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CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF POLITICAL CORRUPTION  
IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATION FOR SOCIAL  
STUDIES EDUCATION

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**Abstract**

This paper examined the causes, and effects of political corruption in Nigeria and how Social Studies Education can serve as a measure for curbing political corruption. The study employed descriptive survey research design which was guided by three research questions. The population for the study comprises of all secondary schools teachers in Osun State; while purposive sampling technique was used to select one hundred and fifty Social Studies teachers as a sample for the study. The instrument for the data collection was a constructed thirteen items structured questionnaire related to the causes, effects of political corruption and measures to curb political corruption were designed for the study. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by the Social Studies experts and validated two weeks before administration and its reliability was estimated through test-retest method which yielded a co-efficient of 0.74. The data collected was

analyzed using frequency count, simple percentage and mean score. The results revealed that god-fatherism and ethnicity are among the major factors responsible for political corruption in Nigeria and political corruption has a serious effect on peoples' standard of living and democratic polity in Nigeria. The study concluded that politicians should be re-orientated that politics is a call to service and not an investment.

**Keywords:** political corruption, godfatherism, democratic polity.

**Word Count:** 208.

## Introduction

Every political issue is tied to who gets what, when and how. The idea that the "national cake" is meant to be shared rather than baked, by the various ethnic groups that constitute Nigerian federation provides a fertile ground for the kleptomaniac individuals who are obsessed to syphoning the public fund. Corrupt practices, in all its manifestations, areas old as a human race (Lipset & Lenz, 2000). Brinkerhoff (2000) cited in Ogundiya, (2009) sees corruption as subsuming a wide variety of illegal, illicit, irregular, and unprincipled activities and behaviours. From this perspective, corruption is importantly a moral, political and legal issue. According to Peters cited in Ogundiya 2009, Political corruption can be classified into three criteria: the legal public opinion and public interest. From legal perspective, political corruption is connected to any behaviour that violates some formal standard or rule of behaviour set down by a political system for its public officials. The political system is said to be corrupt when the weight of public opinion perceives it so. The last one, corruption is taken to be a violation of the public interest. Corruption connotes the abuse of public resources, or the use of illegitimate forms of political power and influence, by the public or private parties. Therefore, corruption is inextricably tied to politics. Corruption is evident when governmental power is abused for illegitimate private, group, or sectional advantages. This is the trading of influence and authority by political leaders and may extend to

granting favours, irregularities in campaign financing and electoral fraud. It is an effort to secure wealth for private benefit at public expense (Lipset and Lenz, 2000). It is an illegal act by an office holder in relation to his official duties; done under the guise of law and trading in influence (Damania & Bulte, 2003). The United States Legal Incorporated (2015) defines political corruption as the abuse of political power by the government leaders to extract and accumulate for private enrichment and to use political influence as means in maintaining their hold on power. Political corruption takes place at the highest level of leadership position.

Moreover, it is natural to think about elections while talking about political corruption. Vote rigging and ballot snatching bring unqualified leaders to a position making them steer away from good governance. Political corruption is the diversion of scarce resources from poor and disadvantaged people to benefit their cronies (Transparency International, 2015). Political Corruption occurs when a public official attempts to gain something by abusing power. Bratsis (2014) states that political corruption involves the private regarding the policy making process, be it a matter of bribery or any other inducement. It is the pathological presences of self-interest within the political sphere. It can also be viewed as the absence of transparency in government business processes.

However, different techniques of corruption have been identified among Nigerian leaders as bribery with its Nigerian variants, kickbacks; nepotism; misappropriation of funds; the use of contrived security threats to the state or the allocation for personal enrichment of public officers charged with the maintenance of public order; the exploitation of privileged relationship with key public sector managers for the purpose of acquiring competitive business assets; auto-corruption; extortion; and employment patronage (Johnson, 2013). However, it should be noted that those who engage in corrupt practices always devise new techniques and are always abreast of the anti-corruption agencies in their strategies.

There is the absence of genuine citizenship sentiment at the national level. Hence the struggle and agitation for political representation by various ethnic groups are meant to secure access to the common-wealth. Therefore, the idea of federal character

principle entrenched in section 14 sub-sections 3 and 4 of the 1999 constitution and the idea of rotational or zoning arrangements besides ensuring a sense of national belonging and the promotion of national unity has embedded corrupt practices (Ogundiya, 2009). Zoning formula and federal character principle are elitist in form and content. The privileged elite has successfully disillusioned the psyche of the masses with the virus of ethnicity; virtually anything in Nigeria can be ethnicized (Ogundiya, 2009). Apart from the nature and character of the Nigerian state and the problem of ethnicity that provided a fertile ground for corruption to thrive, there is poor political will to implement anticorruption laws. This is because eradicating corruption in the eyes of politicians and their Milito-bureaucratic counterpart is tantamount to committing political suicide (Ogundiya, 2009).

Moreover, there are different forms of political corruption. The first form includes both accumulation and extraction where government officials use and abuse their hold on power to extract from private sectors, from government revenues and from the economy at large. Examples include extraction, embezzlement, rent-seeking, plunder and even Kleptocracy (rule by thieves) (Wikipedia, 2016). The second form of political corruption is one in which extracted resources are used for power preservation and power extension purposes. This usually takes the form of favouritism and patronage politics. It includes a most favourite and politically motivated distribution of financial and material inducements, benefits, advantages and spoils (Wikipedia, 2016).

Other forms of political corruption are: rigging of election, vote buying, vote selling, political assassination, contract killing, cancellation of votes, ballot stuffing, manipulation of electoral registers, outright bribery of electoral officers and security agents, inflation of electoral votes and the employment of political offices for personal advantage at the expense of public interest (Ajogbeje, 2016).

Orji (2011) identified avarice, greed and get rich quick syndrome as major causes of political corruption in Nigeria. He concluded that corruption affects the well being of individuals and retards the progress of the state. He stated that acts of corruption

by political leaders include embezzlement of public funds, rigging of elections, kidnapping of political opponents, thuggery and politically motivated killings. In his own view, Eze (2002) stated that poverty is another major cause of corruption in Nigeria and that ineffective leadership as well as the shaky moral foundation in upbringing had actually given license to corruption in Nigeria.

Another major cause of political corruption is the emergence of political “kingmakers” and gladiators commonly known as the political godfathers. According to Human Right Watch (2007): Godfatherism is both a symptom and a cause of the violence and corruption that together permeate the political process in Nigeria. Public officials who owe their position to the efforts of a political godfather incur a debt that they are expected to repay without end throughout their tenure in office. Godfathers are only relevant because politicians are able to deploy violence and corruption with impunity to compete for office in contests that often effectively, and sometimes actually, exclude Nigeria’s voters’ altogether. But they are making it even more difficult to win elected office without resorting to the illegal tactics they represent.

According to Imukuede (2004), godfatherism occurs when an individual (godfather) uses his overwhelming influence or tremendous resources to sponsor into public office a candidate which then allows the godfather not only to control the government but the incumbent as well. Igwe (2002) referred to godfatherism as patronage politics involving the personalization of power and subordination of the freedom and rights of the individuals in favour of personality cults, while the ultimate casualty is a democracy. The godfather remotely controls the resources attached to the office directly by demanding for cash payment and indirectly by nominating holders of sensitive and key positions and award of contracts.

What is important here is the consequence of godfatherism in Nigerian politics. To the godfathers, electoral politics is one huge investment opportunity with the considerable promise of massive returns (Gambo, 2006). This leads to high cost of election, greed and avarice. The failure of electoral democracy to institutionalize a procedure for legitimate government thereby promoting the politics

of pay-off and some influential politician needed to be bought by awarding undeserving and over-inflated contracts to the incumbent to enjoy relative peace and legitimacy (Orji, 2011). This also weakens the legal framework and low opportunity cost of corruption (Michael, 2002).

Corruption is used to acquire political office and as well sustain it. It has become part and parcel of political strategies for assuming political leadership. Politics in Nigeria provides the easiest way to wealth and status, and politicians do anything to acquire political office including vote buying, contract killing, political assassination and outright bribery of electoral officers and security agents. High level of illiteracy and crippling poverty; the prevalence of preventable diseases and so on are evidence that the primordial public is at the receiving end of all corrupt practices. Corruption is both a symptom and consequence of poverty. Corruption breeds poverty and poverty aids corruption to flourish. Tackling corruption is not a one-shot endeavour, but a challenging long-term undertaking (Brinkerhoff, 2000 in Ogundiya, 2009), requiring high a level of commitment and continuity in policies. Anticorruption policies in Nigeria are mere political façade designed to buy political support and loyalty from the citizenry.

According to Ogundiya (2010), corrupt practical financing has adversely affected democracy by generating serious intra party feuds between and among the followers and loyalists of the competing political godfathers. It has also made ruling political parties at all levels of governance reluctant to pass strict laws on political party financing. It also leads to weak support for the anti-corruption posture of the Federal government by the political parties. This can be attributed to: lack of commitment to a national agenda; the pursuit of short-term personal interest as opposed to the long-term interest of the nation; obsession with ethnic considerations as the basis of politics and lack of leadership with vision (Akivaga, 2001). In this situation, political parties can no longer be an agent of democratic stability but rather an agent of decay.

According to Michael (2002), the study carried out in the Caribbean revealed that political corruption is majorly caused by a local bourgeoisie which consists of government officials and their

inefficiencies in the state economic system. Political corruption has a major effect on the state's rule of law – the more the corruption the weaker the rule of law. It also shows the effect on the educational output and economic output as well as societal inequalities; where the few elites remain rich and the masses remain poor. This is in line with what is happening in Nigeria today and this posed a resistance effect on eradication of political corruption in the country.

Dike (2004) posited that the effects of corruption on a nation's socio-political and economic developments are myriad. Natufe (2007) viewed corruption as a major hindrance to good governance and development. Emenyonu (2007) affirmed that corruption has eaten so deep into the fabric of Nigerian society that virtually every segment of the nation is affected by the ugly effects of corruption. Igwe (2005) added that campaigns and actual voting must equally be free and balanced, should meet the objective stated, and devoid of gerrymandering or illegal manipulation of voting districts. Human Rights Watch (2007) reported that the history of election rigging with impunity include such acts as brutality, thuggery, intimidation, maiming, killing and snatching of ballot boxes. Social Studies is aimed to enthrone discipline, good morals and values, self-esteem and dignity, justice and integrity in national life. In this regard, Bamikole (2001) opined that the essence of emphasizing and introducing Social Studies in schools curriculum is to eliminate social vices such robbery, immorality, truancy, drug abuse, promiscuity, corruption, especially political corruption. This is in line with Sebiomo (2011) that Social Studies can serve as a correcting device of curbing the socio-political anomalies in the country such as electoral fraud, corruption, deceit and malpractices in Nigeria democratic system.

Social Studies is aimed at helping the younger generation and the society at large in addressing societal problems, including drug abuse, child abuse, environmental degradation, teenage pregnancy, prostitution, violence, religious intolerance, examination malpractices, robbery, kidnapping, corruption and especially, political corruption. According to Ajogbeje (2017) Social Studies helps to inculcates right values such as, patriotism, honesty, obedient, respect and appreciation of others, law-abiding, diligent, hard-

working, trustworthy, reliable, responsible, committed, contended, self-control, selflessness and leaders should know that position is a call to service and not an opportunity to share the national cake but to bake it. This will help to solve the problems of political corruption in Nigeria.

According to Osakwe and Itedjere (1993), Social Studies aimed at cultivating in learners the knowledge, attitudes and skills for meaningful living in human society. It is concerned with human relationships in his natural and human-made environment. So, the subject is devoted to studying human being as a social being. One of the objectives of Social Studies is to develop in student positive attitude of togetherness, comradeship, cooperation towards a healthy nation, the inculcation of appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hard-work, fairness and justice to criminals to serve as deterrent to others, good leadership traits and followership trait, civic rights and obligations, like: right to vote and be voted for in an election which will pave way for good democratic polity in the society. Nigeria as a heterogeneous country has been battling with corruption for a long period of time. Corruption has become the order of the day and to the extent that people do not see it as a crime again but as the culture of the land. This is due to the fact that virtually every segment of the nation is affected; such as economic, religion, education, health, transport and communication, judiciary, family and political sector. Corruption is so rampant among those in power right from the lower level to the highest level in order to get to the position and to retain their position; which leaves the nation in the hand of corrupt leaders. Despite all efforts by the government to eradicate this malady, it keeps on increasing at an alarming rate. Therefore, this study will examine the causes and effects of corruption among political leaders and the necessity for Social Studies Educator in combating corruption in political sector in order to build a better nation.

### Purpose of the Study

The objectives of this study include:

- (i) to investigate the main causes of political corruption in Nigeria.



- (ii) to examine the main effects of political corruption on the democratic polity.
- (iii) to ascertain Social Studies Education as a subject that is capable of curbing political corruption in Nigeria.

### Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. what are the causes of political corruption in Nigeria?
2. what effects does political corruption have on democratic polity?
3. in what ways can Social Studies Education help to reduce the rate of political corruption in Nigeria?

### Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design to investigate the causes, effects and ways of curbing political corruption. The population is the study comprises of all secondary school teachers in Osun state and purposive sampling technique was used in selecting one hundred and fifty Social Studies Secondary School teachers as the sample for the study, fifty each was selected from the three senatorial districts in Osun state. The researcher constructed a questionnaire which comprises of thirteen structured items related to causes, effects and measures to curb political corruption were designed to elicit responses from the respondents. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by the Social Studies experts and validated two weeks before administration and its reliability was estimated through test-retest method which yielded a co-efficient of 0.74. The researcher administered the questionnaires with the help of research assistants. Data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, simple percentage and mean score. The responses have been graduated while criterion mean weight is set at 2.50 therefore any responses below 2.50 are regarded as not significant while those above 2.50 are regarded as significant.

## Results

The analysis of the study focuses on the research questions generated to guide the study.

**Research Question 1: What are the causes of political corruption in Nigeria?**

**Table 1: Main causes of political corruption in Nigeria**

	Total	Positive	%	Negative	%	Mean	Sig
High level of illiteracy rate induces political corruption.	150	123	82	27	18	3.24	Sig
God-fatherism and ethnicity are the main cause of political corruption in Nigeria.	150	144	96	06	04	3.84	Sig.
The weakness of governmental enforcement mechanism induces corrupt practice among political leaders.	150	105	70	45	30	2.80	Sig.
Greed and passion for luxurious living aggravate the spate of corrupt practice among the political leaders.	150	138	92	12	08	3.68	Sig
Poor standard of living and infrastructures resulted from corrupt practice among the political leaders.	150	125	83	25	17	3.33	Sig.

Source: Field work 2017.

From the Table 1, it can be deduced that item 2 has the highest number of responses i.e. 144 (96%) with the mean score of 3.84 while item 3 has the lowest number of responses i.e. 105 (70%) with the mean score of 2.80. The average mean score is 3.39 which is greater than 2.50. This means that, all the items above are very significant and are factors responsible for corrupt practices among the political leaders in Nigeria.

**Research Question 2: What effects does political corruption have on democratic polity?**

	Total	Positive	%	Negative	%	Mean	Sig.
The corrupt practice among the political leaders endangers good democratic polity.	150	114	76	36	24	3.04	Sig.
Corruption among the political leaders resulted in abject poverty and economic recession in the country.	150	147	98	03	02	3.92	Sig.
Buying and selling of votes during the election is a resultant effect of political corruption.	150	105	70	45	30	2.80	Sig.
Assassinations and contract killing of politicians.	150	140	93	10	07	3.73	Sig.
Insecurity and weak support for anticorruption agencies.	150	120	80	30	20	3.20	Sig.

Source: Field work 2017.

From the Table 2, it can be deduced that item 7 has the highest number of responses i.e. 147 (98%) with the mean score of 3.92 while item 8 has the lowest number of responses i.e. 105 (70%) with the mean score of 2.80. The average mean score is 3.34 which is greater than 2.50. This means that, all the items above are very significant and major effects of corrupt practices among the political leaders on democratic polity in Nigeria.

**Research Question 3: In what ways can Social Studies Education help to reduce the rate of political corruption in Nigeria?**

**Table 3: How Social Studies can help to reduce the rate of political corruption in Nigeria**

	Total	Positive	%	Negative	%	Mean	Sig.
Right values such as patriotism, honesty, hardworking, tolerance, equality, etc, can be inculcated into the citizens through Social Studies.	150	110	72	40	28	2.93	Sig.
The concept of leadership and followership should be taught through Social Studies.	150	138	92	12	08	3.68	Sig.
Lack of severe punishment attached should be attached to the corrupt practice.	150	125	84	25	16	3.33	Sig.

Source: Field work 2017.

From the Table 3, it can be deduced that item 14 has the highest number of responses i.e. 138 (92%) with the mean score of 3.68 while item 13 has the lowest number of responses i.e. 110 (72%) with the mean score of 2.93. The average mean score is 3.27 which is greater than 2.50. This means that all the items above are very significant and are strong ways of reducing corrupt practices among the political leaders in Nigeria.

## Discussion

This study investigated the clergymen perception about causes, effect and Social Studies as a measure for curbing political corruption in Nigeria. The results of the data analysis revealed that the prevalence of ethnicity, illiteracy, god-fatherism, avarice, greed and passion for materialism, poverty, poor infrastructures and standard of living, weak enforcement mechanism, are the major causes of political corruption in Nigeria. The findings of study corroborate that Eze (2002), Human Right Watch (2007), Igwe (2002), Imukkuede (2004), Ogundiya (2010), Orji (2011) and Micheal (2002).

The result of the study showed that political corruption has major effects on democratic polity, economic development, insecurity, contract killings, electoral mal-practices, poverty, weak support for anti-corruption agencies, lack of commitment to the national interest, election as an investment, lack of political will and societal inequalities in the country. This is in line with Akivaga, (2001), Dike (2004), Gambo (2006), Ogundiya (2009), Orji (2011) and Michael (2002), Natufe (2007).

The findings of this study revealed that zoning of political posts through federal character should be abolished, god-fatherism should be eradicated and politician should be educated that election is not an investment as they thought (Uwhejevwe, 2008), ethnicity should be abolished and national unity should be encourage, right values and attitudes should be inculcated into the citizens, severe punishment must be given to the criminals; these will help in curbing political corruption in Nigeria.

The results of this study indicated that Social Studies has the potentials that can help to curb political corruption in Nigeria. Social Studies teaches leadership and followership traits, inculcate the right values into the citizen such as: honesty, commitment, comradeship, hard-working, cooperation, togetherness, selfless, self-control, law-abiding, trustworthy, and others. This is corroborated by Ajogbeje (2017) and Osakwe and Itedjere (1993).

### Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that ethnicity and god-fatherism, high level of illiteracy, poor standard of living, greed and passion for materialism and weak enforcement mechanism are the major causes of political corruption in Nigeria. Political corruption has a serious implication and effect on economic, social and political aspects of the country in terms of poor democratic polity, poverty, societal inequalities, poor infrastructures and standard of living, insecurity of lives and properties, economic recession and host of others. Social Studies can help to reduce the rate of political corruption in Nigeria because of its potentials to inculcate the right values and attitudes and promoting responsible citizenry.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study; the following recommendations were made:

- Politicians should be educated that election is not an investment but a call to service.
- Ethnicity and zoning of political offices should be abolished and issues of national unity should be encouraged. That is, we should focus on those things that unite all.
- Social Studies should be made a compulsory subject at all level of education in Nigeria.
- Social Studies should incorporate community-based education in order to involve the electorate on the purpose and uses of the election.

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