

# ABRACADABRA OF PUBLIC OFFICE HOLDERS AND NIGERIA'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC MAGNIFICATION.

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## Abstract:

*This paper examined the Abracadabra of Public Office Holders and Nigeria's Socio-Economic Magnification. The underlying motive behind this paper is that Nigerians believe strongly that their public offices entitle them to unlimited and unbridled access to the resources of the state with which they can plunder not only to satisfy their material desires but also to service the needs or wants of their kin groups. Nigerians being so minded and characterized, could therefore be said to be transforming government and governance into a prebendacy. The paper has two research questions. The paper is hinged on the structural functionalism theory. The research design adopted in the paper was documentary which heavily relied on secondary sources of data Findings x-rays that; public office holders have not significantly impacted on the poverty rate in Nigeria. Secondly, public office holders have not significantly impacted on the rate of unemployment in Nigeria. Based on the findings, the paper recommends that: the Federal Government should consciously increase allocations to key sectors of the Nigerian economy as a policy matter. In doing so, preference should be given to the productive sector and the social services sector because of their direct impact on the poor. This will bring about reduction of hunger, increase in health, cheaper transportation and increase in literacy rate. The end results of these will be national prosperity and poverty reduction. Secondly, the society should be careful not to be bought with money during election period. This is as result of the fact that it is an opportunity of determining their own future by themselves. Therefore, they should learn to vote right.*

**Keywords:** Abracadabra, Development, Magnification, Prebendalism, Public Office Holders, Socio-economic.

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past fifty years, Nigeria has been piloted by both democratic and non-democratic governments. The Nigerian military's incursion into politics in the country had been on the ground of the failure of previous democratic governments to initiate, foster and sustain development programs that could have brought about social and economic development. However, the military regimes that had ruled the Nigerian state for about 30 out of its 54 years as independent nation-state has also failed, on the most part, to establish the much expected social and economic development (Iroanusi, 2006).

Socio-economic development; in terms of improvement in the living standards of the citizenry, is possibly the basic expectation and reward for the citizens in the social contract agreement between the governors and the governed. What, then, has been the impact of governance on politics and economics in Nigeria from 1960 to the present? Understanding the impact of governance on the Nigerian economy will provide real insight into the gap which exist between the huge available national resources and the quest for development in Nigeria. The concerns emanating from evident gaps in the quest for and struggle by Nigerians

for democracy *vis-a-vis* the fulfillment of pre-election promises of elected political elites; continue to generate debates in policy and academic cycles against the backdrop of unrepentant attitude of corruption by the political elites in the country. This concern is particularly evident in the apparent almost non-existent or grossly inefficient social amenities and dilapidated economic infrastructural facilities across Nigeria (Ake, 2000).

Radical scholars consistently blame the persistent socio-economic challenges in Nigeria on the structural deficiencies created as a result of the country's colonial experiences. In short, they claim, and rightly so, that colonialism was a system designed not only to exploit, but also meant to keep African countries, indeed, Nigeria in permanent vulnerable position of underdevelopment. Ekpebu (1998), therefore castigated the colonial powers for their loot of Africa's abundant resources and strongly recommends restitution for the inestimable destruction that colonialism had brought upon the Africans over a period of 350 years.

Regrettably, the state as the instrument of governance within which socio-economic development is pursued has remained continuously embroiled in these conflicts. Both in public policy implementation, budgetary allocation and strategic political appointments, who gets what, how and when depends on ethnic and regional cleavages with development patterns and trends absolutely characterized by these dichotomies. In the leadership recruitment process, also, excellence, competence and character have repeatedly been sacrificed on the altar of ethnic and religious consideration. Hence, the rise of mediocre leadership in virtually all levels of governance. These issues and others represent Nigeria's barriers in driving sustained socio-economic development.

Moreover, government should belong to the people and need to be for the people and, as well, by the people. This is the democratic ideal that is borne out of the innate desire in man for good governance, societal stability and development (Okafor and Oji, 2000). Contrarily, in Nigeria, these democratic ideals have not been significantly realized. This is attributable, in large part, to prebendalism, which has over the years characterized the nation's political activities and government administration. The term prebendalism is usually said to be used first by Richard Joseph, director of the program of African studies at North Western University, USA, to describe patron client or neo-patrimonialism in Nigeria (Oluchukwu, 2010). Fundamentally, prebendalism refers to the practice of utilizing official positions by public office holders for selfish personal gains. Joseph (1987) conceptualized it as the pattern of political behaviour which reflects, as its justifying principle, that the offices of the state may be competed for and then utilized for the personal benefit of the office holders as well as that of their reference or support groups. Accordingly, he notes that in Nigeria, state political offices are primarily regarded as prebends that can be appropriated by the office holders to generate material benefits for themselves and for other ethnic, cultural or community groups.

Undoubtedly, prebendalism has become the dominant and defining characteristics of the Nigerian State and her politics. Indeed, the political and social behaviours that have continued to dominate Nigerian polity and politics since independence is the prebendal tendencies among the politicians (Linus, 2006; Mala, 2010).

In fact, Nigerians believe strongly that their public offices entitle them to unlimited and unbridled access to the resources of the state with which they can plunder not only to satisfy their material desires but also to service the needs or wants of their kin groups. Nigerians being so minded and characterized could, therefore, be said to be transforming government and governance into a prebendacy.

Public office holders award contracts for white elephant projects and in total disregard of due process, approve fantastic car, furniture and travel allowances for themselves, budget huge sums of money on security votes for which account is not rendered, make huge returns to political god fathers or mentors from public purse, employ and payroll ghost workers, inflate contract sums, divert workers salaries, pervert electoral processes and procedure to ensure victory at polls, sell government property fraudulently, spend reasonable time considering motions and passing bills ostensibly meant to enhance their selfish corporate welfare at the expense of the public interest etc.

There are many people in Nigeria who lack the opportunity of being employed. The formal unemployment rate in Nigeria as estimated by the World Bank in 2007 was 4.9 percent and Nigeria ranked 61st across the world's countries (CIA Fact-book). Many graduates in Nigeria wander the streets without anything reasonable to do for a living. The government is capable but unwilling to provide jobs for them. Employment in Nigeria is usually not based on merit but depends on how connected you are with people that have power.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide the paper:

1. To what extent have public office holders significantly impacted on the rate of poverty in Nigeria?
2. To what extent have public office holders significantly impacted on the rate of unemployment in Nigeria?

## **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS**

### **Public Office Holders**

Nigerian leaders since Independence have so impoverished the country that her social and economic institutions have virtually collapsed. They embezzle public funds with impunity due to weak or the absence of effective institutional checks and balances. Nigerian leaders take undue advantage of these shortcomings to circumvent the few institutional restraints put in place to loot the treasury. They get involved in grand corruption and acquire wealth through questionable means which they use to bribe their ways to remain in power for life. Nigeria has not developed fully because the society had been according undue and undeserved respect to public officials and political office holders. Our leaders are fraudulent and opportunists who are so selfish to the detriment of overall national interest. No wonder, Professor Chinua Achebe reiterated that the problem of Nigeria is simply and squarely that of failure of leadership. Garner (1976), agreeing with Chinua Achebe affirmed that no society can function well with fools, rascals, or non leaders in leadership positions. That is the crux of the matter and the course of unending religious and social conflicts in the country. Some of the Nigerian leaders lack the integrity and knowledge to perform their national duties. According to Samuel Johnson "integrity without knowledge is weak and useless and knowledge without integrity is dangerous". All of the above and more are responsible for the decayed infrastructure, down turn in our economy, political and social conflicts and general lack of development and sustainability in Nigeria. This paper therefore sought to examine the Empirical and conceptual effects of parochial political culture on national development in Nigeria.

There are three basic political cultures known to social scientist and each has its peculiar attributes. The type of political culture practiced in Nigeria is the parochial political culture which consequently breeds what Dike (2006) termed instrumental leadership. Most of the leaders are mired in the pursuit of selfish and personal goals at the expense of broader national interests. Most governments all over the world understand and appreciate the importance of development and its sustainability.

However the leaders may not be lacking completely in social or community commitments but overall more considerations are given to self than interest of the society (Eulau, 1963 in Dike, 2006) without minding the disruptive impact. Nigerian leaders like "absolute power" and usually hold on to power as long as private objectives are achieved (KofeleKoale 1976). Because of the type of political culture in Nigeria, and because the citizens lack knowledge of what the government should be doing for them, they expect little or nothing from the government. They are not interested in what happens in the political system and so the leaders loot the treasury and make policies that are to their own advantage. The masses through socialization (political culture) have come to internalize the norms of respect for authority. They find it very difficult to challenge or criticize authority. Political office holders insist on being treated as tin-gods even when they are not performing. The norm in Nigeria is; if the behaviour of the incumbent leader is similar to that of the past corrupt and ineffective leader some citizens take it as a usual and normal behaviour and would not press for change. This paper



therefore seeks to examine the effects of parochial political culture on the social and economic development of Nigeria.

According to World Report (2008), the Nigerian leaders have so impoverished the nation that people find it very difficult to feed at least twice a day. People are dying of hunger, disease and wallow in abject poverty. If all the monies stolen by these leaders were ploughed back into the education and health sectors, Nigeria would have been better for it (Transparency International, 2010).

### **Socio-economic Development**

This is the process of social and economic development in a society. Socio-economic development is measured with indicators such as GDP, life expectancy, literacy and levels of employment. Changes in less tangible factors are also considered, such as personal dignity, freedom of association, personal safety and freedom from fear of physical harm and the extent of participation in civil society. Causes of socio-economic development are basically changes in technology and in laws which is one of responsibilities of the state in the process of governance. Scholars like Gboyega (2003) opine that development as an idea embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. It implies improvement in material wellbeing of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not imperil the future.

Chrisman (1984) views socio-economic development as a process of societal advancement, where improvements in the wellbeing of people are generated through strong partnership between all sectors, corporate bodies and other groups in the society. Socio-economic development is the combination of social and economic development. In this case, socio-economic development includes the advancement or improvement in the standard of living and the increase in economic life and conditions of the people.

The stride towards socio-economic development, democratic ethos and accountability has been at the lowest level and national institutions have remained weak. Although many Nigerians believe that visionary leadership and good governance remains the hallmark of pushing the growth and development frontiers as well as accelerating the pace of socio-economic progress in any society. In reality, the Nigerian state operates far from this universal democratic truth. Bad governance (political, economic and social governance) constitutes the major challenge to socio-economic development in Nigeria (Shabbir, 2004).

### **Public Office Holders and Poverty Rate**

In developing nations like Nigeria, where satisfying basic necessities of life is still a challenge, the definition of governance has taken an inclusive form. Good governance thus includes effective participation in public decision-making and management by citizens, accountability, legitimacy, transparency, the rule of law, and an open and enabling environment for addressing socio-economic problems. This requires participatory democracy and capacity by governments to respond to the demands of development. The emphasis should be on open governance, as participatory government is not a sufficient condition for good governance. Expression of citizen demands, whether for services, accountability, or transparency, is futile without a government willing and able to listen and respond. A democracy without effective administrative capacity is an empty shell. As such, good governance is not only about providing an open and free political atmosphere; it also requires a government with the capacity to raise the standards of living and quality of life of the people (Adesida, 2001).

The slow progress, the manipulation of the process, and the resulting disenchantment has prompted doubts as to whether participatory democracy in Africa will thrive or collapse in the near future. After analyzing the recent wave of democratization in Africa and the daunting challenges faced by African

societies, Adesida (2001) concluded that "... the majority of Africa in the absence of global fiscal munificence, may, once the international vogue with democracy recedes, be cut loose to drift their own way, sliding back into political strife, dictatorship and military rule".

Thus, the capacity of leadership in Nigeria to respond to and address critical challenges such as: achieving sustained high economic growth and development, meeting basic needs such as food, shelter, housing, clean water and electricity, providing better access to education and health, increasing agricultural productivity, ending civil strife and wars, and reducing poverty substantially hinges on whether Africa is able to institutionalize good governance. Conversely, addressing these factors will also determine whether the current wave of democratization will be sustained and become the norm in the 21st century, with the attendant socio-economic development. There is a nexus between democracy, governance and poverty in Nigeria. Scholars have tended to be on the two divides as to this connection but many of them believed that the very substance of democracy cannot be completely detached from the living conditions of the majority of the citizens. For these scholars, democracy, to be meaningful, has to have a strong social content designed to give the poor and the disadvantaged a clear stake in its institutions and politics (Olukoshi, 2000).

The link between democracy and governance is such that the one cannot be attainable without the other, and the latter socio-economic impact, poverty, would definitely prevail where the former is unstable. This thesis is predicated on the contradictory gulf between the ideal and practice of democracy and governance in Nigeria. Everyone seems to be agreed that the concept, democracy, is a simple one that essentially involves the principles of checks and balances, adequate revenue allocation formula that engenders parity and helps people to live comfortably and freedom to live within one's fundamental human rights. It also involves periodic elections that throw up representatives and political leaderships for the provision of basic amenities to the people. Lending credence to this, the International IDEA (2001:216-217) notes:

In the history of electoral politics in Nigeria, the vital connection between elected and electors necessary for a liberal democracy has been missing. That is to say, the political responsibility of elected public office holders, their accountability to the electorate, and the sanctity of the electoral process all remain elusive... the level of political will needed to ensure the realization of this objective has been absent or has yet to take firm root in the country's political culture.

This lack of political will on the part of government has been noticed in the state of poverty over, or inadequate access to, resources to satisfy wants which are considered normal by the value system of a given society (Aboyade, 1976). Its basic features are lack of basic social amenities, malnutrition, diseases and ignorance. It also involves the setbacks resulting from the problems of policy inconsistencies, disharmonies, lack of focus and contradictions inherent in the rural development programmes in any country (Ogugua, 2006; CBN, 1999; World Bank, 2001). Ajakaiye (2002), following the trend of the other authors mentioned have conceptualized poverty in four ways: lack of access to basic needs; lack of or impaired access to productive resources; outcome of inefficient use of common resources and as a result of 'exclusive mechanism' in the system by certain groups to exclude others from participating in economic development and the democratic process.

He equally delineated between structural and transient poverty, the one being the persistent or permanent socio-economic deprivations linked to a host of factors such as limited productive resources, lack of skills for gainful employment, endemic socio-political and cultural factors and gender. Transient poverty is temporary or transitory, and is linked to natural and man-made disasters; it is reversible but can become structural if it persists. The causes of poverty, according to Ajakaiye (2002) are unemployment, ignorance, high level of inflation, poor governance, corruption and environmental degradation.

Fukuyama (2000) had noted that there is a level of poverty where economic activity is undertaken for the fulfillment of basic natural needs. Thus, poverty is a relative rather than the absolute concept arising from money's roles as a symbol for worth. Okoye and Onyukwu (2006) in giving the dimensions of poverty noted

that the concept has undergone about four changes over the past decade. First, there has been a shift from a physiological model of deprivation, focused on the non-fulfillment of basic material or biological needs to a social model of deprivation, focused on such elements as lack of autonomy, powerlessness, lack of self-respect/dignity, etc. The social model is about incorporating issues of political and economic rights and social justice into the antipoverty programmatic framework. Second, there has been renewed emphasis placed on the concept of vulnerability and its relationship to poverty. Third, the concept of inequality, and its relationship to poverty, has re-emerged as a central concern. Fourth, the idea that poverty should be conceptualized as the violation of basic human rights has been painstakingly argued of late by United Nations system agencies, among others. Nigeria is a poor country plagued with bad leadership and this has become one of the greatest insults to the average Nigerian citizen. As noted by Ilo (2008:173):

Poverty robs people of their humanity and disrobes them of their sense of self. Poverty inferiorizes a person. It degrades a person and reduces self-confidence. Poverty closes the door to life. It makes life a tale of pain and sorrow and a journey into the uncertain land of want and frustration. Poverty makes people powerless and voiceless; it denies them the opportunity to actualize themselves and invest in themselves for the enrichment of our common humanity. Poverty is the greatest weapon of mass destruction in the present world.

He goes further to state that poverty in Nigeria is anthropological. When persons are bereft of their identity, their dignity, their freedom, their thought, their history, their language, their faith universe, and their basic creativity, deprived of all their rights, their hopes, their ambitions they sink into a kind of poverty which no longer concerns only exterior or inferior goods or possessions but strikes at the very being, essence and dignity of the human person. "It is this poverty which we call anthropological poverty. This is an indigence of being" (Ilo, 2008:174). Thus, Umezurike (2006) conceptualized it as:

A social condition in which an individual, for example, is forced to live below the minimum level of subsistence acceptable to the society due not necessarily to the role that individual plays in the social reproduction of wealth, but rather, arising from the unsuitability of the mechanisms for the distribution of social surpluses in the society for which the state plays the central role.

### **Public Office Holders and Unemployment**

Nigeria is the third populous country in the world apart from China and India, economy is dominated by subsistence farmers, 60% of the population of Nigeria engages in agriculture, with 41% contribution to the GNP, despite the dominance of Agriculture oil sector contributes more than 80% of foreign exchange. Manufacturing sector contributes minimum of 3%, while communication sector contribute 5.5% (National office of statistics, 2010). According to CBN (2011) the living standard of those living in rural areas has worsened and some of the viable programmes of government that would enhance their living standard could not see the light of the day. Numerous programmes were put in place which aimed at reducing the rate of unemployment but all in vein without any impacts to the masses, for instance in 1976 when the Military government realized the negative consequence of unemployment as a result of the civil war came out with a programme known as operation feed the nation, by 1979 when the military handed over power to civilian government there was nothing to show as a tangible effects of the programme . Apata, Igbalajobi, Awoniyi (2010) added that majority of poverty stricken people in Nigeria are rural populace that constitute 75% of the population due to lack of accessibility to micro –credit, poor education, lack of accessibility to agricultural extension workers and distance to market constitute hindrance to poverty eradication in Nigeria.

Likewise in 1981 when President Shagari came to power in his effort to further provide employment to thousand Nigerians came out with green revolution, just like its predecessor the green revolution also has it

defect which led to importation of rice which affected the food security of the nation. Also as a result of the failure of Shagari government to address socio-economic problems that bedevil the nation that led to his overthrow in December 1983. By 1984 when the military came in to power unemployment was at the peak and the military government of that time also introduced back to land as a way of salvaging the country from crises, the programme also failed to address the problem of the youth. Other programmes introduced include The directorate of food, roads and rural infrastructure (DFFRI); National Directorate of employment (NDE); The establishment of peoples bank of Nigeria; Better life for rural women programme; The family support programme; Agric development programme, the nomadic and adult education programme. However in 1999 when the country returned to the democracy Poverty alleviation programme was launched in an attempt to provide youths with employment opportunities and later multiply in to National poverty eradication programme (NAPEP), other similar agencies introduced by the federal government include Nigerian economic empowerment and development strategies (NEEDS) and Millennium development goals (Danjuma, 2012).

Despite all these programmes the country is still bisect with the problem of poverty. According to National Office of Statistics (2012) revealed that 69.9% in 2010 could not afford food, shelter and clothing, while in 2004 only 54.7% could not afford. North East and North West recorded the highest prevalence with 77.7% and 76.3% respectively where the activities of Boko Haram sect are the worst heat. Sokoto and Niger state recorded the top list. Sanusi (2012) opined that Nigerian economy is dysfunctional as a result the poverty level in Nigeria will continue grow unless something is done to address the situation.

## **METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Theoretical Framework**

The framework of analysis for this study, took its form from the structural functionalism theory. The structural functionalism theory was developed from the work of a social anthropologist, A. R. Radcliff-Brown (1881-1955) and systematically formulated by the American sociologist Talcott Parsons (1902-1979). Structural functionalism seeks out the 'structural' aspects of the social system under consideration (the public service), and then studies the processes which function to maintain social structures. In this context, structure primarily refers to normative patterns of behaviour (regularized patterns of action in accordance with norms), while function explains how such patterns operate as systems. A "system" refers to an organized whole with interdependent parts, regular patterns of interaction, known boundaries, structures, and functions performed by structures. What this means is that a political system refers to security organizations which help maintain domestic order in a society.

Structural-functionalism in this paper sees society and the civil service as built upon order, interrelation, and balance amongst the various parts as a means of maintaining the smooth functioning of the whole in order to achieve good and purposeful governance. It further viewed shared norms and values as the basis of society, focuses on social order based on tacit agreements between groups, organizations, institutions, and views social change as occurring in a slow and orderly fashion. Structural functionalism has been generally agreed on to be an offshoot from the general systems theories. It is simply a means of explaining what political structures perform, what basic functions in the political system and under what conditions in any given system. This approach therefore assumes that a political system is composed of several structures with specific objectives functions to perform, a process for its attainment and the effect of its performance. According to Cammack (1998), in order for a political system to run smoothly and enjoy a healthy autonomy or boundary maintenance between polity and society, there must be a way to avoid any rush of unprocessed claims or demands without direction or control by the political system. Citizen demands must be selected, channeled, and controlled. Any



"rush" or "eruption" of diverse claims by the citizenry is to be avoided; otherwise the political system will become overwhelmed by direct societal pressures.

### Application of the theory

Good governance is only achievable if the social structure functions effectively for the generality of the society. Therefore civil servants must endeavour to maintain a good working relationship with those that have been elected politically to hold public office, notwithstanding their political affiliation and ethnic relations. This would help build a social structure that is acceptable to all. As an ideal political system utilizes un-fragmented and differentiated structures for interest articulation, and the political parties, for example, are not overly politicized nor tied to particular ideologies or interests. According to Robert Merton he postulates that the function of a particular social structure contributes to make the social system functional and that the maintenance and survival of the system are contingent on the functional interdependence of the diverse structures within the whole system (Merton, 1957). Good Governance and its Role in Societal Development Good governance is a system of governance that is able to unambiguously identify.

### Methodology

The research design adopted in this paper was documentary which heavily relied on secondary sources of data.

**Table 1:** Nigeria's Ranks in Corruption Perceptions Index 1996-2010

Year	Country rank	CPI Score	Surveys used	Confidence range
2010	134/178	2.4	7	2.2- 2.7
2009	130/180	2.5	7	2.2- 2.7
2008	21/180	2.7	7	2.3-3.0
2007	147/180	2.2	8	2.0-2.4
2001	90/91	1.0	4	-0.1-2.0
1999	98/99	1.6	5	NA
1998	81/85	1.9	5	NA
1996	54/54	0.69	4	NA

**Source: Transparency International extracts from 1996 to 2010.**

Table 1 above shows that the ranking of some selected countries by their perceived corruption status for the year 2006 extracted from the TI's annual report. Nigeria ranked 146 out of 163 countries with a score of 2.2. The index related the perceptions of the degree of corruption as seen by business people and risk analysts, and ranges between 10 (highly clean) and 0 (highly corrupt). In SSA Nigeria was the most corrupt with the exception of the war torn Sudan. The rank of Nigeria in the TI fluctuates like the price of petroleum in the global oil market. Nigeria ranked 134, 130, 121, 147 and 90 in 2010, 2009, 2008, 2007 and 2001 respectively. As governments was committing huge sums to tackle the world's most pressing problems (instability of financial markets, climate change and poverty), corruption remains an obstacle to achieving much needed progress. The 2010 Corruption Perceptions Index showed that nearly three quarter of the 178 countries in the index scored below five, on a scale from 10 (highly clean) to 0 (highly corrupt). These results indicate a serious corruption problem.



## FACTS AND FIGURES: AN INSIGHT INTO CORRUPTION AMONG THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP CLASS IN NIGERIA

Items	(\$ millions)
Documentary Film on Nigeria	2.92
Purchase or TV/Video for the Presidency	18.30
Ceremonial Uniform for the Army	3.85
Staff Welfare at Dodan Barracks/Aso Rock	23.98
Travels of the First Lady abroad	0.99
President s Travels abroad	8.95
Medical (Clinic at Aso Rock)	27.25
Gifts: Liberia	1.00
Gifts: Ghana	0.50
Nigerian Embassy: London	18.12
Nigerian Embassy: Riyadh	14.99
Nigerian Embassy: Teheran	2.76
Nigerian Embassy: Niamey	3.80
Nigerian Embassy: Pakistan	3.80
Nigerian Embassy: Israel	13.07
TV Equipment for ABU	17.90
Ministry of Defense	323.35
Security	59.72
Defense Attaches	25.49
GHQ	1.04

**Source: Okigbo Panel Report, 1994: item 7.148**

Overall, neither the Dedication Account nor the Stabilisation Account was applied for the purpose for which it was originally designed. Thus, the Dedication Account was used for many non-priority projects and the Stabilisation Account was not, in practice, used to sterilise revenues in excess of projected earnings. Instead, after a short delay, the monies in the accounts were spent virtually as fast as they accumulated. In addition, the operation of such accounts was not subject to the normal budgetary processes, and therefore lacked transparency. Thus, by limiting the authorisation process for its operation to the approval of the President or Head of State, which was communicated directly to the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, it created considerable room for abuse of procedures, abuse of application and reduced accountability (Okigbo Panel Report, 1994: item 7.149 and 7.150).

Besides, the balances kept in these accounts were not included in the Federation Account, a practice that violated the fundamental precepts of federal fiscal relations in Nigeria. By excluding these incomes from the Federation Account, the respective shares of the State and Local Governments were more or less confiscated by the Federal Government, thereby unilaterally violating the revenue allocation formula (Okigbo Panel Report, 1994: item 7.151). The economic impact of the corruption perpetrated with these accounts on the country's micro economy was enormous.

The gross takings on these accounts from their inception in 1988 to June 1994 totaled \$12.4 billion, which was held totally outside the country's external reserves. What is more, if the funds were counted as part of the external reserves and were held as such, the impact on the exchange rate in the years under review would have been so significant that the Naira would have been stronger in 1994, in relation to the dollar, than it was in

1985 when it stood at N1 to \$1.004. More so, the burden of external debt to the Paris and London Clubs and the pressure on the exchange rate would have been substantially mitigated if not eliminated (Okigbo Panel Report, 1994: item 7.153).

The above facts and figures, therefore, calls into question the wisdom and prudence of the Nigerian political leadership class in the management of the affairs and wealth of the country. The injury the country sustained through the exceedingly harmful corruption of the Babangida and the Abacha regimes massively sets the country back on the path of socio-economic advancement and other forms of development i.e. investments in infrastructure development and social services, such as electricity, roads, education, security, healthcare, water supply, to mention but a few. Saddening enough, the Okigbo Panel Report was kept away from the prying eyes of the Nigerian press and the public for eleven years. It is noteworthy to mention here that up till date, the Federal Government neither is yet to officially release the Okigbo Panel Report nor issued a White Paper on it. This is so because the report indicted many highly placed Nigerians.

In table 3 below, one can obviously see that the rate of corruption of Nigeria's public office holders has never reduced, instead, it increased by years. In 1996, it was at 54% which did not return to that percentage ever again. In terms of unemployment, it was at 8.9% in 1996, but escalated to 24.5% by 2014 which is simply a bad omen for the peaceful existentiarity of the developing state. On its own side, poverty rate was at 65.6% in 1996 and abysmally developed a negative tall leg to 69.0% by 2014. These negative increases on the rates of both unemployment and poverty have purely shown how poor our so called leaders perform. The public office holders have inflicted nothing less than harm to the country.

**TABLE 3: STATISTICS ON NIGERIA'S CORRUPTION RANK, UNEMPLOYMENT, AND POVERTY RATE**

Year	Corruption rank (CR)	Unemployment rate (UNR)	Poverty rate (PVR)
1996	54	8.9	65.6
1997	52	8.6	65.6
1998	81	7.7	65.6
1999	98	17.5	65.6
2000	90	13.9	65.6
2001	90	13.6	65.6
2002	101	12.6	65.6
2003	132	14.8	65.6
2004	144	13.4	54.4
2005	152	11.9	54.4
2006	142	12.3	54.4
2007	147	12.7	54.4
2008	121	14.9	54.4
2009	130	19.7	54.4
2010	134	21.5	69.0
2011	143	23.9	69.0
2012	139	24.3	69.0
2013	144	24.9	69.0
2014	136	24.5	69.0

Adopted from the work of Enofe, Oriaifoh and Omagbon (2016) on Poverty and Unemployment and Corruption in Nigerian Public Sector.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Findings

The research findings are as follows:

1. Public office holders have not significantly impacted on the poverty rate in Nigeria. According to Adesida (2001), the slow progress, the manipulation of the process and the resulting disenchantment has prompted doubts as to whether participatory democracy in Africa will thrive or collapse in the near future. After

analyzing the recent wave of democratization in Africa and the daunting challenges faced by African societies, Adesida (2001) concluded that "... the majority of Africa in the absence of global fiscal munificence, may – once the international vogue with democracy recedes be cut loose to drift their own way, sliding back into political strife, dictatorship and military rule". Apata, Igbalajobi, Awoniyi (2010) added that majority of poverty stricken people in Nigeria are rural populace that constitute 75% of the population due to lack of accessibility to micro-credit, poor education, lack of accessibility to agricultural extension workers and distance to market constitute hindrance to poverty eradication in Nigeria. Sanusi (2012) opined that Nigerian economy is dysfunctional as a result; the poverty level in Nigeria will continue to grow unless something is done to address the situation.

2. Public office holders have not significantly impacted on the rate of unemployment in Nigeria. This finding is supported by the postulation of CBN (2011) that the living standard of those living in rural areas has worsened and some of the viable programmes of government that would enhance their living standard could not see the light of the day. Numerous programmes were put in place which aimed at reducing the rate of unemployment but all in vein without any impacts to the masses, for instance in 1976 when the Military government realized the negative consequence of unemployment as a result of the civil war came out with a programme known as operation feed the nation, by 1979 when the military handed over power to civilian government there was nothing to show as a tangible effects of the programme.

## Conclusion

From the findings, it is understood that the inability of the public office holders to do the right thing cause people to suffer in poverty. Again, unemployment is another problem caused by bad leadership. These issues are threats to the society in general if not properly handled. This is because when one is employed, the issue of poverty becomes minimized to some extent.

## Recommendations

Based on the summary of findings, the following recommendations have been given:

1. The Federal Government should consciously increase allocations to key sectors of the Nigerian economy as a policy matter. In doing so, preference should be given to the productive sector and the social services sector because of their direct impact on the poor. This will bring about reduction of hunger, increase in health, cheaper transportation and increase in literacy rate. The end results of these will be national prosperity and poverty reduction.
2. The society should be careful not to be bought over with money during election period. This is as result of the fact that it is one of the best opportunities for determining their own future by themselves. Therefore, they should learn to vote right and should not be cheaply influenced.

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