

# The Genesis of Corruption and Its' Perception

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## Abstract

*This article intends to discuss the issue of corruption from its origin to date. The first stage, an author would like to take in to account the history of corruption supported with various form which make the world of corruption. The second stage of this article discusses the definition and interpretation of corruption and the way it has been interpreted. The third part present the forms of corruption, and the last part discusses the genesis of corruption worldwide and the way it is been perceived in the society. At this part, the author presents the factors that leads the existence of corruption from the roots, and later identifies some of the effects which make the existence of corruption to be perceived as an obstacle to the society.*

**Keywords:** Corruption, bribery, passive corruption, active corruption, grand corruption, petty corruption

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## INTRODUCTION

As it has been proved, corruption is not a new phenomenon. It is a limp in the walk of human evolution and it is as old as the history of manhood and recognized; History demonstrates that the phenomenon of corruption had been manifested since ancient times in different cultures and societies [1]. To prove it is not a new phenomenon, Corruption ought to be described even in the holy books including Quran and Bible by providing some scriptures to address and prohibit human beings to indulge in bribery. For instance, the holy Quran [2] provides a verse as translated as follows:

and do not consume one another's wealth unjustly or send it [in bribery] to the rulers in order that [they might assist] you [to] consume a portion of the wealth of the other people in sin, while you know [it is unlawful].

Similarly, the holy Bible [3] provides for the same as Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples went to the leading priest and arranged to betray Jesus and they promised to give him money and Judas asked them 'how much will you pay me to betray Jesus to you?' and they gave him thirteen pieces of silver. For that time Judas was an opportunist and wanted to betray Jesus.

Generally, corruption induced the attention from a moment where it was taken as the notion of non-reciprocity struggles and contrary to the norms of open handed in return, which gave power to the society to choose the rulers and judges by being the recipient of offers [4]. The issue of corruption is prescribed in various eras to provide its existence since then. From 1000 A.D to 1500 A.D. it has been proved that the society engaged itself in the corrupt activities and the embodiment was found mostly in religious, legal issues and literary works; and by that time corruption was vigorously implemented and was successful [5]. Many scholars write about corruption and emphasise that corruption is not a new phenomenon. The primary academic study of corruption which emerged from the late 20th Century is the one which is new [6]. Consequently, Shabir and Anwar [7] declare the position of corrupt activities from the 16th and 18th century where the English law and English Bible produce and declare norms for English empire at domestic level [8].

Many scholars write about corruption and emphasise that corruption is not a new phenomenon, the primary academic study of corruption emerged from the late 20th Century is the one which is new [9]. From the 20th

century, corruption enlarged substantial devotion from academic scholars and turn out to be a debatable issue to various disciplines including social sciences and humanities. Various authors focused number of issues including the position on how the government addresses the issues of corruption, issues promote and hold back the development of the countries from corruption; and how the legislation and anti-corruption agencies tried to reduce the level of corruption [10]. Similar to that, some scholars associated with economic discipline have focused corruption problem in a broader spectrum, scholars made research to find out the level of corruption across various countries and its reasons or determinants [11].

### **Definition and Interpretation of Corruption**

Definition of corruption is the most debatable issue in literary work which induces the excitement. The word “corruption” had been used and presented different meanings which depended upon its intellectual relatively to its field. It has been proved that the word “corruption” is often narrowly compared to the concept itself and is used to describe only the mandate of specific bodies which includes the task to fight against and within a jurisdiction matter [12]. To define corruption is one of the most debated issue in the literature and endures to excitement. Despite of various debates in defining corruption, this article decides to pick up some of the acceptable definitions to attribute the comprehended concept of corruption. For instance, the Transparency International has provided a wide definition of corruption as the misuse of entrusted power for private gain [13]. Similarly, the World Bank report [14] defines corruption as a use of public office for private gain, the report emphasises that any act committed by an official could be a corruption if the official personally benefited from that act.

The SADC Protocol against Corruption [15] defines corruption as "any act that includes bribery or any other behaviour in relation to persons entrusted with responsibilities in the public and private sectors that violates their duties and aimed at obtaining undue advantages of any kind for themselves or others" [16]. Similar to that, the AU

Convention on Prevention and Combating Corruption [17] defines corruption as the acts and practices including related offences prescribed therein; for instance, corruption is understood as the behaviour of a person who derails another one from his/her way, customs or duties, through the promise of money, honours or security [18] and the Oxford dictionary defines corruption as the dishonest or illegal behaviour especially for the people in authority, typically involving bribery [19].

Some scholars including Kibwana [20] defined it as “an act of omission perpetrated by an individual or group of individuals which goes against the legitimate expectation and hence the interests of society. Such acts of omission take place in all spheres of human endeavour; in government offices, corporate bodies, and private institutions”. With similar view, Riara [21] says that, corruption is often said to be immoral, unjust and repugnant to the ideals of humanity; corruption has different definitions to different people, but there is one view that is collective in society, that corruption is a wrong and immoral act; And Whoever indulges in corruptive behaviour should, without a doubt be frowned upon by society.

Klitgaard [22] further says that, the boundaries of corruption are hard to define as it comes in many forms, crosses over various sectors and can range from the trivial to monumental; and he further emphasises that corruption can involve the misuse of policy instruments, tariffs and credit, irrigation systems and housing policies, the enforcement of laws and rules regarding public safety, the observance of contracts, and the repayment of loans or of simple procedures. It can occur in the private sector or in the public one, and often occurs in both simultaneously [23]. Klitgaard, Leys [24] states that habitually, “the word corruption referred to general context which denotes the perversion of anything from an original state of purity and is defined by moralists as to change from good to bad; to debase; to pervert.”

Leys further emphasised that, cases of corruption often point to the existence of a standard of behaviour according to which the action in question breaks some rules, written

or unwritten, about the proper purposes to which a public office or a public institution may be put [25].

For instance, Langseth [26] urges that there is no single, comprehensive, universally accepted definition of corruption. Attempts to develop such definition consistently encounter legal, criminological and, in many countries, political problems.

The word "corruption" had been used historically to present different meanings. It has been noticeable in different ways and rendered to abundant connotations by different intellectuals relatively to their field [27]. Sometimes, the definition of corruption can either be conceptualised in collective or relative approach. Collective approach is the definition of corruption which entails certain common properties with the premise as a combination of properties, or defining characteristics, which makes certain behaviour in all societies; while a "relativist" approach contends corrupt in one society may not be so in another and that the definition of corruption would now depend on the country and culture in question [28].

As it has been noted, in 2001 the UN Convention against Corruption proposed and initiated the consideration as the legal framework is not required to define corruption at all rather than to list specific types or acts which amount to corruption [29]. In simplifying the notion, the UN Convention against Corruption requires member states to criminalise corruption principally with specific offences or categorised groups of offences and shall depend on types of conduct involved and if implicated public officials [30].

Generally, it can be said that there is no universally accepted definition of corruption: to religious believers, all sin is corruption; to moral purists, all moral decadence is corruption and to most citizens, bribery is the epitome of corruption [31]. Given the fact that, international instruments define corruption, various authors support their definitions with arguments and debate as to ensure they provide appropriate meaning of corruption [32]: for the purposes of this article, the term

corruption defined as *"the abuse and/or misuse of public powers entrusted to public officers to whom they improperly and unlawfully enrich for personal gain"* is taken as suitable definition serves for the essence of the article. The following part presents and discusses forms of corruption as have been considered.

### **1. Forms of corruption**

Forms of corruption are identified in various names including petty corruption, grand corruption, passive corruption, active corruption, and passive bribery. Though, all the aforementioned names describe same acts of corruption despite having different names. And it has been proved that a form is to be named based on the country's affection which leads the enactment and enforcement of the law. The UN anti-corruption toolkit expresses that forms of corruption always lean towards the enactment and /or enforcement of anti-corruption legislation of a country that is affected and those forms are defined differently [33]. For instance, the European Union Convention on the Fight against Corruption identifies passive corruption and active corruption as the forms of corruption [34]. The Convention describes the passive corruption as a deliberate action of an official who directly or through an intermediary request, receives advantages of any kind whatsoever for himself or for a third party or accepts a promise of such an advantage [35]. While, the active corruption is also to be defined as a deliberate action of an official who directly or through an intermediary request, receives advantages of any kind whatsoever for himself or for a third party or accepts a promise of such an advantage except for the performance which is not conducted as an official is for anyone.

Similar to that, the European Criminal Law Convention on Corruption [36] identifies active bribery and passive bribery as the forms of corruption. The Convention prescribed active bribery as the act of offering or paying of the bribe [37]; and passive bribery refers to the act of receive the bribe [38]. Some scholars' urge that the passive form of corruption is used to distinguish the term between particulars of corrupt activities and the ones which attempt or incomplete offences [39]; while the active

corruption includes all cases where the payment and /or acceptance of a bribe had taken place [40]. With similarities, the Transparent International [41] provides that the grand corruption has been used as an instrument to describe large scales deals of corruption caused by the greedy people and senior public officials/companies who are trading under international level [42]; and it has been proved that grand corruption is conducted at the top level of the public sphere [43].

On the other hand, Palmer [44] defines grand corruption as that which takes place at the highest levels of political authority and decision-making'; and occurs at the formulation of public policies and may involve the appropriation or embezzlement of government funds, or the tailoring and selective implementation of public laws, codes and regulations for the benefit of particular 'favoured' persons or groups in return for bribes or, simply, to preserve political support and power [45].

Further to the above, the author emphasises that Grand corruption is used in two senses: it refers either to specific acts of corruption involving particularly large amounts of money, usually at senior levels of government, or to corrupt practices that result in the abuse of systems designed to ensure good and effective governance. Palmer further states that the sustained abuse of such systems can result in the entrenchment of the corrupt practices as part of the systems, which point that these practices are referred to as 'systemic corruption.

Rose-Ackerman [46] says that grand corruption was a form of corruption that pervaded the highest levels of a national government, leading to a broad erosion of confidence in good governance, the rule of law and economic stability.

Doig and Theobald [47] also say that grand corruption was often motivated by greed; it dealt with highly placed individuals who exploited their position to extract large bribes from representatives of transnational corporations, arms dealers, drug barons and the like, who appropriated significant payoffs

from contract scams, or who simply transferred large sums of money from the public treasury into private (usually overseas) bank accounts.

Furtherly, Doig and Theobold [48] say that petty corruption occurs in smaller increments by lower-level officials, often in exchange for speeding up a legitimate process.

And further Doig and Theobold emphasises that, petty corruption is often referred to as 'speed' or 'grease' money and describes facilitation or grease payments sought and obtained by junior officials who are ostensibly rendering a service to the public.

And like that, Palmer [49] states that petty corruption means either specific acts of the abuse of power by public officials for some small bribes or relatively minor benefits, or more serious corruption at managerial level [50].

Additionally, it has been contended that petty corruption is a bureaucratic corruption which is conducted by the opportunist people who are engaged in the economic activities [51]. In the same manner, Rose-Ackerman [52] insists that grand corruption involves the exchange of very small amounts of money, the granting of minor favours by those seeking preferential treatment or the employment of friends and relatives in minor positions [53].

The petty corruption has been a transaction in which group of people play their role to accomplish the transaction. Therefore, no one can judge the action conducted by another, and therefore, people do not judge one another's involvement in this type of corruption.

In addition to that, Blundo and de Sardan [54] point out that the same person may often condemn corruption with reference to official rules and ideal conceptions of public management, while at the same time legitimising corrupt practices, with reference to more practical prevailing norms, such as 'everyone is doing it' or 'it is needed to survive'. Despite of the different forms of corruption to be named as contained in the different perceptions, nothing is prescribed something new compared to each other. All

the terminology is used and referred as one thing which implements the acts of corruption world-wide.

## THE GENESIS OF CORRUPTION AND ITS PERCEPTION

As it has been mentioned above, corruption is not a new phenomenon and it exists with the presence of manhood. Various institutions and organisations make loud noise purposely to indicate the need to fight against it. Those institutions and organisations highlight the effects of corrupt activities and pledge the countries to implement legislations with powers to fight against corruption [55].

To have power in fighting with corrupt activities there should be good governance with the devotion to the rule of law. The existence of good governance and rule of law should be determined by two aspects and these are the actual operations which protect the exercise of powers, and the ability to provide an alternative now where the power is exercised intuitively [56].

Theoretically, soon after independence each country is supposed to create and formulate its own legal framework including legislations, principles, and regulation from the one which were used by the colonial government to free the country from colonial perception. A new government has a duty to make some changes especially on political and economic institutions, and that changes are supposed to reflect the realities of the society from the ground [57]. Unfortunately, it was proved that, soon after independence the African leaders do not avail primary opportunities to reform institutions which were designed to enhance the maximization of the collective wellbeing of the citizen [58]. In support of the above, Sebudubudu [59] says that since the colonial period, Botswana, South Africa, and Namibia lacked parliamentary democracy; it merely acted as a rubberstamp of the executive government.

The author further claimed that the executives were an extension of the ruling parties and the monopoly of economic decision-making. The executives culminated in an expanded bureaucracy vested with discretionary powers

which ended up weakening other organs of the state and making it normal for bribes to be offered before a representative of the state bureaucracy could complete any transaction [60].

Additionally, Coetzee and Snell [61] state that empire and colonialism directly impact the post-colonial psychological make-up of individuals and groups as well as the political and cultural outlook of liberated countries within Africa, linking the necessary changes directly to the compensation for an intrinsic inferiority complex deep within, at the expense of inherent cultural identity.

Providing similar points to the above, Huntington [62] states that a weak legislative system, including parliament and any other law-making organs of a country's government, can foster corruption for not being able to enact or enforce strict anti-corruption legislation.

Huntington further notes that a country with a weak judicial system fosters corruption by not being able to adjudicate fairly, impartially and professionally in matters relating to corrupt practices by government leaders and civil servants due to inadequate financial resources and/or lack of independence of the judiciary from the executive branch of a country's government [63].

Additionally, Van de Walle [64] points out that 'authoritarianism prevailed, and it was cruel, murderous, and incompetent'. Van de Walle further emphasises the fact that what emerged in virtually all of those few countries were corrupt, neo-patrimonial systems in which rent seeking, corruption and other forms of political opportunism were pervasive [65].

Hope and Kayira [66] supported the argumentation by saying that among other issues, the failure to amend the new constitution after independence allowed the emergence of autocratic presidents and bureaucracies, who are above the law, devoid of accountability, transparency, rule of law and administrative predictability.

Coetzer and Snell [67] agree with these authors by indicating as there is a connection

between the colonial system and the existence of today's corruption. Further, the authors strongly emphasise the link between the role of colonialism and corruption as it relates to the type of bureaucracies which developed in the majority of African states.

Szeftel [68] in his work makes a similar point to other authors and observes that most of the African countries were fabricated with the environment of post-colonial period since the inception of clientelism and factionalism. As it has shown its originality, Corruption is perceived as an obstacle before power to destruct and put dilemmas in the society including development, social, and political aspects; and it is believed that the acts of corruption affect all classes within the society including ages, sex, and gender always from the ancient to date [69]. The acts of corruption mostly occurred in the public and private sectors where the society activities took place including public procurement and contracting, licensing activities, the rezoning of land and the collection of revenue, whether through taxation or customs duties [70].

In correspondence to the above, Klitgaard [71] says that for corruption to take place, the following elements must be present: a public official, discretionary power, a misuse of that public power by the public official, and a benefit (whether in money or in kind) resulting to that official.

On the other hand, Shabbir and Anwar [72] say that corruption made itself noticeable when the organisation of the government was established; no area, and hardly any country has been exempted from corruption.

The way corruption perceived in the society is like a cancer disease with power to destroy functions of the affected area in politics, economics, and socially. Shabbir and Anwar [73] say that corruption is like a cancer; it strikes almost all parts of society and destroys the functioning of vital organs of society politically, economically and socially.

Mbao [74] says "it is common cause that corruption, in all its varied manifestations, is like a cancer, remorselessly eating away at the

very moral fibre of society and causing incalculable harm to the development efforts of the societies involved".

Johnston further notes that normally in a politically corrupt country people believe that it is useless to deal with the government through official political and administrative channels even if such channels are still functional and believe that there are some officials who will pre-empt honest officials through bribery and connections [75].

Bouissou [76] on his part states that it is challenging for governments to perform coherently in response to citizens' needs and use rare resources. He further contends that unlike other straightforward consequences of corruption, the political effect of corruption is often unnoticeable, not broadly shared and often only recognised in the long term [77]. Rothchild and Chazan [78] also note that political corruption has a major role to play in demoralising and eroding the confidence of the people. This kind of demoralisation occurs in the fair functioning of the political system which automatically leads to uncertainty as well as dividing citizens.

Apart from having issues of corruption in political affairs, corruption also raises effects in economic status. As it has been noted, various authors including Eigen [79] argue that '[a]s long as corruption reigns so severely; economic prospects simply remain an impossible dream'.

Correspondingly, Mauro [80] shows that mostly corrupt countries are likely to diminish citizens' capital in business and to alter public expenditure.

Consistently, Jung-Yeop Woo and Heo [81] say that the situation poses a problem as foreign investors want to avoid corrupt countries because the benefit from a supply of resources at a reduced cost can be undermined by corruption because additional costs are required to meet the demands of corrupt behaviour.

Pope [82] also provides the same argument as shown above as corruption generates an



ambiguous environment, increases the expenditure of organisations and diminishes the turnover of the country. Additionally, Dunfee and Hess [83] further emphasise that corruption also has effects on government expenditure as it moves from vital purposes such as education and public health and into schemes where public officials can simply exact bribes.

The above-mentioned authors clearly indicate how the corruption is perceived at economic level and to the individuals. Once country lets the penetration of the acts of corruption in any aspect, it is obvious that the citizens of that country are the ones to enjoy the consequences of that acts.

Apparently, corruption has direct and indirect effects on living conditions which also increase poverty, hunger, disease, and inequality of income. Those effects include the delivery of basic services to services such as education or healthcare [84].

Kaufmann [85] contends that corruption reduces total revenue on social spending, distorts the allocation of public expenditures away from social programmes and denies the poor equal access to public goods [86].

Kaufmann further says that corruption also impairs the means to escape poverty by undermining property rights and raising a regressive bribery tax on small entrepreneurs.

Conveniently, the World Bank Report [87] emphasises that corruption worsens absolute poverty; it lowers economic growth; biases the tax system to favour the rich and well-connected; reduces the effectiveness of the targeting of social programmes; biases government policies towards favouring inequality in asset ownership; lowers social spending; and reduces access to education by the poor.

In addition to that, the World Bank reports that corruption increases the risk of investment by the poor when corruption misdirects the assignment of unemployment or disability benefits, delays eligibility for pensions, weakens the provisions of basic public

services such as health and education, it is usually the poor who suffer most.

The above-mentioned arguments and debates clearly indicate the existence of corruption and its effects.

## SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

As it has been said before, this article presents and indicates the genesis of corruption and its perception in the eyes of the society. It is true that once there is corruption, the effects to the society should be visible despite being invisible while conducted. According to the information therein, it can be concluded that the society perceived corruption as an instrument which is used by the people with authority to injure the society. As it has been proved above, the existence of corruption at any society raises effects including social and economic development. And those effects are how corruption is perceived in the society.

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#### Cite this Article

Saphy L. Bullu, The Genesis of Corruption and Its' Perception. *National Journal of Criminal Law*. 2018; 1(1): 32–40p.