



Anti-corruption Fight by Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Corruption is implicated for the low level of infrastructural facilities in Nigeria, and solving the challenge of corruption by Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Offences Commission (ICPC) would enhance sustainable development in the country. The purpose of this paper is to examine the activities of ICPC in ensuring sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper was built around the deterrence theory which helped our understanding of the place of certainty of punishment, severity of punishment and celerity of punishment in preventing potential corrupt-individuals from indulging in crimes, which would ultimately protect the future of the future generations in Nigeria through increased public savings and rational allocation of public resources. Data for the paper were collected largely from secondary and primary sources of data. Primary data were collected from in-depth interview, while secondary data were collected from official reports of ICPC as well as internet materials on corruption and anti-corruption fight and how it affected sustainable development in Nigeria. Primary data collected were analysed using narrative-analytic method, while data collected from secondary source were analysed using content analysis. It was discovered that corruption largely affected the wellbeing or security of Nigerians, while anti-corruption fight by ICPC has increased the level of infrastructural development in the country, hence giving a ray of hope for the realisation of sustainable development therein. Among other things, it was recommended that recovered loots from public officials should be used for improving the wellbeing of Nigerians.

Keywords: Corruption, Anti-corruption, Sustainability, Development, Sustainable Development

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Introduction

Though development means different thing to different people, it is usually perceived as the kind of progress directed towards complex goals like provision of employment, protection of human rights, reduction in the level of inequality, and reduction in the level of poverty in a country (Abuiyada, 2018).With robust sustainable development in a country, there would be improvement in the quality of lives of the individuals in so many areas of life such as in improvement n the level of infrastructure provided in a state, the improvement in the standard of living of the people, increased access to education, freedom of expression and cultural manifestation for the people in both the present and future generation in the country. Sustainable development cannot take place in any state characterised by corruption.

According to Jolaosho (2021), corruption manifests in several ways, especially in dishonest behaviour in both public and private offices in Nigeria, involving avarice, fraud, covetousness, among other things. In Nigeria, corruption is pervasive as it has become a household name. The endemic nature of corruption in the successive governments in the country manifests through favouritism, nepotism, abuse of public office, lack of accountability and transparency, and this has made corruption entrenched in the country's political culture. Today, some bureaucrats as well as political leaders see government office as opportunity to embezzle public funds, not opportunity to serve. This thinking usually results in the looting of public treasury contrary to the provisions of the Nigerian Constitution of 1999 in the Fifth Schedule. The Fifth Schedule states that a public office holder must not accept any benefit for herself or himself for anything done in their capacities as public office holders except such benefits are received on behalf of the government (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). Violation of this code of conduct for public officers



would make them face the wrath of the law, but this provision of the Constitution has not largely deterred the public servants from abusing public offices through corruption.

Corruption has many effects on efforts of the government in realising sustainable development goals in Nigeria as funds budgeted for purchase of security gadgets, building of schools or even payment of salaries to public officials are siphoned into private treasuries. Corruption is inimical to the promotion of the wellbeing of the future generations in the country as it creates massive youth unemployment, poverty, and those factors are major drivers of insecurity in Nigeria, which invariably impinges on the wellbeing of the future generations of Nigerians. Those that benefit from corruption fight to ensure that the system that makes corruption possible continues to exist because it is their means of livelihood. This makes corruption to continue to fester in the country. Since corruption creates poverty and unemployment, the surge in the activities of Boko Haram and those of other criminal elements in the country cannot be isolated from corruption (Oladele, 2013). It is instructive to note that the foregoing activities hamper efforts at achieving sustainable development in the country, especially poverty eradication, improvement in access to education and healthcare, provision of robust infrastructural facilities that can drive industrialisation, among other things.

Folarin (2016) noted that in Nigeria successive government have adopted several measures to tackle the challenge of corruption, including War Against Indiscipline (WAI), War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC), establishment of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) as well as the establishment of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), to tackle the problem of economic and financial crimes in the country. Despite the foregoing, corruption has continued to fester in the



country, especially in Taraba and Plateau States under the administrations of Jolly Nyame and Joshua Dariye who are now convicted of corruption (Oluigbo, 2018), among other states in the country where their public officers are still facing corruption charges. According to Nwaneri, Egwu, and Yohanna (2022), report of Corruption Perception Index (CPI) released by the Transparency International showed that Nigeria was rated 121 out of 180 countries surveyed. On the scale of 0 to 100 where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean, Nigeria scored 1.6 in 1999; 1.2 in 2000; 1,0 in 2001; 1.6 in 2002; 1.4 in 2003; 1.6 in 2004; 1.9 in 2005; 2.2 in 2006; 2.2 in 2007. Between 2007 and 2013, Corruption Perception Index of Nigeria increased from 22% to 75 %. In 2020, Nigeria was ranked 149 out of 180 countries assessed (Corruption Perception Index, 2020). In 2021, Nigeria ranked 154 out of 180 countries assessed in 2021 (Erezi, 2022). The foregoing shows that Nigeria has continued to occupy an unenviable position in the world in terms of corruption perception. Therefore, this paper is geared towards the examination of anti-corruption fight by ICPC and its implications for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

Anti-corruption

According to Imhonopi and Ugochukwu (2013), corruption is comprised of many activities including bribery, fraud and embezzlement of funds. This shows that corruption is linked with unacceptable behaviour. The authors' inclusion of fraud and bribery in the definition of corruption is aligned to the position of this paper, but non-inclusion of abuse of public trust in the definition paves the way for further literature search.

Similarly, United Nations Development Programme(UNDP) (2014) stated that corruption means abuse of public positions and authority that comes from such positions for self-



aggrandisement. For UNDP, corruption is perpetuated through extortion, influence peddling, nepotism, among other channels. The UNDP rightly defined corruption to include abuse of public offices, which is in line with the position of this paper.

Olarenwaju (2015) defined corruption as behaviour that is likely to reduce the capacity of the state in significantly taking care of the welfare of its citizenry. This is because resources that are earmarked for provision of welfare and other needs of the citizenry are sometimes diverted for selfish reasons, thus increasing the level of poverty in the country. In view of the foregoing, corruption is defined as abuse of public as well as private positions for selfish purposes. Corruption manifests itself in theft, bribery, nepotism, favouritism, among other activities. Therefore, anti-corruption agencies are defined, in this paper, as those organisations created by the laws of the federal government such as ICPC and charged with the responsibility of investigation, arrest as well as prosecution of those that exhibited fraudulent behaviours in both private and public settings for self-aggrandisement.

Sustainable Development

Before delving into the definition of sustainable development, it is important to define the concept of development. Development has been defined by Kehinde, Adewale and Abiodun (2022) as the crucial goal of every individual and state. Nevertheless, development is not usually achieved by every individual or state given the fact that there are still wretched, poor, average and rich people around the world. In the same manner, some states are categorised as developed, developing and underdeveloped on the basis of whether the standard for measuring development has been achieved.

The concept of development is anchored on change. Change means transition from one state of affairs to another. Development can equally be defined as a series of changes that are



characterised by irreversibility, spontaneity, monotonic character and directionality. The term, development, has various meanings to different people and can be explained in different contexts. This means that development should be defined as a progress towards complex goals such as elimination of poverty, provision of employment, reduction in the level of inequality and a guarantee of human rights (Abuiyada, 2018). The definition of development by Abuiyada (2018) is related to the definition of development in this study because term is defined as a positive attribute that is vital for the progress of a society from lower level to a higher level. This shows that development is dynamic and places emphasis on the direction of the change. However, the author did not capture human dimension of development which is vital to this study.

According to Neatu and Ciobanu (2014), development is a preamble of improvement of the quality of life of individuals both materials such as infrastructure, housing quality and living standards in general, but also abstract elements such as education, freedom of expression and cultural manifestations. People are instruments as well as beneficiaries and victims of all development activities. The study by Neatu and Ciobanu (2014) rightly defined development to include improvement in the quality of life of the people as well as improvement in all the tangible and intangible things that make life worth living in the society, which is related to the meaning of development in this paper because it gave us a clue to the understanding of sustainable development.

Onu (2003), Nwaneri, Egwu, and Yohanna (2022), among other scholars, defined sustainable development as a type of growth pattern which necessitates the use of resources in order to meet the needs of human population while, at the same time, conserving the environment to enable the future generation benefit from it. This shows that sustainable development



involves the use of resources in such a manner that both present as and future human needs can be realised. It is important to note that sustainable development involved development that meets the needs of the present generation, without compromising the ability of future generations to also meet their needs.

Vivian (1991) agreed with the position of WECED (1987) cited in her study that sustainable development means the kind of development that satisfies the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Vivian further stressed that sustainable development is a kind of continued improvement in the standard of living or living levels of people, especially the poor and disadvantaged groups in the society. The foregoing shows that the scholars whose works were reviewed showed that sustainable development means development that takes care of both present and future generations. Therefore, sustainable development is defined, in this paper, as ensuring that the behaviour of government in terms of its allocation and utilisation of public funds is done in such a manner that the future generation of Nigerians would still enjoy public goods without being burdened with huge debts.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is built around the deterrence theory of realism paradigm, at individual-level of analysis. The theory originated from early works of classical philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes (1588-1678), Cesare Beccaria (1738-1794), and Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832). Deterrence theory is underpinned by centrality of punishment, severity of punishment and celerity of punishment when an offence is committed with a view to preventing potential offenders from committing crime in the future (Deterrence theory, 2010).



Similarly, Tomlinson (2016) noted that for punishment to be effective, it must be quick, certain and in proportion to the crime committed so as to prevent future perpetuation of such crimes. In this regard, laws should be clearly written and punishment for offences should be made known to the public. Deterrence could be specific or general, but must be designed to prevent crimes from taking place and ensure appropriate punishment to offenders when crimes have taken place. More so, Eassey and Boman (2015) asserted that the major assumptions of deterrence theory is that crimes can be prevented only when the punishment is quick, certain and severe.

The theory is relevant to the examination of the activities of ICPC in ensuring sustainable development in Nigeria because it is only when funds budgeted and allocated are fully utilised for the purpose for which such allocations were made in the public budgets that Nigeria can ensure the wellbeing of its future generations without plunging them into heavy debt burden. The theory is equally relevant in ensuring that those arrested, prosecuted and found guilty of corruption cases are punished, which has led to seizure, recovery and forfeiture of properties and cash worth billions of naira by offenders. With the money recovered, the government would have more funds available to it for allocation to people-oriented projects which may be of huge benefits to both the present and future generations in Nigeria. However, the theory is weak in the paper because the creation of ICPC and its enabling laws have not been able to adequately deter potential corrupt individuals from looting the public treasury. Also, the theory is weak because potential offenders can only be deterred from indulging in corrupt activities if they feel that the benefits of a given crime are lower than the cost of the crime.



Methodology

The design of the paper is descriptive research design involving survey and historical research designs. Survey research design, in the paper, involved data collection through in-depth interview of 15 senior staff in ICPC Headquarters, Abuja, who were purposively selected on the basis of their wealth of experience and depth of knowledge on issues relating to corruption and anti-corruption fight and how it affected sustainable development in Nigeria. Historical data were collected from ICPC publications on their past activities in the fight against corruption with a view to understanding the present situation regarding corruption in the country and making useful projections for the future. Data generated from in-depth interview were manually-transcribed, textually-presented and analysed using narrative-analytic method, while data collected from officials reports of the ICPC were analysed using content analysis.

Role of ICPC in the fight against Corruption for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Majority of the respondents who were interviewed opined that the activities of ICPC in enhancing security of the people include arrest, investigation, prosecutions, systems study, blockage of leakages, and monitoring of projects to ensure that they conform to budgets. The foregoing findings are related to reports from ICPC revealing that the Commission established 1 club, 155 clubs and vanguards, 233 clubs and vanguards, 65 clubs and vanguards and 189 clubs and vanguards in 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 respectively (ICPC, 2017), with a view to training the young minds on the vices of corruption which is vital in ensuring sustainable development in the country.

In 2019, ICPC tracked 424 projects across 12 states in Nigeria, while in 2020 and 2021, the Commission tracked 722 projects and 1,098 projects respectively in 16 states across the



country. The Commission focused essentially on people-oriented sectors of the Nigerian economy such as education, health, water resources, agriculture and rural development as well as power sector (Akpan, 2022). When asked what the Commission seeks to achieve through their activities, all the respondents stressed that the idea behind this is that when projects awarded to the foregoing critical sectors of the economy of Nigeria are adequately executed, the present and future generations in the country can experience improvement in their overall wellbeing.

Similarly, under the Constituency and Executive Projects Tracking Initiative, the Commission tracked over 2,000 projects worth over ₦300 billion from 2019 to 2021. Within the same period, 326 contractors of abandoned projects across the country were compelled back to various sites to complete abandoned projects worth ₦32.183 billion. It is important to note that the Constituency and Executive Projects Tracking Initiative of the ICPC has brought about better service delivery as well as increase in completion rate for funded projects in line with regulatory requirements on one hand and ensured value-for-money in the government's rolling plans from 2013 to 2021. Through the ICPC's Systems Study review of personnel and capital votes of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), a total of 261 billion has been saved by the government from 2019 to 2021 (ICPC Report, 2022).

The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission has equally received a number of petitions, investigated corruption-related cases, referred some of the cases to court, secured convictions, and made recoveries and seizures of assets and monies illegally acquired as presented in Table 1.1 below.

**Table 1.1: Showing Summary of Activities of ICPC in Anti-Corruption Fight (2013-2021)**

Year	Number of Petitions Received	Number of Cases Referred to Court	Number of Cases Concluded	Number of Convictions Made	Value of Assets and Money recovered or seized
2013	1,023	558	243	8	₦469 million
2014	1,016	682	392	12	₦733,789,810.54
2015	1,518	1,171	498	7	₦704,895,470.61
2016	1,569	1,198	704	11	₦663,952,846.99
2017	1,595	1,267	667	16	₦248,063,841.35
2018	1,653	556	501	24	₦17,892,654,187.47
2019	1,145	454	220	13	₦16,524,667,080.24
2020	1,364	357	73	26	₦82.57 billion
2021	745	-	-	-	₦2.71 billion

Source: ICPC Annual Reports (2013-2021)

Findings from Table 1.1 shows that the activities of ICPC have gone a long way in ensuring improvement in the wellbeing of Nigerians by ensuring that money stolen by corrupt public officials are recovered and returned to the public treasury. The recovery and return of billions of naira by ICPC from 2013 to 2021 shows that if the fight against corruption in Nigeria is sustained, monies allocated for projects that would benefit the ordinary Nigerians that have been looted would be recovered, returned to the public treasury and rechannelled to the where it was originally allocated for the benefit of not only the current generation of Nigerians, but future generations.

Analysis of findings from reports of ICPC in this study and findings from previous studies showed that findings of previous studies are slightly similar to the findings of this study in



terms of focus of the studies, but differ significantly from it in terms of depth of issues covered. Findings by Adeola (2012) cited in Olanrewaju (2015) stressed that in the telecommunications sector in the country, the 450 MHz frequency, valued at over USD \$50 million was allegedly sold for less than USD \$6 million. This represented a difference of USD \$44 million or about ₦6.9 billion by the Nigeria Communications Commission (NCC). This shows that corruption has permeated into many sectors of the Nigerian economy as established by this study.

The findings of study showing high level of corruption in Nigeria as exemplified by the huge amount of money stolen or recovered by the ICPC are in line with findings by Abdul and Kigbu (2021), which found that Nigeria has lost over USD \$500 billion to corruption since the country gained political independence from Britain. The study further showed that more than 75 % of Nigerian live below USD \$1 per day, while about USD \$300 billion worth of crude oil has so far been stolen from Nigeria; a situation that makes majority of Nigerians to live in abject poverty in the midst of plenty in the country shows that corruption impinges on the wellbeing of Nigerians, especially the masses.

More so, Ethelbert (2016) found that the EFCC charged 200 offenders to court in 2007. The agency equally arrested, prosecuted and convicted former governors Diepreye lameiyeseigha, Orji Uzo Kalu, former Inspector-General of police, Mr. Tafa Balogun, to mention but a few, which is related to the findings of this study in terms of identification of activities of ICPC in anti-corruption war. However, the findings by Ethelbert (2016) differ from the findings of this study in terms of depth of issues covered because the former are not linked to how recoveries by the ICPC could improve the wellbeing of both the present and future generations of Nigerians.



Connection between Fight against Corruption by ICPC and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

All the 15 respondents whose views were elicited on possible connections between anti-corruption fight by ICPC and sustainable development in Nigeria noted that anti-corruption fight by ICPC could result into improvement in the wellbeing of the people. A breakdown of their views showed that money recovered from corrupt individuals can be used for the provision of infrastructural facilities in communities. In addition, removal of corruption in the recruitment process in the country would lead to improved service delivery when capable hands are employed.

Majority of the respondents opined that if the government is to recruit teachers that are not properly trained, the quality of education in the country would further deteriorate and this would have negative implications for human capital development in the country. When the human capital is underdeveloped in the country, it spills-over to preceding generations by bequeathing a legacy of poorly-skilled manpower to them. Bad road anywhere in Nigeria is connected to corruption. In view of the foregoing and more, ICPC has mounted pressure on the National Assembly, which is responsible for increase in service delivery in the areas of provision of social amenities and healthcare delivery in the country to use more effective oversights in ensuring that funds allocated and appropriately utilised. Majority of the respondents equally opined that fight against corruption is a pathway to sustainable development in Nigeria, thus a sustained anti-corruption fight would ensure the improvement of economic wellbeing of the people, and ultimately broaden the level of sustainable development in the country by ensuring that the wellbeing of future generations in Nigeria is not jeopardised by corruption. The foregoing findings are slightly related to the findings



by(Jolaosho, 2021) which linked anti-corruption fight to wellbeing of the people, but differ from it significantly in terms of scope of coverage of issues covered.

Citing the reports of the Commission, majority of the respondents opined that huge sums of funds recovered by ICPC from 2007 to 2021 showed possible connections between fight against corruption and improvement in the standard of living of people of Nigerians. This manifests in the large number of assets recovered from corrupt contractors, and this has further ensured that most items appropriated for in the country's budgets are purchased the way they were appropriated. This can be seen in the public hospitals as purchase of fake medical test kits and equipment through corruption can lead to death of patients, but this problem has been largely mitigated through anti-corruption fight by the ICPC. Fight against corruption has equally increased the level of the standard of living in the country as contractors now desist from abandoning their constituency projects, however, this finding is contrary to the information in the public domain probably because of the believe that corruption has instead of abating increased in the country given the huge amounts of funds alleged to have been stolen by some public servants in the recent times. That aside, some of the contractors that have abandoned their constituency projects have been forced by the ICPC to complete those abandoned projects. Therefore, improvement in service delivery in the area of improved quality in road construction, provision of infrastructures in public schools, among others things, largely increase the wellbeing of the people and ensure that the future generation of Nigerians are not put into debt burden. Also, funds recovered through anti-corruption fight by ICPC can be used to improve service delivery in the localities, thereby ensuring that the goals of sustainable rural development are achieved in Nigeria (ICPC Annual Reports, 2021).



Similarly, majority of the respondents opined that that when corruption is allowed to fester, sustainable development goals in the country, especially efforts and eradicating poverty, and improvement in infrastructural development in the country would not be realised. The respondents were of the opinions that corruption impeded sustainable development in many Nigerian states given the huge sums of money stolen and recovered in the country. The foregoing findings from this study are collaborated by findings from a study by Oladosun, Bwala, Nghaliri and Mangga (2015), which revealed that corruption negatively impacted on the Nigerians. The previous findings revealed that because of corruption, 88 % of the residents of Plateau State dispose their waste through open dump, while 2.9 % of the residents pay refuse vendors to collect and dispose their waste. The study found that only 9 % of the residents dispose their refuse at government approved refuse collection points. Similarly, only 20% of the residents have access to tap water, while 15.3 % of the residents get their water from hand pumps. Majority of the residents of Jos representing 64.3 % of the residents get their water from water vendors, streams and shallow wells. This situation is unsuitable for healthy living as well as for realising sustainable development goals of the government. Therefore, findings by Oladosun, Bwala, Nghaliri and Mangga (2015) reinforce our finding that anti-corruption fight by ICPC can ensure sustainable development in Nigeria.

More so, a study by Baba and Abubakar (2015) collaborated the finding from in-depth interview in this study that corruption impinges negatively on sustainable development in Nigeria. According to the authors, significant number of state infrastructures is abandoned by the government and its agents shortly after its commencement and left to decay. Water supply in majority of states in Nigeria is largely poor as a result of corruption. It was found that in the majority of the communities where nomadic-pastoralists live, both human beings and



animals drink from the same water source, and this exposes the people more to water borne diseases. Findings by the author showed that 66.7% of the respondents were of the view that official corruption is responsible for high level of infrastructural deficit in many states in Nigeria with high indices of corruption, while 88.7 % of the respondents were of the view that where infrastructures are available in the states, they are largely in deplorable conditions, which are closely related to the findings of this study in terms of focus of issues covered.

When asked the volunteer their views on connection between fight against corruption by ICPC and quest for sustainable development in the country, majority of the respondents opined that anti-corruption fight is essential in ensuring sustainable development in the country. This is hinged on the fact that monies and assets recovered and forfeited from corrupt individuals can be deployed in the provisions of infrastructural facilities in the local areas in the country such as portable water supply, steady supply of electricity, good road networks, well-equipped health care centres and well-equipped schools, which would, among other things, go a long way in building the capacity of both present and future generations in the country.

The foregoing findings are aligned to Princewaterhouse Coopers warning that corruption could cost Nigeria up to 37 % of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2030 or around \$ 1,000 per person if not addressed immediately because corruption is felt the most by poorer households as well as smaller firms in Nigeria (Musser, 2019). This is buttressed by the report by the National Security Adviser to the President that over 54,000 illicit entries have been discovered in the Integrated Personnel Payroll System (IPPIS) in the country in 2022, while billions of naira were alleged to have been siphoned in the Office of the Accountant



General of the Federation. These and more attest to the dangerous level corruption has assumed in Nigeria and its possible implications for the future generations of Nigerians.

Conclusion

The paper examined the activities of ICPC and its implications for sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper found out that anti-corruption fight has direct bearing on the welfare of Nigerians, which are critical in ensuring the realisation of sustainable development goals in the country. It was further discovered that the implications of the activities of ICPC for sustainable development in Nigeria include increase in the provision of infrastructural as well as social facilities, improvement in access to education, improvement in healthcare, and improvement in service delivery in the country. The findings of the paper are slightly different from the findings from earlier studies in terms of coverage and depth of analysis of issues relating to the activities of the ICPC and its implications for sustainable development in Nigeria. Therefore, it is concluded that ICPC should increase its capacity in the fight against corruption in Nigeria, if not; the quest for the realisation of sustainable development goals in Nigeria would continue to be a mirage.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are found relevant in this paper in ensuring sustainable development in Nigeria:

- i. The Commission should expand its scope of anti-corruption fight through extension of its Systems Study mechanism to all organisations in the country;
- ii. Everybody convicted of corruption should be made to forfeit all properties and monies linked to him or her in order to deter others from indulging in corruption;



- iii. The Commission should carry out more effective investigations on corruption allegations in order to reduce the huge gaps between cases reported to ICPC and cases concluded;
- iv. Special courts should be created for trying corruption cases to ensure that justice is not delayed or denied; and
- v. Money recovered from corrupt public officials should be used in improving the wellbeing of the people from the state the money was looted.

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