also exchange in kind. Some of the respondents explain instances of having to pay extra cash to get documents such as international passport and drivers' licence. Getting this document out on time would however take an extra cost. This is also seen when unemployed individuals give bribes to get a job. This is reported to be suspicious as when those kinds of people are employed, they would do all they can to recoup the money they have expended to get the job. A respondent held that: *Most of these gifts are in cash. Cash is one of the main tools that aid corruption. We see people exchange some money for preferential treatment, among other illicit benefits* (IDI/Male Commercial driver/motorcyclist/32 years old/Bwari Central/Bwari LAC/2021).

Another respondent expressed the opinion that offering money as a gift is a method utilised in corrupt activities. It is also mentioned that additional payments are frequently offered in the form of financial gifts as an encouragement to obtain international passports and driver's licences more quickly, as this respondent noted:

Yes, gift in cash or kind facilitates corruption. To get an international passport or driver's licence, you would have to pay a certain amount of money. However, if you want to get it quickly, say the next day, you would have to pay double or triple the original cost of the document (IDI/Female Politician/65 years old/Garki/AMAC/LAC).

Another respondent, a civil servant, reaffirmed that job seekers would show up and provide a sizable sum of money. It is indeed doubtful where they obtained the funds even before obtaining the position. And when they eventually secure the job, there is a propensity to continue the unethical behaviour in order to recoup the money used to secure the position. He stated:

Someone looking for a job will come and give you a sum of three hundred thousand Naira. He does not have a job, so how did he raise three hundred thousand Naira? This automatically tells you that by the time he comes into the system, he will recover his money by any means necessary (IDI/Male Politician/39 years old/Dobi/Gwagwalada LAC/2021).

While some believe that if such money is not solicited for by the receiver, then it is not an act of corruption. However, others are of the opinion that most gifts, especially when presented to government officials are often for a particular purpose and with an expectation of something in return. A respondent shared his position, thus:

If it is not solicited for, a gift in cash or kind might not be a corrupt practice. I might do something for you, and you feel obliged to appreciate me with gifts or in kind. Therefore, I do not consider such instances as acts of corruption, but an act of appreciation **(IDI/Male Civil Servant/36 years old/Kutunku/Gwagwalada LAC/2021)**.

Another participant corroborated this claim by stating that most of the money given to government employees and service providers is typically corrupt. This is because they ensure that they both end up expecting something valuable in exchange. As he described:

Most of the gifts given in contemporary times, especially to public officials and government service holders, usually link back to corruption. This is because you are giving that gift to get something in return. Maybe you are giving the gifts in order to get a promotion or an appointment **(IDI/Male Lecturer/46 years old/Zuba/Gwagwalada/2021)**.

Given the narratives of how money has been used to commit corruption in the earlier cases examined, it is possible that corruption is perpetuated when gifts of money are given as payment for services provided but are not earned. Additionally, it signifies that although the money is offered as an additional payment for the services provided by an employee, it is understood by both sides that it is being used to induce or influence the actor's decision. Due to this, corruption is typically sustained through the use of money, either overtly or surreptitiously, depending on how it is presented. Figure 4.13 further demonstrates the fact that presenting gifts, stealing people's properties, granting contracts, and other methods that are used to commit acts of corruption, they are all ultimately utilised to do the corrupt practices by turning them into cash.



Figure 4.13: A Word Cloud Showing the Key Concepts Gifts as a Strategy of Executing Corrupt Practices

Source: Field Survey (2021)

During festive periods, public office holders also engage in exchange of gifts such as rams for Muslims during Salah and gift hampers for Christians during Christmas. This is sometimes not even from the offerees' personal funds but from the public purse. This is done with the intention that the offerers can in turn request for favours from the recipients, as a respondent disclosed:

Take the Director General of a parastatal, for example. When Salah comes, the Director General would go and buy rams and distribute them to Directors, Permanent Secretaries, and Ministers dealing with his parastatal. Is the Minister too cash-poor to buy a ram? Is the Permanent Secretary too poor to buy a ram? They would also purchase hampers as Christmas gifts using government resources during Christmas. These are issues we need to address **(KII/Female Lawyer/45 years old/Bwari Central/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

Those who do not have the means to engage in corrupt practices strive to get it so they can improve their lot. A respondent noted that payment in cash or kind is another form of corruption. In her precise statement: *Payment in cash or kind is another form of corruption. This is because it would lead to many, especially those who cannot pay in kind, looking for ways to make money. It would direct them to do all manner of things, some of which are illegal* (KII/Female Lawyer/41 years old/Wuse/AMAC/2021).

From the above narratives, it can be concluded that a variety of factors predispose officials or people to corrupt practices at all levels of society. These practices may be financial or non-financial in nature, depending on the circumstance and setting in which the two actors are encountered. By inference, this implies that people appreciate money regardless of societal moral standards in exchange for whatever services are provided. In fact, a lot of activities are continued during the festive season under the pretence that they are being provided outside of official engagements. Yet, an act of corruption has been covertly perpetrated waiting for its manifestation during official engagements. Despite this, it should be emphasised that every action taken by an individual has a hidden reason, which means that there is always a stimulus-response cycle at play.

4.7 Normative Gestures and People's Receptivity to Corrupt Practices

This section analysed how normative gestures determine people's receptivity to corrupt practices in the study area. Measuring the normative gestures through the lens of the culture of gift-giving rituals, granting of loans or doing favour and how membership of a particular religious sect influence official activities, Table 4.10 presents the summary of the results based on the measures. On the result of the culture of gift-giving rituals fostering corruption in Nigeria as a country, over two-third of the respondents (86.8%) indicated that such a culture influenced corrupt practices, while only a few proportion (13.2%) signified that it did not foster corrupt practices in Nigeria.

In the analysis of the phenomenon that granting loans or doing favour by individuals affect the way officers/people treat official dealings (matters), it was discovered that more than half of the respondents (71.2%) agreed that such an act influence corrupt practices compared to 28.8% of the respondents who indicated that it did not affect the way officers treat official matters that affect individuals in the society.

On a final note, when respondents were asked whether membership of a particular religious sect influences official activities in any way, it was found that more than half of the respondents (64.2%) disagreed that religious membership does not influence official activities in any way. Although the majority did not agree that religious membership an act influence official activities in any way, there was an indication that more than one-third (35.8%) of the respondents subscribed to the fact that membership of a particular religious sect influence official activities in a way.

Table 4.10: Distribution of Respondents by how Normative Gestures Determine People’s Receptivity to Corrupt Practices

S/N	Normative gestures	Response categories	
		Viewpoint supported (%)	Viewpoint not supported (%)
a.	Culture of gift-giving rituals foster corruption in Nigeria	1129 (86.8)	171 (13.2)
b.	Granting of loans or doing favour affect the way officials/people treat official dealings that affect individuals	926 (71.2)	374 (28.8)
c.	Membership of a particular religious sect influence official activities in any way	466 (35.8)	834 (64.2)

Source: Field Survey (2021)

NB: Figures in parenthesis are in %

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The respondents' opinions on whether the claim that "corruption has been institutionalised in government agencies and parastatals" is true or false were sought in light of the notion that "corruption has been institutionalised in government agencies and parastatals." Depending on whether respondents believe that "corruption has been institutionalised" in government agencies and parastatals, the distribution of respondents is shown in Figure 4.14. The results indicate that a large majority of respondents (93.5%) agreed that the claim that "corruption has been institutionalised" in government agencies and parastatals is accurate. However, 2.2% of the respondents disagreed with this assertion, and 4.3% were uncertain whether it is true or false. Given that a large majority of respondents agreed that "corruption has been institutionalised" in government agencies and parastatals, one could also surmise that the majority's opinion is somewhat true in this particular phrase.

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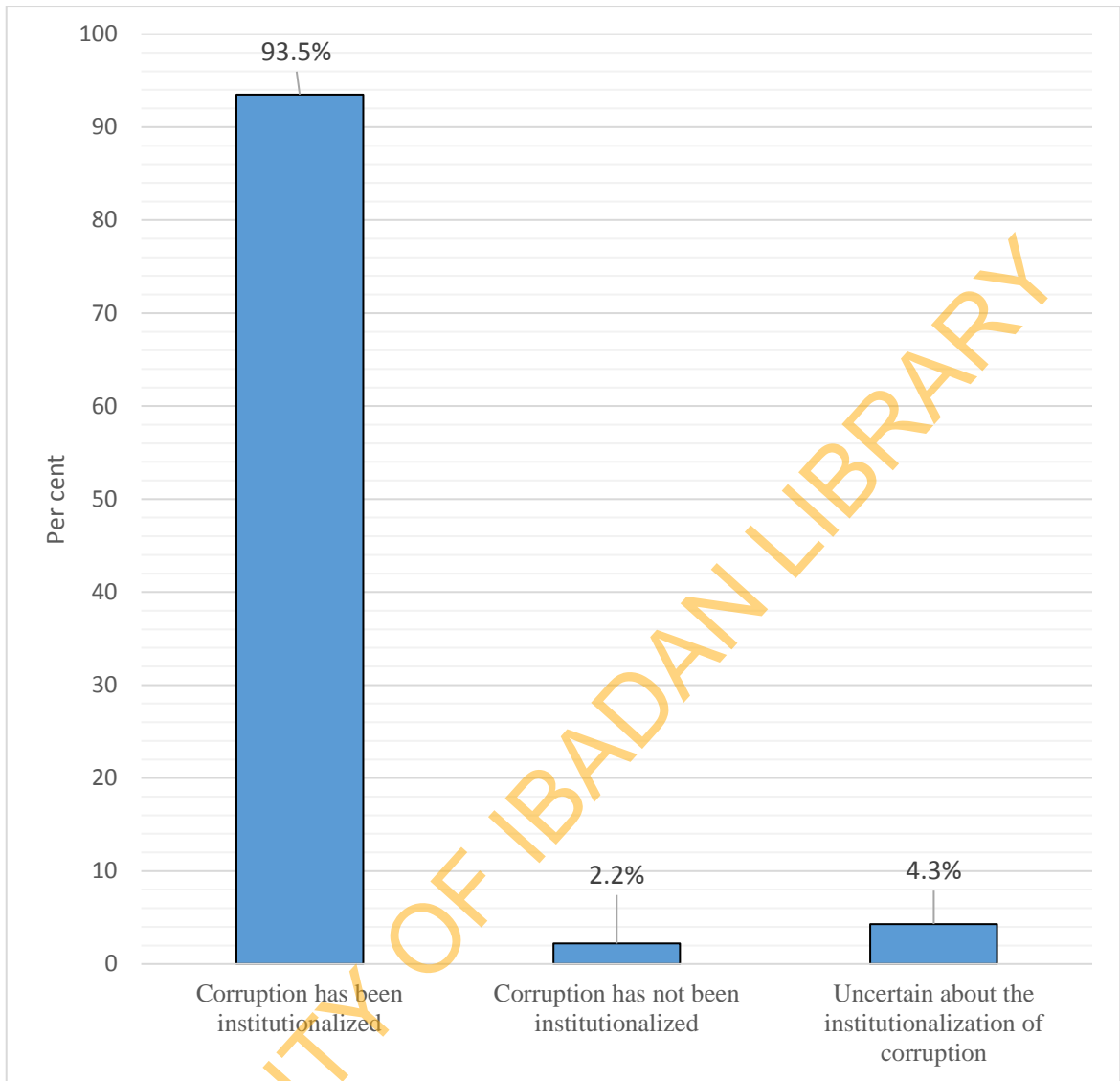


Figure 4.14: Distribution of Respondents by the Opinion that ‘Corruption has been Institutionalised’ in Government Agencies and Parastatals

Respondents were asked whether the payment of fines in lieu of jail term by corrupt authorities encourages or discourages corrupt practices as part of measures to assess how normative gestures impact people's susceptibility to corrupt actions. The findings overview is shown in Figure 4.15. The figure shows that the majority (93.6%) believed that paying fines instead of serving jail time for corrupt officials encouraged corruption, 4.4% were unsure, and 2.0% said that it discouraged corruption.

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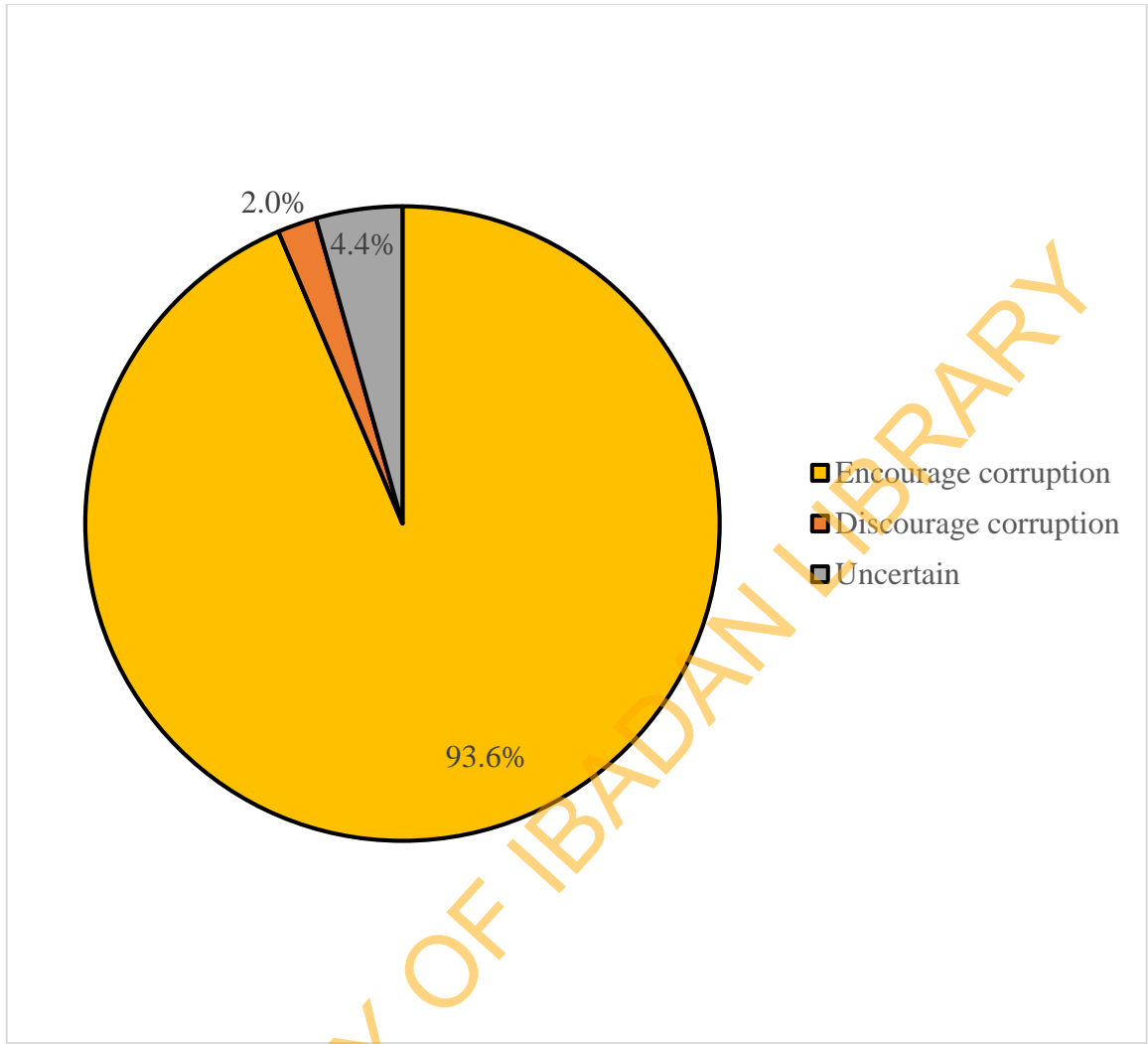


Figure 4.15: Distribution of Respondents by whether the Payment of Fines in Lieu of Jail Term by Corrupt Officials Encourages or Discourages Corrupt Practices

In the view of the varied perceptions of people about corrupt activities/actions, findings from the qualitative aspect of the study revealed that people react differently to corrupt practices and this informs the normative gesture of corruption. For example, as one of the respondents reported when asked, it was noted that there is no special reaction to corruption as it has been normalised with everyone seen as corrupt. Therefore, activities which are against the norms and values of society which can be seen as corrupt are overlooked. There is also the aspect of hearing of this atrocity overtime without seeing proper sanctions placed on perpetrators.

Many questions have been asked regarding the corruption level in Nigeria, and it is observed that corrupt practices are now a norm in the country. Interestingly, most public officers, in one way or the other, must involve themselves in shady dealings in order to get rich. Further to the aforementioned, engaging in such corrupt practices has no limit. If an individual is caught in the act, they would surprisingly be absolved of the crime, which would eventually inspire anyone in the society to divert public funds without being arrested. Therefore, at the end of the day, everyone is comfortable engaging in corrupt practices because nothing serious will befall him or her (**IDI/Male Lecturer/46 years old/Zuba/Gwagwalada/2021**).

From the prism of public-interest-centred definition, people continuously see that there is a reward for corruption and those who would not engage in corrupt practices are considered wicked, especially when the corrupt practice is to help a kinsman. Viewing it in this manner, they reconstruct it in such a way that corruption is not bad. As this respondent states, the only reason why someone would say corruption is bad is if the person is dead. She revealed:

Most well-known issues about corruption are usually linked to public officers diverting public funds for their benefit. Also, using someone's position to abuse a public office is another aspect of corruption that needs to be critically examined because most individuals consider nepotism a normal practice. But, the outcome of this act will result in corrupt practices. For example, a situation where a Managing Director of a company employs a staff who is not qualified for a post but was hired because they hail from the same village. A situation like this will result in improper monitoring of this staff member even when they engage in corrupt practices. If the Managing Director refuses to give the job due to lack of merit, people will condemn the person for doing the right thing. This is because, in this society, nepotism is a general practice, and if an individual does otherwise, they are seen as a bad leader, even though they are doing the right thing (**KII/Female Lawyer/41 years old/Wuse/AMAC/2021**).

So in a particular community, what happens when a person gets successful through corruption is that they are celebrated. People do little in trying to ask where or what the source of income is. Rather there is praise and gladness that they also now have access to a wealthy person. *You will see a government worker or a civil servant going home with a convoy every day, and nobody questions how they got the money. Instead, these people celebrate him and the fact that they know a wealthy person* (IDI/Male Lecturer/45 years old/Nyanya/AMAC/2021).

And because of this, there is also the desire to go into corrupt practices to fulfil the desire to be celebrated by people. The general orientation is however that there is no reaction to corruption as it is seen as normal.

Today, we see people happy about the fact that someone is corrupt. Back in the day, things were different. Nobody would be pleased with the corrupt person and they would not want to identify with the person. However, today, we see people celebrating these criminals. This is another reason why some people delve into corruption. They do it so that others can celebrate them **(KII/Male Lawyer/52 years old/Gwagwalada Centre/Gwagwalada LAC/2021)**.

There has been an institutionalisation of corruption such that there is no caution or sanction on it. There is an "I-don't-care" attitude among the general populace where checks and balances are non-existent. In his opinion: *Regrettably, corruption has been elevated and firmly institutionalised. So no one gets into trouble or faces the wrath of the law. In summary, the public does not care how you make your money* (KII/Male Lawyer/43 years old/Kubwa/Bwari LAC/2021).

One of the respondents estimated that just 10% of the people may have a negative reaction to corruption due to how common it is in society. This is because it has become inherent in the system already and has become a daily routine. As explained:

If you have a population of a hundred people, I think only about one-tenth of them would frown at corrupt acts. It is sad because, these days, when people go out and hustle to survive, corruption must come into play. It has become a daily occurrence and a way of life. People are no longer fazed about the fact that corruption is going on. In fact, they just sit and wait for the opportunity to arise so they can exhibit these corrupt practices. They act without remorse because it has become a norm in

the society (FGD/Journalists/25-45 years/Kubwa/Bwari LAC/2021).

While people understand that there is much corrupt activities going on, the extent of damage is however unknown. This could be one of the reasons why there is less negative reaction towards the act. People who do not even get to participate or enjoy the rewards for corruption grumble and feel denied of the dividends. One respondent narrates a situation where some people refused to vote because they were not given bribes for it, relinquishing their electoral right, as stated below:

It is well-known that corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian economy and polity. The adverse effects on the socio-economics of the nation and the well-being of Nigerians are dangerously alarming. It has become a phenomenon that politicians seeking elective positions engage in voting buying, which is a violation of the electoral laws of the land (KII/Female Lawyer/Staff Quarters Phase I/Gwagwalada LAC/2021).

The high possibility of getting off corrupt cases unpunished is also a factor that encourages people to go into corruption. This respondent gives an example of how letting corrupt people off without appropriate judgment sends a signal that other can also engage in such practices without consequence. The nonchalant attitude towards corruption however did not just begin. Like this respondent states, people got fed-up with trying to get it right, resulting to the lower standard available:

One of the most crucial ways we must tackle the menace of corruption is through adequate sanctioning. Those sanctions should be proportional to the stipulated constitutional laws for economic and financial crimes. With these sanctions in place, the aim of achieving corruption deterrence is achievable (KII/Male Sarki Bwari/62 years old/Bwari/Bwari LAC/2021).

In another light, one of the respondents argued that corrupt activities have made citizens very aggressive and very unhappy. This is said to be the cause of many discrepancies like irresponsibility seen in the society. There is a possibility that these reactions are as a result of the injustice seen in the persecution of corrupt practices which breeds a sense of powerlessness. A perspective shared below:

Several fraudulent activities across the board have portrayed youths as insensitive and unresponsive to critical economic issues. I hope for swift intervention to revive the eroded societal and moral values as well as the lost uprightness in both the public and private sectors of the economy (**KII/Male Esu of Bwari/59 years old/Bwari Central/Bwari LAC/2021**).

Continuous complaints about corrupt activities without sanctions has ensured the normalisation of the act such that people now see it as "Human nature". And since it has become a norm, especially with politicians, little is done in terms of social rebuke for engaging in different corrupt acts. A respondent noted: *Due to this lack of accountability, youths engage in corrupt vices detrimental to their social and mental well-being. Sadly, this has shrouded the vision and mission of youths who are meant to be the leaders of tomorrow* (FGD/Journalists/25-45 years/Kubwa/Bwari LAC/2021).

There are always opinions about corrupt individuals expressed in gossiping and murmurings about the corrupt individual, but since they are not in the same social space, these people can do nothing about it.

Most people no longer celebrate hard work, integrity, or other similar characteristics. Today, what is being celebrated is sudden riches without explanation, money ritualism, embezzlement of public funds, nepotism, and internet fraud. Cyber fraud has become an avenue for Nigerian youths to amass ill-gotten wealth, and they have been encouraged by the society to flaunt the ill-gotten wealth, given its acceptability and indulgence on the part of parents and the society at large (**KII/Male Aguma of Gwagwalada/63 years/Gwagwalada Central/Gwagwalada LAC/2021**).

The foregoing accounts from various participants imply that corruption has permeated nearly every element of human life to the point where those who refrain from it are viewed as deviants by those who engage in it. The consequence is that it will be practically challenging to control the perpetuation of the social vices in all sectors or agencies if the majority of people have accepted it as the norm. This is typical of the sanctions imposed on the culprits in the absence of severe penalties. In fact, since it appears to have become the norm in society, those in positions of authority who are supposed to punish the offenders often collaborate with them in part due to the mutual benefits they stand to get from them (perpetrators). This could partly explain the reason why corruption is not treated seriously

because it is considered to be a common occurrence. More so, it implies that in reality, money transactions are the primary method used to commit corruption. After that, it starts to affect people's life in Abuja and throughout Nigeria. As a result, corruption is a social scourge that permeates every part of the country.

Some other respondents believe that those who have a negative reaction to corruption are those who do not benefit from it. As a respondent noted,, innately, these people are also very interested in getting the proceeds but would not support the act because they don't have the means to act corruptly to access them. A respondent believes that:

The economy is extremely porous that the economic system has collapsed. This is evident as fraudulent activities are encouraged by the majority because they tend to benefit from the proceeds of the crimes leading to decadence in all economic ramifications (KII/Male CISLAC Official/48 years old/Garki/AMAC/2021).

While people react differently to issues of corruption, there are cultural views to their reactions. These views are usually based on the belief that there should be a show of appreciation either in kind or in the form of gift-giving. These form the themes on the cultural viewpoint of how people react to issues of corruption.

4.7.1 Appreciation

Exploring more in-depth how culture affects perceptions of corruption and the elements of cultural values which overlaps with what is today now considered as corrupt, this study explores the norms of appreciation and gift-giving. Different opinions were shared on how appreciation can be shown. The difference between doing what is culturally right and what is corruption seems to be a thin line. Some are of the opinion that appreciation does not necessarily mean giving gifts but could be said in words. In the alternative, appreciation could also be done by giving back to the community which benefits more people than just one individual. But when such appreciation is done by enriching one person's pocket because of an awarded contract, it could easily be termed corruption, as noted below:

In the course of discharging official duties, it is prohibited to accept gifts. It is presumed that this will interfere with the delivery of service in a professional, effective and efficient manner, giving room for

preferential treatment and favouritism **(KII/Female CODE Official/38 years/Nyanya/AMAC/2021)**.

According to a different respondent, it may be challenging for the agencies charged with the task to combat corruption on their own. It was further noted that the corruption scourge cannot be eliminated until all other stakeholders are involved in the fight against it. As he stated:

The fight against corruption, nepotism, and bad governance cannot be done alone by the agencies saddled with the responsibilities of combating these societal ills. The fight must encourage inclusiveness by all if we are determined to win the war against these vices **(KII/Male Agora of Zuba/71 years old/Zuba/Gwagwalada LAC/2021)**.

This respondent believes that everyone should work together to fight corruption rather than just a few individuals who want to pay money as a bribe in exchange for votes. This suggests that people in positions of power, particularly politicians, should not support the continuation of corruption by offering bribes to the electorates in exchange for votes. As he stated:

In this regard, citizens who have the financial capacities are encouraged to help the government in terms of providing some form of basic social amenities to help better the lives of the common people rather than giving them money in exchange for their votes during election **(KII/Male CSJ Official/35 years old/Wuse/AMAC/2021)**.

Within a cultural perspective, appreciation that involves only words and no form of giving could also be unacceptable. In order to give an acceptable appreciation, some are therefore forced into gift-giving. One respondent stated that true appreciation is done by giving, while also agreeing that this is the foundation of corruption. There are also some acceptable amount or threshold that would be considered a worthy appreciation which the receiver would also appreciate. A respondent shared his perspective, thus:

It depends on the individual. Some say verbal appreciation is all they need, and it goes a long way. However, some people think just saying 'thank you' is not enough. If these people proffer a service and are not given a gift as appreciation, i.e. if the recipient of the service fails to 'perform' they call the him/her greedy person for not coming with something, or playing ball no matter how little. In my opinion, giving gifts is a valid way of showing appreciation **(IDI/Male Politician/45 years old/Kubwa/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

From this respondent's point of view, corruption starts because many individuals do not want to believe that one may truly appreciate another person without providing them with money or other forms of payment. As he explained: *The African man does not believe that you have genuinely appreciated him until you have given him something and that giving of something is the foundation of corruption* (KII/Male Judge/58 years/Federal High Court/Wuse/AMAC/2021).

Contrary to the view of the above participant, a respondent who shared this opinion also said that while some individuals may consider it acceptable to appreciate someone for their efforts with a gift of one or two thousand naira, the recipient might see it as a bribe. As he stated:

Some people have it in mind to appreciate someone's efforts with one or two thousand Naira. But, once they do, the recipient looks down on them. I believe that if you want to appreciate someone, just do it regardless of the amount, but if they want you to bribe them, they should say so. The concept of brown envelope is now rampant that people expect to receive brown envelope or kola any time they render services to others which is actually their official tasks (KII/Male **Agora of Zuba/71 years old/Zuba/Gwagwalada LAC/2021**).

Normally, appreciation is often based on personal interest and should be done willingly for it is not to be considered as corruption. Like another respondent explains, appreciation for a good job done without being requested cannot be classified as corruption. A respondent believes that: *It depends on the way I show appreciation. What I am obliged to do as a Christian is the paying of my tithes, the giving of offering, right? So, every other thing I do outside of that, I might be doing for my interest* (KII/Male PWYPC Official/43 years old/Garki/AMAC/2021).

One of the respondents, who was also a male driver, supported the above point of view by stating that the greatest moment to show appreciation to a driver for safe driving or arriving at the destination on time is just after the trip has ended. In his submission:

As a driver, if a passenger wants to appreciate me for driving safely or getting to the destination on time, they should do it immediately after the journey ends. That is the best time to appreciate me. I do not consider it to be corruption because you gave it to me at that exact

moment for my excellent service (**IDI/Male Commercial driver/motorcyclist/30 years old/Zuba/Gwagwalada LAC/2021**).

There are also cases or instances in which people innocently accept a gift as a form of appreciation, or even a job position as appreciation. Those who do this might not however be corrupt because such individuals may be qualified but also to ensure that they are able to carry out their corrupt practices through such avenue as the occupant of that seat owes them thanks for getting there. A respondent disclosed:

Talking about appreciation, some people actually go blindly into this. They tell you, 'if you want this position, come and fill this office,' but you may not know what you are getting into. Regardless, you appreciate the gift and realise that the person who put you in this position is a high-ranking official. You also see people appreciating this high-ranking official for their appointments without knowing what is in store for them. In the end, this official only places people in these positions so they can get something from them as appreciation in the future (**IDI/Male Politician/45 years old/Kubwa/Bwari LAC/2021**).

With the above instances of appreciation, it appears that there are various viewpoints on expressing appreciation in regard to corruption. Others perceive appreciation as a kind of bribery, while some see it as a way to show gratitude for what has been done. In reality, regardless of the form of appreciation, it is indeed crucial to consider the timing and personality of such an appreciation before deciding whether or not this is a corrupt practice. This is by implication suggesting that the timeliness of expressing gratitude for a work well done by a person is strongly correlated with cultural perspectives on corruption, as seen diagrammatically. While it is possible for someone to interpret such activity as corruption or stealing, others can regard it as a traditional manner of showing one's appreciation for an act.

4.7.2 Gift-giving

Gift giving is a common trend that exists not just within corporations and organisations but in normal human relationships as well. It is therefore said to be a normal part of human exchange until such gifts are given with a conception and expectation of getting something in return, as a respondent disclosed:

Gift-giving is not a bad idea, but it can worsen and lead to corrupt practice if gift-giving is expected for a particular favour. In the society, most individuals now give gifts with the expectation of something in return. It could be either in kind or through monetary appreciation, which is the foundation of corrupt practices for public officers. For example, an individual visiting any public officer for service must pay a certain amount of money without being asked before they can gain access to the authority in charge. In view of my previous statement, the mentality of individuals in the society needs to be re-socialised toward gifts giving **(KII/Male/Judge/55 years/High Court/Bwari Central/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

Gifts given freely could also be intercepted such that it is now being used to achieve a particular purpose. A respondent gives an example of the situation with palliatives meant to be distributed to people during the coronavirus lockdown which some politicians then withheld to gift people close to election period. This has changed the motive of the gift and is expected to influence how people vote. Here are the thoughts of a respondent:

During the Covid pandemic, we saw that billionaires donated palliatives to be given to the people, but we also noticed that politicians just kept everything in warehouses. People had to go there and break into these warehouses to get what they wanted. These politicians waiting until it is suitable to use these palliatives to achieve their goals is corrupt. The ulterior motive for doing that becomes corruption **(KII/Male BudgIT Official33 years/Garki/AMAC/2021)**.

Despite the fact that not every gift is given to a person who is regarded as corrupt, the timing of the gift-giving should also be taken into account before corruption is labelled. This suggests that everyone needs to be careful when giving a gift to a superior or subordinate so that the recipient doesn't attach any sentiment that is not even correct. Using gifts as bribes and being considered corrupt is depicted in a word cloud in Figure 4.16. The figure shows that a gift could be given, but that it depends on the timing and position the recipient has to determine if the action is corrupt or not.



Figure 4.16: A Word Cloud Showing the Key Concepts Used by People in Appreciating but are Forms of Corrupt Practices
Source: Field Survey (2021)

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In such a scenario, what makes the difference is the timing of which the gift is given and the motive of giving it. Gifts can be given and received at any time, but when it is targeted with a corrupt motive toward receiving a favour, then it can be considered as corrupt, as this respondent stated:

Gift-giving is not about the timing. It is the motive behind giving it that matters. So, I think it is bad to give a gift to someone in order for them to do something wrong for you. For example, in construction, a field where this happens a lot, you see people pleading for jobs. They might find someone to give them a job and approve it, but to get that approval, they need to give a gift. When they offer that gift to get approval, and the person accepts it, then corruption has taken place **(IDI/Male Contractor/44 years old/Dutse Alhaji/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

In contrast to the previous account of how gifts can be used to entice someone to commit corruption, another male respondent's account described how mind-set is one of the major factors that determine corruption, provided that the gifts are not given in place of something the recipient is expected to do. He revealed:

It is all about mind-set. It depends on your reason for giving a gift that determines what you mean. Giving me a gift when you need something from me shows that you only need my help, and in some cases, with something corrupt. However, giving me a gift without needing anything shows me that you are just being kind. Therefore, gift-giving all depends on the mind-set of the giver **(KII/Male CSJ Official/35 years old/Wuse/AMAC/2021)**.

This respondent agreed with the above respondents in claiming that giving gifts is inborn and cannot be viewed as corrupt. The gift being offered and the giver's mind-set, she said, will both play a significant role in assessing whether the act is corrupt or not. She stated: *I do not think gift-giving is always an act of corruption because gift-giving is inborn. It comes from the mind and the heart. It depends on the motive behind the act of gift-giving* **(KII/Female SERA Official/29 years old/Garki/AMAC/2021)**.

Reciprocity, a common standard which can be established in almost every culture, is the great driver for gift exchanges. The primary function of a bribe however is to trigger a return or at minimum, a feeling of obligation to repay favors on the receiver side. A bribe makes the person who has accepted it indebtedness and put him or her under pressure to reciprocate with the expected action or inaction. It means that the aim to induce or influence the service

provider depends on the same reasons why the offerer is making the gift to the provider. In order to understand corruption, it is crucial to understand the primary component that determines gift offers even by those that fall outside the scope of the social environment.

4.8 The Role of the Media in the Social Construction of Corruption

The roles of the media in shaping the social construction of corruption cannot be over-emphasised within the society. In order to explore these roles, respondents were first asked their sources of information about corrupt practices. Table 4.11 presents the distribution of respondents by sources of information about corrupt practices. The highest proportion of cases the respondents indicated that they sourced information about corrupt practices was the social media (17.2%), which was closely followed by those who sourced such information from the newspapers (15.5%) and actual experience of the practice (10.0%).

The Table further shows that they also sourced information about corrupt practices from the television (9.3%), civil society organisation (8.9%), friends/peers (7.5%), schools (7.5%), political meetings (5.1%), traditional leaders/rulers (5.0%), office and markets (3.5%), family members (3.1%), religious leaders/teachings (3.0%), radio (2.1%), community meetings (1.3%), politicians (0.8%) among others (0.3%). However, while the cases from the social media seems to be the highest proportion, it should be noted here that these reports are in multiple responses, wherein respondents sourced information from several media on different corrupt practices. In this regard, these sources are intertwined and largely dependent on the possession of various gadgets of information available for individuals.

Table 4.11: Distribution of Respondents by Sources of Information about Corrupt Practices (Multiple Responses)

S/N	Media source	Responses	
		Frequency/case	Percent
1.	Social media	820	17.2
2.	Newspapers	738	15.5
3.	Actual experience of the practice	478	10.0
4.	Television	442	9.3
5.	Civil Society Organisation (CSO)	425	8.9
6.	Friends/peers	356	7.5
7.	Schools	356	7.5
8.	Political meetings	245	5.1
9.	Traditional leaders/rulers	237	5.0
10.	Office/markets/workshop/business space/economic settings	168	3.5
11.	Family members	149	3.1
12.	Religious leaders/teachings/settings	145	3.0
13.	Radio	99	2.1
14.	Community meetings	61	1.3
15.	Politicians	40	0.8
16.	Others	14	0.3
**	Total number of cases	4773	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2021)

The medium through which information about corrupt practices is received was ascertained. Figure 4.18 revealed that radio (34.7%) has the highest proportion of respondents, followed by the social media (25.7%), television (23.6%), newspaper (4.2%), others (2.8%), politicians (2.1%), actual experience of the practice (2.1%), office/markets/workshop/business, etc. (2.1%), community meetings (1.4%), friends/peers (0.7%) and schools (0.7%). This result implies that the radio has the widest coverage of respondents relative to the reportage of corrupt practices compared to other media of information.

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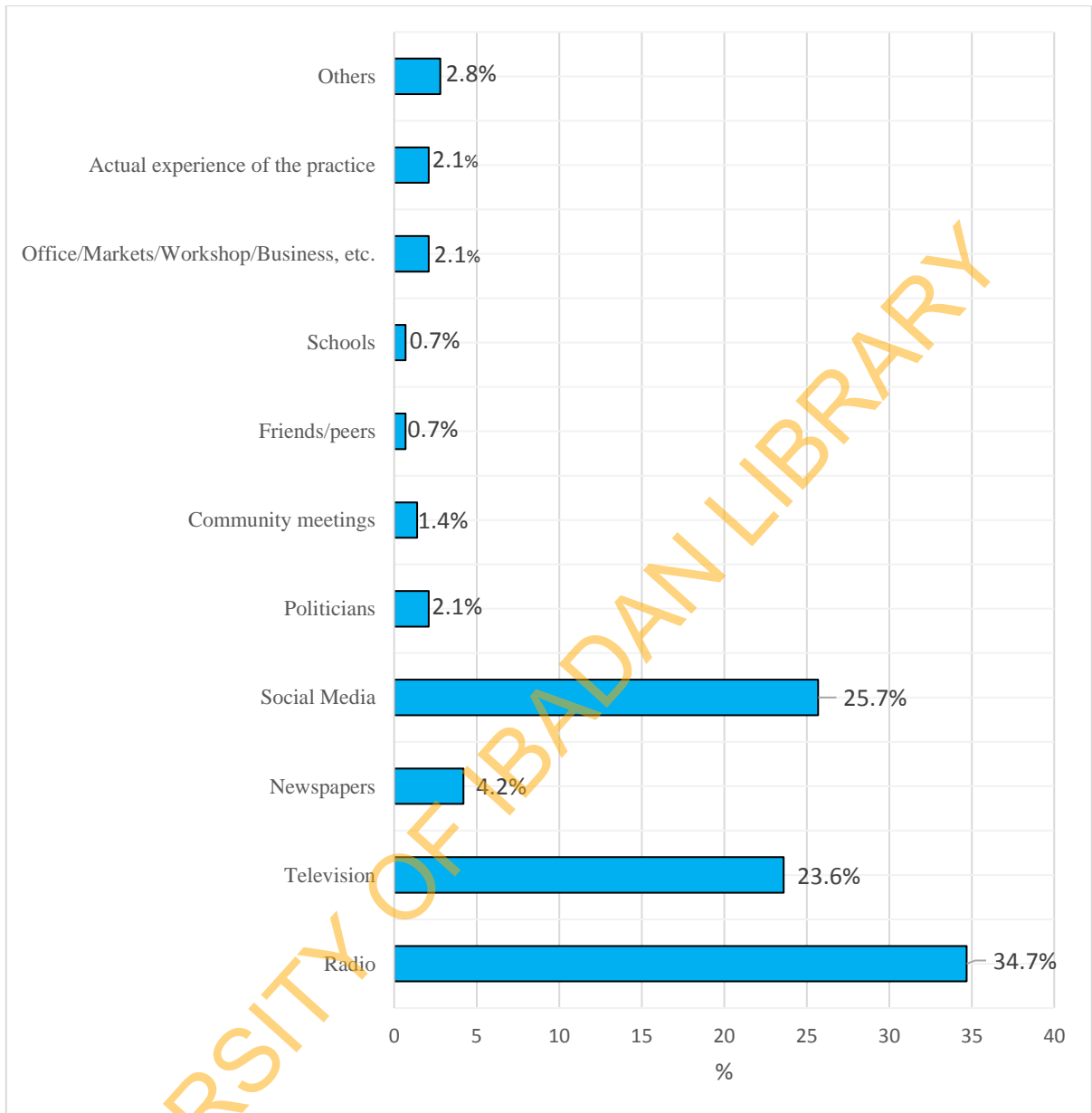


Figure 4.17: Distribution of Respondents by Medium of Getting Information about Corrupt Practices

The extent to which the information received from the media about corrupt practices can be trusted was investigated. Figure 4.19 displays the distribution of respondents by the extent to which information received from the media about corrupt practices can be trusted. It was revealed that the majority of the respondents pointed out that the information received from the media about corrupt practices can be trusted to a large extent (65.6%), followed by those who signified that it can be trusted to a great extent (24.6%) and to a low extent (7.9%). While a high proportion of respondents agreed that the information from the various media about corrupt practices can be trusted to some extent. 1.9% of them still indicated that they did not trust the sources of such information at all.

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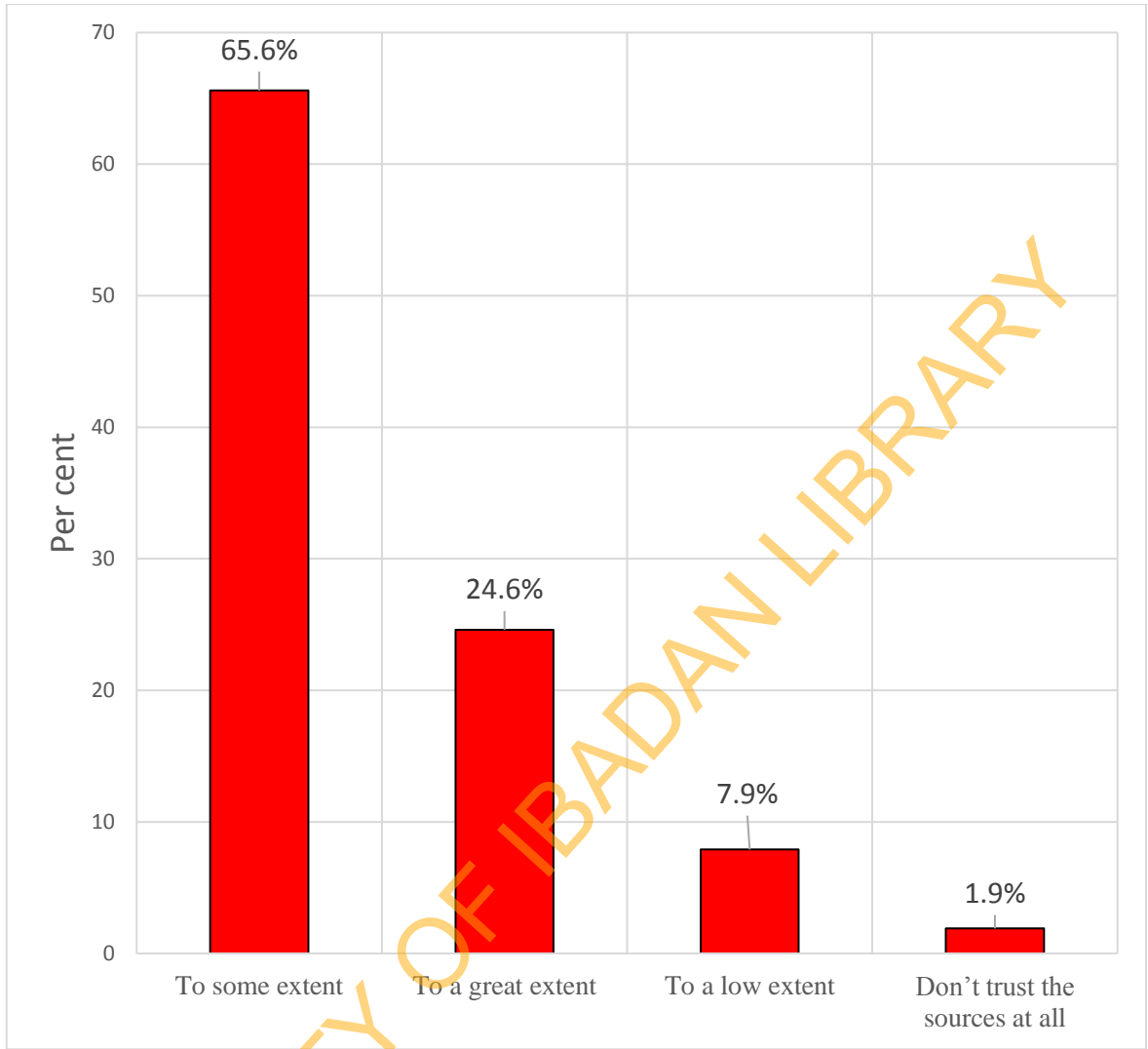


Figure 4.18: Distribution of Respondents by the Extent to which Information Received from the Media about Corrupt Practices can be Trusted

Having documented the extent to which information received from the media about corrupt practices can be trusted, it is also essential that what the respondents think about media reportage of corruption cases and allegations is examined. Thus, when respondents were asked what they actually think about media reportage of corruption cases and allegations, Figure 4.20 shows the distribution of respondents by what they think about media reportage of corruption cases and allegations. More than half of the respondents reported that the media is sympathetic to the actors (59.4%), 24.1% of them say the media condemns corrupt actions, and 17.5% of the respondent said the media appears to be indifferent. It then means that the majority of the respondents see media reportage of corruption cases and allegations as sympathetic to the actors thereby defending and covering up rather than exposing corruption.

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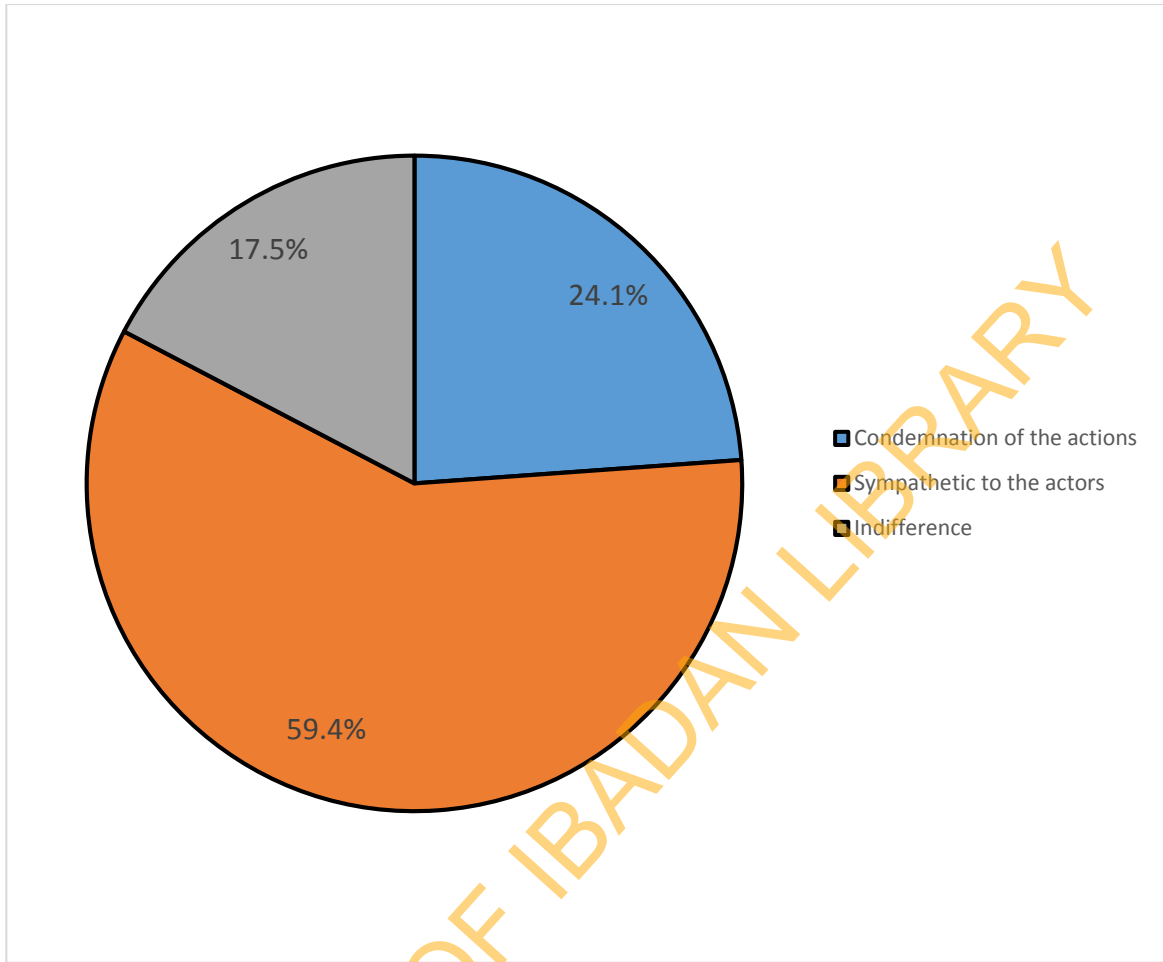


Figure 4.19: Distribution by what Respondents Think about Media Reportage of Corruption Cases and Allegations

Respondents' perception about media report cases of corrupt officials was explored in this study through the lens of what comes to their minds when the media report cases of corrupt officials. Figure 4.21 reports the results that the highest proportion of the respondents was uncertain (55.4%) about what comes to mind, but 24.3% of them indicated that what comes to mind is true information, 17.6% signified that it is false information and 2.8% of the respondents reported that they were unbiased information.

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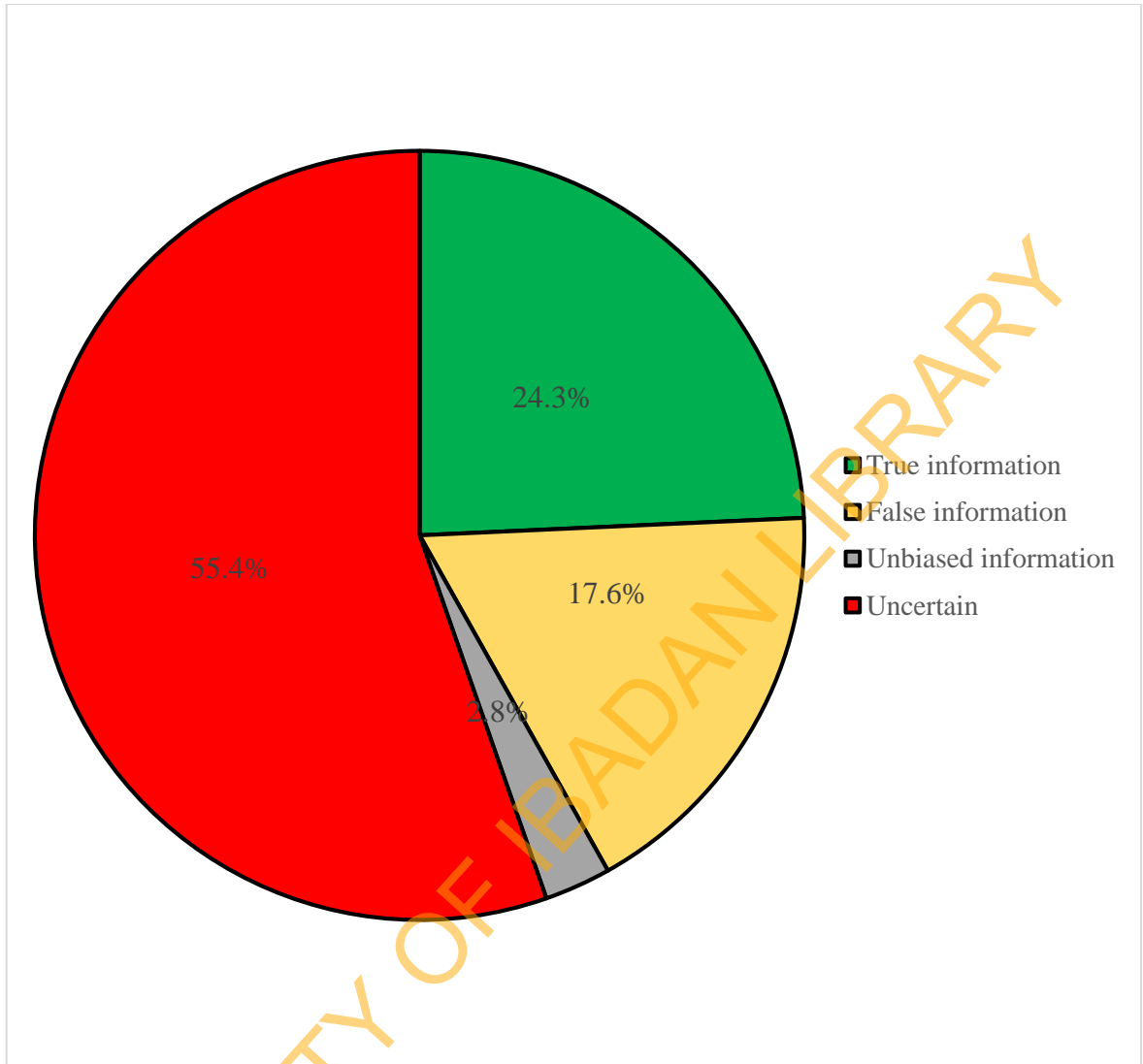


Figure 4.20: Distribution by what Comes to Respondents' Mind when the Media Report Cases of Corrupt Officials

From the qualitative responses, it was found that although the media report cases of corruption, the magnitude of the offence were not always taken as serious. They rather cover-up, condemn and sympathise. For example, some media usually report corruption as nothing to worry about such that the magnitude of the offence or crime is watered down. In the illustrations of this respondent, it was explained that:

In Nigeria, one person, for example, a Governor or Senator, would embezzle fifty billion Naira and regard it as a small sum. You hear statements like, 'one thousand pounds and they are protesting, why?' The offenders influence certain media agencies and make them present these acts of corruption in a passable way **(KII/Male PWYPC Official/43 years old/Garki/AMAC/2021)**

The media is accused of sugar-coating reports on corruption cases. Although they cannot outrightly judge a person as guilty who hasn't been tried by the court. However, there is still the opinion that they are easily manipulated to report cases in favour of the accused. Because some of this media houses are owned by the government, they can also be easily politicised favouring those who belong to their camp. Private media houses who might try to report the exact cases face the possibility of sanctions which is 'bad for businesses. Precisely, it was narrated that:

They sugar-coat it; they do not report it properly. Sometimes, they politicise it. The government or politicians own the mainstream media in this country, so they determine how they present those things. The private-owned media houses that try to be as truthful as possible end up being sanctioned. In the end, they do not say it like it is. Even with all the facts about corruption and stealing out in the open, they say 'alleged.' Using that term means they are unsure, but the facts make us sure. Therefore, it is safe to accuse the media of being manipulated **(KII/Male CISLAC Official/48 years old/Garki/AMAC/2021).**

Based on these narratives, it is inferred that there are actions that should be classified as corrupt in the social environment, but the information made public by the media will be used to recreate or re-construct corruption in a way that prevents the general public from considering the act to be serious or illegal. This depicts that while the media disseminates information about persons who participate in corrupt activities, many of the messages are portrayed in a way that the social context will dismiss them as unimportant.

Sometimes the media houses are seen shying away from reporting the evils done by those occupying higher positions in the political environment because they want to protect themselves and their family. They therefore report petty crimes in the news while major corruption acts go unreported. The fact that journalists take this route also reveals the lack of independence of the press and the ways power play ensures the continuity of corruption. So if all that is known about corruption is from the media, then not reporting grand corruption will hide the real situation as the popular African saying goes ‘if an *iroko* tree falls in the forest and it is not reported, it means the *iroko* tree has not fallen’. In the expression of this respondent, it was highlighted that:

They do not publish all the news regarding corruption and misappropriation of public funds. The media often pick out the ones to disseminate, especially the information that deals with influential individuals. They select what to broadcast because these people are ‘sacred.’ Some news items involving the high and mighty could come with a lot of litigation and award of damages by the court. Interestingly, crime news involving the downtrodden is reported with ferocity and even over-investigation such that nothing is hidden **(KII/Male PWYPC Official/43 years old/Garki/AMAC/2021)**.

Giving an example of cases where media houses are threatened to comply with a form of reportage that pleases the government, one of the respondents narrates an incidence of an interview held by Channels TV. The interviewee on the show began to reveal government secrets and was receiving several calls right there to keep quiet. The TV station also received a directive to shut-down their operation with immediate effects. According to the respondent:

I remember an issue with Channels TV where the presenter kept asking the interviewee questions, and the man started revealing things about the government. Suddenly, his phone started ringing, but he did not pick up. After that, he said he was willing to die for speaking the truth. Eventually, he was arrested, and Channels TV was ordered to shut down its entire operation. So, there is so much going on that we know nothing about. However, nobody wants to go out of business, so you have to live with such conditions **(KII/Male BudgIT Official33 years/Garki/AMAC/2021)**.

This sanctioning of media houses is done by the National Broadcasting commission which ought to safeguard the tenets of the profession. But they also bow to the political powers and sanction media houses even for revealing the truth. On the flipside, because they also

have to make money, the same people that this media outfits have condemned at one time or the other, they also assist during campaigns for election. As she explained:

As soon as any media house features someone who can expose corruption, the next thing is that they are sanctioned, and the sanction comes from the top, National Broadcasting Commission. Suppose the National Broadcasting Commission can come out to sanction a media house for allowing somebody to voice out the ills happening in the society. In that case, you should understand that these media houses often do not portray the truth out of fear of being sanctioned. Furthermore, these houses are not too clean regarding political campaigns. During these periods, media houses collect tremendous money to create and broadcast campaign jingles. These media houses do not question the source of the money; instead, they go on to create campaigns in favour of the politicians. So, at the end of the day, you find out that they are also adulterated and are on both sides **(KII/Female Lawyer/45 years old/Bwari Central/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

There are also cases of the media under-reporting events to side with the government especially in relation to security issues. This is seen as an aspect of corruption in media houses where their concern is looking good to the government instead of providing the truth of situations to the public. In his statement:

There was once a topic of discussion on Channel TV in which the presenter asked a guest a question. The guest revealed some vital information about the government. Immediately, his telephone rang, but he did not pick up, stating that he was willing to die for the truth. The guest was arrested, and Channel TV was ordered to shut down its operations. There is more going on behind the scene of governance and news reportage than we know, but nobody is willing to go out of business for the truth. Instead, these media houses find ways to keep the government happy and the public uninformed **(KII/Male Cislac Official/48 years old/Garki/AMAC/2021)**.

It is perceived that in not performing the expected role of presenting truth to the citizens of Nigeria, journalism in Nigeria is failing. On a part, there is the fault of the journalists themselves not appropriately investigating stories before reporting them. On the other part, when they finally make their findings, they cover it up instead of exposing the truth. As stated:

For instance, AIT features anyone willing to expose corruption, but the National Broadcasting Commission sanctions them for allowing their

outlet to be used to tell the ills in the society. The fear of this kind of sanction restricts the media from going all out to report and expose social ills. In addition, the media outlets are contaminated because when it comes to election campaigns, the politicians use them for their jingles, paying them huge sums of money; the source of such funds may be questionable, yet the media as beneficiary, in this sense, do not care to ask questions. It can be concluded that the press is stuck between promoting good governance for the greater good of the populace and remaining in business **(KII/Male PWYPC Official/43 years old/Garki/AMAC/2021)**.

It was also stated in the reports compiled from the FGD that there is no reliable reporting of the corruption problems in Nigeria. The reason is that those in power use the media to spread propaganda. Citing the example of Covid-19 deaths recorded, it was shared in their discussion that:

There is no accurate reportage of situations in the country, especially when it has to do with security. This is because most media outlets dance to the whims and caprices of the government. So, we continue to experience corruption. For instance, in a situation where fifty people died as a result of the insurgency and the media reported that ten people died or an unascertained number died. Again, during the outbreak of Covid-19, some countries brought everything to the forefront through the media, but in Nigeria, the press only churned out figures without verifiable evidence **(FGD/EFCC/ICPC2/25-50 years/Garki/AMAC/2021)**.

There have also been instances where the media provides encoded information to protect the names of powerful people. In other cases, the media practitioners call each other out (having a kind of battle) over the reporting of a particular case because of their political affiliations. In his words:

They always encode information in order to save face and protect the identity of powerful individuals. When you go on media platforms, they tell you not to mention names or parties for security reasons, but there is more to that than meets the eyes. If you dig deeper, you will find these media houses support one particular political party or the other. In most cases, you find media houses smearing each other due to their conflicting political associations **(KII/Male CISLAC Official/48 years old/Garki/AMAC/2021)**.

They also sometimes choose what to report based on how gainful it will be for them as an organisation. So, with the right amount of money, what comes out as news can be controlled. Precisely;

Journalism is failing in Nigeria as people no longer seek the truth. Also, journalists are unwilling to publish reports relating to officials in power because the story will be swept under the carpet. Sometimes, media practitioners are afraid or too lazy to expose corrupt individuals **(IDI/Female Civil Servant/50 years old/Wuse/AMAC/2021)**.

Many acts of corruption could not be considered significant or harmful to the development of the nation since the government and some powerful people control the media. As a result of the media's hijacking of its powers to report the reality on corrupt behaviours, its role as the watchdog of society has been skewed. The consequence is that the activities previously regarded as corrupt may not be corrupt to a member of the public to the extent that the matter is handled in accordance with legal requirements to function as a deterrent to other intending actors of corruption.

Every media house has its own personal interest and this means that its reporting of corruption cases would be from the perspective of the editorial board. This means while one sees a media house or social media handle condemning a criminal, one may see another media refuting existing evidence on such case. This lack of consensus on what is the truth contributes to the continuity of corrupt practices. In the explanation of this respondent, it was stated that:

Here in Nigeria, every media house reports corruption based on personal interest, whether on social media or the internet. When an anti-crime agency arrests a particular criminal, you see media houses condemn the criminal. Still, simultaneously, you see another media outfit condemning the arrest, encouraging others to continue. For instance, some media outlets supported the government in the arrest of El-Zakzaky, while other media outfits said the government did not follow the rule of law. The same scenario played out during the case of Sunday Igboho and Mazi Nnamdi Kanu **(KII/Female CODE Official/38 years/Nyanya/AMAC/2021)**.

The same way the media condemns people without a court judgment, they also appear to show sympathy to people whose cases are glaring that they are corrupt. In such cases like that of former Petroleum Minister, Diezani, people see the media trying to awaken the sympathy of citizens by revealing the sorry state of her health. A respondent observed:

They released a picture of the woman with no hair, exaggerating her condition like she would die the next day. They insinuated that since cancer has eaten her up, there is no need to persecute her for her actions.

After watching their news segment or reading their article, you feel sorry for her. So, if you see in the news that the case between EFCC and Diezani is ongoing, you start to consider it devilish. After the article on Diezani was released, nobody talked about her despite the amount of money involved. In reality, the public perception of certain acts and allegations is greatly influenced by the media and how it presents information (KII/Male CSJ Official/35 years old/Wuse/AMAC/2021).

The examples provided by the participants above imply that rather than fulfilling its role independently, the media has become dependent on the whims and caprices of the wealthy and influential members of society. Such attachment has the implication that it leads to the criticism and compassion of individuals who are responsible for corrupt activities. In actuality, the media's ability to persuade the public to condemn the case while sympathising with the accused has resulted in their pardon, which has flipped the needed justice that should be meted out on the offenders.

4.9 Power Relations and Corrupt Practices

This section examined the description of how power relations affect corrupt practices. In order to achieve this, specific scenarios were used to explore how power relations affect corrupt practices. Table 4.12 presents the distribution of respondents by the description of how power relations affect corrupt practices using specific scenarios. The first scenario captures a question like: "Do you think power such as the powers of a traffic police officer to arrest and detain a motorist affect corrupt behaviour and willingness to submit to demand for bribe by the motorists?" The majority of the respondents (85.1%) subscribed to the view that it will compared to only a few respondents who did not agree (4.9%).

In the second scenario, respondents were asked: "Do you think it would be possible for people on the same power relations to extort bribe from their fellows?" The Table revealed that more than half of the respondents did not agree that it would be possible for people on the same power relations to extort bribe from their fellows (61.6%), while 38.4% of them agreed that they do.

Table 4.12: Distribution of Respondents by the Description of how Power Relations affect Corrupt Practices Using Specific Scenarios

S/N	Opinions on how power relations affect corrupt practices	Response categories		
		Affect power relations (%)	Do not affect power relations (%)	Not Sure, whether it affects power relations or not (%)
a.	The powers of a Traffic Police Officer to arrest and detain a motorist affect corrupt behaviour and willingness to submit to demand for bribe by the motorists	1236 (85.1)	64 (4.9)	-
b.	Possibility for people on the same power relations to extort bribe from their fellows	499 (38.4)	801 (61.6)	-
c.	Possibility for a motorist to extort bribe from a policeman or any other person in a higher power relation with him	148 (11.4)	931 (71.6)	221 (17.0)

Source: Field Survey (2021)

NB: Figures in parenthesis are in %

The third scenario put forward the question: “Do you think it is possible for a motorist to extort bribe from a policeman or any other person in a higher power relation with him?” The result shows that over two-third of the respondents disagreed that a motorist would extort bribe from a policeman or any other person in a higher power relation with him (71.6%), but 11.4% of the respondents agreed, while 17.0% of them were not sure whether or not it affects.

Still on power relations, Figure 4.22 displays the results on who among two people on an equal power relationship respondents think is more likely to give bribe or be made to pay bribe. More than half of the respondents (61.9%) signified that a person in lower power status is more likely to give bribe or be made to pay bribe compared to those who indicated that it would be person in higher power (18.5%) and those who said it depends (19.5%) on the situation.

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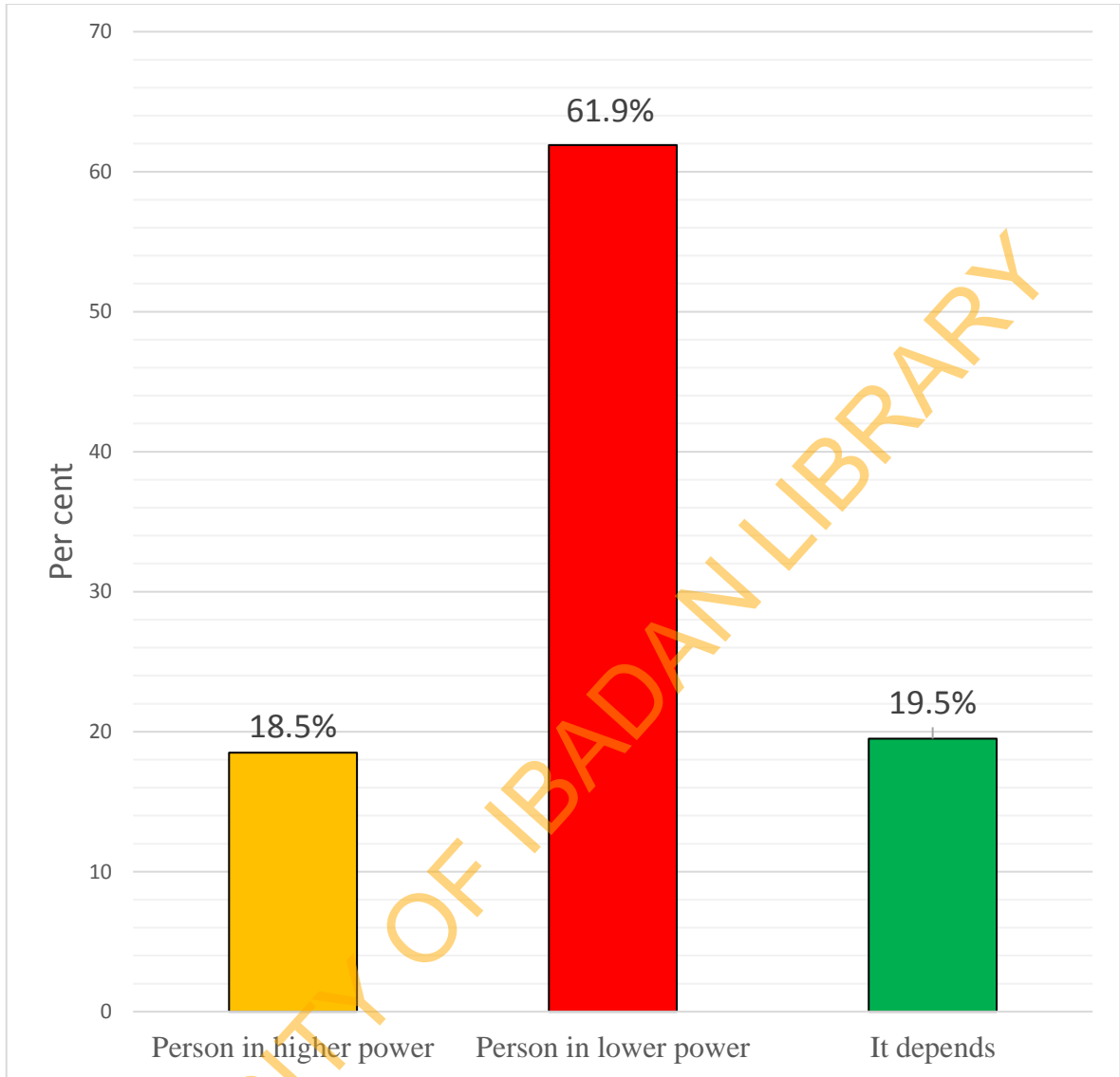


Figure 4.21: Distribution by who among Two People on an Unequal Power Relationship Respondents Think is more likely to Give Bribe or be Made to Pay Bribe

Conversely, those who frame actions and activities as corrupt practices were examined in this section. Figure 4.23 presents the results with the highest proportion of the respondents (34.7%) indicating the law of the land, followed by the ruling class (33.4%), the high and mighty in society (19.2%), the culture (2.5%) among others were responsible for framing actions and activities as corrupt practices.

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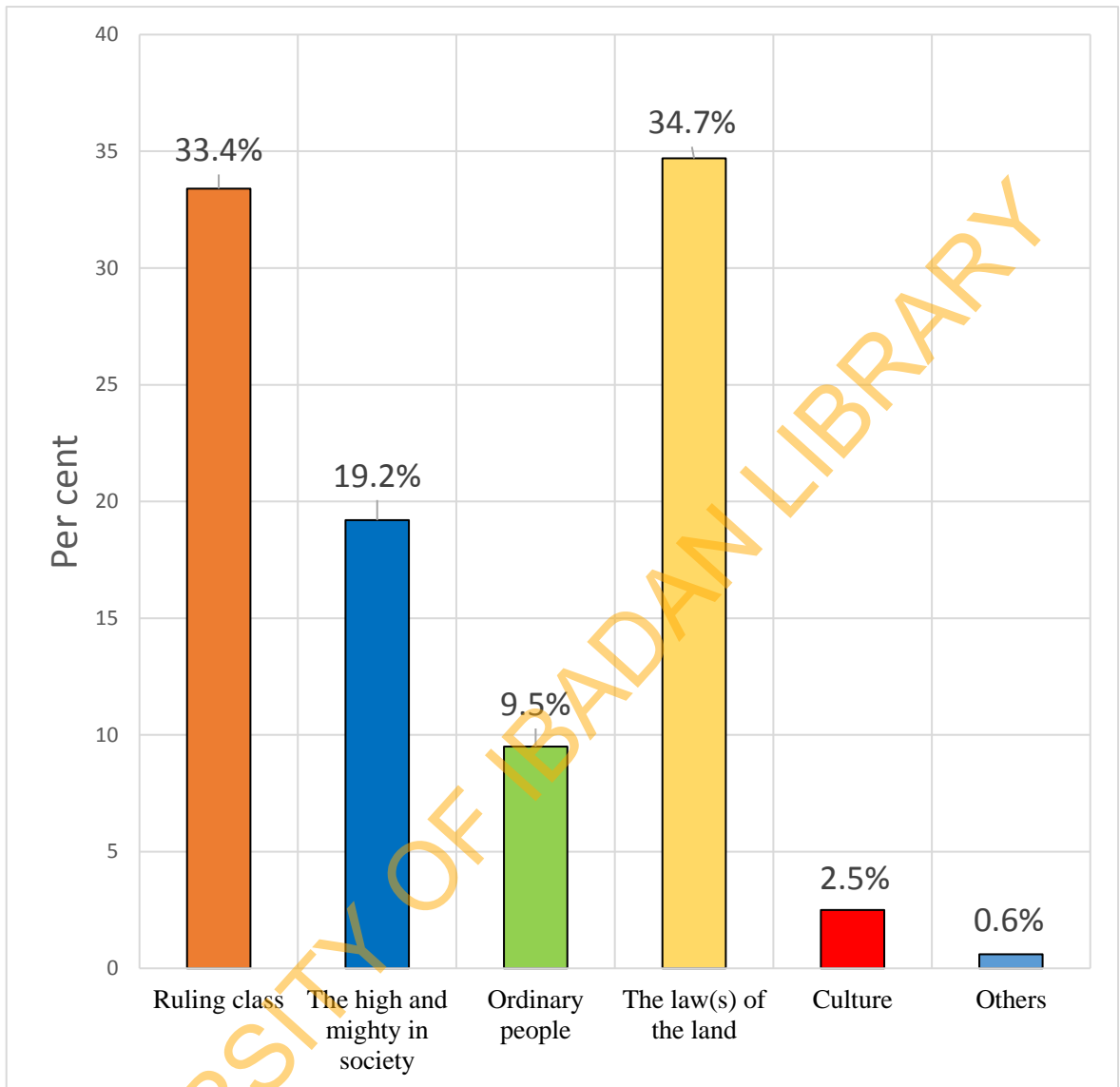


Figure 4.22: Distribution by who Frame Actions/Activities as Corrupt Practices

Respondents were also asked whether actors see actions and activities framed as corrupt behaviour in the same way as those who describe them as such. Figure 4.24 displays the results and the majority did not agree (66.7%) that those actions and activities framed as corrupt behaviour are seen in the same way as those who describe them as such. On the other hand, while 5.6% of the respondents were not sure whether actors see actions/activities framed as corrupt behaviour in the same way as those who describe them as such, more than one in every four (27.8%) respondents were strongly in agreement with actors seeing actions/activities framed as corrupt behaviour in the same way as those who described them as such.

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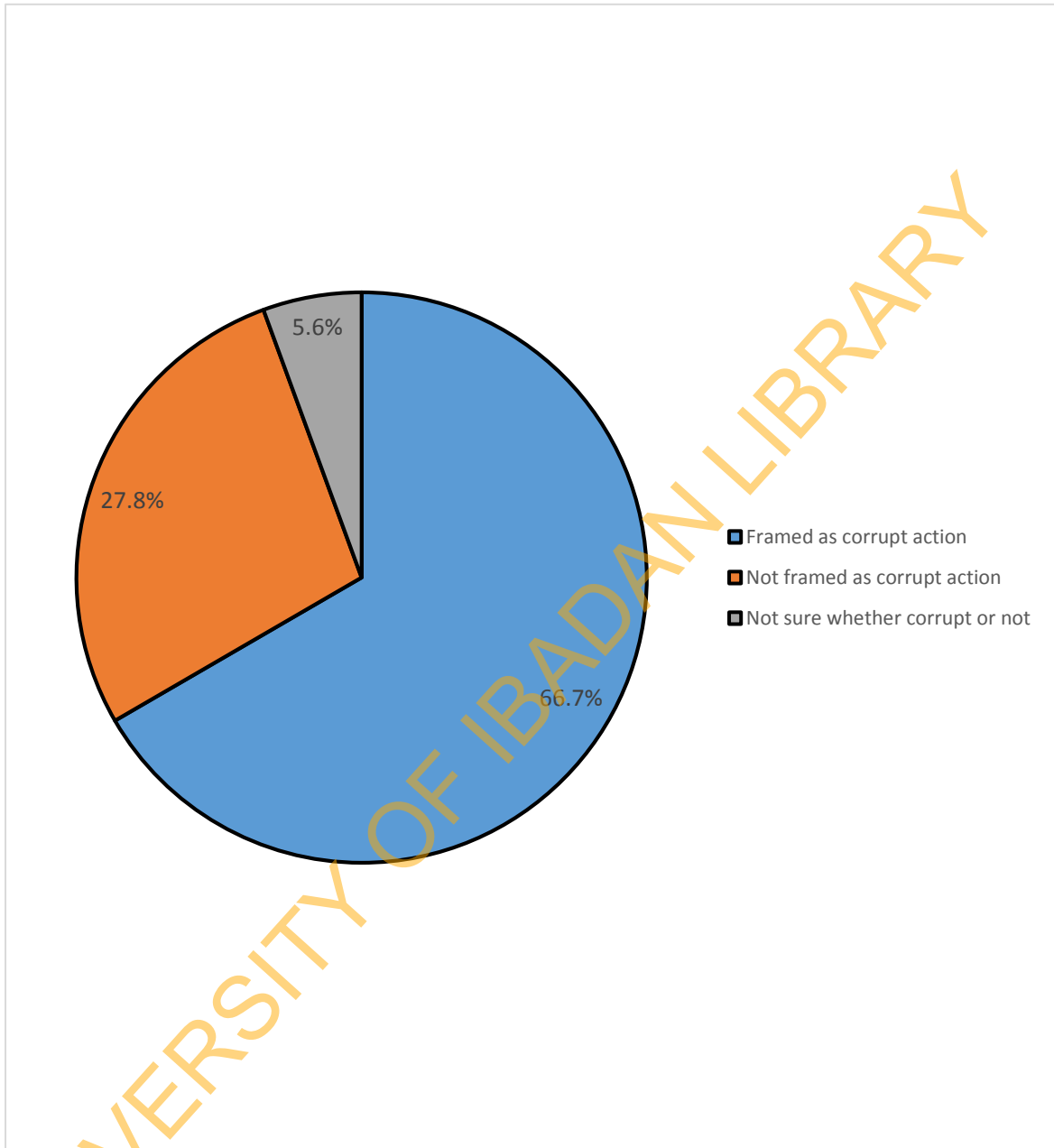


Figure 4.23: Distribution by whether actors see Actions/Activities Framed as Corrupt Behaviour in the same way as those who Describe them as such

It is suggested that the political sector and political power is more potent than economic power in corroborating examples of power relations and corruption from the qualitative data. This respondent asserts that the political sphere is in charge of determining how the economy functions. Those who have political power are therefore more prone to be corrupt in trying to access economic power. In his statement:

People put other people in the corridors of power because of corruption. If illicit sums were not gotten from these positions, the country would be untainted, and the economy prosperous. Keep in mind that politics drive the economy, and not the other way around. But, these people prioritise money over good politicking, which leads to corruption. So, it is safe to say that those with political power are more likely to be corrupt as they quest for economic power **(IDI/Male Lecturer/46 years old/Wuse/AMAC/2021)**.

For example, a sitting president can be taken to court on the grounds of election or issues related to certificate, especially when the tenure is just starting. However, he has immunity against offences such as embezzlement which emboldens them to freely engage in corrupt practices if they so wish. As she describes:

Due to constitutional immunity, a serving President or Governor can only be sued in court for certificate and election-related cases. So, if they embezzle public funds or engage in other forms of corruption, nothing can be done until they finish their tenure. This practice is obviously an incentive to be corrupt **(KII/Female Lawyer/41 years old/Wuse/AMAC/2021)**.

Immunity on the grounds of political power also has some geo-political dimensions. Since political power tilts more to the north, it is assumed that they have more chances to be corrupt and get away with it. In his explanation:

When it comes to political power, the northerners know how to manage the system even though they are corrupt. The system is rigged in their favour, so if they, for example, steal billions of Naira, they would most likely get away with it. Conversely, if a southerner were to commit a similar or lesser crime, they would be held accountable for their actions **(IDI/Male Contractor/43 years old/City Centre/AMAC/2021)**.

Religious leaders also participate in corrupt activities. These leaders wield a form of emotional or spiritual power over members such that could be regarded as power relationship that fuels corruption. There is the point of religious leaders, for example an

imam or pastor who collects offering during religious gatherings for a particular purpose but diverts the funds for something else. Since there is little or no accountability within the religious setting, such corrupt religious leaders can get away with it. In cases where there is an accountable system put in place, there is a possibility that corruption would still take place when the leader connives or manipulates the other member who would somehow be low ranking than he/she is. As he narrated:

In Nigeria, we have cases where offerings are consumed by the imam or pastor instead of being used for renovating the mosque or church. Ultimately, the religious leader ends up spending the money for personal reasons without utilising it for its intended purpose; that is corruption. I do not think others are involved except the leader connives with other lower-ranking officials **(IDI/Male Lecturer/46 years old/Wuse/AMAC/2021)**.

People in positions of power also have the right avenue to change the course of electoral outcomes. This type of corruption is seen clearly in Nigeria. Like this respondent stated:

I remember listening to the radio on the last day of elections in Ondo State a few years ago. I kept track of who had the highest votes, but at the end of the day, the person with the highest vote was not announced as the winner. Instead, they announced the person with the third highest vote as the winner. So, that too is part of corruption **(IDI/Female Civil Servant/45 years old/Gwagwalada Central/Gwagwalada LAC/2021)**.

On the flip side, some were of the opinion that money is a powerful controlling tool. Therefore, a place where economic power is wielded has higher chances of corruption. According to this respondent:

Money is a powerful tool you can use to sway events or the opinion of others in your favour. I firmly believe those with economic power are more likely to be corrupt than those with any other form of power. For example, if people are on a waiting list for a service or product and the process is taking too long, someone with money can quickly pay some money and move up the waiting list **(KII/Female SERA Official/29 years/Garki/AMAC/2021)**.

In places where money is to be earned by someone, there is the possibility that people would be willing to do anything. In his view, it was stated that:

Money is quite influential, and some people do not even know how far they would go to obtain it. There is a general fear that poverty can lead one to do things they never thought they would. While some are disciplined enough not to partake in certain acts, others are not; they would be willing to go to any lengths to make money regardless of the consequences **(IDI/Male Contractor/33 years old/Kubwa/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

For example, the relationship between the police officer and taxi drivers is a power relationship that engenders corrupt practices and involves exchange of money. However, one of the respondent stated that the taxi driver giving in to the police officer is not because of the power the police officer wields but because of his own bid to maintain his economic power. He therefore would give little to the police officer so he can be freed to go as many turns as possible to meet up with his daily quota. In his words:

In most cases, the reason why drivers give these tokens to police officers is to maintain their economic power. By refusing to 'settle' the police officer, the officer would most likely delay the driver, which wastes time they could use finding passengers and meeting their daily quota **(IDI/Male Commercial driver/motorcyclist/33 years old/Gwagwalada Centre/Gwagwalada LAC/2021)**.

In the view of another respondent, corruption has become a means to avoid delays and buy time which in turn could be used to make money and take steps out of poverty. As this respondent describes:

Three factors tend to influence the actions of most people. These include money, politics, and religion. The most influential of these three is money, then comes politics, and last, religion. However, sometimes, politics comes first, money second, and religion third. This is why most corruption cases are typically powered by money; even cases found in the western world **(IDI/Male Contractor/44 years old/Dutse Alhaji/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

It was mentioned that many people would desire to pay bribe in order to escape obstacles given that everyone is moving. Despite this, it was stated that anyone who does such is doing so as a result of poverty, as mentioned by this participant:

It is poverty that causes people to pay and avoid hindrances. Everybody is on the move, and nobody wants to be delayed because there are only so many hours in a day, and most people need to hustle to earn money for that day. Therefore, they cannot afford the luxury of delays and pay

what little they can to avoid their hustle grinding to a halt (**IDI/Female Civil Servant/36 years old/Kutunku/Gwagwalada LAC/2021**).

With the foregoing narratives, it is clear that power dynamics speak more to corrupt behaviours. Others who have been endowed with power utilise their influence to compel those below them, as an example, to submit to their caprices by paying bribes. This is a result of their lack of ability to carry out the fines or punishment attached to the offence. This means that both the party who exercises power and the party that yields to it are corrupt. Since it pays more to avoid the consequences of the punishment that will be meted out to offenders, there appears to be a rational momentum for the person who pays a bribe to be freed. Power and money have a bigger role in acts of corruption, especially with the police, as seen in Figure 4.25. This is mostly attributable to their ability to influence someone, like a driver, to pay or provide money in exchange for the crime they committed in order to be freed. This action exemplifies both sides' corrupt behaviour.

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Figure 4.24: A Word Cloud Describing the Key Elements Contained in the Description of Power Relations in Corrupt Practices
Source: Field Survey (2021)

While it is largely believed that all traffic wardens are corrupt and accept bribes from taxi drivers, one of the respondents tells the story of one of these traffic wardens who refused to engage in this bribe collection. However, instead of being praised, she was disliked by other colleagues. The benefit of her not being a part of the corrupt act was enjoyed by her child, but this came after her death. In the statement of this participant:

My sister-in-law was a traffic warden. She always told us about her experiences and how she was known for not collecting levies from the drivers. She was even against the act, and her fellow wardens knew. In fact, she was not promoted for a long time because she decided to follow the road less travelled. She always said that if that were the reason for the lack of promotion, she would rather stay where she is because she fears God. Sadly, she passed away, but on the day of her wake keep, people sang praises about the type of person she was and how she lived a life worth emulating. Due to her selfless commitment to the Federal Civil Service, her son was offered an appointment. Corruption is wrong, and those who practice it only do it because they want to be on top. At the end of the day, it is good to be good **(IDI/Male Civil Servant/48 years old/Bwari Central/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

Police officers are believed to be ordinary men who have been empowered with legal authority and power. Therefore, their uniform and gun are symbols of the power they have been given. This is what they misuse in the process of corruption. However, it is quite impossible for people on the same level of power to force the other into a corrupt act as they are on a levelled ground. Following this, it was explained that:

Their power comes from the uniform and gun. They use this power daily to terrorise people, extorting them of what little they have. I am sure that it is happening right now. Those of us who do not wear the uniform or have the gun cannot do anything about it. If you plan to extort a policeman, it will take much more than words. You need to be on the same power level as him or even higher **(IDI/Male Lecturer/45 years old/Nyanya/AMAC/2021)**.

People in authority are able to wield their power more effectively because they are legal power holders and can easily implicate the common man since they in that case have a louder and more credible voice as well as the opportunity to manipulate evidence. The common man is therefore in a way forced to comply. In view of this, it was noted by one of the students in a focus group discussion that:

I am not in the wrong, but the policeman is in a position where he can easily implicate me. He knows it will be a case of his word against mine, so he enforces that power knowing that I can easily succumb to it. He takes advantage of this power and uses it to extort money from me **(FGD/Students/18-35 years/Dutse Alhaji/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

A lack of proper understanding of the position of the law on a certain matter also make people fall prey to, and resort to corrupt practices to get out of offences they did not commit or that they ought not to be credited with. According to him:

Most people do not know their rights, and these people can easily get harassed by those in power. A majority of police officers do not know the rules that pertain to traffic law. Generally, no police officer is allowed to stop you and ask for your driver's licence because they are not empowered constitutionally to do that. However, since you do not know your right, you think you have done wrong by not having that licence. Therefore, they ask you to pay a fee so they can let you go; it is a form of corruption **(KII/Female CODE Official/38 years/Nyanya/AMAC/2021)**.

Putting anti-corruption agencies; administration under the power of political leaders has also easily made them into political under-dogs. This is evident in political leaders, even political party chairmen being able to guarantee immunity for choice aspirants. In the explanation of one of the respondents, it was highlighted that:

The appointment of heads of anti-corruption agencies by the President is a danger to the independence of these anti-corruption agencies. As the saying goes, 'he who pays the piper, dictates the tune he plays.' Obviously, the anti-graft agencies cannot operate independently because the President can appoint and remove the Chairpersons at will. So, to strengthen these agencies, there is a need to make them independent in terms of the appointment of people to head and give direction to the anti-corruption fight **(KII/Male Lawyer/41 years old/Kubwa/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

Apart from corruption being a means by which those with power sometimes oppress, corruption is a way that people try to get what they do not deserve from higher ups. For example, a student trying to buy results referred to as 'sorting' from the lecturer or a member of a unit trying to gain good standing. Engaging in corruption that involves power relations could also mean someone trying to improve his power levels by buying a way into the favour of another higher up making him superior to people on his own level, as this respondent observed:

There are frequent cases of people with less power-seeking help from those with higher power levels. For example, a student underperforming academically engaging in bribery and other corrupt practices to get good grades. Another scenario is where a church member wants to occupy a good position in the church, so they find ways to engage in corrupt practices spiritually or otherwise. So, they engage in magu-magu or wuru-wuru to cut corners and have undue advantages over their competitors. It is hard for a person to seek help from someone on the same level as them because they usually have access to the same resources. The truth is, there are fewer people with power than those without, so the competition to get ahead is stiff. This is why you see several people chasing after a contract, and in order to stand out, they have to offer a gift of appreciation. In this race, the highest bidder gets the contract **(IDI/Male Contractor/40 years old/Gwagwalada Centre/Gwagwalada LAC/2021)**.

Student Union Government officials are also caught in the web of using their political power to inflate fees so that they can get a share of what comes in to the school for personal gain which is also seen as a corrupt act. As this respondent described:

You find SUG officials adding an extra five hundred Naira to the original fee just to make a profit at our expense. That, too, is corruption because they did not inform the students of the actual amount. Instead, they inflate it for their selfish gain. Imagine collecting five hundred Naira from a million students; it adds up to five hundred million Naira. They do not even stop there and find ways to take more from students, all in the name of 'helping' them and all the monies are squandered by them. They in league with school officials at the bursary just chop clean mouth as they say it **(FGD/Students/18years/Kabusa/AMAC/2021)**.

Monopoly of power, vested in one-man businesses are also a good avenue for corruption. Such individuals likely have the ears of the government, especially when they make necessary products. In such instances, the business can be used as an avenue to siphon state funds or on the flipside such businesses could get away with corrupt act by cutting corners in tax payment. A respondent revealed that:

While everyone can have power, there are higher and lesser powers. This means that those with lesser power have to cave to the will of the higher power, making corruption possible if it is the wish of the higher-powered individuals. Therefore, to a large extent, those on higher power levels, who have more influence and power, will always want to control those with lesser power. Since those with lesser power do not have the wealth or influence, they would always succumb to the whim of their superiors **(IDI/Male Lecturer/46 years old/Wuse/AMAC/2021)**.

There is therefore a case of power play with the "if-you-can't-beat-them-then-join-them" mentality. In the scenario presented by this respondent, recording resumption time is an example of corruption going on in all organisations where those who come late input a resumption time that is within the stipulated time by the organisation. Once the boss is in support of corrupt acts, there is little the junior staff do to remain incorruptible. On a levelled power playing field however, one has the option to disassociate from another corrupt individual when there is no form of needed exchange of wants and needs, as revealed below:

The junior staff tried to do the right thing, but his boss called and said, 'this is how things operate in the office. You either take it or leave it. You are not going to change things for us, and if you do, they will send you somewhere awful.' In a situation like this, it becomes a case of 'if you cannot beat them, join them.' So, the junior staff joined them **(IDI/Male Civil Servant/ 44 years old/Kubwa/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

The influence that bosses have over their apprentice could also further the cause of corrupt practices. For instance, if an apprentice is able to observe the good and bad ways of doing business and sees the results that the bad/corrupt activity generates, one who has no moral standard would have been initiated into this corrupt nature. This breeds new corrupt businesses when the apprentice also goes to set up his own corrupted business.

Your boss can influence you, and I am speaking from experience. I once had a boss who said to me, 'you are new to this job, right?' I said, 'yes, sir.' Then he told me, 'learn the good and bad parts of the business.' I observed that he could do little work and earn one hundred thousand Naira by doing business the wrong way. So, obviously, I would want to learn the bad way of doing business if it means I can earn one hundred thousand Naira in a few minutes. Then the icing on the cake is when he gives me fifty thousand Naira. This would inspire me to want to learn precisely what he is doing to make that money. It is called if you can't beat them, you join them **(FGD/Journalists/25-45 years/Gwagwalada Central/Gwagwalada LAC/2021)**.

There is a possibility that people working under a corrupt leader would be prone to corruption. Apart from learning the behaviour from the leader, workers would also be willing to engage in corrupt practices when they perceive that refusing to cooperate with the corrupt boss could lead to job loss. Workers who feel cheated could also resort to embezzlement or fraudulent acts to get their dues from their company, which is also a corrupt act. A civil service and an employment scheme where people work for 35 years

with poor salaries and leave with bye-bye predisposes them to corruptive maneuvering with a view to topping up their income. A respondent shared his thoughts:

If you are a corrupt leader, you make it difficult for your underlings to do the right thing because they fear you might remove them from their position. Also, there are cases where you might find that an apprentice is being owed salary or specific benefits, so this apprentice, feeling cheated, would take matters into his own hands. He waits for the opportunity to present itself and steals from his boss or collects bribes from those around him **(KII/Male Agora of Zuba/71 years old/Zuba/Gwagwalada LAC/2021)**.

The power play in the perpetration of corrupt practices is demonstrated by leader-follower relationship. In a focus group discussion, it was shared that though the follower may not be interested in engaging in corrupt practices until the leader or boss engages in it. By mere indulging in such act, the follower had no option other than conniving with the leader to perpetuate corruption, as seen below:

If you work for a corrupt leader, it takes a certain level of self-discipline not to follow in the footsteps of your boss. You rarely see a person who is not corrupt working for someone who is. Initially, they might be straightforward, but this all changes with time. Even if they are not working directly with their corrupt boss, they find other ways to engage in corrupt acts. Those who stay unfazed through it all have strong convictions **(FGD/Journalists/25-45 years/Kubwa/Bwari LAC/2021)**.

There is also the notion that powerful people cannot be questioned. For example, when a governor approaches a subordinate to execute funds misappropriation, it is believed that saying no would result in loss of job and probably loss of life. This is the position of a respondent captured below:

Subordinates find it difficult or even impossible to confront their supervisors regardless of how unethical their actions are. For example, a Governor of a state who diverts or misappropriates funds cannot be held accountable by his subordinates. In fact, the deputies would be scared to speak up or ask questions because they fear that if they do, they might lose their jobs or, worse, their lives **(KII/Male Auta of Jabi/67 years old/Jabi/AMAC/2021)**.

It is reported that cooperation exists among those who are corrupt such that in harnessing their power, they could commit an offence but change the name such that the negativity is buried and the act more acceptable to the public, as a respondent posited:

I believe these people are working together because they do not classify it as stealing. In truth, they do not even talk about it. They just have their connections with people in the government. With this connection, they are smart about how they handle their dealings. They present negative acts in a light that the masses can accommodate. If these people did not cooperate to this degree, I believe Nigeria would be a better place **(KII/Male CISLAC Official/48 years old/Garki/AMAC/2021)**.

In this respondent's opinion, the lack of discipline is also what makes people feel guilty when they are not. And even if tried and found guilty, what is expected is that the offence should be paid for, not that one would pay bribe to get out of paying for the offence. He shared:

People just go around paying bribes, and it is unacceptable. Why should someone pay a bribe? If the person did not commit an offence, then why are they paying a bribe? It is because they lack self-discipline and actually believe they are guilty. Even if they are found guilty, why is the next step bribery? This person should be held accountable and face punishment for their crime. After all, the bribe does not go to the government; it belongs to the individual involved **(KII/Male Sa'payi of Garki/65 years old/Garki/AMAC/2021)**.

Given the narratives about how power dynamics have sustained corrupt behaviours, it is clear that power imbalances, particularly those between superiors and subordinates, are a major factor in how corruption is carried out. This is done primarily by coercing the subordinates to engage in the corrupt behaviour, either passively or actively by giving them instructions to do so. When it comes to the exercise of authority, many people are compelled to engage in corrupt behaviours because the person holding the higher authority can either directly or indirectly compel the person holding the lower authority to comply. These factors contribute to the persistent spread of corruption among people through the use of power against one another.

4.9.1 Person without Authority and Power

It is also possible for someone without authority and power to wield a kind of psychological power on a professional, enough for him to be influenced and act corruptly. For example, suggestions of lower cost of production could make a professional compromise, producing lower standard of output which this individual described as corrupt. In her precise statement:

The reduction of that standard is corruption. Imagine two contractors in a conversation about a bridge one of them built. The first contractor would praise the bridge and ask the other contractor how many bags of cement he used to build it. The second contractor would respond by saying he used two trailers' worth of cement. Then, the first contractor informs him that he can do that same job with one trailer worth of cement. Obviously, it is possible, but the end product would be subpar. Sadly, the seed has already been planted, and the contractor is already considering doing that for his next job **(IDI/Female Civil Servant/36 years old/Kutunku/Gwagwalada LAC/2021)**.

Safety is another reason why people are engaged in corrupt acts even against their own will or judgment. People who have damaging information about others hold a certain level of power over them and this could be seen as corruption. As he describes:

Threatening to leak someone's personal information unless they pay a certain amount of money is also a form of corruption. Usually, the victim should not pay but does so out of fear because they feel the information the culprit has is damaging and want to feel safe. However, as long as the culprit still has that information, they can choose to leak it at any point or even ask for more money. Therefore, the vicious cycle continues, making one party a reluctant player in this corrupt act and the other an eager participant **(KII/Male PWYPC Official/43 years old/Garki/AMAC/2021)**.

It is nevertheless possible to draw the conclusion that people in positions of greater and lesser power have an impact on instances of corruption based on the circumstances that have led to corrupt actions considering the above descriptions of power relations in corrupt acts. Power relationships between the low and high are therefore occasionally influenced by those below or above when determining corrupt behaviours.

4.10 Discussion

This study focused on the social construction of corruption in Abuja, Nigeria. Findings revealed that the average age of the respondents was 34.9 years. When comparing male and female respondents, it was discovered that more than half of the respondents were male. Over half of the respondents were married or cohabiting at the survey, and nearly two-thirds had completed their tertiary education. These findings indicate that the majority of the sampled population was made up of young adults, as they were also found in the marriageable age range. It also implies that the bulk of the people in the sample were well-educated, with only a minority having no formal education. The study found that less than a quarter of the respondents worked in the public sector, while slightly more than one-fifth worked in the private sector. This means that, on the subject of the social construction of corruption, the views of all employees from all sectors (public and private) were adequately represented. It was also discovered that the majority of respondents had stayed in the study setting for more than ten years, implying that participants had a thorough understanding of the phenomenon under inquiry. In terms of the study's ethnic composition, the northern minority had the highest proportion of respondents, followed by Igbo, Yoruba, Southern minority and Hausa. This could be due to the research site (Abuja), which is located in an area where the natives primarily speak languages classified as northern minorities, such as Gwari, Bassa, and Gwandara, among others.

Still on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, findings showed that two-thirds of the respondents lived in the research setting's metropolitan centres, with one-fifth in semi-urban and rural areas. This indicates that a vast majority of the respondents were city dwellers. This could also be ascribed to the effects of urbanisation in Abuja as the Federal Capital Territory. Finally, it was found that slightly more than half of the respondents earned an average monthly income of ₦70,001 and above, with the lowest proportion earning less than ₦30,000. This can be traced in part to the influence of highly educated people who have dominated the research setting, as well as the effects of the area's urbanisation. This means that the majority of the respondents earned about US\$167 on average per month, which is far below the international poverty line of US\$1.90 for daily basic needs.

Having discussed the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, the findings from the study shall be discussed in line with the specific objectives. On the identification of behaviour defined as corrupt, it was discovered that the majority of the respondents agreed that the following could be defined as corrupt behaviours: acceptance of gift items by officers before delivering a service to the offerer; acceptance of gift items by officers after service delivery to the offerer; acceptance of pay-off for service delivery; acceptance of tips in cash or kind for service delivery by officers before service delivery; and acceptance of a promise to be rewarded by officials before service delivery can be defined as corrupt behaviours. Further analysis of corrupt activities and actions indicates that more than two-third of the respondents agreed that acceptance of a promise to be rewarded by officials after service delivery, acceptance of a fee or commission before service delivery by officers, acceptance of a fee or commission after service delivery by officers, acceptance of kick-backs from contracts awarded, falsification of financial records by officers and falsifying certificates for promotion/appointment are identified and defined as corrupt practices.

In addition to the items identified and defined as corrupt activities and actions, findings also indicated that more than two-third of the respondents accepted that stealing public funds or property by officers, undue conversion of public funds/property to personal use by officers, preferential treatment of people by office holders in official service delivery, and acceptance of a fee or commission before consideration for employment, appointment and promotion are termed corrupt practices. Also, nearly all the respondents accepted that the acceptance of a fee or commission after consideration for employment, appointment and promotion, diversion of public funds to unbudgeted projects, using official time for personal business, using an official car for personal trips and errands, reporting to work late and closing before the official time are corrupt practices.

The various identifications and definitions of corruption in this manner are consistent with other studies (Nmah, 2017; Nkwede *et al.*, 2017; Akanle *et al.*, 2014, Akanle, 2013), which pointed out that Nigeria, like many other countries in the Global South, is plagued by corruption, including bribery, graft, fraud, manipulations, indiscipline and nepotism, all of which have left the country with an abnormal history of prebendal politics. As Aluko (2002)

argues, when a society institutionalises corruption, it permeates into the value system, becoming normative and an embodiment of culture, and in turn manifests in people's behaviours. This is probably why Smith (2010) agreed with Uslaner (2010) that the social reproduction of corruption is tied to the inequality trap that he persuasively explains and demonstrates in his work "Corruption, Inequality, and the Rule of Law".

Previous studies indicated that the normative tolerance that the two publics dialectic has for public officials disregards rules of conduct in their duties (Ugwuani and Nwokedi, 2015). Similarly, Sutherland's (1947) differential association theory has argued that people engage in certain activities because they are exposed to more definitions that are favourable to such activities. In this study, findings have shown that people's viewpoints on corruption is the major cause of its perpetration. For example, it was discovered that the majority of the respondents view acceptance of gift items by officers before or after service delivery to the offerer, acceptance pay-off for service delivery, acceptance of tips in cash or kind for service delivery by officers and acceptance of a promise to be rewarded by officials before service delivery as corrupt practices, while other categories of respondents did not see these as corrupt activities.

Additionally, it was also discovered that the majority indicated that acceptance of a promise to be rewarded by officials after service delivery, acceptance of a fee or commission before service delivery by officers, acceptance of a fee or commission after service delivery by officers, acceptance of kickbacks from a contract awarded, falsification of financial records by officers, falsification of certificates for promotion or appointment exercise and stealing of public funds or property by officers were perceived as corrupt practices. Also, undue conversion of public funds or property to personal use by officers, preferential treatment of people by office holders in official service delivery, acceptance of fee or commission before consideration for employment or appointment, acceptance of a fee or commission after consideration for employment, appointment or promotion, and exercise and diversion of public funds to unbudgeted projects as corrupt practices. These findings support the works of Apel and Paternoster (2009) and Jackall (1988), which posited that individuals are more likely to break the law when exposed to crime-favourable definitions. These also corroborate the works of Klitgaard (2019); Agbibo (2013) and Tavits (2010), which

established that citizens are more likely to engage in corruption when they interpret such behaviour as incorrect. This suggests that people's beliefs and misinterpretation of certain behaviour influences the perpetuation of corruption.

Again, the remarkable aspect of the prebendal hypothesis is that there appears to be a consensus that serving the interests of a minority has become somehow legitimated by precedence and norms, thus making what would otherwise be illegal look permissible informally (Sharma and Mitra, 2019; Suberu, 2013). However, some aspects of our cultural beliefs and gift-giving practices have been discovered to be linked to corruption, either indirectly or directly. This means that giving a present, whether in cash or in kind, without identifying the reason for the gift, could be considered bribery to the giver or otherwise.

Despite the fact that the majority of the respondents understand corrupt practices, there are varied interpretations and viewpoints of corruption based on their socio-demographic characteristics. For instance, it was discovered that there is significant relationship between age, marital status, education, occupation, income level and people's views on or interpretation of corrupt actions. This means that the interpretations of corrupt actions are greatly influenced by the socio-demographic characteristics of individuals. Although the interpretations of people's actions in corrupt practices are shaped by their socio-demographic characteristics, these interpretations are found to change over time. This is because corruption has become a cultural phenomenon and forms an integral component of who people are in society.

Specifically, findings have shown that several factors predisposed people to corrupt activities. It was found that a significant disparity between the salaries of civil servants and those of politicians is responsible for corruption in Abuja. This finding aligns with the earlier study conducted by Allen, Qian and Shen (2015), which revealed that corruption results from organisations, institutions and governments due to their inability to pay employees competitive wages that would deter them from engaging in corrupt practices. Furthermore, it is well-acknowledged that the salaries of civil servants are far lower than those of politicians, which also translates to the politicians not engaging in corrupt practices. In this study, however, it was found that politicians had more opportunities to steal and

embezzle money than the civil servants. This is the reason many people perceive this form of corruption as a component of the system, largely due to the inability of the offenders to face the wrath of the laws on corrupt practices.

While some studies have persistently identified that the prevailing political and economic structure of a country facilitates people's involvement in corrupt practices (Ghaniy and Hastiadi, 2017; Sumah, 2018), others revealed that some policies discourage involvement in corruption (Jungo *et al.*, 2023). This study has found that greed, poverty and weak laws predisposed people to corrupt practices. Additionally, it was discovered that political office appointees and public office holders largely engage in corrupt practices based on poor enforcement of anticorruption systems, party politics, porous government financial systems and compatibility of Nigerian cultures with corruption. This finding corroborates the work done by Ogunlana (2019) that the Nigerian public sector is blatantly inefficient, which has accounted for a high level of corruption. In fact, the prevailing political and economic structure of a country has supported people's involvement in corrupt activities because, beyond issues around policies, factors such as lack of fear of God, community or family pressure and peer pressure have been discovered to influence people to engage in corrupt activities.

Despite the factors identified to have been associated with corruption, several studies have linked corruption to the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents (Gok, 2021; Zouaoui *et al.*, 2021; Adjor and Kebalo, 2018; Dwiputri *et al.*, 2018; Jaime-Castillo and Martinez-Cousinou, 2012; Goel and Nelson, 2010). Although the majority of the respondents viewed certain behaviour as corrupt, their views are also connected to their socio-demographic characteristics. For example, findings indicated that there was a significant relationship between age, marital status, education, occupation, income level and people's viewpoints on corrupt practices. This implies that, although this study did not find that there was a statistically significant relationship between gender and corruption as discovered by Ishola, Kenku and Oyewo (2019) and Cera and Sinamati (2017) in their studies, the findings corroborate the works of Gök (2021), Dwiputri *et al.* (2018), and Jaime-Castillo and Martinez-Cousinou (2012) which argue that education, age, income levels and occupation are significantly related to corruption. From these, it can be concluded that the

causes of corruption can either be internal or external to the perpetrator of the act of corruption.

Earlier studies (Nmah, 2017; Aborisade and Gbahabo, 2021) have identified that corrupt practices can include the use or concealment of proceeds from any illicit acts and direct or indirect acts or omissions of one's duties encouraged by provision or promise of any undue advantage to a person or a group concerned. Findings indicated that the strategies used to execute corrupt activities ranged from the "use of long leg" to the "use of bottom power", "chop I chop", "scratch my back I scratch your back", "kickbacks" in the award of contracts, and offering gift items before or after service delivery. It was also found that rendering unofficial services to the superior in exchange for favour, recommendations from very important personalities popularly known as VIPs, direct monetary reward in exchange for favour, outright stealing of public funds or property, and short-changing employees' salaries and wages are all strategies used to execute corrupt activities. Other strategies discovered are direct conversion of public funds or property to private use, distortions of financial records, charging unauthorised fees, excessive auctioning of government property, diversion of employees' salaries and allowances to personal use, payment of ghost workers, demands for favours or advantage (such as sex) before official services are rendered, god-fatherism in politics, exam malpractices, and offering financial aid to support politicians are among the strategies used to execute corrupt activities.

The qualitative data helped to further clarify the methods used to carry out corrupt practices. It showed that many of the methods and styles used by various persons to carry out corrupt practices are covert, so that only those involved would be aware of it. The use of connections, sometimes known as "long legs" or "man know man", is one of the frequent methods of carrying out corruption. The use of bribes to execute corrupt practices was also based on covert behaviour. Indeed, the person seeking the favour of the official might even come up with suggestions on how the person in position could use his power to get them what they want. These findings support Nmah's (2017) and Page's (2018) earlier works that corrupt practices can include the use or concealment of proceeds from any illicit acts, direct or indirect acts, or omissions of one's duties encouraged by provision or promise of any undue advantage to a person or a group concerned.

Previous studies have revealed that deliberate waste by the government creates avenues for embezzlement, contract fraud, and patronage distribution among their cronies and loyalists (Aborisade and Gbahabo, 2021; Sharma and Mitra, 2019; Page, 2018). In this study, it was discovered that people also use their influence to fraudulently embezzle funds out of an office to the extent that the junior staff are not empowered to keep their bosses accountable. This is further exemplified by the system of godfatherism, which sometimes is a system which officials even put in place to ensure that whatever they do would be acceptable and not countered. These strategies, however, confirm the normative tolerance ideology of the two publics dialectic that people have with public officials who disregard rules of conduct in their duties, as suggested by Ugwuani and Nwokedi (2015).

The inability of government to effectively and adequately regulate its agencies has been identified by Otalor *et al.* (2015) and Owusu *et al.* (2019) to have emboldened public office holders to unnecessarily extend the bureaucratic procedure, resulting in public officials demanding bribes before they carry out their statutory responsibilities. In this study, it was discovered that, based on the inability of the government to effectively regulate its agencies and officials, bending the rules to achieve a desired result has become a common strategy for executing corruption. It was also found that this is manifested within the judiciary system as well as during voting, where manipulation of activities is carried out. These findings affirm the studies of Oke *et al.* (2021), Edori *et al.* (2020), Ijewereme (2015) and Bassey *et al.* (2013) that a number of election frauds have been used to perpetuate corrupt practices which have plagued the country. This also aligns with Igiebor's (2019) study that the country's electoral system is not immune to the ubiquitous corruption that has bedevilled the nation's social institutions and other important sectors of the society.

Findings also revealed that there was doctoring of documents to fit a particular purpose. This includes falsification of age or doctoring of reports for personal gain. It was found that older men working in the public service that had passed the age of retirement doctored their age certificate to stay in the office beyond retirement. Other strategies that are related to falsification of data include manipulating data to get more funds for a project, among others. This finding supports Onwujekwe *et al.* (2019), Kirya, 2019 and Khan *et al.* (2021) that

misinformation and falsification of records are tactics of corruption for the purpose of personal gains by health sector employees.

On how normative gestures determine people's receptivity to corrupt practices, existing studies have shown that certain cultural practices such as gift-giving rituals have been used to rationalise unethical behaviour (Folarin, 2021; Ekpo, 1979). In specific terms, the findings indicated that the culture of gift-giving rituals, granting of loans or doing favours, and membership of a particular religious sect influenced official activities and aided corrupt practices. Apart from willing gifts, it was argued that poverty, hunger, poor remuneration and absence of social security predisposed many workers to corruption, as most of them demand and accept financial gifts, innocuously referred to as "transport money" or "kola". These findings support Folarin (2021) and Ekpo's (1979) earlier work which posited that the gift-exchange culture has aided the practice of corruption within the state apparatus.

As Posner (1970) described for people who believe corruption is normal, the cost of bribery may seem smaller due to the difficulties and discomfort involved with breaking societal standards. Similar to this, it was discovered that "corruption has been institutionalised in government agencies and parastatals". As a result, it has become a norm in almost all sectors. This norm has in turn aided the production of symbolic rewards to the actors. This finding corroborates Ashforth and Anad's (2003) study, which stated that once corruption is accepted as the norm, it can also produce symbolic rewards such as status and self-esteem in addition to utilitarian ones.

Further findings show that payment of fines in lieu of jail terms by corrupt authorities encourages corrupt practices. This means that, in spite of people reacting differently to the issue of corruption, there are some practices that have made corruption part of the system. In fact, corrupt people are most often than not celebrated in society because stringent measures are not undertaken to punish the offenders as a deterrent to other members of society intending corruption. This finding supports Cábellová and Hanousek (2004) who discovered that people are more inclined to believe that they will escape punishment if they accept bribes if they know that others are willing to do the same. It further aligns with Andvig and Moene's (1990) theory that there is the idea of multiple equilibria in the

incidence of corruption which show that as perceived corruption increases in culture, the risk of being caught decreases. It also agrees with Transparency International (2019) and Enste and Heldman (2017) that corrupt social practices are universal in Africa, even though vocal anti-corruption initiatives and resistance have a long history in many traditional societies.

As Nmah (2017) noted, before European colonial incursion into Africa, Nigeria's indigenous cultural values were at odds with corruption. In this study, it was found that the tradition of showing appreciation, especially when it is associated with the motive of an individual expecting something in return, encourages corruption. This finding supports Chinweuba's (2018) and Nwogu and Ijirshar's (2016) assertions that there is a traditional connection between the normative practices of achievement at all costs and the pervasive corruption in the nation. This further explains how people's cultural orientations permeate to redefine or reconstruct people's diverse ways of life. The implications of these cultural orientations are that they affect the socio-cultural environment, thereby causing damage to the social structure in Nigeria and many other southern states, particularly the extended family system, as suggested by Otite (1986) who writes that each African public official owes a double duty to the people who belong to his tribe, which may be denoted by his family, his home, or other clannish ties.

Findings indicated that several corrupt practices are reported using social media, newspapers and actual experience of the practice. In specific terms, it was found that many corruption cases are reported on television or by civil society organisations (CSOs), friends and peers, schools, political meetings, traditional leaders and rulers, offices and markets, family members, religious leaders and teachers, on radio, in community meetings, and by politicians. This aligns with the work of Nišić and Playšić (2014) that the media play a crucial role in influencing how society constructs reality through the deliberate selection and presentation of particular news. Although the majority of the respondents indicated that the information received from the media about corruption could be trusted, one-tenth of them pointed out that the information cannot be trusted. This could be based on Moglie and Turati's (2019) view that the frequency of media reports on corruption is influenced by the electoral cycle. Thus, corroborating Školokay and Itoková's (2016) view on the media's

agenda-setting function contrasts with that of Komolafe, Nkereuwem and Kalu-Amah (2019), who held that the topics that the media in Nigeria focus on are determined by the electoral cycle.

Further findings revealed that, despite the media being in possession of factual information, more than half of the respondents reported that the media is sympathetic to the actors in their reportage of corruption cases and allegations. There are several factors that account for this: first, it was found that although the media report cases of corruption, the magnitude of the offence was not always taken to be serious. They rather cover-up, condemn and sympathise. Second, the fear of the possibility of being sanctioned by those in authority is there. Based on these narratives, it is inferred that there are actions that should be classified as corrupt in the social environment, but the information made public by the media will be used to recreate or reconstruct corruption in a way that prevents the general public from considering the act to be serious or illegal. This shows that while the media disseminates information about persons who participate in corrupt activities, many of the messages are portrayed in a way that the social context will dismiss them as unimportant. This finding supports Mpfu *et al.*'s (2023) opinion that the failure of the media to adequately focus their searchlight on corruption leaves a vacuum that further emboldens the continued perpetration of corruption.

Every media house has its personal interest, and this means that its reporting of corruption cases would be from the perspective of the editorial board. This means that, while the public sees one media house or social media handle condemning a criminal, they may see another media refuting existing evidence on such case. This lack of consensus on what the truth is contributes to the continuity of corrupt practices. Presenting corrupt cases in the media in this manner aligns with Berti's (2018) study that the media directs the social reconstruction, also known as the framing and reframing, of the concept of corruption, as well as Bratu and Kola's (2018) study which found that there are corruption metaphors in the news media coverage of seven European countries. This provides more creative and socialising roles in providing descriptions and the language of corruption which finds congruence with the work of Dumbili and Sofadekan (2016). What became evident from this study is that biased

reportage of corruption allegations and indeed media trials have destroyed people, reputations, dignities, careers and businesses.

Corruption, according to Warburton (2013), emerges from actors' desires to meet their own needs, ambitions, aspirations and interests. The most potent prerequisite is to achieve this power. In this study, it was discovered that power dynamics influence corrupt practices, with the majority agreeing that a traffic officer's ability to arrest and detain a motorist influences corrupt behaviour and willingness of motorists to accede to bribe demands. Most respondents believe the person in lesser power is more likely to pay bribes than those who believe the person in greater power is more likely to give bribes or be forced to pay bribes.

The law of the nation, the governing elite, the high and mighty in society, and the culture are all accountable for framing behaviours and activities as corrupt practices. Again, political power, particularly of those with immunity based on political authority, has more clout in power dynamics than economic power. People with political authority can access economic power and use it to alter rules in their favour, which is a kind of corruption. Furthermore, spiritually powerful people use their influence to persuade those in positions of authority to do what they want. It implies that both political and spiritual authority are intertwined with the social construction of corruption, with severe consequences for human moral standards. Consequently, it may be helpful to consider spiritualising sanctions against corrupt practices. It is even contended that taking an oath of office using the instrumentalities of traditional objects such as the symbols of Amadioha (god of justice and thunder), Ogun (god of iron and war), Sango (god of fire and lightning) and so on, instead of only the Holy Bible and the Quran, may deter public office holders from abusing their offices given the immediacy of the sanctions believed to be associated with some of these traditional religious deities. While Amadioha is believed to be invoked in matters related to justice and righteousness, Ogun is often invoked in matters related to work and industry and Sango can be invoked in matters related to entertainment and celebrations.

Further explanation on how power relations affect corrupt practices revealed that people on the same level of power relations extort bribes from their fellows. On the other hand, it was

found that the majority of the respondents indicated that a person with less power is more likely to give bribe or be made to pay bribe than a person with more power. This suggests that power relationships between the actors involved are critical to the instigation of corrupt practices, which supports Roohi (2022), as well as Setiadi *et al.*'s (2022) position that public employees request bribes in exchange for services, and politicians misuse public funds to sponsor personal projects.

Earlier study has shown that there are corrupt forces that take into account the power dynamics that define a manager-subordinate relationship, particularly when taking into consideration upward information-sharing that is frequently hampered by relative power imbalances (Li, 2021). Again, Silitonga *et al.* (2016) have suggested that informal relations, in addition to formal power relations, are important for initiating and sustaining corrupt transactions, and that corruption necessitates a distinct social capital base in various institutional configurations. The study found that the nature of corruption networks in the country has changed as a result of decentralisation, because it was primarily characterised by dyadic and multiplex relations that have an overarching goal of maximising profits. In this study, it was found that those who frame actions and activities as corrupt practices were usually influenced by the law of the land, the ruling class, the high and mighty in society, the culture among others. This means that the law and the ruling class, including the high and mighty, use their economic influence to dictate the tunes in the realm of corrupt practices involving the lower and upper class. This finding confirms Gupta's (2012) and Witsoe's (2013) studies that the configuration of corruption is generally important to the running of the Indian state, as welfare services to the underprivileged citizens or lower castes were reliant on the lower castes' ascent to power.

Studies have persistently revealed that those in authority influence subordinates to participate in corrupt practices such as payment of bribes (Sheridan, 2019; Chingaipe, 2013; Nawaz, 2012). In this study, it was found that those who have political power are more prone to be corrupt in an attempt to access economic power. Yet they have immunity against some offences such as embezzlement, which emboldens them to freely engage in corrupt practices if they so wish. This finding supports Chiweshe's (2015) work that corruption is a function of power and that power within the broader network creates avenues for access

and exclusion, whereas corruption becomes a tool for gaining access to and inclusion in specific rooms, spheres, and forms of social standing.

Corruption is a continuous utility-maximising problem that generates a requirement for its practices, and a rational person's willingness to accept corrupt income is contingent on a variety of factors, including the official wage rate, the severity of the punishment, awareness of those penalties, the possibility of being discovered, and the likelihood of being indicted (Juraev, 2018). In this study, it was discovered that corruption thrived when there was little or no accountability, especially among the religious leaders and political office holders. This is illustrated with the finding that the relationship between a police officer and taxi drivers was a power relationship that engenders corrupt practices and involves exchange of money. In this, it was discovered that a taxi driver giving in to the police officer is not because of the power the police officer wields but because of his own bid to maintain his economic power. He therefore would give little to the police officer so he can be freed to take as many turns as possible to meet his daily quota. This finding supports Sheridan's (2019) investigation in Tanzania that Chinese migrants consent to pay bribe to the bureaucrats on the street so as to keep them in their businesses. Put succinctly, both the payers and the payees seem to derive certain benefits in corruption. As such, corruption remains a continuous utility-maximising problem.

4.10.1 Findings and Theoretical Discourse

In this study, the social construction theory was employed as a theoretical guide, with focus on Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's perspectives. The theory focuses on how people's interactions with their social environment give meaning to objects that are otherwise meaningless, and form reality. It also has a theoretical foundation that is concerned with how knowledge is historically placed and ingrained in cultural values and practices as they are socially created via people's interactions (Gergen, Gergen and Ness, 2019, Hair, and Fine, 2012). Although Berger and Luckmann were strongly influenced by the work of Alfred Schütz, their central concept is that people and groups interacting in a social system create, over time, concepts such as corruption or mental representations of each other's actions, and then these concepts eventually become habituated into reciprocal roles played

by the actors in relation to one another. When these roles are made available to other members of society to enter into and play out, the reciprocal interactions are said to be institutionalised. In the process, meanings are embedded in society. Knowledge and people's conceptions (and beliefs) of what reality is become embedded in the institutional fabric of society. Reality is therefore socially constructed (Aini, 2022; Adeleke, Alabede, Osayomi and Iyanda, 2021).

This study is an exercise in contextualisation, in situating the construction of corruption within its wider contexts in order to offer some idea as to why this wicked problem has become so prevalent in media discourses. It examines the extent to which representations of corrupt activities have changed in recent years, how and why these changes have taken place, and what the implications of all this may be for the perceptions and receptivity of corrupt individuals in Nigeria. In applying social constructionism to the findings of this study, it is apposite to take a careful look at how the fractured and over-centralised Nigerian social and political structure as presently constituted – predispose individuals and subgroups to corruption and corrupt practices. Component parts therefore do not relate to the structure as one which they belong to, but rather as an object to take from, by whatever means, to the various subunits they actually belong to. As long as this is the prevailing definition and relationship among the component parts with the political structure, corruption would continue to be seen as taking a fair share from the centralised entity by individuals who represent subgroups. Little wonder, then, that there are agitations for restructuring, including resource control, which challenge national unity, cohesion and development. This is because the centralised structure has created a void among ethnic nationalities leading to widespread complaints of marginalisation, exclusion, discrimination, oppression, neglect and injustice. Government, particularly at the federal and state level, is seen as a 'big thief' which has stolen from the people leading to the deprivation they face. So, any time their ward is elected or appointed into position of public trust, the ordinary man at the countryside expects him or her to steal from the 'big thief' such that in most instances, where the public official is able to steal with amazing efficiency, they change the 'T' in the thief to a 'C' and the person becomes a 'chief'. A process of deconstruction that relies on restructuring may therefore be a way to mitigate the sustenance of corruption in Nigeria.

In addition, notwithstanding the outward religious nature of people, the deep sense of frustration which accompanies prolonged economic failure, as a result of bad governance and unethical practices such as large-scale fraud, embezzlement of public funds, gross abuse of power, cutting corners and breach of trust, among others, without respite, has reduced the peoples' endurance levels and corroded entrepreneurial zeal in many of them. This attitude has continued because corruption has not been correctly constructed as a severe crime, and since it is both a social and an economic disease of the mind, stakeholders may need to address the minds and conscience of the people. It goes without saying that corruption has paralyzed the nation's development in general – personal, family, systemic, economic and corporate development. It was discovered that the powerful always act out of self-interest as far as corruption is concerned, because the over-centralised political structure is seen by many as not serving their personal and group interest. It can be contended that some people break rules because they have to survive – corruption borne out of need, which happens due to the inability of the state to perform its duty of providing the services that it should within the social contract theory framework. Others engage in corruption out of greed – all corrupt people act outside their power by abusing such power. So, corruption is seen as a form of governance deficit.

Understanding and explaining the social construction of corruption in Nigeria is central to understanding its resonance in contemporary social life. This research examined more fully the diversity of social, political, cultural, organisational and economic forces that shape its social construction in society. From the findings, corruption is constructed and framed by the powerful so that those frames will be reproduced in the media. If successful, these “preferred” social definitions are planted in public discourse, where they take root and grow within popular consciousness, ultimately constituting the frames of reference used by news readers to make sense of the issues in their everyday lives. Once the social definitions of the powerful have won popular consent, support may also be won for the measures of control and containment they entail. What became clear is that corrupt behaviour is a human issue involving the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the great and the small, and indeed everyone is susceptible to its seduction because it offers unjustifiably rapid satisfaction and an easy way out of tough circumstances. As a fundamentally divided society, Nigeria's deep-rooted sociopolitical, cultural, religious and economic splits influence profoundly the

nature of corruption inherent in the country. This has important implications for the construction of issues of law and order and, more specifically, the peoples' construction of and social response to corruption and its perpetrators. In more stable social orders, the demonisation of corrupt individuals provides an emotional outlet, a focus not just for those fears and anxieties precipitated by the risk of corruption victimisation, but perhaps also for the insecurities that have become a part of everyday life. In Nigeria, the condemnation of corrupt individuals will create a space within which a moral consensus can flourish, transcending party politics and religious differences and establishing an enemy against which all normal, decent, reasonable people can unite.

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This study examined the social construction of corruption in Abuja, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study addressed issues around identification of activities and actions defined as corrupt practices (a-20 item actions); predisposing factors to corruption, strategies used to execute corrupt practices, people's receptivity to corrupt practices, the role of the media in the social construction of corruption, and how power relations affect corrupt practices.

In order to achieve the objectives, the study was guided by social construction theory. Inspired by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966), the theory emphasises how individuals' interactions with their environment give meanings to otherwise meaningless things, and thus shape reality. It is also concerned with how knowledge is historically situated and embedded in cultural values and practices as they are socially constructed through the coordination of people in their various encounters.

In the application of this theory to the phenomenon of corruption, it is believed that the cultural environment and the concept that "corruption has been institutionalised in the public sector" has reshaped the construction of its reality and manifestations in society. In essence, corrupt practices are seen and constructed as the embodiment of cultural values and practices manifesting either consciously or unconsciously in the sociology of everyday life.

Methodologically, this study employed a cross-sectional survey design with the use of an exploratory sequential design variant. In this plan, a qualitative approach was first adopted in the collection of data, after which the quantitative aspect of the study was conducted.

Abuja was purposively selected as the research setting, based on the high concentration of federal ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs). After the purposive selection of Abuja, three Local Area Councils (LACs) were randomly selected out of the six LACs in the city. Thereafter, a total of 1 300 respondents was sampled using Yamane's sample size determination formula. Following this selection, systematic sampling was used to proportionately administer a structured questionnaire to respondents (aged ≥ 18 years) in the selected study areas: Abuja Municipal (438), Bwari (433) and Gwagwalada (429) LACs respectively.

The study complemented the quantitative aspects with qualitative tools. Eighteen key informant interviews were conducted, with lawyers (6), judges (6) and law enforcement agents (6); 32 in-depth interviews were conducted with community leaders (8), civil society officials (8), lecturers (8) and elected politicians (8). Additionally, 18 focus group discussions were held with students (3), journalists (3), lawyers (6) and contractors (6). Analytically, the quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Chi-square at $p \leq 0.05$, while the qualitative data were content-analysed using NVIVO software.

In summarising the findings from the study, it was found that respondents' age was 34.87 ± 10.82 years. The majority of the respondents were male. Findings indicated that more than half of the respondents were married or cohabiting. Two-thirds had completed their tertiary education, and only a few of them had no formal education. The occupational distribution of the respondents revealed that they were both public and private sector employees. More than half had stayed in the city for ten years or more. The ethnic composition comprised of the northern minority, Igbo, Yoruba, southern minority and Hausa. Two-thirds of the respondents resided in the urban, semi-urban and slum areas. More than half of the respondents earned above ₦70,001.00 as average monthly income, while the least earned below ₦30,000.00.

Findings also indicated that all of the following were defined as corrupt practices by the majority of respondents: acceptance of a gift by officers before service delivery to the offerer; acceptance of gift items by officers after service delivery to the offerer; acceptance of pay-off for service delivery; acceptance of tips in cash or kind for service delivery by

officers before service delivery and acceptance of a promise to be rewarded by officials before service delivery. From the qualitative responses, corruption has both cultural and legal definitions. However, it has been summarised that corruption is a major or slight redesign of what one ought to do or has taken responsibility for. This entails carrying out actions in a manner that deviates from the normal process to benefit from the crooked paths by those who do not see the deviations as corrupt actions.

On the factors that predisposed people to corruption, it was discovered that the majority perceived corruption as highly negative, compared to only a few who stated that it is less negative. Thus greed, poverty and weak anti-corruption laws predisposed people to corrupt practices. Other factors predisposing people to corrupt practices include lack of fear of God, community or family pressure and peer pressure. Likewise, poor enforcement of anticorruption laws, party politics, loopholes in government financial systems and compatibility of Nigerian cultures with corruption were the reasons that political appointees and public office holders largely engage in corrupt practices.

Additionally, it was also discovered from the non-numerical approach that some cultural gestures and gift-giving practices affect people's perceptions about corruption, while also serving as predisposing factors for corrupt practices – although, depending on the context of its presentation, these values include the norm of appreciation and offering gift items to people in either official or unofficial relationships. From the foregoing, respondents and participants identified poverty, relative deprivation, get-rich-quick syndrome, greed and avarice, flamboyant lifestyles, weak enforcement of anti-corruption laws, poor leadership, family and other pressures as factors predisposing people to corrupt practices in Abuja.

On the strategies used to execute corrupt activities, findings revealed the “use of long leg” to the “use of bottom power”, “chop I chop”, “scratch my back I scratch your back”, “kickbacks” in the awarding of contracts and offering of gift items before or after service delivery. Rendering unofficial services to a superior in exchange for a favour, recommendations from very important personalities popularly known as VIPs, direct monetary reward in exchange for a favour, outright stealing of public funds/property and

short-changing staff/employees' salaries/wages were all strategies used to execute corrupt activities.

Direct conversion of public funds/property to private use, distortions of financial records, charging unauthorised fees, excessive auctioning of government property, diversion of employees' salaries and allowances to personal use, payment of ghost workers, demands for favours or advantage (such as sex) before official services are rendered, godfatherism in politics, exam malpractices and offering financial aid to support politicians were among the strategies used to execute corrupt activities. Covert measures – such that only those involved in the acts would understand the actions – through “connections” popularly known as “long leg”, bending the rule, seeking favour from the person who needs assistance, doctoring documents, gift money and exchange of gifts during the festive period constituted the strategies used to execute corrupt actions.

On how normative gestures determine people's receptivity to corrupt practices, it was found that more than two-third of the respondents indicated that the culture of gift-giving fostered corruption in Nigeria. Granting loans or doing favours by individuals affects the way officials and people treat official dealings. Indeed, the culture of presenting gift items as a form of appreciation has become a very strong factor that influences people's receptivity to corrupt actions, to the extent that those who do not have the means to even engage in corrupt practices strive to get it so they can improve their lot. A majority of respondents agreed that paying a fine in lieu of jail term encouraged rather than discouraged corruption.

On the roles of the media in the social construction of corruption, it was discovered that while some of the media reports revealed that corruption was not something to worry about, as the magnitude of the offence or crime was watered down, others shied away from accurately reporting corrupt practices by people in higher authorities. In fact, many of the corrupt cases go unreported or under-reported by the media. On the whole, biased reportage of corruption allegations and indeed media trials have destroyed people, reputations, dignities, careers and businesses. Among other factors, the fear of sanctions of media houses by the National Broadcasting Commission – the regulatory body of the media houses – is a critical factor influencing the reconstruction of corruption.

On how power relations moderate corrupt practices, it was found that the law of the land, the high and mighty in society and the culture, among others, were responsible for framing actions and activities as corrupt practices when power dynamics is considered in corrupt practices. Also, political power, especially of those with immunity on the grounds of political power, wields greater potency in power relations than economic power. This is because immunity allows impunity and shields political power holders from prosecution, unlike those with economic power. Political and economic power, on the other hand, are interwoven in the sense that people with political power can access economic power and use it to sway rules in their favour, which is a form of corruption.

5.2 Conclusion

Of significance is the finding that even though two-third of the respondents reported that they would still consider an activity as corrupt even if they were direct beneficiaries, a few of them that indicated they would not consider the act corrupt if they benefitted from it directly. This is instructive, because even politically exposed persons standing trial or convicted for corruption often argue that the material facts upon which they were accused, charged, tried and convicted are not correct, and so they do not see themselves as corrupt. From the constructionist perspective, one cannot deny other peoples' reality; one can only build on it. Therefore, juxtaposing alternative facts with the findings in this study reveals that most corrupt individuals seem to live in a completely different moral universe, as it appears that corruption has blocked their sense of propriety. Corruption, for many people, is simply a special-purpose vehicle or tool for doing business. It is a higher form of competition. By and large, corruption in Nigeria is a social practice. This is because people's corrupt practices are motivated by what they think other people think, believe, and approve of or disapprove of. The culture of gift-giving, often used to mask bribes, also establishes social bonds that help secure informal networks for people. Corruption and these normative practices are therefore not seen as opposites. In conceptualising and crafting anti-corruption laws, emphasis should be placed on informal forms of normative ordering, such as values, gift-giving and the like, to be able to capture the multiple leeway exploited by corrupt individuals.

The construction of corruption is influenced by many biases such as news, media, selective attention, social desirability, levels of education, and other cultural, economic and political factors. Again, the social construction of corruption is linked to the systemic character of greed, poverty, insufficient enforcement of anti-corruption laws, people's indifference and family pressures. As a result, corruption has become endemic to the point where activities defined as corrupt have come to be institutionalised across federal ministries, departments and agencies, owing to the interplay of power relations between the powerful and the powerless seekers of public services. Indeed, the power struggle between these groups has spread to the media, where the media is being used to deconstruct corruption so that what should be is no longer the case. In other words, the interplay of power between authorities and the media has been used to cover up the opacity of the system. This makes the public helpless, as standing up to corruption is scary. The seeming helplessness then leads to indifference, which is a major breeding ground for both the corruption of greed and of the need to grow. The normalisation of corruption, as the study found, is linked to a number of rationalisation techniques such as moral licensing, lack of social trust, scarcity, and optimism about getting away with the act, among other loopholes. Leaders who should tackle corruption are themselves beneficiaries of dirty money. As a construct, corruption is a social practice which will continue insofar as corrupt individuals who have done no business other than hold public office and stolen public funds are celebrated and sometimes even worshipped instead of being vilified and scorned, particularly in a Nigeria where government remains the only big business.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following are some recommendations:

1. There is an urgent need to carefully reorganise the over-centralised structure of Nigeria to enable individuals and ethnic nationalities to have a sense of ownership of the resources therein. Therefore, the restructuring should emphasise a derivation principle, whereby a large percentage of all federal collectible revenues from natural resources should be given back to the sub-nationals from where they are extracted. This will lead

to a deconstruction and reconstruction of corruption as people do not usually steal their own belongings.

2. Alternatively, each state, region or geopolitical zone of the country should be constitutionally empowered to explore their mineral and agricultural resources, with a view to developing an economic value-chain from them, and pay royalties to the central government. This will deconstruct the cake-sharing-philosophy of the current over-centralised federal structure and focus on wealth creation.
3. To effectively fight corruption of need, governments must address factors such as poverty, poor remuneration of workers and the lack of social security which predisposed people to corrupt practices, by prioritising welfare and incentives for public officials and the citizenry to encourage them to be upright and patriotic.
4. In order to fight the corruption of greed, governments at all levels should develop a Revenue Assurance Solution (RAS) to monitor revenue with a view to blocking leakages in the computation and collection processes, as well as ensuring that revenues generated are accurately tracked, analysed and used for the benefit of the whole country.
5. Anti-corruption agencies (ACAs) must not only be proactive but must also swiftly investigate and prosecute those culpable for corrupt practices. And to be effective, there is also need to constitutionally designate special courts to expeditiously try corruption cases which impinge on national development.
6. The National Orientation Agency and other relevant stakeholders should embark on a re-orientation campaign as well as enlightenment on the effect of debased values in the country. The campaign should highlight the core value of the Nigerian society such as discipline, honesty, hard work, loyalty, truthfulness and accountability, which will ultimately lead to a deconstruction and reconstruction of corruption in the country.

5.4 Contributions to knowledge

The following are some of the areas where this research has contributed to the advancement of sociological knowledge:

1. This study has made a significant contribution to the developing understanding of corruption, since it has supplied the social reality of comprehending its development from a sociological perspective, which was hitherto under-explored.
2. This research has contributed to methodological approaches in the study of social research because it developed a 20-item actions, which is a novel toolkit for identifying corrupt activities and actions and which used an exploratory sequential research design, which has not previously been explored in earlier studies.
3. This study has contributed to expanding discussions on social construction of reality inspired by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann.
4. This work established a profile of corruption disaggregated by types as it discovered that greed, poverty and shabby implementation of anticorruption laws predisposed people to corrupt behaviour and influenced how they construct corruption. Put pointedly, two types of corruption exist – that of greed and that of need, with different causes and effects. This disaggregated profile of corruption has generated suggestions for effective anti-corruption reforms and programmes.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

The following topics for future research on corruption are suggested:

1. The scope of the research on social construction of corruption in Nigeria should be expanded to cover the six geopolitical zones of the country.
2. A comparative study should be conducted in Nigeria to examine the disparities in sanctions meted out to offenders who commit corrupt acts in public and private sectors.
3. In-depth research on the consequences of power relations in the construction of corruption in Nigeria should be conducted.

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APPENDIX I

Social Construction of Corruption in Nigeria

Introduction and Informed Consent Form

Dear Ma/Sir.

I am conducting a PhD study on Social Construction of Corruption in Nigeria. A very important component of this process involves interviewing systematically selected individuals to understand the issues. You are being interviewed because you are one of the systematically selected people to participate in this process. I ask for your understanding and confidential commitment to take quality time to complete this questionnaire/instrument with great dispassionate detail and accord it the importance it requires. All responses will be treated with extreme confidentiality and discretion. This is certainly why we do not need names of respondents on the questionnaire/instrument.

Thank you for taking time to respond to the questionnaire/instrument.

Instructions for completing the instrument

Dear respondent, you will notice there are two types of questions on this instrument:

1. Questions with options (Close-ended questions)
2. Questions without options (Open-ended questions).

For the Close-ended questions, please circle the codes (in the fourth column) that represent your preferred/chosen options.

For the Open-ended questions, please write your actual responses as exhaustively as possible in the blank spaces provided across the questions.

Section A: Respondents' Socio-Demographic Background

Module	Question	Response	Codes	Comments
101	Please, what is your age as at last birthday?		Actual	
102	What is your Sex	Male Female	1 2	
103	Marital Status	Married /cohabiting Separated/divorced Single Widow/Widower Others please specify -----	1 2 3 4 99	

104	Highest Level of Education	No formal education Primary not completed Completed primary Secondary not completed Secondary school completed Tertiary not completed Tertiary Completed Others (Please Specify)-----	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 99	
105	Please what is your Profession/Occupation?	Student Civil servant Self-employed Lawyer Judge Policeman Prison Official Traditional Title Holder Religious Leader Civil Society Official Doctor Unemployed Teacher Social Worker Politician Lecturer Media Person Others please specify-----	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 99	
106	For how long have you been in this State? Indicate years or months		Actual.	
107	Ethnic Group	Yoruba Igbo Hausa Ilaje Fulani Ijaw Gwari Awori Tiv Efik/Ibibio Kanuri Others specify-----	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 99	
108	How best can you classify your residential area?	Slum settlement Semi-urban Urban	1 2 3	
109	Average of how much do you earn as income per month? (RAs to help in accurate calculation/estimation)		Actual	

Section B: Identify activities/actions people defined as corrupt practices

201. What activities do you think are regarded as corrupt practices based on the following?

	Statement	Corrupt	Not Corrupt	Don't know
a.	Acceptance of gift items by officers before service delivery to the offerer	()	()	()
b.	Acceptance of gift items by officers after service delivery to the offerer	()	()	()
c.	Acceptance of pay-off for service delivery	()	()	()
d.	Acceptance of tips in cash or kind for service delivery by officers before service delivery	()	()	()
e.	Acceptance of a promise to be rewarded by officials before service delivery	()	()	()
f.	Acceptance of a promise to be rewarded by officials after service delivery	()	()	()
g.	Acceptance of fee/commission before service delivery by officers	()	()	()
h.	Acceptance of fee/commission or fee/commission after service delivery by officers	()	()	()
i.	Acceptance of kick-backs from contract awarded	()	()	()
j.	Falsification of financial records by officers	()	()	()
k.	Falsification of certificates for promotion/appointment	()	()	()
l.	Stealing of public funds or property by officers	()	()	()
m.	Undue conversion of public funds/property to personal use by officers	()	()	()
n.	Preferential treatment of people by office holders in official service delivery	()	()	()
o.	Acceptance of fee/commission before consideration for employment/appointment and promotion	()	()	()
p.	Acceptance of fee/commission after consideration for employment/appointment and promotion	()	()	()
q.	Diversions of public funds to unbudgeted projects	()	()	()
r.	Using official time for personal business	()	()	()
s.	Using official car for personal trips and errands	()	()	()
t.	Reporting to work late and closing before official time	()	()	()

Module	Question	Response	Codes	Comments
202	How do you come to understand the activities indicated in Q201 as corrupt or not corrupt?	Through interaction (Externalisation) Through habitual things (Objectification) Through what we believe	1 2 3	

		<i>(Internalisation)</i>		
203	Are the activities indicated in Q201 a BIG problem in the Area Council where you live?	Yes No Not sure	1 2 3	
204	Are the activities indicated in Q201 big problem in Nigeria?	Yes No Not sure	1 2 3	
205	Please give reason(s) for your response in Q203 above.		Actual	
206	If some or all the activities indicated in Q201 are totally eradicated from Nigeria, the country will not function well.	Yes, I agree No, I disagree Not sure	1 2 3	
207	Please explain your response in Q205 above.		Actual	
208	Do you think the corrupt practices can ever be eliminated in Nigeria?	Yes No Not sure	1 2 3	
209	Do you think corruption should be eliminated from Nigeria?	Yes No Not sure	1 2 3	
210	Please explain your response in Q208 above.		Actual	

Section C: Factors that predispose people to corrupt practices

301. What is your viewpoint on the following identified actions or activities based on the environment you live in? Please indicate by ticking corrupt if you think the action in the statement is an act of corruption; not corrupt if you think it is not an act of corruption or Uncertain if you are not sure.

	Statement	Corrupt	Not corrupt	Don't know
i.	Acceptance of gift items by officers before service delivery to the offerer	()	()	()
ii.	Acceptance of gift items by officers after service delivery to the offerer	()	()	()
iii.	Acceptance of pay-off for service delivery	()	()	()
iv.	Acceptance of tips in cash or kind for service delivery by officers before service delivery	()	()	()
v.	Acceptance of a promise to be rewarded by officials before service delivery	()	()	()
vi.	Acceptance of a promise to be rewarded by officials after service delivery	()	()	()
vii.	Acceptance of fee/commission before service delivery by officers	()	()	()

viii.	Acceptance of fee/commission or fee/commission after service delivery by officers	()	()	()
ix.	Acceptance of kick-backs from contract awarded	()	()	()
x.	Falsification of financial records by officers	()	()	()
xi.	Falsification of certificates for promotion/appointment	()	()	()
xii.	Stealing of public funds or property by officers	()	()	()
xiii.	Undue conversion of public funds/property to personal use by officers	()	()	()
xiv.	Preferential treatment of people by office holders in official service delivery	()	()	()
xv.	Acceptance of fee/commission before consideration for employment/appointment and promotion	()	()	()
xvi.	Acceptance of fee/commission after consideration for employment/appointment and promotion	()	()	()
xvii.	Diversion of public funds to unbudgeted projects	()	()	()
xv.	In general, what is your view about some of the corrupt practices stated above in Nigeria?			

Module	Question	Response (Multiple choice)	Codes	Comments
302	Most of the officials/people who engage in corrupt practices are as a result of:	Poverty Greed Weak laws	1 2 3	
303	Which one would also add that will result in a cause of corrupt practices among corrupt officials/people?	Lack of fear of God Community/family pressure Peer pressure Other factors (specify)	1 2 3 4	
304	Some of the political office appointees and public office holders engage in corrupt practice largely due to:	Porous government financial systems Poor enforcement of anticorruption laws Politicking of anticorruption systems Party politics Compatibility of Nigerian cultures with corruption Influence of traditional institutions Peer pressure Others (specify)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	
305	If an act is practiced without knowing the law, we cannot say that the person who performed the action is corrupt?	Yes, that is correct No, that is not correct	1 0	
306	If an act benefits me directly, I cannot consider it corrupt.	That is true That is not correct	1 0	

Section D: Strategies used to execute corrupt activities

401. What strategies do you think people/officials employ to execute corrupt practices listed in Q201 based on the following? Tick yes (✓) if agreed with each of the strategies and tick no (✓) if disagreed or don't know (✓) if uncertain.

	Statement	Yes	No	Don't know
i.	Use of 'long leg'	()	()	()
ii.	Use of bottom power	()	()	()
iii.	Use of 'chop, I chop'	()	()	()
iv.	Use of 'scratch my back' I scratch your back'	()	()	()
v.	Use of 'kickback' in the award of contracts	()	()	()
vi.	Offering of gift items before or after service delivery	()	()	()
vii.	Rendering of unofficial services to the superior in exchange for favour	()	()	()
viii.	Recommendations from VIPs	()	()	()
ix.	Direct monetary reward in exchange for favour	()	()	()
x.	Outright stealing of public funds/property	()	()	()
xi.	Short-change of staff/employees salaries	()	()	()
xii.	Direct conversion of public funds property to private use	()	()	()
xiii.	Distortions of financial records	()	()	()
xiv.	Charging of unauthorised fees	()	()	()
xv.	Excessive auctioning of government property	()	()	()
xvi.	Diversion of employees' salaries and allowances to personal use	()	()	()
xvii.	Payment of ghost workers	()	()	()
xviii.	Demand for favour or advantage (such as sex) before official services are rendered	()	()	()
xix.	God-fatherism in politics	()	()	()
xx.	Exam malpractices	()	()	()
xx.	Offering of financial aids to support politicians	()	()	()

Section E: Normative gestures and people's receptivity to corrupt practices

Module	Question	Response	Codes	Comments
501	Do you think the culture of gift-giving rituals foster corruption in Nigeria?	Yes No	1 0	
502	Do you think granting of loans affect the way officials/people treat to official dealings that affect you?	Yes No	1 0	

503	Do you think membership of a particular religious sect influence official activities in a way?	Yes No	1 0	
504	Please, give reasons to your answer in Q503.			
502	How do you perceive the saying that 'corruption has been institutionalised' in government agencies and parastatals?	Positively Negatively Uncertain	1 2 3	
503	How do you perceive the payment of fines in lieu of jail of corrupt officials?	Positively Negatively Uncertain	1 2 3	
504	Do you think the saying that 'corruption has been institutionalised' in government agencies and parastatals is?	True Not true Uncertain		
505	Do you think payment of fines in lieu of jail term by corrupt officials encourages or discourage corrupt practices?	Encourage corruption Discourage corruption Uncertain		

Section F: The role of the media in social construction of corruption

Module	Question	Response	Codes	Comments
601	From where do you get your information about corrupt practices you have indicated in 201? YOU MAY CHOOSE MORE THAN ONE CHOICE	Radio Television Newspaper Social media Political meetings Politicians Community meetings Civil society organisations/NGOs Family members Friends/peers Religious leaders/teachings/settings Traditional leaders/rulers Schools Office/markets/workshop/business space/economic settings Actual experience of the practices Others please specify.....	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16	Multiple choice
602	Which of these media do you get more information about corrupt practices mentioned compared to others in Q201?	Radio Television Newspaper Social media Political meetings Politicians	1 2 3 4 5 6	

		Community meetings Civil society organisations/NGOs Family members Friends/peers Religious leaders/teachings/settings Traditional leaders/rulers Schools Office/markets/workshop/business space/economic settings Actual experience of the practices Others please specify.....	7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16	
603	To what extent do you trust the information you received from these sources about corrupt practices?	To some extent To a great extent To a low extent I don't trust the sources at all	1 2 3 4	
604	Give reason(s) for your response in Q603 above?		Actual	
605	Do you think media reportage of corruption cases and allegations in Abuja is:	A Condemnation the actions Sympathetic to the actors Indifference	1 2 3	
606	What comes to your mind when the media report cases of corrupt officials?	True information False information Unbiased information Uncertain	1 2 3 4	

Section G: How power relations affect corrupt practices

Module	Question	Response	Codes	Comments
701	Do you think power such as the powers of a Traffic Police officer to arrest and detain a motorist affect corrupt behaviour and willingness to submit to demand for bribe by the motorists?	Yes No Not sure	1 2 3	
702	Do you think it would be possible for people on the same power relations to extort bribe from their fellows?	Yes No Not sure	1 2 3	
703	Do you think it is possible for a motorist to extort bribe from a policeman or any other person in a higher power relation with him?	Yes No Don't know	1 2 3	
704	Who among two people on an unequal power relationship do you think is more likely to give bribe or be made to	Person in higher power Person in lower power It depends	1 2 3	

	pay bribe			
705	Please give reason(s) if your response in Q704 is it depends			
706	Who frame actions/activities as corrupt practices?	Ruling class The high and mighty in society Ordinary people The law(s) of the land Culture Others, please specify.....	1 2 3 4 5 6	
707	Do actors see actions/activities framed as corrupt behaviour in the same way as those who describe them as such?	Yes No Not sure	1 2 3	

Thank you very much for completing this instrument.

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APPENDIX II

Social Construction of Corruption in Nigeria FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE Introduction and Informed Consent Form

Good Morning Ma/Sir.

I am conducting a PhD study on 'Social Construction of Corruption in Nigeria.' A very important component of this process involves interviewing selected individuals to understand the issues. You are being included in the discussion because you are one of the people purposively selected to participate in this process. I request for your understanding and confidential commitment to take quality time to respond to the questions with great dispassionate detail and accord it the importance it requires in the discussion. All responses will be treated with extreme confidentiality and discretion. This is certainly why I do not need names of participants for any reason.

Thank you for taking time to participate in this interview/discussion

Moderator's Name.....

Time..... Date.....

Location of Interview/Discussion.....

Background information of the participant:

Group of people in the discussion

Sex/gender of people in the discussion

Local Government Areas.....

Age group of the participants

Section A: Identify activities/actions people define as corrupt practices

1. Can anyone explain what we mean by corruption?

Probe for:

- a. Cultural viewpoint of corruption;
- b. Corruption from the law perspectives.

2. What are the activities people defined as corruption?

Probe for:

- a. Bribery
- b. Fraud
- c. Extortion

- d. Embezzlement and misappropriation of fund
 - e. Nepotism/favouritism
 - f. Other forms of corrupt practices.
3. When do these activities become corrupt practices?

Probe for:

- a. Timing of its perpetration (e.g. acceptance of gift items by officers)
 - b. Reasons for the responses you gave
4. How do people perceive corrupt practices you have described earlier?

Probe for:

- a. People's reaction to corrupt practice
- b. Beliefs about corruption as a way of life

Section B: Factors predisposing people to corrupt practices

5. Why do you people engage in corrupt practices?

Probe for:

- a. Poverty
- b. Greed
- c. Institutional/organisational culture
- d. Existing laws
- e. Participation in politics
- f. Other predisposing factors

Section C: Strategies used in executing corrupt practices

6. How do people perpetrate corrupt practices you previously mentioned?

Probe for:

- a. Long leg
- b. Gift in cash or kind
- c. Kickback
- d. Stealing
- e. Falsification of records
- f. Conversion public property to personal use
- g. Other strategies used

Section D: How normative gestures determine people's receptivity to corrupt practices,

7. How do you see the culture of gift-giving rituals in Nigeria generally, in your own view?

Probe for:

- a. The motive of the gift
- b. Appreciation
- c. Other cultural practices influencing corrupt practices

Section E: The role of the media in social construction of corruption

8. What roles are the media playing any role in the construction of corruption? Please give reasons for your response.

Section F: How power relations affect corrupt practices

9. In what way(s) do you think power relations (both symmetrical and asymmetrical) affect corrupt practices?

Probe for:

- a. Decision making power
- b. Economic power
- c. Political power
- d. Social and religious power
- e. Other forms of power relations

APPENDIX III

Social Construction of Corruption in Nigeria IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE Introduction and Informed Consent Form

Good Morning Ma/Sir.

I am conducting a PhD study on ‘Social Construction of Corruption in Nigeria.’ A very important component of this process involves interviewing selected individuals to understand the issues. You are being interviewed because you are one of the people purposively selected to participate in this process. I request for your understanding and confidential commitment to take quality time to respond to the questions with great dispassionate detail and accord it the importance it requires. All responses will be treated with extreme confidentiality and discretion. This is certainly why I do not need names of participants.

Thank you for taking time to participate in this interview/discussion

Moderator’s Name.....
Time..... Date.....
Location of Interview/Discussion.....

Background information of the participant:

Profession.....
Religion.....
Sex/gender.....
Ethnic group.....
Marital Status.....
Local Government Areas.....
Age.....

Section A: Identify activities/actions people define as corrupt practices

1. Please, explain what you understand by corruption?

Probe for:

- a. How the law defines corruption to be;
 - b. How the people define corruption to be;
 - c. Cultural viewpoint of corruption.
2. What are the activities people defined as corruption?

Probe for:

- a. Bribery
 - b. Fraud
 - c. Extortion
 - d. Embezzlement and misappropriation of fund
 - e. Nepotism/favouritism
 - f. Other forms of corrupt practices.
3. When do activities become corrupt practices?

Probe for:

- a. Timing of its perpetration (e.g. acceptance of gift items by officers)
 - b. Reasons for the responses you gave
4. How do people perceive corrupt practices you have described earlier?

Probe for:

- a. People's reaction to corrupt practice
- b. Beliefs about corruption as a way of life

Section B: Factors predisposing people to corrupt practices

5. In your own view, why do you think people engage in corrupt practices, especially in public services?

Probe for:

- a. Poverty
- b. Greed
- c. Institutional/organisational culture
- d. Existing laws
- e. Participation in politics
- f. Other predisposing factors

Section C: Strategies used in executing corrupt practices

6. How do people perpetrate corrupt practices you previously mentioned?

Probe for:

- a. Long leg
- b. Gift in cash or kind
- c. Kickback
- d. Stealing
- e. Falsification of records

- f. Conversion public property to personal use
- g. Other strategies used

Section D: How normative gestures determine people's receptivity to corrupt practices,

7. How do you see the culture of gift-giving rituals in Nigeria generally, in your own view?

Probe for:

- a. The motive of the gift
- b. Appreciation
- c. Other cultural practices influencing corrupt practices

Section E: The role of the media in social construction of corruption

8. What roles are the media playing any role in the construction of corruption? Please give reasons for your response.

Section F: How power relations affect corrupt practices

9. In what way(s) do you think power relations (both symmetrical and asymmetrical) affect corrupt practices?

Probe for:

- a. Decision making power
- b. Economic power
- c. Political power
- d. Social and religious power
- e. Other forms of power relations

APPENDIX IV

Social Construction of Corruption in Nigeria KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE Introduction and Informed Consent Form

Good Morning Ma/Sir.

I am conducting a PhD study on ‘Social Construction of Corruption in Nigeria.’ A very important component of this process involves interviewing selected individuals to understand the issues. You are being interviewed because you are one of the people purposively selected to participate in this process. I request for your understanding and confidential commitment to take quality time to respond to the questions with great dispassionate detail and accord it the importance it requires. All responses will be treated with extreme confidentiality and discretion. This is certainly why I do not need names of participants.

Thank you for taking time to participate in this interview/discussion

Moderator’s Name.....

Time..... Date.....

Location of Interview/Discussion.....

Background information of the participant:

Profession.....

Religion.....

Sex/gender.....

Ethnic group.....

Marital Status.....

Local Government Areas.....

Age.....

Section A: Identify activities/actions people define as corrupt practices

1. Please, explain what corruption is in your view/opinion?

Probe for:

- a. How the law defines corruption to be;
- b. How the people define corruption to be;
- c. Cultural viewpoint of corruption.

2. What are the activities people defined as corruption?

Probe for:

- a. Bribery
 - b. Fraud
 - c. Extortion
 - d. Embezzlement and misappropriation of fund
 - e. Nepotism/favouritism
 - f. Other forms of corrupt practices.
3. From your experience/knowledge of Nigeria, when do activities become corrupt practices?

Probe for:

- a. Timing of its perpetration (e.g. acceptance of gift items by officers)
 - b. Reasons for
4. How do people perceive corrupt practices you have described earlier?

Probe for:

- a. People's reaction to corrupt practice
- b. Beliefs about corruption as a way of life

Section B: Factors predisposing people to corrupt practices

5. In your own view, why do you think people engage in corrupt practices, especially in public services?

Probe for:

- a. Poverty
- b. Greed
- c. Institutional/organisational culture
- d. Existing laws
- e. Participation in politics
- f. Other predisposing factors

Section C: Strategies used in executing corrupt practices

6. How do people perpetrate corrupt practices you previously mentioned?

Probe for:

- a. Long leg
- b. Gift in cash or kind
- c. Kickback
- d. Stealing

- e. Falsification of records
- f. Conversion public property to personal use
- g. Other strategies used

Section D: How normative gestures determine people's receptivity to corrupt practices,

7. What is your view on the culture of gift-giving culture in Nigeria generally?

Probe for:

- a. The motive of the gift
- b. Appreciation
- c. Other cultural practices influencing corrupt practices

Section E: The role of the media in social construction of corruption

8. Do you think the media including social media play any role in the construction of corruption? Please give reasons for your response.

Section F: How power relations affect corrupt practices

9. In what way(s) do you think power relations (both symmetrical and asymmetrical) affect corrupt practices?

Probe for:

- a. Decision making power
- b. Economic power
- c. Political power
- d. Social and religious power
- e. Other forms of power relations

APPENDIX V

ABRIDGED REPORT OF THE PILOT STUDY ON SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

Introduction

The study was focused on understanding the objectives of the study which includes; people's construction of corruption, activities that are defined as "corrupt", what factors predispose people to corruption, and lastly, the strategies deployed used in carrying out corrupt practices.

Data Collection

To guide the development of research instrument, a pilot study on Social Construction of Corruption was carried out in Ibadan. Qualitative data was elicited through 3 In-depth Interview, 4 key informant interview and two Focus Group Discussions. The quantitative data was collected using a semi-structured questionnaire. Seventy (70) questionnaires were self-administered with the assistance of two research assistants, out of which sixty-nine (69) copies of the questionnaires were retrieved and that formed the basis of the presentation and analyses of data.

Data Analysis: Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

This section dealt with the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Their age, gender, marital status, highest level of education, occupation, how long they have lived in their residential area, ethnicity and the average amount of monthly income of the respondents were ascertained in this section. Table 1 below showcases socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variables	Frequency (n=69)	Percentage (%)
Age as at last birthday		
18 – 27	13	18.8%
28 – 37	31	44.9%
38 – 47	17	24.6%
48 and above	8	11.7%
Gender		
Male	46	66.7%
Female	23	33.3%
Marital Status		
Married / Cohabiting	39	56.6%
Single	29	42.0%
Widow/Widower	1	1.4%
Highest Level of Education		
No formal education	1	1.4%
Secondary school completed	2	2.9%
Tertiary not completed	5	7.3%
Tertiary completed	61	88.4%
Profession / Occupation		
Student	11	15.9%
Civil servant	25	36.2%
Self employed	13	18.8%
Lawyer	4	5.8%
Policeman	1	1.4%
Traditional Title Holder	1	1.4%
Religious Leader	2	2.9%
Civil Society Official	1	1.4%
Unemployed	4	5.8%
Teacher	2	2.9%
Lecturer	2	2.9%
Animal Health Technologist	1	1.4%
Marketing	1	1.4%
How long have you been in this state?		
0 – 9	28	40.6%
10 – 19	7	10.3%
20 – 29	9	13.0%
30 – 39	11	15.9%
40 – 49	11	15.9%
50 and above	3	4.3%
Ethnic Group		
Yoruba	49	71.3%
Igbo	7	10.3%
Hausa	2	2.9%
Ijaw	1	1.4%
Tiv	1	1.4%
Efik / Ibibio	3	4.3%
Nupe	1	1.4%
Anyima	1	1.4%
Ikwerre	1	1.4%
Nyandang	1	1.4%
Ron	1	1.4%
Urhobo	1	1.4%

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The result shows that 18.8% of the respondents are between the ages of 18-27years, 44.9% of them falls within the age bracket of 28-37years, 24.6% of the respondents are within the ages of 38-47 years while 11.7% of them are of ages 48years and above. This result shows that majority (44.9%) of the respondents are of ages within 28-37years. The distribution of the respondents according to their gender shows that 66.7% of the respondents are male, while 33.3% of the respondents are females.

With respect to the marital status of the respondent, 56.5% of the respondents are either married/cohabiting, 42% of the respondents are single while 1.4% of the respondents are widows/widowers. This is an indication that majority (56.5%) of the respondents are married/cohabiting. Taking into consideration, the highest level of education of the respondents; the result shows that 1.4% of the respondents have no formal education. 2.9% of them had completed secondary school, 7.2% of them had not completed tertiary education while 88.4% of them had completed tertiary education. This shows that majority (88.4%) of the respondents have completed their tertiary education.

With respect to the respondents' profession/ occupation, the study shows that 15.9% of the respondents are students. 36.2% of the respondents are civil servant, 18.8% of the respondents are self-employed, 5.8% of the respondents are lawyers, respondents that are Policemen, Animal Health Technologist, Marketing, Traditional Title Holders, or Civil Society Official all had an equal percentage of 1.4% respectively, 2.9% of the respondents are Religious leaders, 2.9% of the respondents are Teachers and another 2.9% are Lecturers, while 5.8% of the respondents are unemployed, this shows that higher percentage (36.2%) of the respondents are civil servants.

With regards to the number of years spent by the respondents in the state, the result shows that 40.6% of the respondents has spent between 0-9years, 10.3% of the respondents has stayed in this state for 10-19years, 13% of the respondents have been in the state between 20-29years in the state, 15.9% of the respondents has spent a period of 40-39 years in the state while 4.3% of the respondents has stayed in the state for 50years or more. The result shows that higher percentage (40.6%) of the respondents has spent a period of 0-9years in the residential areas in the state.

The distribution of the respondents according to their ethnic group shows that 71% of the respondents are Yorubas, 10.1% of the respondents are Igbos, 2.9% of the respondents are Hausas while 4.3% are from Efik/Ibibio, respondents who are natives of Anyimas, Tivs, Ijaws, Ikwerres, Nydandangs, Rons, Urhobos and Nupes had 1.4% respectively. This shows that majority (71%) of the respondents are Yorubas.

The fact that corruption has been absorbed into the national systems and institutions could make it difficult to begin to expunge its different forms of manifestation as it is now considered normal. However it is still explained as an endemic fast replacing the pre-existing norms. An FGD participant relates that there are systems, pathways in the way corrupt activities are practiced while moving from one actor to another.

Sincerely, it is a big problem, corruption is systematic, that is it has a system, sequence, there are stages, steps, pathways that you follow and each stops and takes on by another fellow. Corruption is not just big but also endemic (FGD Male/March 2020).

Corrupt practices are further being encouraged by people who see it as normal and in a way pressure other to conform to this standard instead of joining hands to fight against it. In an example of bribery of policemen on the highway, an FGD participant reiterated that even when drivers do not want to comply, they are encouraged by passengers who believe that it is a better alternative to being delayed;

The driver might not want to give them but passengers will be insulting the driver to give them the money. That means it is the way of life, they made it the way of life. So, in that way now they have seen it as though it is the normal thing but by law, no police man is supposed to collect anything from anybody (FGD Male/March 2020).

Expounding on how corruption has overridden culture, an example of the values of the Yoruba people in parenting and children's education was given to show that corruption has now replaced cultural values of an "omoluabi"- a child that is birthed by God with goodly virtues;

It is a man of virtue that is what Omoluabi means and when we were young, if you go to school and your parent see any strange item with you as a young boy or a young girl, the following day they will take them to where they took that time, you have to return it. You understand but today, you will see some Yoruba who will be doing "Parishe" for their children and they want to cut corner for them to enter university or pass exams. But you can't say but you can't say because they are doing that they are not Yoruba but the Yoruba that I know, if you are going to follow are what Yoruba and how much they place premium on the value. I know that it is difficult. (EFCC official/Male/47 years/KII/March 2020)

Using his own culture as an example, another interviewee asserted that every ethnic group in Nigeria welcomes corruption, however in each of this tribes one would also still find individuals who abstain from corrupt acts, he argued;

My brother, every tribe in Nigeria welcomes corruption. Every tribe, even Ikwere people and it depend on individual. Yes, you might meet an Ikwere person and anything that has to do with corruption and they shun it; you might meet another Ikwere corruption that will value corruption (Police Officer/Male/40 years KII/March 2020).

Sometimes the ethnic group also provides a safe covering for individuals to perform corrupt acts as they have the privileged of ethnic solidarity, a interviewee assert that: *So for me I see it is okay in Nigeria to stay and be corrupt and do some atrocity in your locality, in your region and get away with it than when you are not in you so to say people or tribe (FGD Female/March 2020).*

Activities people consider as Corruption

Corruption is often seen as a behavior played out in different activities. Corrupt activities can be academic, economic or political and it is often a deviation from the normalcy defined by a particular community. Interviewees gave examples of several of these activities as it applies to or as they have observed in their environment. Giving a broad view of corrupt activities, an interviewee explains those observable in the market place, in politics and even in the education institutions;

You know, like I said earlier on, any behaviour, any action that deviate from what is normal and normality now is defined by the community. Any activity be it academic, be it economic, be it political that is the nation, of the society. In Nigeria we have a lot of them, one-in market place we have different measures whereas we have standard measure. You are not even sure of what you are buying whether it is quality or not so you cannot trust what you buy, whether clothes or food items... Now politically- vote buying, vote selling, threatening voters with police, thuggery, all those ones now, ballot box snatching. I am very sure these are not documented and permitted by the law of the land but they do it. Talk about educationally- lecturer threatening students, you know in exchange for marks, so these are not acceptable. Now, other forms of malpractices; cheating in exam (Community Leader/Male/IDI/March 2020)

Activities identifies as corrupt activities by interviewees included Yahoo, examination malpractice, tribalism, favoritism, vote buying, cheating, internet fraud, money laundering, kidnapopointing, bribery, ballot snatching, fraud and going late to work. As defined by one of the interviewees, any action that is geared towards taking undue advantage of the system can be classified as a corrupt activity. He states: *When you are taking undue advantage of the system that is corruption. When you are diverting something that is meant for others, that is corruption (EFCC official/Male/47 years/KII/March 2020).*

Predisposing Factors

This objective sought to understand what factors predisposes or influences people's decision to engage in corrupt practices. It is believed that people engage in corruption because there are no checks and balances, no one is held to the responsibility of doing what is right as those who also ought to uphold the law also dabble in corrupt acts. Interviewees were of the opinion that because there are little or no consequences for corrupt actions, people often allow their greed free expression.

That is a very question. Just like I told to earlier on about the society, when people come together to form a society, whether it is written or unwritten, there must be that thing regulating their behavior. In Nigeria, we call it constitution, law or anything. Something that can be a point of reference that when a behavior is being violated, they can come over and say. That is why traditional rulers, they are custodians of rules and regulations of culture and traditions. So the reason it is like corruption is everywhere is because there is no checks and balances. (Community leader/Male/IDI/March 2020).

Another motivating factor which feeds the act of corruption is greed. This Interviewee also stated that engaging in corrupt practices is a matter of interest as well. While some engage in it to tackle hunger, some others just find it an existing practice to engage in. This interviewee stated that;

Everyone has different opinion, some people know that their act is corrupt and they still do it because they are just interested in it, even those that are not hungry. It is as a result of greed...If they know that government will deal with them, they won't do it (Community Leader/Male/IDI/ March 2020).

Strategies Used to Execute Corrupt Activities

This objective examines the strategies known to interviewees of how corrupt practices are executed as well as the strategies that can be deployed to put a stop to corruption. The strategies identified includes the intentional misinterpretation and manipulation of the law to suit personal purposes as well as using the lack of well laid out organisation structure to one's advantage. The tilting and misinterpretation of the law to favor oneself is a common way of perpetuating corruption in Nigeria. While the law is there to guide and protect all, it is poses no barrier to people who are determined to act in corrupt manner;

Of course, there two ways, lawlessness that is the most prominent way. Where we have laws that are against some behaviors and attitude, people go against it. That is lawlessness. Just moving away from the law, not doing what the laws says. Another one which is subtle, is by making sure, by tilting the law or by misinterpreting the law or confusing the law. Like police people, they are on out road, but by the law they are permitted to do that but they are not permitted to extort. Because they carry fire arms, people must obliged to them. People must give those bribes and other things like that otherwise they will be killed.

So, two ways now, by breaking the law or by manipulating the law.
(Community leader/Male/ IDI/March 2020).

Another strategy deployed in carrying out corrupt practices is the method of paying ghost workers either fuelled by nepotism in which people decide to include members of their family in the pay roll or because of their personal pocket: *Invisible and ghost workers that are paid salaries.* (Community Leader/Male/100years/IDI/March 2020)

The act of robbing Peter to pay Paul is often justified by asserting that one region is more in need than others. This deception is also used in circumstances of a fund allocation where politicians and non-governmental organisations use a particular people to get funds and later divert it to suit personal purposes: *Because you can't use a community name to get so called allocation or project or whatsoever and then you take their project to another community. It is corruption* (FGD Female/March 2020).

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Table 2: Respondents opinion on strategies people use to carry out corruption in Nigeria/how do people perpetrate corruption in Nigeria

How people perpetrate corruption in Nigeria
Abuse of power/office/conspiracy
Approving/awarding contracts to friends and relatives
Lobbing/bribing for contracts/positions/jobs
Embezzlement/siphoning funds/diverting funds into wrong places/stealing public fund for private use/
Padding of budges/over-invoicing/inflating cost of materials in office or market
Nepotism/Favouritism/Putting wrong people at the right place
Giving and receiving bribes/gratifications of all sorts/sex for grade/ position/ inducement/ kickbacks/getting tips/settlements in cash and kind (sex)/
Doing shabby job/low standard contracts/non implementation of contracts
Weak application of set law enforcement agent
Forging of document/manipulations of figures
Gratification
Falsification of truth/false procurements/governmental programmes

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 2 shows that people carries out corruption by abusing power and the office they occupy, by approving and awarding contracts to friends and relatives, by lobbying and bribing for contracts, positions and jobs. Moreover, the strategy used by people to carry out corruption in Nigeria also includes embezzlement, siphoning of funds, and diversion of funds amongst other strategies outline in Table 2.

Ways in which Corruption Affects Development

Interviewees agree that corruption is affecting the development of Nigeria, albeit in different ways. Development to them was defined in terms of good roads, a working democracy, standard health clinics and security. Corruption in Nigeria has however rid us of this type of development. One interviewee stated that the manner in which election of political leaders takes place manifests corruption and other sectors also have these manifestations of corruption;

It has affected us a lot because Nigeria is not making progress and just like the other time, the manifestation of corruption. One, politically the way we select, even political parties, the way they are formed the way they select the leaders who will represent us and the way our elections are conducted, they are faulty. So that is a manifestation of corruption. Now economically- a lot of things are wrong as well, talk about health, talk about transportation, talk about energy, so all these generally, Nigeria is not moving forward, we are just on a spot or possibly regressing (Community Leader/Male/IDI/March 2020).

Money looting which is a common corrupt practice is another way that corruption affects the development of Nigeria as money that ought to be used for the nation are embezzled by individuals for personal use. One of the many things such money could have been used for is to improve road networks. As well, unmet expectations of extra cash by civil servants could alter their commitment to their jobs;

Corruption has affected the Nigeria system badly, for instance, the money released to do road or any other project in the country is wasted by chopping it, and it will affect the country. Also, maybe in the office, because nothing comes after your salary, you do not stay in the office, it will surely affect the work of the office maybe there is a project that should be submitted at an appropriate time and is not ready and many like that (Civil Servant/Female/50 years/KII/March 2020).

Corruption has often been described as the bane of development in most developing countries. This is exemplified even from the point of selecting leaders. In a situation where a leader comes into power by corrupt means e.g. vote buying, ballot box snatching, etc., the capability of such leader to make the right policies that would set the nation on the path for development comes into question. Corruption has also maintained the wide gap between the rich and the poor. This is why a country like Nigeria is tagged the Poverty headquarters of the world. The continual repatriation of loots stored away by past leaders in foreign countries reveals the extent of looting that has been going on for ages while we keep

borrowing from international organisations. Like an interviewee stated, the nation is running on 'Auto-pilot' and yet without direction.

Conclusion

Corruption is seen as normal as well as problematic. The lack of clear-cut decision on corruption being good or bad has affected how it is defined. How do we problematise normality? From responses given, people's belief about corruption is broadly shaped by their environment/culture, religion, political affiliations and the law. Some interviewees believed that corruption in Nigeria has existed as far back as the foundations of the country, yet some are of the opinion that it came with the wave of modernity overriding cultural values. Due to the lack of unity in defining corrupt acts, it is believed that the fight against corruption should be at the individual level and not collectively. This makes it harder to believe that corruption can be stopped at the governmental level when individuals make deliberate efforts to put themselves first. There is also the self-righteousness practiced by people who see corruption as what others do which they do not benefit from. But when the tables are turned, they name such acts as favouritism, ethnic solidarity, gift or tip giving and not the term "corrupt". It seems activities become corrupt when the reporter is one other than the person being termed "corrupt".

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