

## Bureaucracy and Corruption in Nigeria: Implications for Buhari's Change Agenda

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**ABSTRACT :** The issue of corruption has taken the front burner in public discourse in Nigeria. This is particularly because of the leadership that emerged in the country from the 2015 general elections concluded in April same year. The emergence of President Muhammadu Buhari as the country's President has made the issue of corruption to resonate with a deafening intensity as the fight against corruption became the major item on the campaign promises of the All Progressive Congress (APC), the current ruling party in the country. This paper addresses the issue of corruption in Nigeria's bureaucracy and its implications for the change mantra of the Buhari civilian administration. The paper adopts a qualitative method and relied on secondary sources of data. It also adopted the theory of anomie and the contradictions of bureaucracy as a theoretical framework. It defines bureaucracy and corruption, gives an overview of bureaucratic corruption and highlights its implications on the Buhari's change agenda. It discusses in great detail the implications of the corruption in the bureaucracy on the sustenance and consolidation of democracy as well as the change agenda of the Buhari government and highlights such issues as poverty and underdevelopment, negative impacts on productivity and efficiency, the deprivation of the citizenry of the benefits of good governance and the much needed dividends of democracy among others. It argues that if the bureaucracy in Nigeria is not purged of all corrupt tendencies it will be impossible for it to drive the much needed change necessary for democratic consolidation and recommends the need to strengthen the anti-corruption agencies, making accountability and transparency an article of faith, addressing the issues of salaries and wages, thorough investigation and prosecution of corrupt public officials as well as a reorientation of Nigerians on the need to avoid corrupt practices. It is hopeful that this study will lend a voice to the current war against corruption and assist the anti corruption agencies in their fight against the menace in the civil and public service.

**KEY WORDS:** *Bureaucracy, Corruption, Change agenda, Underdevelopment, Democratic consolidation*

### I. INTRODUCTION

The public or civil service is the bureaucratic arm of government. Bureaucracy or the civil service in every country is saddled with the responsibility for the conduct of government business. This is not different in Nigeria where the civil service performs the same role. The public or civil service of Nigeria by definition includes the following institutions, the federal civil service, the state civil services, local governments, statutory corporations of both the federal and state government, business enterprises with full or majority ownership by either the federal or state government, authorities or commissions established by the federal or state government, educational institutions established or financed mainly by federal and or state government, the Nigeria Police Force, the armed forces, the judiciary, the prison service, customs, civil defense among others (FRN, 1999).

The public service is a creation of the collective sovereign will of the people or the constitution, and as such, it is an institution created to serve the collective will of the people. It is the body of men and women employed by the state to execute and implement the policies and programmes of the government of the day. It is the permanent infrastructure of government in a modern state (Obaro, 2004:183). Given the objective realities of the Nigerian state as it is today, the following issues are of critical importance to the Nigerian public service, and that the service will need to understand the challenges involved and respond by developing appropriate mechanisms for dealing with them. The issues are bureaucratic red tapism, corrupt practices and poor service delivery. Of these three, corruption stands tall and generates more concern as it is generally believed that once it can be curbed in the public service, then the other two issues would definitely fall in line.

In Nigeria today, the issue of corruption has taken the front burner in every public discourse. This is particularly because of the leadership that emerged in the country as a result of the 2015 general elections concluded in April. The emergence of President Muhammadu Buhari as the country's President has made the issue of corruption to resonate with a deafening intensity as the fight against this monster became the major item on the campaign promises of the All Progressive Congress (APC) party which threw up the current president. In fact, the fight against corruption has become a mantra and tops the change agenda as propagated by the current government in Nigeria. Similarly, corruption on its own has remained a perennial social problem in the country. Beginning from the pre-independence era when Nigerians began to take charge of the administration of the country, different acts of corruption have been reported among various public office holders, civil servants and officials of the business sector (Okonofua and Ugiagbe, 2003:261). It can be therefore be said that corruption in Nigeria is as old as the history of business or public administration in Nigeria

Again, few Nigerian public believe that public agencies provide adequate services. Services rendered by public agencies are of low quality, and this has remained so for years. This conception also has far reaching implications for the present leadership in the country and the professed mantra of change which is its hallmark. Thus, this study argues that for the much needed change by the present government in Nigeria to be achieved, the public service in its present form must be repositioned to eschew all forms of corrupt practices since it remains at the centre of government policies implementation. It becomes pertinent for this research to focus on the relationship between bureaucracy and corruption in the Nigerian public service with the understanding that it would enhance the prospect of institutional reforms leading to improved public service delivery, economic development and human welfare all needed to drive the change mantra of the Buhari civilian administration.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Nigerian public or civil service is part of the bane of the society, quite unlike its counterparts in the other parts of the world. It is vilified by all and sundry for its indiscipline, ineptitude, corruption, dishonesty and criminal tendencies. Public and civil servants in Nigeria do not only distort or subvert the ideas and values that they ought to uphold as professionals, they also enrich themselves at the expense of the people and the state that they are paid to serve. Many of them are self-servers, so prompted by purely self-seeking motives that they extort money to render service, sell off public property and steal government money and property. Where this is hindered, public services and businesses are stalled, stalemated or sabotaged. For even a paltry fee, the Nigerian civil servant will give his cooperation up to the extent of going to great length to cover up for his and other individual's nefarious activities in which files and other vital documents are hidden, destroyed or tampered with.

Sometimes, entire public buildings are razed to the ground. Civil servants plunder state funds through the inflation of contract values, over invoicing for purchases, illegal transfer of capital abroad among others (Igbinovia, 2003:51). In all this, Nigerians keep focusing on the politicians and other political office holders as the conduit pipe that drains government resources through corruption whereas the civil servants are enmeshed in bureaucratic corruption with a higher intensity. The problem here is that given the above scenario, the bureaucracy cannot function effectively and as such cannot also function as the change driver in the present political dispensation. It is therefore necessary that the issue of corruption in the public service be addressed if President Buhari's change agenda must have positive impact on Nigerians. That is what this study intends to undertake. In doing this, the study is limited to the present democratic government of President Muhammadu Buhari and its fight against corruption in the Nigerian society and the issue of corrupt practices in the public and civil service in the country.

## III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory of anomie and the contradictions of bureaucracy would explain the problems of bureaucracy and corruption in the Nigerian public service. Bureaucratic processes are developed, presumably to facilitate effective public service. Effective and efficient public service requires that rules and regulations be widely known and understood and that mechanisms for public consultation regarding their modification be well developed. But in Nigeria bureaucracy has turned out to be an obstacle. Bureaucratic red tapism, ritualism or abuses and corruption often undermine efficient public service (Obaro, 2004).

Durkheim (1974) gave two rather different meanings to anomie or a state of normlessness by distinguishing between two forms of solidarity: mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity, and their accompanying modes of division of labour and control. Durkheim asserts that a society without an elaborate division of labour rests on the mechanical solidarity of people who not only react much alike to problems but also see that everyone around them react alike to those problems thereby lending objectivity, scale and solidarity to moral response, and bringing massive disapproval and repression to bear on the deviant. Such a social order is conceived to lie in the simpler past of pre-industrial and bureaucratic society or traditional society (Durkheim, 1974).

The industrial and bureaucratic society is distinguished by a state of organic solidarity, the solidarity appropriate to a complex division of labour. People are allocated by merit and effort to very diverse positions, and they recognize not only the legitimacy of the manner in which rewards are distributed but also the indispensability of what each does in his or her work for the other and for the common good. Organic solidarity would thus have controls peculiar to itself. Sheer economic regulation is not enough and there should be moral regulations and rules which specify the rights and obligations of individuals in a given occupation in relation to those in other occupations (Giddens, 2006:11).

However, it is Durkheim's analysis of the luminal state between the two forms of solidarity that is of real interest to criminologists. In the transition from the mechanical to organic solidarity, capitalism and colonialism is thought to impose a "forced division of labour". People acquiesced neither in the appointment of rewards nor in the moral authority of the state. They are obliged to work and act in a society that enjoy little legitimacy and that exercised an incomplete control over their desires. In such a setting, it is held, "man's nature is to be eternally dissatisfied, constantly to advance, without relief or rest, towards an indefinite goal" (Durkheim, 1974:256).

In Durkheim's second meaning of anomie he argued that people are not endowed at birth with fixed appetites and ambitions. On the contrary, their purposes and aspirations are shaped by the generalized opinions and reactions of others, by a collective conscience. When society is disturbed by rapid change or major disorder, however, that semblance of solidarity and objectivity can itself flounder, and people may no longer find their ambitions subject to effective social discipline. The condition of anomie is experienced as a 'malady of infinite aspiration' that is accompanied by weariness and disillusionment, disturbance, agitation and discontent (Lukes, 1997:137).

Durkheim (1974) further theorized that corruption or any act of deviance is a result of anomie. He developed the notion of anomie to refer to the thesis that in modern societies, traditional norms and standards become undermined, without being replaced by new ones. Anomie exists when there are no clear standards to guide behaviour in a given area of social life. In these circumstances, Durkheim, believed, people feel disoriented and anxious, anomie is therefore one of the social factors influencing dispositions to bureaucratic corruption.

Given another complexion by Merton (1983), anomie becomes a socially festered state of discontent and deregulation that generates deviance and crime as part of the routine functioning of a society which promised much to everyone but actually denied them equal access to its attainment. People might have been motivated to achieve meaningful progress in Nigeria but they confront class, ethnicity and other social differences that manifestly contradict the myth of bureaucracy or efficiency and openness. And in a society where failure is interpreted as a sign of personal rather than social weakness where failure leads to guilt rather than to political anger and social or public policy, the pressure to succeed could be so powerful that it impels people thus disadvantaged to bypass legitimate careers and to take illegitimate careers instead. In this setting a cardinal virtue, "ambition" promotes a cardinal vice "deviance" (Merton, 1983:145).

From all of the above, it can be deduced that the central thesis of the anomie theory rests on the pillars of discontent and the subsequent manifestation of deviant behaviour. This result directly on the issue of greed which is central to the festering corruption in the public service as it is the motivation for the primitive accumulation associated with public officials in the country. This basically is the linkage between the theory and our present study and makes it suitable for the analysis of the implications of corruption in the bureaucracy on the war that the government of Nigeria under President Buhari has declared on corruption and other economic crimes against the Nigerian state. Conclusively, it must be noted that bureaucratic corruption as a sub category of deviant behaviour involves such variety of forms of activity and is therefore unlikely that we can produce a single theory which would account for all forms of this criminal conduct.

### **Bureaucracy and Corruption: A Definition**

This study deals with two somewhat elusive concepts and their complex interaction: bureaucracy and corruption. It is particularly concerned with the way corruption has been institutionalized in the various bureaucracies in Nigeria. Without entering into the old age debate about the relevant conceptual meaning of bureaucracy itself, we can simply state that 'bureaucracy' is a type of organization marked by a clear hierarchy of authority, the existence of written rules of procedure, and staffed by full time wage earning officials (Giddens, 2006).

In the view of Konjoulas (1982), bureaucracy is a form of organization which is indispensable to the efficient operation of any complex structure while Hague and Harrop (2013) described bureaucracy as "the institution that carries out the functions and responsibilities of the state: It is the engine room of the state". Bureaucracy notwithstanding its qualities and differences is an administrative body of "appointed officials". The term has been primarily used to denote the apparatus consisting of professional, full time officials subject to hierarchical supervision and carrying out their functions in a well ordered way based on rules, regulations and orders coming from above. The bureaucrats are therefore seen as actors within the form and content of bureaucratic system (Lawal and Tobi, 2006).

Corruption on its part is a term that has been perceived in various ways by various scholars. Its conceptualization has attracted in recent past, competing and numerous views and approaches. It is therefore seen as a worldwide phenomenon which has long been with every society in the world. Incidentally, it has been identified as the bane of most political and economic problems in societies. The concept of corruption, like the bureaucracy, comes with a mixed bag of affective and pejorative perceptions. The reason is not farfetched, typical of most social science concepts; there are divergent opinions on what constitutes corruption. This notwithstanding, the definition given by Dwivendi (1967) seems to be appropriate here. According to him, corruption includes “nepotism, favoritism, bribery, graft and other unfair means adopted by government employees and the public alike to extract some socially and legally prohibited favours.

Nye (1967) in another instance described corruption as the process of obtaining material enrichment or opportunities for oneself and or for others, through the use of public office (or influence) in ways other than those publicly acknowledged through the rules and procedures of that office. In other instance, Kanu and Osunbajo (1990) defined corruption as the “act of turning power and authority into ready cash. Corruption according to Khan (1996) is an act which deviates from the formal rules of conduct governing the actions of someone in a position of public authority because of some private motives such as wealth, power or status”.

Otite (2000) in his own attempt at defining corruption, states that “corruption is the perversion of integrity or state of affairs through bribery, favour or moral depravity”. He further states that corruption takes place when at least two parties have interacted to change the structure or processes of society or the behaviour of functionaries in order to produce dishonest, unfaithful or defiled situations”. A careful study of the above presentation by Otite (2000) shows that corruption transcends bribery but includes “treasury looting and also the deliberate bending of rules of the system to favour friends or hurt foes. It is clearly an evidence of absence of accountability, law and order.

Odunuga (2000) in his presentation assert that corruption refers to the conscious and well planned act by a person or group of persons to appropriate by unlawful means the wealth of another person. The view presented by Otite (2000) is not at variance with the above conception of corruption. On his part, Ojaide (2000) asserts that corruption is:

any systemic vice in an individual, society or a nation which reflects favoritism, nepotism, tribalism sectionalism, undue enrichment, amassing of wealth, abuse of office, power, position and derivation of undue gains and benefits – it also includes bribery, smuggling fraud, illegal payments, money laundering, drug trafficking, falsification of document and records, window dressing, false declaration, evasion, underdevelopment, deceit, forgery, concealment, aiding and abetting of any kind to the detriment of another person, community, society or nation.

Following from the above, corruption can be described or referred to as the conscious attempt or deliberate diversion of resources from the satisfaction of the general interest to that of selfish (personal or particular) interest. The disdain for corruption is clearly felt mainly on ground of morality. There is no doubt that it inflicts some sort of adverse effects on any society where it exists and persists until such society is purged of its immorality (Okoosi, 1993).

### **Bureaucratic Corruption: An Overview**

Bureaucratic corruption can be seen as any form of inducement or gratification ‘given and taken’ in order to do some official work or assignment which ought to be done as a normal routine, or to jump some official protocols or bend some rules and regulations for personal gains. Thus, bureaucratic corruption entails an intricate network of favours provided only in exchange for other favours rendered, anticipated or expected. In essence, therefore, bureaucratic corruption deals with the ways and manner in which all forms of corruption has been institutionalized in the Nigerian bureaucracies (Aluko and Adesopo, 2003).

Anise (1986) provided an elastic conception of the Nigerian bureaucracies. Included in the elastic view are: (i) Civil services of all the thirty six (36) state governments, the seven hundred and seventy four (774) local governments and the federal civil service (ii) Parastatals and public enterprises bureaucracies (iii) armed forces bureaucracy (iv) Internal security or police bureaucracy (v) Universities and other institutions of higher education bureaucracy (vi) Teaching service bureaucracy (vii) Judicial bureaucracy (viii) Public media bureaucracy (ix) Political party bureaucracy (x) Private sector bureaucracy.

The Udoji report of 1974 charged the Nigerian bureaucracies with nepotism, ethnic loyalties, sectionalism, and more importantly corruption. The report also concluded that not only is the entire bureaucracy corrupt, it was not result-oriented. Thus, when the Murtala/Obasanjo regime took over the reins of power in 1975, one of the first step it took was the massive purge of the public service. More than ten thousand top level bureaucrats were sacked on grounds ranging from old age, inefficiency, declining productivity, drunkenness to conduct not in the interest of the public trust and most importantly corruption (Anise, 1986).

According to Amucheazi (1980) the bureaucrats running the nation's bureaucracies were tainted with the cankerworm of corruption, ethnicity and sectionalism. Evidence abounds of their active participation in the power struggle among politicians. They aided and abetted election rigging, manipulation of census, falsification of reports, and frustration or poor implementation of development plans. In another instance, Anise (1986) stated that routine bureaucratic services have been slowly converted into an intricate network of favours provided only in exchange for other favours rendered or expected.

Bureaucratic corruption is linked with the activities of bureaucrats. Traditionally, the concept was used to denote the practice of buying favour from bureaucrats who formulate and implement governments' economic and political policies. The concept however transcends the buying of favour; it refers to the violation of public duty by bureaucrats or public officials. Various explanations have been given for the pervasiveness of bureaucratic corruption. One school of thought holds that bureaucratic corruption can be explained within the context of the nature and character of the bureaucratic institution itself. This school holds the view that at times bureaucracy outgrows its organizational structure and as such becomes dehumanized and monolithic, hence due to undefined structure, lack of social values, integration of selfish interest over and above that of the organization, the absence of rules and procedures, corruption has the likelihood of evolving, persisting and spreading (Lawal and Tobi, 2006).

If bureaucratic corruption can be viewed in this way, then it can be argued that, since bureaucracy is the engine of growth of state, the pervasiveness of corruption in the institution has the capacity of undermining development. More so, if corruption has already permeated the bureaucracy, for any development to take place the institution must as a matter of fact be purged of all corrupt practices. Similarly, if good governance is conceived to include the capacity of a government to manage resources efficiently to improve the wellbeing of the citizens, then bureaucratic corruption can thus be regarded as one of the main obstacles to good governance and development in Nigeria (Lawal and Tobi, 2006).

Corruption has assumed a normal pattern of life in Nigeria. A way of getting "everything" done. A norm in the land. Consequently, the situation has rendered the Nigerian state (Governance) – a non – delivery state. Corruption has denied the Nigerian people the beauty of good governance. Bureaucracy and other institutions have been dishonest, ineffective and highly centralized. This as a matter of fact, has already been identified with all administrations in Nigeria since independence in 1960. Each succeeding administration or regime has always accused the other of corrupt practices particularly under the various military regimes. It has been observed that systemic corruption distorts incentives, undermines institutions and redistribute wealth and power to the undeserving (Kayode, 2000).

When corruption undermines property rights, the rule of law and incentive to invest, economic and political development is crippled. These have been the pattern of things in the Nigerian State; hence the gains of good governance and development have been eluding Nigerians. It is within this understanding and threat which bureaucratic corruption poses to good governance and development that, the civilian administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo initiated the Anti-Corruption Bill which had since been passed by the National Assembly into law to fight corruption in the country at various levels among many other measures against corrupt practices. The entire clamour about transparency and accountability is therefore seen as the necessary step towards development (Kayode, 2000). Even with this laudable effort by the Obasanjo regime, corruption persisted and reached an all time high if the revelations of the present Buhari administration are anything to go by. In fact, the depth of corruption has been so much that the fight against this monster has become almost the single campaign and policy issue of the present Buhari administration which has also incorporated this fight into the "change mantra".

#### IV. BUHARI'S CHANGE AGENDA

Since assuming office on May 29 last year, President Muhammadu Buhari has not minced words about his commitment to the fight against corruption. He has seized every opportunity to reiterate his disapproval of the ills that bedevil the nation while warning officials working in his government that he would not tolerate corruption in any form. The president has lived up to his words thus far. But it is also evident that what we are dealing with is a hydra-headed monster that will not easily go away (Ogienagbon, 2016).

Corruption has not only eaten deep into the fabric of the society, it is also of such magnitude that even the very existence of our nation is now mortally threatened. Hardly a day goes by without revelations of monies earmarked for building infrastructure necessary for boosting the national economy that were diverted to personal use by some government officials. Therefore, in the face of the real danger that corruption poses to our country, every citizen must stand with President Buhari to fight it to a standstill. But the citizens' cooperation and buy in cannot be taken for granted. For the people to give the support required to fight and win this war, they must see concrete evidence of a sincere pursuit of the cause (Ogienagbon, 2016).

What has come to be known as Buhari's change agenda is the embodiment of the APC's presidential flag bearer's campaign promises during the build up to the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. Although several campaign promises were made by Buhari, the fight against corruption stood out as the key item on the agenda.

The APC presidential flag-bearer said it was not only a civic duty but that every Nigerian was morally-bound to sustain the struggle to rid “this country of the prevailing corruption”. He stressed that he would make sure that those who steal public money are made to return it, noting that the fight against corruption will form a major focus of the APC government (Ogienagbon, 2016).

Buhari said despite his mature age he feels “spiritually strong enough and physically agile to give every sacrifice in our bid to salvage our dear nation from imminent economic and social disintegration.” “On corruption, there will be no confusion as to where I stand. Corruption will have no place and the corrupt will not be appointed into my administration. First and foremost, we will plug the holes in the budgetary process. Revenue producing entities such as Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and Customs and Excise will have one set of books only. Their revenues will be publicly disclosed and regularly audited. The institutions of state dedicated to fighting corruption will be given independence and prosecutorial authority without political interference” (Ojeifo, 2016).

Furthermore, Muhammadu Buhari who was 2003 presidential candidate says that his vision of governance was to make Nigeria a country where the public and private sectors will collaborate to create zero tolerance for sharp practices in the running of government business. He stated inter alia:

There is a clear linkage between the billions of naira lost to corruption and the poor living conditions of our people: it is the resources meant for the development of our people that are diverted to service the greed of a few. It is the fear of the unknown in a country where both family and government social welfare have collapsed that fuels the avarice of those in offices to steal for generations unborn (Ejiofor, 2015).

It would be recalled that while opening and during all his electoral campaign, Buhari promised to tackle corruption, insecurity and economic issues, if elected. He said that these were the fundamental challenges facing Nigeria. Buhari assured Nigerians that his party, the APC, would assemble a team of competent Nigerians to work with him to proffer solutions to the numerous problems plaguing the nation. Reiterating Buhari’s position, his Senior Special Assistant on media and publicity, GarbaShehu while addressing state house correspondents in a three day retreat in Kaduna hosted by his office said the ongoing anti-corruption campaign is bound to offend many as big toes will be stepped on. He stated further that personal interests would also be cast aside to achieve positive results in the campaign (Ejiofor, 2015).

On his part, the Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed has lent his voice to the change agenda of the Buhari government and also emphasized that no amount of criticisms will derail the fight against corruption in the country. Mohammed, said that President MuhammaduBuhari will not relent in his war against corruption until the scourge is destroyed in the country. He also called on Nigerians to join the battle against corruption in the country. “This is not Buhari’s war; this is not the All Progressives Congress’ war. This is a war for all Nigerians and we must all join hands in waging the war,” Mohammed said while delivering a lecture on Friday at the Faculty of Arts, ObafemiAwolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State (Falodi and Makinde, 2016)

According to him, once the people were determined to fight corruption, they were assured of victory. The Minister said, “No power has ever been great enough to defeat a people who are determined to win. Let us all form what I call citizens’ coalition against corruption by speaking up against the crime, refusing to glorify or support looters, irrespective of how much dirty cash they dangle before us, and refusing to be divided along religious or ethnic lines.” While listing the effects of corruption in the nation, the minister said Nigeria lost \$400bn in the oil sector alone, adding that so much money was stolen by corrupt leaders from the health, education, security and other sectors (Falodi and Makinde, 2016).

Taking the change mantra and the war against corruption to the civil service, our main focus of study, Buhari said he was disturbed by the rot and thriving corruption in the civil service, which has cost the country trillions of naira. He ordered that all outstanding audit queries which had piled up over the years be resolved within the next 30 days. Confirming the presidential directive, Senior Special Assistant to the President on Media & Publicity, MalamGarbaShehu, said the unanswered audit queries sounded unsavory to the President who, on hearing it, expressed his displeasure. He added that the president was not happy that standard operating procedures and financial regulations were no longer observed in the public service. An audit query is the request for an explanation by the Auditor-General of the Federation over improprieties discovered in the Accountant-General of the Federation’s report. The report is done quarterly (Ndujihe&Nwabughio, 2015).

Shehu went further to capture the President’s displeasure with the bureaucracy thus:

The president, he said, was “irrevocably” committed to tackling administrative and bureaucratic corruption head-on. “The era of impunity is gone. The president is taking the war on corruption to the civil service.

He is not happy that standard operating procedures and financial regulations are no longer being observed as they should. "President Buhari will ensure that public officials and civil servants ... pay a heavy price from now on for violating financial regulations or disregarding audit queries. "On his watch President Buhari wants to firm action against those who violate extant financial regulations and the prevarications and shenanigans that went on in the past in the form of endless probes and public inquiries" (Ndujihe&Nwabughio, 2015).

Shehu stated further that the president had, therefore, directed the Auditor-General of the Federation to ensure that all outstanding audit queries are conclusively resolved within 30 days. Buhari had also ordered that henceforth, all audit queries must be answered within 24 hours. He said the orders followed Buhari's displeasure on hearing that audit queries remained unanswered for long periods, sometimes running into years, under previous administrations. He concluded that Buhari was determined to end the situation in which rather than respond to legitimate audit queries, public servants violating financial regulations resorted to threatening, bribing or mounting other forms of social pressure on auditors. It must be recalled that President Buhari had promised during the election campaign period that he would fight graft head on, describing the level of corruption in the country as intolerable. Since he assumed office, Buhari has pushed ahead with efforts to recover the billions stolen in the recent past by government officials (Wakili, 2015).

### **Implications of Bureaucratic Corruption on Buhari's Change Agenda.**

In a bid to identify the most corrupt public institutions, a survey study reported several Nigerian public agencies. The ranking order by enterprises respondents were by and large consistent with those offered by household and public official respondents. It became evident from responses that enterprises and households have to pay gratification to public officials to secure government contracts or obtain services (Nigeria Governance and Corruption Survey Study, 2003). Enterprises are often targets of corruption. Abuse of the procurement and public contract process is highly entrenched in the country's public service. It is generally acknowledged that government contracts are often poorly executed or abandoned because public officials who are expected to oversee the contract become accomplices of the defaulting contractor after being gratified. Those who award contracts after receiving gratification are not in a position to oversee proper implementation of projects (Obaro, 2004:187).

Corruption has obvious negative impacts on productivity and efficiency, and all corrupt practices undermine the accountability, responsiveness, legitimacy and transparency of government and public institutions, the effective implementation of policies and efforts to bring about recovery and development in general. According to the Chairman of Transparency International (TI), "political elites and their cronies continue to take kickbacks at every opportunity. Hand in glove with corrupt business people they are trapping whole nation in poverty and hampering sustainable development (Igbinovia, 2003:37).

It must however be emphasized that the bureaucracy was spared the agony of corrupt tendencies when Nigeria gained independence in 1960. In fact when the first military coup took place in 1966, the soldiers were particularly irked by the level of corruption perpetrated by the political class which can rightly be said to be political corruption. It is argued that bureaucratic corruption came to its peak when public servants, not steamed in the traditions of political professionalism, saw how politicians who, hitherto were nothing became rich overnight through patronages, gifts, bribes and outright embezzlement of public funds. It thus was only a matter of time before the bureaucrats joined the politicians and political corruption begot its logical extension, bureaucratic corruption (Akpan, 2011)

Corruption has denied the Nigerian people the beauty of good governance. Bureaucracy and other institutions have been dishonest, ineffective and highly centralized. This as a matter of fact, has already been identified with all administrations in Nigeria since independence in 1960. Each succeeding regime has always accused the other of corrupt practices particularly under the various military regimes. It has been observed that systemic corruption distorts incentives, undermines institutions and redistribute wealth and power to the undeserving. Thus, when corruption undermines property rights, the rule of law and incentive to invest, economic and political development is crippled (Lawal and Tobi, 2006).

These have been the pattern of things in the Nigerian State; hence the gains of good governance and development have been eluding Nigerians. It is within this understanding and threat which bureaucratic corruption poses to good governance and development that, the civilian administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo initiated the Anti-Corruption Bill which had since been passed by the National Assembly into law to fight corruption in the country at various levels among many other measures against corrupt practices. The entire clamour about transparency and accountability is therefore seen as the necessary step towards development (Lawal and Tobi, 2006).

From all of the above, it is an established fact that the public service in Nigeria is riddled with corruption and can therefore not carry the load of leading the change as propagated by the present Buhari government in the country. The first test and confirmation of this fact has manifested in the regime's effort in passing the 2016 budget which was manipulated by some top civil servants in what has been referred as budget padding, a situation where some figures are imported into the original budget figures to create room for corruption as such funds will be diverted for private use by this powerful cabal in the public service (Ehikoya, 2016).

Similarly, the government is making effort to sanitize the contractual and public procurement process to allow for a transparent and accountable procedure for the procurement of public goods and services. This is informed by the facts that prior to now, most government officials were involved in awarding contracts to themselves and their cronies thus, rendering registered government contractors redundant and impoverished in the process. In fact, the bidding process have not been spared this agony as often times the process is equally manipulated to give undue advantage to some companies to the detriment of others in the bidding process. Public servants have also been involved in contract splitting, a situation where contract values are divided into lower values that can meet the financial approval level of the officer involved instead of a lump-sum award that will attract direct public bidding (Ehikoya, 2016).

Furthermore, a bureaucracy where government ministries, agencies and departments open and maintain numerous bank accounts for diverse purposes none of which is meant to help the implementation of government programmes but to line individual pockets cannot drive any anticipated change in either the attitude, behaviour or conduct of government officials and would therefore not augur well for the current change agenda of this government. That government has served trillions of naira through the Treasury Single Account (TSA) as a part measure of monitoring the inflow and outflow of government revenue is a testimony to this development. The entire issue of subsidy scam cannot be possible without the connivance of public servants who serve as accomplices and accessory to the fact of these criminal financial lootings of public funds.

In a similar clime, a bureaucracy that would advertise for vacancies for employment through consultants demanding for the payment of monies by applicants in order to access the job portal cannot in any way drive change. In a country where the unemployment rate is very high it remains criminal for such extortion to be meted by public officials for whatever reason to applicants. That the demand for application fee was bad enough rendered the recorded figure of 19 deaths through that recruitment process an aberration. Hence such public service will instead be detrimental to change as advocated by the present Buhari administration.

The resultant effect of all these is that corruption damages political legitimacy. Systemic corruption undermines the legitimacy of government especially democracies. Citizens may come to believe that the government is simply for sale to the highest bidder. Corruption harms society by damaging economic development and reforms and hinders the growth of democratic institutions. It impedes the ability of developing countries to attract foreign investors and distorts capital allocation as well as impedes international trade. Corruption also causes financial haemorrhage. It can lead to unhealthy power struggle, loss of social and moral values and unequal distribution of wealth (Lawal and Ogunro, 2012).

In a similar vein, the implication of all these is that the Nigerian public service must be repositioned for effective service delivery and implementation of government policies and programmes if the change agenda of the government must see the light of the day. Government at all levels must make sure that the bureaucracy is purged of all trappings of corruption if must answer the name of a change driver needed to drive the implementation of the current administration's change agenda. If this is not done, then there is every likelihood that the change mantra will only be an effort in futility as far as the Buhari civilian government is concerned. It can thus be established that the unfettered corruption in the nation's bureaucracy has far reaching implications for the change agenda of the present government in Nigeria.

It is imperative to mention here that the change agenda of the government and the war against bureaucratic corruption has not gone down well with the public servants who have expressed resentment on the change just like their political counterparts. A cross section of senior civil servants in the country say President Muhammadu Buhari's anti-corruption crusade may not yield any meaningful results unless the Federal Government addresses what they describe as the huge disparity in the salaries of civil servants. The civil servants were particular about the gap in the salaries of permanent secretaries and directors in the Federal Civil Service. They said the disparity does not encourage sincerity and transparency in the service, saying that it equally creates room for corruption (Nnabugwu, 2015). Confirmed sources show that a Federal Permanent Secretary earns over N1 monthly including allowances while a Director on Grade Level 17, a step before the Permanent Secretary, receives less than N300,000 a month. A Deputy Director earns less than N250,000 while an Assistant Director earns not more than N220,000, under the consolidated salary structure. Some of the aggrieved directors, who spoke on condition of anonymity, alleged that most of the new breed permanent secretaries were junior to them in the service while a number of others were brought from the

states and promoted to higher offices. Government's action, they said, was capable of promoting apathy in the service. According to one Director, "you think that if I have the chance to make money, I won't do it, with the meager salary I receive as a Director?" Another director put it this way: "This type of thing promotes corruption. Everybody will be exploring all avenues to make additional money" (Nnabugwu, 2015).

Similarly, other Nigerians have also reacted negatively towards the change mantra particularly the war against corruption. For Bekeh Utietang (2016), President Muhammadu Buhari and his ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) party have no plans on how to rescue Nigeria from its economic malaise. Since they came into power in May of 2015, they have gradually reneged on all the promises they made to Nigerians and have used the anti-corruption crusade as a way of distracting Nigerians from the serious problems that the country is facing. Fighting corruption is a noble and courageous act in a country like Nigeria where it has eaten deep into its fiber. As far back as 1984, the esteemed Nigerian writer, Chinua Achebe had written in his book, *The Trouble With Nigeria* that, "Keeping an average Nigerian from being corrupt is like keeping a goat from eating yam." I dare to say that, corruption is far worse today than it was in the 1980s. Today, it has become institutionalized and cuts across the socio-political, economic and even religious sectors of the country.

He further stated that the problem with Buhari's anti-corruption tactics is that they are not sincere. When Nigerians who were fed up with the impunity of the former government of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) went out to vote for Buhari because they believed he would clean up the system. It is impossible to advance yourself as an anti-corruption crusader when the major benefactors of your campaign are among the most corrupt Nigerians. After his election, Buhari gave voice to these people by appointing them to his cabinet and other governmental parastatals. Utietang (2016) concluded that their anti-corruption agenda has been reduced to a witch hunt of the members of the opposition party, PDP. About nine months after Buhari was sworn in as President of Nigeria, no member of the APC has been arrested or prosecuted. Yet, a substantial number of the members of the ruling APC were formerly members of PDP who enriched themselves from the government coffers during the sixteen years that PDP ruled Nigeria.

## V. CONCLUSION

It is stating the obvious that Nigeria's bureaucracy is riddled with corruption which in turn has the capacity to impede its role as a change driver as demanded by the policies and programmes of the present Muhammadu Buhari led government. In its current form, the public service lacks the capacity to serve as the arrow head of the fight against corruption and the change agenda of the present government because it has also been entangled with corruption itself, a development which has far reaching negative consequences for the change mantra of the Buhari government. In fact, to say that bureaucratic corruption remains widespread in Nigeria and that it portends evil for the nation is no longer a subject of debate. Rather the debate is usually about what causes bureaucratic corruption and what can be done to curtail it. However, this study differed in its focus by attempting instead to analyze the implications of this malfeasance in the public service on the change agenda of the present civilian government in Nigeria. From all indications, it is clear that corruption in whatever form it takes is not desirable. It is the single most debilitating factor that has stalled the progress, growth and development of Nigeria and as such that of the bureaucracy must be eradicated if it must perform the function of driving the change anticipated by the present government. In the light of this, we suggest some measures that can help in this direction in the next section of this research work.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

This research project recommends the following measures that can curtail bureaucratic corruption and assist in repositioning the public service for effective policy implementation and service delivery needed to drive the Buhari's change agenda.

First and foremost, there is need to strengthen the anti-corruption agencies through legislation that should spell out the time frame for the prosecution of corruption cases in the public service. Although there are existing laws, they seem too loose to allow for effective handling of corruption cases particularly the ones related to the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Offences Commission (ICPC) and even the Code of Conduct Tribunal (CCT). Such laws should also attract stiffer penalties for corrupt offences such as long years or life imprisonment once convicted.

Secondly, government should make accountability and transparency an article of faith in Nigeria. This can be done by embarking on grassroots' level education of Nigerians at homes and market places and youngsters at high school and university/college levels about the destructive effects of corruption and election of corrupt officers into public offices. This can appropriately be handled by the National Orientation Agency (NOA).

Thirdly, government must seriously address the issues pertaining to the salaries, wages, pensions and gratuities of public servants. The existence of wide salary disparity between the different cadres of officers does not augur well for the service as such cannot motivate the officers for greater efficiency and productivity. This generates the idea of struggling to gather funds for retirement by all means including outright stealing of public funds. These emoluments should be paid appropriately to make public servants resist corrupt practices.

Fourthly, there is greater need for the investigation of past cases of corruption involving public servants and affected public officers must be made to face the wrath of the law, else the average Nigerian will just think the ongoing crusade against corruption is a continuation of the rhetoric and sloganeering of the past.

Fifthly, there should be a reorientation of Nigerians across all walks of life about the importance of not according credence and credibility to ill gotten money by means of worshipping the culprits and accumulators of such illicit wealth in public places like churches, mosques, universities, clubs and so on in form of awards, praise singing, image laundry and the likes in return for a share of such illicit wealth in the form of donations, fundraising and so on. This is where both the Federal and State Ministries of Information and their agencies have greater role to play.

Finally, these educational forums should be organized on regular basis all round the year and across all major cities and universities in Nigeria in the form of lectures delivered by renowned human right and anti-corruption activists, local paper advertisements, local radios and televisions jingles and advertisements and T-shirts and post able signs as well as the social media.

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