

**CORRUPT PRACTICES IN THE MEDIA, TRADITIONAL AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS:
A LEGAL PERSPECTIVE***

Abstract

Corruption in Nigeria manifests itself in different ways and occurs at all levels of society. The media, traditional and religious institutions are also negatively affected by corruption and despite numerous laws and policies that are aimed at tackling the menace, corruption still permeates in various forms. Using a doctrinal research methodology, this article examines the concept of corruption, the historical background and the legal framework for combatting corruption. Right from the colonial era, there have been allegations of corrupt practices in Nigeria. The article examines corruption in the media, traditional and religious institutions. The article observes that it is the constitutional duty of the media to hold government accountable by providing information to the public in respect of how corruption permeates into governmental activities and permissible actions to be taken in fighting corruption. It also observes that, despite the immense contributions given by Nigeria's religious leaders in the fight against corruption, some few among them have been accused of converting religion as a channel of corruption. Among other recommendations, this article recommends that anti-corruption efforts are more effective if the media, traditional and religious institutions are actively involved.

Keywords: Corruption, Corrupt Practices, Media, Religious and Traditional Institutions.

1. Introduction

Corruption has been a major problem which permeates almost every institution in Nigeria. Corruption in Nigeria manifests itself in different ways, both on a micro and a macro level, and it occurs at all levels of society.¹ It is also widely accepted that the misappropriation of public funds and assets by corrupt elites has been a major cause of Nigeria's underdevelopment. The media, traditional and religious institutions are also negatively affected by corruption. Despite numerous laws and policies that are aimed at tackling the menace, corruption still permeates in various forms. This article examines the concept of corruption as well as the historical background. In addition, the legal framework for combatting corruption will be briefly addressed before examining corruption in the media, traditional and religious institutions.

2. The Concept of Corruption

Transparency International defines corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.² Corruption has also been defined as an act done with intent to give some advantage inconsistent with official duty and the rights of others.³ It includes bribery, but is more comprehensive; because an act may be corruptly done, though the advantage to be derived from it be not offered by another.⁴ Corrupt practices are often referred to by different terms depending on where, when and how the practice is done. Such terms include kickbacks, to shake hands, to understand, to be wise, kola and brown envelopes. There are statements such as 'our share of the national cake', not minding whether it is obtained fairly, legally and justly or otherwise.⁵ Corrupt practices also manifest themselves in Nigeria in different forms which include bribery, embezzlement, outright looting of public treasury, diverting workers' salary for personal use, insertion of fictitious names on government payroll, auctioning government property to oneself at little or no cost and extortion and over-inflating cost of contract.⁶ Other forms of corruption include demanding, offering or accepting gratification, succumbing to inducement and undue influence and conflict of interests. For instance, the award of contracts by public office holders to cronies, family members, and/or personally held companies, fraud, favouritism, nepotism and tribalism in recruitment/appointment and promotion are all forms of corruption.⁷ Furthermore, actions such as rigging of elections, money laundering, kickback, over invoicing, leaking tender information to friends and relations,

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¹Transparency International, What is corruption? <<https://www.transparency.org/en/what-is-corruption>> Accessed on 26th March 2022.

² Ibid.

³ Legal Dictionary, 'Corruption' <<https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Corruption>> Accessed on 26th March 2022.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Iba Jacob Omenka, 'The Effect of Corruption on Development in Nigeria', *Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* (2013), 15, 6, p.40.

⁶ Abdullahi. Y. Shehu, *Economic and Financial Crimes in Nigeria: Policy, Issues and Options* (Express Image Limited 2006), p. 78; Ogbewere Bankole Ijewereme, 'Anatomy of Corruption in the Nigerian Public Sector: Theoretical Perspectives and Some Empirical Explanations,' <<http://www.uk.sagepub.com/aboutus/openaccess.htm>> Accessed on 26th March 2022. p. 3.

⁷ Ibid.

diversion and misappropriation of funds through manipulation or falsification of financial records; payment for favourable judicial decisions, collection of illegal tolls, commodity hoarding, illicit smuggling of drugs and arms, human trafficking, child labour, illegal oil bunkering, illegal mining, tax evasion, foreign exchange malpractices including counterfeiting of currency, theft of intellectual property and piracy, smuggling, open market abuse, dumping of toxic wastes, and prohibited goods false declarations of assets, advance fee fraud and other deceptive schemes known as Ponzi scheme (419) are all forms of corruption⁸ Additionally, some government officials enjoy prerequisites so excessive that they are widely seen as a form of legalized corruption.⁹

3. Historical Background of Corruption in the Media, Traditional and Religious Institutions

From the colonial era to date, the Nigerian media industry and traditional and religious institutions have been known for leading the fight against corrupt practices. Unfortunately, they have been increasingly enmeshed in allegations of corrupt practices, thereby affecting the integrity of the said institutions. During the colonial era, there were allegations of corrupt practices levelled against both indigenous and foreign media houses as well as Emirs and Chiefs particularly on monies generated from taxes and levies and media houses.¹⁰ In their bid to tame corrupt practices, the colonial administration issued a proclamation prescribing the termination of appointments and jail terms for corrupt officials.¹¹ Nevertheless, during that period, the major traditional anti-corruption institutions such as police and courts were weak, due to their pollution with the same vice they were supposed to fight. This made it necessary for the colonial government to devise other means of fighting corruption.¹² The media industry in Nigeria has equally been enmeshed in several scandals of corrupt related practices during the colonial and post-colonial era. Due to the complexity of the media industry in Nigeria,¹³ there has been a divide between manner of reporting between northern and southern media as well as reportage that is filled with ethnic, regional or religious coloration.¹⁴

The Nigerian media industry which many believed and described as a product of nationalist struggle during colonization and developed through a severe economic condition was said to be one of the reasons which made 'brown envelope' to be prevalent in the industry.¹⁵ Though, the industry is expected to endure and discharge its watchdog role in respect of inter-alia exposing corruption, it is however accused of being complicit.¹⁶ Traditional institutions are headed by Emirs, Chiefs, Obas, Obis etc and are expected play a great role in combating corrupt practices in their respective domains. However, there was a prevalence of corrupt practices during the colonial era in Native Authorities headed by traditional leaders. This necessitated the then Emir of Gwandu on the 26th of February 1952, to move a motion for the need to combat corruption by the colonial administration particularly in Native Authorities.¹⁷ Consequently, the House agreed that bribery and corruption were widely prevalent in all walks of life, and recommended that Native Authorities should make every effort to trace and punish offenders with strict impartiality and also to educate the public on the evil of bribery and corruption.¹⁸ After Nigeria's independence, corruption continued to permeate into the said institutions unabated. In 1962, two years after independence, a British resident of Kano, called M. Cook, wrote a number of confidential letters to Sir Ahmadu Bello Sardauna, Premier of Northern Region, pointing out some financial recklessness and inequities of the Emir

⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 8-9.

⁹ Matthew T. Page, 'A New Taxonomy for Corruption in Nigeria,' <<https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/07/17/new-taxonomy-for-corruption-in-nigeria-pub-76811>> or <<http://justrac.org/a-new-taxonomy-for-corruption-in-nigeria/>> Accessed on 26th March 2022.

¹⁰ Victor Egwemi, Introduction: Conceptualizing Corruption, in Victor Egwemi, (eds), *Corruption in Nigeria Issues, Challenges and Possibilities*, (Aboki Publishers Makurdi 2012), p.11

¹¹ Falola Tunji, Corruption in the Nigerian Public Service 1945-1960, Mbaku James (eds), *Corruption and the Crisis of Institutional Reforms in Africa*, (Edwin Mellen Press Lewiston 1998), p.123.

¹² Nwaodu Nnamdi, Adam David and Okereke Okechukwu, 'A Review of Anti-Corruption Wars In Nigeria' *Journal for Review of Anti-Corruption Wars in Nigeria*, [2015], 1, 1, p.157.

¹³ Muhammad Jameel Yusha'u, 'Reporting Corruption Scandal in Nigeria: Perspectives from Journalists: International Approaches to African Media System', available at: <<https://www.springprofessional.de/en/reporting-corruption-scandal-in-nigeria-perspectives-from-journ/16173864/>> Accessed on 26th March 2022.

¹⁴ *Ibid*.

¹⁵ Toyosi Olugbenga Samson Owolabi and Eamonn O'Neill, 'Recapitalising the Mass Media Industry in Nigeria: The Implication for National Development' *British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, Vol.14 No II (2013), p.248. downloadable at: <<http://www.bjournal.co.uk/BJASS.aspx>>.

¹⁶ Suleiman Amu Suleiman, *Investigative Reporting and Press Coverage of Corruption in Nigeria (1999-2012)*, Being a thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies University of East Anglia, Norwich 2017, p.8.

¹⁷ Nwaodu Nnamdi, Adam David and Okereke Okechukwu, 'A Review of Anti-Corruption Wars In Nigeria' *Journal for Review of Anti-Corruption Wars in Nigeria*, [2015], 1, 1, p. 157.

¹⁸ *Ibid*.

of Kano, Muhammad Sanusi I.¹⁹ Sequel to M. Cook's letters, the Regional Government of Northern Nigeria appointed David Muffett as the Sole Commissioner to start an investigation into the financial practices of the Kano Emirate, calling upon all officials and administrators to send evidence of malpractices. David Muffett's report had finally indicted Emir Sanusi and the indictment led to his compulsory resignation.²⁰

4. The Legal Framework for Combatting Corrupt Practices in Nigeria

Nigeria has a plethora of laws to combat corruption. These include the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) (Establishment) Act 2004²¹ and the Independent Corrupt Practices (and other related offences) Commission (ICPC) Act 2000²². In addition to the above, there are several other laws that address corrupt practices as follows:

- i. Advance Fee Fraud and Other Related Offences Act 2004²³
- ii. Money Laundering (Prohibition) (Amendment) Act 2012²⁴
- iii. Foreign Exchange Act of 1995.
- iv. Miscellaneous Offences Act²⁵
- v. Code of Conduct Act²⁶
- vi. Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative Act²⁷
- vii. Freedom of Information Act 2011²⁸
- viii. Fiscal Responsibilities Act 2010²⁹
- ix. Penal Code Laws of Federation of Nigeria 2004
- x. Criminal Code Law of Federation of Nigeria 2004
- xi. The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency Act (NDLEA) of 1988
- xii. Banks and Other Financial Institutions (Amendment) Act 2004³⁰
- xiii. Failed Banks (Recovery of Debts) and Financial Malpractices in Banks (Amendment) Act 1994

Despite the numerous laws that have been enacted, corruption continues to plague Nigeria with its various forms.

5. The Media

The Media is defined as a collection of different establishments that share the production, publication and distribution of media texts.³¹ Also, media texts can be used to inform, entertain, or promote ideas or products.³² Audiences or viewers can consume media texts in many different formats on a range of platforms, which may either be through traditional media i.e. old media like radio, print and television or modern media such as on-demand content accessed via the internet through digital devices like personal computers and smartphones which gave birth to social media. Through modern media one can download music, surf the internet, watch videos, listen to radio, read newspapers and magazines, and participate in social media pages like Facebook, Twitter etc.³³ Media is also the plural of the word 'medium'; Media are the news and information outlets or tools used to elicit, solicit, store, deliver and disseminate information or data.³⁴ Both old and modern media such as social media have an important role in the fight against corruption in Nigeria, because the Media can demand accountability and transparency from the public and private sectors. Media generally and investigative journalism in particular, play a crucial role in exposing corruption to public and fighting against impunity.³⁵ The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) guaranteed the right of citizens to operate media for dissemination of

¹⁹ He was the head of Kano Native Authority (NA), which was the N. A. that generated highest revenue in the all the northern region.

²⁰ Andrea Brigaglia, 'The Sultan, the Sardauna and the Sufi: Politics and Inter-Tariqa Conflict in Northern Nigeria, 1956-1965,' <https://www.academia.edu/37978094/The_Sultan_the_Sardauna_and_the_Sufi_Politics_and_Inter-Tariqa_Conflict_in_Northern_Nigeria_1956-1965_1> Accessed on 26th March 2022.

²¹ Cap EI LFN 2004.

²² Cap C 31 LFN 2000.

²³ Cap A6 LFN 2004.

²⁴ No 11 of 2011.

²⁵ Cap m17 LFN 2007.

²⁶ Cap c15 LFN 2004.

²⁷ Cap N159 LFN 2004.

²⁸ Cap A 2 LFN 2004.

²⁹ Cap 40 LFN 2014.

³⁰ Cap B3 LFN 2004.

³¹BBC, Industries overview An overview of how different media industries work together. <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zqrdxsg/revision/1>> Accessed on 26th March 2022.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Business Dictionary, 'Media' <<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/media.html>> Accessed on 26th March 2022.

³⁵UNODC, 'The Role of the Media in Fighting Corruption', <<https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/anti-corruption/module-10/key-issues/the-role-of-the-media-in-fighting-corruption.htm>> Accessed on 26th March 2022.

information, ideas and opinions.³⁶ Also, the Constitution under the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles Of State Policy in respect of media provides the role which media is expected to play as follows: ‘The press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this Chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people’.³⁷ From the forgoing, it is the constitutional duty of the media to hold government accountable in respect of its duty, by providing information to public in respect of how corruption permeates into governmental activities and other permissible action capable of fighting corruption.

In Nigeria, many times, media confront and expose unethical conducts or practices and often be the catalyst for investigation and prosecution. For example, former Aviation Minister Stella Oduas’s scandal of opening several bank accounts using her housemaid’s name was exposed by Punch Newspaper and the report led to an investigation by EFCC and subsequently charges were filed against her.³⁸ Also it was the investigation carried out and published by Premium Times that led to the investigation of former Minister of Finance Mrs. Kemi Adeosun and her subsequent resignation on ground of forging the National Youths Service Corps Certificate.³⁹ Moreover, two BBC reports about lecturers in some Nigerian Universities who engaged in ‘sex-for-marks scandal’ and abuse of cough syrup by Nigerian youths, led to the arrest and prosecution of the lecturers involved and then promptly the Federal Ministry of Health imposed restriction on codeine cough syrup importation and production respectively.⁴⁰ The importance of exposing corruption by media cannot be overemphasised. The effects of exposing corruption in the media include: fuelling public outrage at corruption in government, forcing the impeachment and resignation of a corrupt official, prompting formal investigations into corruption, and spurring citizen pressure for the reform of corrupt States etc.⁴¹

On the other hand, social media are considered more widely accessible, and more resistant to top-down control compared to mainstream media. Social media fights corruption by providing information in the form of analysis, commentary and advocacy and through investigations and crowdsourcing.⁴² Social media provides a channel for what is called ‘citizen journalism’ as there are several social media platforms where citizens can provide information on corruption, which is then investigated by government authorities or journalists. Social media may also mobilize public opinion in a way that increases citizen engagement with particular issues and on reaching a certain level, which can lead to uprisings and changes in government, as it occurred in several countries such as Tunisia and Egypt.⁴³ Aside from its importance in the fight against corruption, social media is vulnerable to abuse, which can lead to the sustained spread of disinformation among citizens. In particular, the growing prevalence of false information spread via social media popularly known as ‘fake news’ has become a major threat to public trust in both mainstream and independent media outlets. Fake news is not only used to disseminate incorrect information, but is also often used with malicious intent to, for example, discredit political adversaries by casting doubt on their integrity through weaponized reports alleging corrupt conduct, or to discredit journalists who report cases of corruption accurately.⁴⁴

It is worthy of mention that *individual* citizens may contribute to the fight against corruption by reporting corruption to the authorities or through the media, including social media. Citizens could also engage in supporting and or financing training programmes and sensitization campaigns that aim to create a culture of integrity and zero tolerance for corruption.⁴⁵ Citizens’ refusal to participate in corrupt practices is an important act of resistance. Due to the advancement of technology, new online methods of reporting corruption by citizens have become available. Many anti-corruption agencies now allow reports to be made online by proving platform in their websites enabling citizens to easily report incidents of corruption.⁴⁶

³⁶ CFRN, s 39.

³⁷ Ibid, s 22.

³⁸Punch Newspaper, ‘Exclusive: Former Aviation Minister Stella Oduah Keeps Money in Housemaid’s Accounts,’ <<https://www.punchng.com/exclusive-former-aviation-minister-stella-oduahkeeps-money-in-housemaids-account/%3famp>> Accessed on 26th March 2022.

³⁹Premium Times, ‘Adeosungate Drama, Intrigues that Preceded Kemi Adeosun Resignation’, <<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/283765/adeosungate-drama-intrigues-that-preceded-kemi-adeosun-resignation.html>> Accessed on 26th March 2022.

⁴⁰ BBC News, ‘Nigeria Lecturer Suspended after BBC Africa Eye ‘Sex-for-Grade’ Film,’ <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-49971067>>; BBC News, ‘How Cough Syrup in Nigeria is Creating a Generation of Addicts’, <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-43912282>> Accessed on 26th March 2022.

⁴¹ UNODC, n 35.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ UNODC, n. 35.

⁴⁶ EFCC now has social media platforms where members of public could lay complaint against corrupt practices

Nigerian media like any other institution in the country are equally infested by corruption. 'Brown envelope journalism' is ubiquitous, for both proprietors of media houses and their staff (journalists) who work for them, demanding and accepting cash from politicians or persons whose interest is at stake is a common practice. Over 75 percent of Nigerian journalists interviewed by Al-Jazeera as part of its 2013 survey admitted accepting financial gifts, inoffensively referred to as 'transport money,' 'matter,' 'load,' and 'kola nut.'⁴⁷ It is also a notorious fact that editors and publishers often receive even bigger bribes to manipulate their coverage and quash stories that might embarrass their political patrons.⁴⁸ One gigantic media corruption in Nigeria which was prosecuted by EFCC is Daar Communications Ltd. Daar Communications is the owner of Africa Independent Television (AIT) and Ray-power FM Radio stations across the federation. Its chairman was accused of accepting ₦2.1 billion (\$12.4 million) in 2015 from public funds diverted then for President Goodluck Jonathan's re-election campaign.⁴⁹ Such grand corruption not only erodes press freedoms and fuels media bias; it also sustains many fly-by-night and unscrupulous media houses that rely on 'brown envelope journalism' to stay in business.⁵⁰ Omojola, while analysing the causes of corrupt practices in Nigeria media stated as follows:

Media commercialism does not only hinder journalism practice; it also undermines its integrity. The valid but immoral claim of a typical news organization to break even and make profit on the platform of commercialism has invoked the fortitude of celebrating the sources of advertising incomes. This corporate spirit has found its way into the heart of the typical Nigerian journalist who seems to have caved in to corruption tendencies. The situation is compounded by the fact that many journalists in this country are poorly paid, thereby resulting in this vice of corruption that is demonstrated in the form of bribery and other types of indirectly solicited gifts.⁵¹

Apart from engaging in corruption by some media houses' proprietors and their staff; they are also accused of undermining anti-corruption efforts, especially where politicians, business leaders or corrupt elites are involved. In many cases, media reporting may be biased and used to manipulate citizens to favour corrupt elites.⁵² Some journalists are recruited by Politically Exposed Persons to air favourable media slants or air fabricated syndicated stories to divert public attention and slur investigation and prosecution in order to intimidate judges and to confuse the public from independently weighing the merit or otherwise of the allegation against them.⁵³ However, sometimes, State security agencies fail to protect investigative journalists who expose corruption in government, to the extent that some journalists are either killed or maimed while some are forced to go on exile or maliciously prosecuted at the instance of corrupt government officials.⁵⁴

6. Traditional Institutions

Traditional or tribal leaders are individuals occupying communal political leadership positions sanctified by cultural mores and values, enjoying the legitimacy of particular community and runs the affairs of that community on the basis of legitimacy it derived from tradition.⁵⁵ Traditional leaders are the custodians of culture, custom and costumes of their people. They are considered as the representatives or viceroy of God on earth. Hence, they could not be questioned since God could not be questioned.⁵⁶ They command and enjoy respect and obedience from

⁴⁷Al Jazeera World, 'Bribes and Brown Envelopes: Nigeria's 'Journalists', <<https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/listeningpost/2015/12/bribes-brown-envelopes-nigeria-journalists-151227175941010.html>> Accessed on 26th March 2022 .

⁴⁸ Matthew T. Page, n.9.

⁴⁹ Dasukigate: Dokpesi 'Did No Job for ₦2.1bn received - Witness,' <<http://efccnigeria.org/efcc/news/3121-dasukigate-dokpesi-did-no-job-for-n2-1bn-received-witness>> Accessed on 26th March 2022.

⁵⁰ Matthew T. Page, n 9.

⁵¹Oladokun Omojola, Mass Media Interest and Corruption in Nigeria UNILAG Communication Review Vol. 4, No. 2, August 2010 33 available at: <<http://eprints.covenantuniversity.edu.ng/2494/1/Mass%20Media%20Interest%20and%20Corruption%20in%20Nigeria%20by%20Omojola.pdf>> Accessed on 26th March 2022.

⁵² UNODC, n. 35.

⁵³ Esa O. Onoja, Economic Crimes in Nigeria: Issues and Punishment, (Panaf Press Nigeria, 2018), p. 519.

⁵⁴ Ibid; Jafar Jafar is online media practitioner who exposed Kano State Governor's Engr Abdullahi Umar Ganduje's bribe video and had to flee to United Kingdom after threats to his life. See: Premium Times, 'Journalist Who Exposed Ganduje Bribe Video Flees to UK', <<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/topnews/459073/journalist-who-exposed-ganduje-bribe-video-flees-to-uk.html>>, Accessed on 26th March 2022.

⁵⁵ Benson O. Igboin, 'Traditional Leadership and Corruption in Pre-colonial Africa: How the Past Affects the Present', <http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1017-04992016000300009>, Accessed on 26th March 2022.

⁵⁶ Benson O. Igboin, Traditional Leadership and Corruption in Pre-colonial Africa: How the Past Affects the Present, <http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1017-04992016000300009> Accessed on 26th March 2022

their subjects. Therefore, their role in fighting corruption is very important.⁵⁷ This is because traditional institutions are imperative stakeholders and they have no choice other than to play a key role in preventing and combating corruption.⁵⁸ Traditional leaders are also conferred with functions to perform by various State legislations.⁵⁹ For example, Sokoto State law provides for deducting local government allocations to fund the activities of traditional institutions in the State and their advisory role has been expressly stated by the law.⁶⁰ However, corruption and politics have also permeated these institutions and eroded their capacity to effectively and fully play their role in fighting corruption.⁶¹ Though, traditional rulers are currently dissatisfied with their role and agitate for their inclusion in the constitution by giving them a role to play in governance (other than advisory roles),⁶² they are not above the board when it comes to corrupt practices. In the year 2020, the Emir of Kano, Muhammad Sanusi II (Sanusi Lamido Sanusi) was dethroned for alleged misappropriation of ₦ 3.4 billion from funds of Kano State Emirate Council.⁶³ Also, recently, a district head in Katsina State was sacked for assisting banditry in his domain,⁶⁴ while the Emir of Zurmi had his palace burnt by protesters after accusing him of conniving with bandits in his domain.⁶⁵

7. Religious Institutions

Religious leaders are persons recognised by religious institutions as having some authority within that institution.⁶⁶ In addition, religious leaders are custodians of religion in societies. The power of religion in Nigeria is enormous and its influence on adherents cannot be over-emphasised. Religious leaders have often presented themselves as a strong force who preaches to their followers against corruption.⁶⁷ All religions teach that there are punishments for any person who engages in corrupt practices.⁶⁸ Every religion seeks to be a tool of societal cohesion and purveyor of morality, and equally teaches that act of corruption leads to divisiveness and immorality.⁶⁹ Nigerian Muslims, Christians and followers of other African traditional religions are always conscious of wrath of God or gods who debar them from engaging in corrupt practices.⁷⁰ Thus, religious leaders who are saddled with the responsibility to remind and admonish their followers to be conscious of God are indispensable to the fight against corruption in Nigeria.⁷¹ From the Islamic point of view there are numerous Qur'anic verses and Prophetic traditions in respect of forms and types of corrupt practices recognized by Islam, as well as the religious admonition to corrupt people. Saheed while commenting on forms of corrupt practices in Islam states that:

This, no doubt, gives corruption a wider connotation than its traditional perception as the abuse of public office for private gain. Islam thus sees it as phenomenon emanating from a wide range of abuses including abuse of political, administrative, judicial and cultural powers, these abuses are called different names but all fall under *fasad*. ...rulers, judges, and people in authority as well as the general public are forbidden from engaging in unlawful appropriation of property.⁷²

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ United Nations Economics Commission for Africa, 'Corruption in Local Governance and Traditional Institutions in Africa', <<https://repository.uneca.org/bitstream/handle/10855/23826/b11860091.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>>, p. 9. Accessed on 26th March 2022

⁵⁹ States across the federation have Local Government and Chieftaincy Laws recognising the traditional leaders.

⁶⁰ Local Government Law CAP 82 Vol. III, Laws of Sokoto State, s 73 and 76.

⁶¹ United Nations Economics Commission for Africa, (n. 229).

⁶² Rotimi Ajayi, 'Politics and Traditional Institutions in Nigeria: A Historical Overview', [1992], 29, *Trans-African Journal of History*, 128, available at: <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/24520424>> . Accessed on 26th March 2022

⁶³ Premium Times, Emir Sanusi's Probe: Kano Anti-Corruption Commission Outlines Next Step, <<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/nwest/378900-emir-sanusi-probe-kano-anti-corruption-commission-outlines-next-steps.html>> Accessed on 26th March 2022

⁶⁴ Daily Trust, 'Kankara District Head Sacked 'For Aiding Banditry', <<https://dailytrust.com/kankara-district-head-sacked-for-aiding-banditry>> Accessed on 26th March 2022

⁶⁵ Premium Times, 'Angry Residents Burn Emir's Palace During Protest of Insecurity', <<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/nwest/464721-angry-residents-burn-emirs-palace-during-protest-of-insecurity.html>> Accessed on 26th March 2022

⁶⁶ Definition Net, 'What does Religious Leader Mean?', <<http://www.definition.net/definition/religious+leaders/>> Accessed on 26th March 2022

⁶⁷ J. J. Oragun, The Role of Religious Leaders in the Anti-Graft War in Nigeria, in Corruption in Nigeria Issues, Challenges and Possibilities, in Victor Egwemi, (eds), *Corruption in Nigeria Issues, Challenges and Possibilities*, (Aboki Publishers 2012), p.159.

⁶⁸ Ezichi A. Ituma, Chidinma Precious Ukeachusim and Leo Ilechukwu, The Role of Religion in Combating Corruption and Management of Religious Crisis in Nigeria, available at: <<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352439688>> Accessed on 26th March 2022.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.160.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁷² Timehin Olurotimi Saheed, Religion and Corruption: Islamic Perspective, in Morufu A, Bello (eds) *A Compelling Compendium, Effects of Corruption on the Nigerian Society*, (Alamori Eda Publication Ltd 2017), pp.114-115.

On the other side, Odojin, after citing biblical injunctions on corruption and narrating the life of Jesus Christ being the role model for every Christian, concluded that:

Christian perception to corruption is that of total condemnation and distancing oneself from its company, the bible commands Christians not to associate with the men of corrupt minds, anyone professes the Christian faith and yet is comfortable with the men of corrupt minds should not be taken as a true follower of Christ.⁷³

Though, some religious leaders and their institutions are accused of engaging or promoting corrupt practices in Nigeria; it is submitted that the role they play in fighting corruption in Nigeria cannot be ignored. Orugun,⁷⁴ while discussing the role of religious leaders in fight against corruption in Nigeria stated as follows:

In spite of criticism levelled against the religious leaders in Nigeria, their role in anti-graft war cannot be overemphasized. The religious leaders have preached against corruption and other forms of social, political, and economic vices in Nigeria. If government will put more effort as religious leaders have done, corruption would have been reduced to the lowest level.⁷⁵

It is however instructive to state that, despite the immense contributions given by Nigeria's religious leaders in fight against corruption, some few among them have been accused of converting religion as a channel of corruption, giving aid and support for corruption in the society as well as hailing and praising corrupt individuals on their pulpits, which is a result of quest for riches and wealth by some of them.⁷⁶ Many seminars and workshops were carried out by both national and international institutions sponsored either by governmental and non-governmental organizations with the sole aim of framing and shaping anti-corruption efforts using religious perspectives on moral standards and ethical behaviour.⁷⁷ Collaborations with religious groups and faith-based organizations in anti-corruption programming are predicated on a number of presumptions which include that integrity and ethics are central to the belief systems of the major every religions and religious people are more likely to behave according to ethical standards established and expected by those belief systems. Furthermore, it is widely believed that anti-corruption efforts can be more effective if they are communicated and conducted via religious organizations or leaders, appealing to the moral standards of these major religions.⁷⁸

8. Observations

- a. It was observed that the media has an important role in the fight against corruption in Nigeria due to its ability to demand accountability and transparency from the public and private sectors. The media therefore plays a crucial role in exposing corruption to public and fighting against impunity.
- b. It was observed that social media helps fight corruption by providing information in the form of analysis, commentary and advocacy and through investigations and crowdsourcing.
- c. It was observed that traditional leaders occupy communal political leadership positions sanctified by cultural mores and values and enjoying the legitimacy of the. They command and enjoy respect and obedience from their subjects. Therefore, their role in fighting corruption is very important.
- d. It was observed that the power and influence of religion in Nigeria is a strong force against corruption. All religions teach that there are punishments for any person who engages in corrupt practices. Every religion seeks to be a tool of societal cohesion and purveyor of morality, and equally teaches that act of corruption leads to divisiveness and immorality. Religious leaders who are saddled with the responsibility to remind and admonish their followers to be conscious of God are indispensable to the fight against corruption in Nigeria.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

This article has examined the concept of corruption as well as the historical background of corruption in Nigeria. The legal framework for combatting corruption was also addressed before examining corruption in the media,

⁷³ Julius B. Odojin, Corruption and Religion: Christian Perspective, in Morufu A, Bello (eds) *A Compelling Compendium, Effects of Corruption on the Nigerian Society*, (Alamori Eda Publication Ltd 2017), p. 101.

⁷⁴ J. J. Orugun, The Role of Religious Leaders in the Anti-Graft War in Nigeria, in *Corruption in Nigeria Issues, Challenges and Possibilities*, in Victor Egwemi, (eds), *Corruption in Nigeria Issues, Challenges and Possibilities*, (Aboki Publishers 2012), p.159.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p.164.

⁷⁶ Patricia Ebere Nwazonobi and Agweye Okpachui Apah, 'Religion, Corruption and Economy: The Problem of Nigeria in this 21ST Century', *American Journal of Social Science Research*, [2018], 4, 1, p.6.

⁷⁷ Leena Koni Hoffmann and Raj Navanit Patel, Collective action on corruption in Nigeria the role of religion Chatham House briefing 26 March 2021 ISBN: 978 1 78413 438 9, <<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/03/collective-action-corruption-nigeria/religion-and-anti-corruption-efforts>> Accessed on 26th March 2022.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

traditional and religious institutions. Corruption has grave effect on Nigeria as a whole. Laws and policies must be effectively harnessed in order for there to be any meaningful progress in the fight against corruption. It is essential that there is accountability for everyone who engages in corruption and corrupt practices. Without this, corruption will continue unabated. In the light of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- a. It is recommended that the role of the media in exposing corruption should be appropriately harnessed in order to make an impact on government anti-corruption efforts. The constitutional duty of the media to hold government accountable under the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy should be actively invoked.
- b. It is recommended that social media should be used to mobilize public opinion in a way that increases citizen engagement with particular issues. This can lead to important changes that help to curb corruption.
- c. It is recommended that the respect commanded by Traditional rulers should be leveraged by giving them a clearly defined role in the government. This will increase the impact traditional rulers have on anti-corruption efforts.
- d. It is recommended that there should be more governmental and non-governmental efforts aimed at framing and shaping anti-corruption efforts using religious perspectives and moral perspectives. Anti-corruption efforts can be more effective if they are communicated and conducted via religious organizations or leaders, appealing to the moral standards of major religions in Nigeria.