Corruption: A combat without bullet, The Nigerian Economic and Financial Crimes Commission’s (EFCC) Perspective

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Abstract: Corruption is real and it virtually affects everyone directly or indirectly. No any single nation on the globe that is 100% free from the shackles of corruption. However, the rate and the intensity in which corrupt practices are being perpetrated vary from one country to country another depending on several indices. Some of these indices include the societal orientation towards corrupt practices and the control structures put in place to check the menace. On the whole, the developing nations have been identified in most circumstances to be more corrupt than their developed counterparts. Positioned among the developing nations, Nigeria is infamously known for its corruption especially within the public-sector practice. Concerted efforts put in place over the years seemed to have not proven positive. Along the line, some anti-corruption agencies were set up to address the problem. One of such agencies whose impacts in the fight against corruption is felt by everyone is the EFCC. This paper therefore, explores the various strategies employed by EFCC to address the incessant level of corruption particularly within the public service sector of the country. With the use of a case study strategy, data were obtained from 24 interviews purposefully conducted with the staff of EFCC and document sources were analyzed accordingly. The results obtained indicate that the role of EFCC in combating corruption is effective even though more is needed for improvement. The study suggests fighting corruption is a never-ending war and that authority such as EFCC should play bigger role in combating corruption through the twenty first century tools and strategies.

Keywords: Corruption, Qualitative research, anti-corruption, public sector, Nigeria

1. INTRODUCTION

Transparency International’s (TI) (2016) report on corruption perception globally reveals the increasingly devastating nature of the phenomenon. Captured in the report is the absence in any country in the whole world to pass through the perfect clean bill of the 2016 index (TI, 2016). Further to this, the reports observes that no fewer than two thirds of the total number of 176 nations studied in the 2016 index fall below the average point. In a scale of 0 implying highly corrupt nations to 100 denoting not corrupt, majority of the countries failed to meet up to the midpoint score (TI, 2016). Essentially, the number of the countries with scores indicating high perception of corruption have outnumbered the top scoring nations by far. More to that, corruption is regarded as an international subject of discourse and often most talked about issue. It is a problem that has not spared out any nation, developed or undeveloped and has equally not considered the peculiarity of an creed, race or even geographical location of the actors involved (Agbiboa, 2012; Ijewere, 2015; Mauro, 1995; Nye, 1967; Tanzi, 1998).

According to a private opinion poll conducted at the instance of BBC world service in 26 countries, corruption was tipped the number two fatal problem after extreme poverty, plaguing the world (Globescan, 2015). In the opinion poll covering 13,350 matured citizens from those sampled in their countries, one of every five (approximately 21%) lamented to have talked about the worrying impact of corruption in a month’s time. Hence, corruption covers the entire people’s lives which transcends beyond carting away with money and this makes it a phenomenon with global outfit (TI, 2015). Thus, corruption is considered along the negative postures it projects internationally as the effects are evidently glaring in the destruction of the welfare and lives of many. Wherever there is traces of corruption the outcome is often manifested in poor governance, adverse economic growth, misplacement of priorities or even underdevelopment level in some nations (Agbiboa, 2012; Mauro, 1998; Mbaku, 2008; Montinola & Jackman, 2002; Nye, 1967; Tanzi, 1998). However, the literature has identified the developing nations to be involved more in corruption than their developed counterparts. Scholars and researchers alike see the developing nations in most instances as hub of corrupt practices (for example Mbaku, 2008; Nye, 1967) whereby certain official practices in themselves epitomize corruption. Nigeria belongs to the classes of the developing nations whereby corruption becomes the subject of daily concern. It is not an issue that has just started today or in few years, rather it has been a recurring concern since the birth of the independence of the country in 1960 (Agbiboa, 2012; Osoba, 1996). Various governments in the country have consistently made efforts in stamping out the tide
of corruption and this paved way to the emergence of the anti-corruption bodies we have today in Nigeria. Notable of these anti-corruption bodies are the ICPC and EFCC set up in 2000 and 2002 respectively. With the establishment of EFCC in 2002, it became the financial intelligent unit saddled with the responsibility of coordinating all other anti-corruption bodies in the fight against corruption and all other financial crimes in the country. This paper therefore examines the role of EFCC in the alleviation of corruption and corrupt practices within the Nigeria’s public sector service. Many studies have conducted on the efficacy of EFCC or otherwise in combatting financial and economic crimes in Nigeria. However, majority of the studies are from the positivist perspective who tend to mirror EFCC from the outsiders’ lens. Corruption is such a complex and clandestine phenomenon which requires insiders’ perspective to fully comprehend it intents. More so, the operation of EFCC is very secretive to such an extent that mirroring it from outside may not provide the desired understanding on its activities. It is in view of the forgoing that this study considers a paradigm shift in understanding the role of EFCC from the experiences and understandings of the insiders. These insiders are experts who have been interacting with corrupt public officers for years as investigators, prosecutors, forensic analysts and in many other capacities. Using qualitative research method through in depth interviews with experts in EFCC and reviewing documents to that effect, the study seeks to gain an insider insights on the role of EFCC. We organize our paper into five parts, part one which is this section covers the introduction. Parts two and three cover the literature review and methodology sections respectively. Presentation and discussion of results are pushed to section four of the paper while part five concludes the paper.

2.0 Searching the literature

On corruption

The academic literature has presented diverse perspectives into which corruption is studied. The available literature on corruption have considered the concept along the economic and political dimensions (Agatiello, 2012; Agibboa, 2012; Ariyabuddhiphongs & Hongladarom, 2014; Atelhe & Agada, 2014; Dungan et al., 2014; Dion, 2010; Donnan, 2008; Mendez & Sepúlveda, 2006; Montinola & Jackman, 2002; Nye, 1967; Obuh, 2010). Others have discussed the concept along socio-cultural angle (Osoba, 1996; Othman, Shafie, & Abdul Hamid, 2014; Otusanya, 2011; Roman & Miller, 2013; Torsello & Venard, 2015), moral and ethical (Dion, 2010; Dungan, Waytz, & Young, 2014; Shah & Schacter, 2004) as well psychology and social anthropology (Rothstein & Torsello, 2013; Torsello & Venard, 2015). Interestingly, the common ground on all these perspectives into which the concept is presented is the description of the phenomenon along the line of negative bearings (see Agibboa, 2015; Ariyabuddhiphongs & Hongladarom, 2014; Atelhe & Agada, 2014; Berlinski, 1997; Mbaku, 2008; Nye, 1967, for example). Imminent in this line of argument is the notion that corruption is an anti-social behavior (Osoba, 1996) and retard economic growth of a nation (Berkovich, 2015; Mauro, 1998; Tanzi, 1998). Equally presented in the literature is the idea that corruption is an evil undertaking, complete menace, disease plaguing a nation, a scourge ravaging the society and a monster that is terrifying everyone (Agibboa, 2012; Atelhe & Agada, 2014; Berlinski, 1997; Dion, 2010; Egwemi, 2012). Politically, it creates nuisance and instability in a polity (Agibboa, 2015; Atelhe & Agada, 2014) often leading to poor governance, thus depriving the citizenry from enjoying the basic requirements of living. Therefore, for a meaningful development to thrive in a nation or the society, corruption is to be reduced to the barest minimum if not totally eradicated. As maintained by Montinola & Jackman (2002), corruption is a form of immorality of the highest order in human civilization.

Conversely, a variant section of the literature sees corruption as not without some benefits in contrast to the popular held view. In spite of not condoning the act, this view believes that corruption can be beneficial in some ways (Dungan et al., 2014; Ijewereme, 2015; Montinola & Jackman, 2002; Nye, 1967; Torsello & Venard, 2015) which for instance, can be “efficiency enhancing” (Montinola & Jackman, 2002). Corruption as argued can be a bye product of two conflicting moral identities (Dungan et al., 2014) when an individual is shrouded with the difficulty to serve two groups (Ijewereme, 2015).

How it is defined?

Varieties of definitions on the meaning of corruption are presented in the literature. Each of the definitions presented focuses on the disciplinary orientation from which it emanates or the lens through which the phenomenon is mirrored. As observed by Othman et al. (2015); Rothstein & Torsello, (2013) and Yaru, (2009), the sensitivity and complexity of corruption account for the proliferation of the definitions. While others identified the multiple definitions to emanate from the universality of the phenomenon as well as the multifaceted nature and dimensions corruption often assumes. Oblivious to the recognition that corruption is studied from multiple perspectives, the diverse definitions are surfacing on corruption
tend to converge on a central theme. In this sense, corruption is defined as the use or abuse of entrusted authority for the private or public officer’s private or personal benefits (T1,2011). The benefits can equally be extended to the third party by the entrusted private or public officer in defiance of the established procedures guiding the official engagements.

What is the situation in Nigeria?
Corruption in Nigeria has always been discussed in terms of its prevalence and magnitude. The current president of Nigeria has always been reiterating on the need to curtail the growing rate of corruption that “we either kill corruption or we allow corruption to kill Nigeria”. Corroborating the president’s position Agbibi (2012), had earlier observed that corruption poses a potential threat to Nigeria’s survival. Scholars such as Obua (2010), see the nation as a fail one, due to the inability of the Nigerian state to solve the problem of corruption for years. Researches and other independent reports always portray the severity of the situation. For instance, a report attributed to global professional services of the Price water house cooper projected that come 2030 corruption if allow unabeted in Nigeria could account for 37% of the country’s GDP (Winsor, 2016). More revealing is the submission that should the trend be allowed to persist there could equally be hike in the loss from approximately $1,000 per head in 2014 to an estimated figure of $2,000 per head of individual come 2030. Alternatively, if the prevalence and magnitude of corruption in Nigeria were to be appropriately attended to, Nigeria’s GDP could be seen improving by $534 billion as projected (Akintutimi,2016; Winsor, 2016). More to intense corruption level in Nigeria, estimation by financial experts reveals corruption to stand at about 40% of the Nigerian total public expenditures (Fafawora, 2015). The Nigerian former national security adviser was involved in a high-profile corruption case standing to the tune of $2 billion. This fund was diverted from the purchase of arms to tackle the problem of insurgency and terrorism that has ravaged the north east geographical zone in the country (Winsor, 2016). Further to this, corruption is more pronounced in some notable public sector organizations in Nigeria (The sun, 2006). For instance, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) which is the government owned corporation and responsible for managing the petroleum revenue which is main source of government’s income is considered among the most corrupt public outlets (Fafawora, 2015). Somewhere in 2015, the former of petroleum was arrested in London over alleged laundry of more than N4 trillion or US$20 billion. Hence, Price water cooper reports that money amounting to $174 billion were in Nigeria in 2015 consequent of corruption (Akintutimi, 2016). All these revelations therefore, speak of the intensity of corruption and especially within the public-sector service in Nigeria. This ugly trend has been a great concern for governments for years and has culminated in setting up the anti-corruption agencies Nigeria such as the ICPC and EFCC in 2000 and 2002 respectively (EFCC, 2011).

3.0 Methodology
In this section, we present the qualitative methodology employed in this study. The use of qualitative research methodology in this study is justified considering the philosophical orientation of the study. The ontological and epistemological assumption we are predisposed of. We believe that in studies such as this, learning from the experiences and understanding of insiders on complex phenomenon such as corruption is very much suitable for the qualitative paradigm. More so, the operation of EFCC is such that requires gaining an insider’s knowledge and experience sharing due to its sensitivity and security nature. Hence, going by this consideration we justifiably tilt toward the qualitative paradigm based on social constructivism perspective.

We obtained our data from the interviews we conducted with experts from the commission through purposive sampling. Specifically, we used the snow balling technique where we selected our experts based on recommendation given by the other experts after the first set of experts were identified as information rich informants. This technique is useful for researcher to gain rich and thick description of the data. The validity and reliability of the data attained through the process of getting the right person to talk to. In our case, the selection of experts is based on that. These, experts comprise investigators, forensic accountants, digital forensic experts, legal practitioners/prosecutors and other operational staff of the commission. Some of these experts have been with the commission right from its inception, hence highly experienced and knowledgeable. Additionally, we review documents to triangulate our data from the interview. Official documents such as the EFCC’s Zero Tolerance Magazine, yearly records of conviction secured and Annual Reports were considered in the review. Other relevant public documents such as the national dailies, newspapers and magazines are also considered.

We analyzed the data generated from the interview using thematic analysis. As the primary instruments for the data collection and analysis, we manually code the data to enable us becoming part of the entire analysis process. We organized our codes
into three levels in accordance with King & Horrocks (2010); Merriam (2009); Yin (2011); Saldana (2009). We rigorously carried out the analysis using both comparative and iterative means involving going forth and back within and across cases. The emerging codes, categories and themes were constantly refined, added or dropped as the case may as we progressed in our analysis up to the point that we believed that the saturation point was reached.

**4.0 Presentation and Discussion of Result**

The outcome of the analysis we carried out using thematic analysis based three levels in our interpretation of our data led to the emergence of three themes as our findings. Our informants are highly experienced members of staff of EFCC with expertise in different fields of endeavor. Notwithstanding, this level of experience and expertise of the informants, we triangulated the outcome of the interview with the multiple of documents available on EFCC and its operations. Emanating from the analysis of the interviews conducted with experts in EFCC and the review of relevant documents we present the following findings:

Theme one: Leadership role
Subtheme: Coordination of the fight against corruption
Categories:
(i) Leading agency
(ii) Deep involvement in the fight
(iii) Agent of positive change
(iv) Cooperation with others
(v) Rendering assistance

Theme two: Prosecution role
Subtheme one: Corruption prosecution
Categories:
(i) Investigation
(ii) Effective prosecution
(iii) More prosecution

Subtheme two: Easing court process
Categories:
(i) Charging cases to court
(ii) Evidence gathering
(iii) Tendering of evidence

Theme three: Reduction role
Subtheme one: Punishment
Categories:
(i) Conviction of corrupt officers
(ii) Causing fear

Subtheme two: Corruption reduction
Categories:
(i) Mechanisms in place
(ii) Ensuring justice
(iii) Investigation of Public sector corruption

Subtheme three:
Categories:
(i) Curbing corruption
(ii) Institution for fighting corruption
(iii) Specialist organization
(iv) Composition
(v) Failure of earlier organizations

We visualize the above findings in figure 1 while figure 2 gives a proper picture of the emerging themes and subthemes on the role of EFCC in fighting corruption in Nigeria.

![Figure 1: Role of EFCC; Main themes](image-url)
Figure 1 summarizes into three main themes of leadership role, reduction role and prosecution role. As a leader in the anti-corruption fight in Nigeria, EFCC coordinates all other agencies and instruments in the fight against corruption. Equally, it performs the role of corruption reduction in its fight against corruption using various processes and techniques. One of such techniques recently employed by EFCC in the investigation of public sector corruption in Nigeria is the forensic accounting method. The commission of financial crimes is becoming much more technologically based and much of the financial crimes cases end up in courts. Therefore, in this aspect EFCC functions to reduce corruption and to appropriately prosecute corrupt public servants by introducing forensic accounting. Figure 2 presents these themes together with the dimensions that accounted for their emergence.

Figure 2: Role of EFCC in fighting corruption in Nigeria (Themes, subthemes and categories)

Source: Research finding

Theme 1: Reduction role

EFCC has been identified as playing the role of reducing corruption in Nigeria. The activities of the commission have been construed to have positive impact in reducing the level of corruption in the country as total eradication can be somewhat impossible (Adegbie & Fakile, 2012). The study has identified three ways in which EFCC performs its reduction role in fighting corruption in Nigeria. Corruption is a crime that often fights back, yet EFCC through appropriate punishment, corruption reduction and its establishment purposes can sustain the fight.

By causing fear and conviction of corrupt public servants EFCC functions to reduce the high level of corruption in Nigeria. On the very least, the mere mention of EFCC serves means of deterring many public servants from getting involved in actions that will eventually lead to corrupt practices. Equally, EFCC is mandated by its establishment Act to follow corruption and other financial crimes up to the conviction of the accused person in the court of law (EFCC Establishment Act, 2004). The total number of 471 convictions have been secured form 2013-2016 (Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, 2016). Participant 13 captures this when he submits:

EFCC is the only agency in Nigeria that is prosecuting PSC. Over 400 corruption convictions and that you find out that any case you want it to move forward definitely it has to………………… (Participant 13)

Even though, this figure may be deemed as not sufficient considering the high corruption cases in the country as many would argue, it is however a veritable step in reducing financial crimes. Impliedly, the corruption perception index of the TI (2016), reveals Nigeria as scoring below 30% for the year considered, thus indicating high perceived rate of corruption in the country. Similarly, from the index Nigeria we can deduce that the level of corruption is higher than averagely 130 countries from the ranking yearly. Obviously, this scenario presents a very negative posture of the country’s corruption stance.

Furthermore, the wave of corruption cases involving high profile and notable public personalities in Nigeria presents a very shocking
and unfolding revelation. For example, according to EFCC (2013) and Azeez (2011), the commission was able to arrest and secure the conviction of the following influential Nigerians:

1. Tafa Balogun, former Inspector General of Police.
3. Former Edo state governor Lucky Igbenedion for embezzling 2.9 billion Nigerian naira.
4. Former Deputy National Chairman of the then ruling party of the People’s Democratic Party, Chief Olabode George convicted over various contract scam and splitting amounting to 100 billion naira during his tenure as the chairman of the governing board of the Nigerian Port Authority (NPA). Convicted alongside with him were five others including: Aminu Dabo, former NPA chief executive, Captain O. Adeboye, Abdulrahim Tafida, Zanna Mairaribe and Sule Aliyu.
5. Mrs Cecilia Ibru, former chief executive of Oceanic Bank (now Eco Bank) for fraud of 1.2 billion USD in cash or in asset.
6. Muhammad El-Ameen Al-Haleel for defrauding one Dr. Shuaibu Sani Teidi the sum of 60 million naira, who was a gubernatorial aspirant on the platform of the PDP with pretense of arranging meeting with the Vice President in order to be nominated as the party’s candidate.
7. John Yusuf from the police pension over 32.8 billion police pension scam.

Other notable arrests and convictions equally observed by Azeez (2011); Eddy & Akpan (2008); EFCC, (2013); Sadiq & Abdullahi, (2013) are:

1. James Ibori, former Delta state governor was convicted for 129 count charge over money laundering amounting to over 9.1 billion naira.
2. Orji Uzor Kalu former governor of Abia state for embezzling 3.1 billion naira in addition to houses owned in London as well as the US. Equally he was accused of siphoning the state’s treasury to fund the Slok Airlines and 2 banks in Gambia and Sierra Leone.
3. Saminu Turaki, former governor of Jigawa state was accused of using 36 million naira from the state’s coffers to acquire federal government’s oil block.
4. Reverend Jolly Nyame, former governor of Taraba state as siphoning 1.6 billion belonging to the state.
5. Chimaroke Nnamani former governor of Enugu state was convicted of public fund diversion to the tune of 5.6 billion naira.
6. Senator Iyabo-Bello Obasanjo, a former senator and the daughter of former president Obasanjo was involved in a contract scandal of 3.5 billion naira with an Australian firm.
7. Professor Adenike Grange former minister of health, professor Agandi (permanent secretary-ministry of health) and Mr. Gabriel Aduku minister of state for health were convicted for misappropriating the sum of 300 million naira representing the unspent balance of money at the end of the year.
8. Police equipment foundation chief, Martins Kenny was convicted for 50 billion naira mismanagement.
9. Dimeji Bankole, former speaker of the Nigerian Federal House of Representatives and his deputy Bayero Nafada were convicted by the commission over 40 billion naira scandal during their tenure.

These, of course, are just few cases of the numerous corruption and other financial crimes being recorded in Nigeria. Now the issue before us and possibly everyone is not just the prosecution and conviction of the corrupt officers, but how do we ensure that corruption is ultimately put to a halt and that offenders face appropriate sanction and punishment.

Similarly, the accounts from our interviews have attested to the reduction role of EFCC including establishment purpose and corruption reduction. Participants 1 is very blunt on the corruption role of EFCC, when he submits “Imagine if there was no EFCC in the country these years. Obviously, the country would have been something else due to the intensity of corruption”. “The ICPC Act of 2001 and the 2002/2003 EFCC Act. These agencies collectively work together to curb PSC” (Participant 3). EFCC (is) as the name implies Economic and Financial Crime Commission, it’s set up to fight corruption after three organizations have failed (Participant 7).

Theme two: Prosecution role

Another role that EFCC seeks to achieve as observed from the documents reviewed and the revelation from the interviews is the prosecution of corrupt public officers. EFCC has been prosecuting corrupt public servants including politically exposed persons over the years (EFCC, 2013; Mutum, 2015). Through corruption prosecution and by easing the court processes, corrupt public servants are brought to justice for their
improprieties financially. Prosecution according to the participants’ perspective covers investigation, corruption prosecution, effective prosecution and of course having more prosecution. The starting point for prosecution is investigation and with a sound investigation you prosecute all corruption cases up to conviction of those found guilty. Investigations grounded on a very sound premise leads to effective and more prosecution of corruption cases. EFCC performs all these functions as precursors to effectively fighting corruption.

We deduced from the accounts of the participants that prosecution role being played by EFCC is so significant in the battle with the dreaded ailment called corruption. For instance, participant 1 is so direct on his view on the role of EFCC in prosecution of corruption. “EFCC is the leading agency in prosecuting corruption in Nigeria”. “EFCC has been very effective and has done very well in the prosecution of public sector corrupt officers ….” However, this prosecution is an outcome of the techniques such as forensic accounting technique employed in the investigation. Still participant 1 is so categorical on this and thus submitted: “More prosecution of PSC is possible because of forensic accounting”. Other participants have equally contributed on this aspect of the role of EFCC, thus:

Charging all cases to court, making sure all the elements and facts of issues are pronounced to prove the cases without all reasonable doubt (Participant 11).

EFCC carries out investigation of public corrupt officers which is the first stage in bringing a corrupt officer to justice. Investigation must be carried out before prosecution can take place. EFCC official also tender evidence in court during the trial of any public office holder (Participant 12).

EFCC is the only agency in Nigeria that is prosecuting PSC. Over 400 corruption convictions and that you find out that any case you want it to move forward definitely it has to…………….. (Participant 13).

EFCC is the coordinating agency as far as anything economic and financial crime is concerned which include corruption cases. So, we, and the EFCC has not shied away from that role and we are the forefront of the, of the investigation and prosecution of PSC cases. And (pause), that is why today you know in all the records of having the highest convictions as far as these kinds are concerned (Participant 15).

Supportive to the positions of the participants as it may appear the EFCC establishment Act of 2004, have clarified further on this role:

(a) The investigation of all financial crimes including advance fee fraud, money laundering, counterfeiting, illegal charge transfers, futures market and fraud, fraudulent encashment of negotiable instruments, computer credit card fraud, contract scam, etc.

(b) Collaborating with government bodies both within and outside Nigeria carrying on functions wholly or in part analogous with those of the commission concerning:

(i) The identification, determination of the whereabouts and activities of persons suspected of being involved in economic and financial crimes.

(ii) The movement of proceeds or properties derived from the commission of economic and financial and other related crimes.

(iii) The exchange of personnel or other experts.

(iv) The establishment and maintenance of a system for monitoring international economic and financial crimes in order to identify suspicious transactions and persons involved.

(v) Maintaining data, statistics, records and reports on persons, organizations, proceeds, properties, documents or other items or assets involved in economic and financial crimes.

(vi) Undertaking research and similar works with a view to determining the manifestation, extent, magnitude and effects of economic and financial crimes and advising government on appropriate intervention measures for combating same (EFCC Establishment Act, 2004).

Theme three: Leadership role

The EFCC establishment Act has described the role of EFCC as the financial intelligent unit assigned with the responsibility of coordinating other anti-corruption agencies in the fight against corruption and other financial crimes (EFCC Establishment Act, 2004). Similarly, both the vision and mission statement of EFCC have clearly captured this role. The vision of EFCC states:
“The vision of the EFCC is to make Nigeria a safe and corruption free nation and enhance positive image of the country” (EFCC, 2011).

An agency operating to best international standards and leading the fight against economic and financial crimes in Nigeria” (EFCC, 2012).

Furthermore, the mission statement of EFCC reads as follows:

“The EFCC is to curb the menace of corruption that constitute the clog in the wheel of progress, protect national and foreign investments in the country, imbibe the spirit of hard work in the citizenry and discourage ill-gotten wealth, identified illegally acquired wealth and confiscate it; build an upright force in both public and private sectors in the economy and contribute to the global war against financial crimes and terrorism financing”(EFCC, 2011).

“To rid Nigeria of economic and financial crimes and to effectively coordinate the domestic effort of the global fight against money laundry and terrorist financing” (EFCC, 2012).

Equally, from the analysis of our interviews, we established the emergence of the theme of leadership role of EFCC as one of the findings to this study as presented in figures 1 and 2 above. Under the leadership role of EFCC, one subtheme is identified. The leadership role is achieved through the coordination function based on five descriptive codes or categories as indicated by the participants to the study. Deep involvement in the fight against financial crimes, playing the role of leading agency as well as rendering assistance have echoed in the participants’ accounts of the coordinating function of EFCC. Other aspects reported by the participants include cooperation with other agencies and EFCC as agent of positive change. As the leading agency in the fight against corruption and other financial crimes in the country, EFCC is very much involved in that course. Essentially, EFCC as an agent of positive change in this noble struggle, both cooperate and render technical as well as other logical assistance to other anti-corruption bodies in Nigeria. Extracting these categories from the participants’ accounts will corroborate the documentary evidence reported above.

EFCC is the leading agency in prosecuting corruption in Nigeria. In fact EFCC is more involved in the PSC than any anti-corruption agency in Nigeria (Participant 1).

EFCC decided to niche into those fields and it makes its name from those fields. And right now, they are the leading agency in the country in fighting such activities (Participant 7).

EFCC is the coordinating agency as far as anything economic and financial crime is concerned which include corruption cases. So, we, and the EFCC has not shied away from that role and we are the forefront of the, of the investigation and prosecution of PSC cases. And (pause), that is why today you know in all the records of having the highest convictions as far as these kind [s] are concerned (Participant 15).

They are really [] trying on a very serious note and it has really helped a lot. it has brought in to some percentage of positive changes, you know. It has put that fear in the minds of everyone, you know. And all these things I think, am EFCC has really [] done a lot, thy have done their best, their, their, possible best to see they, they, they against this particular aspect in Nigeria (Participant 17).

No, everywhere as in all the units, we work for both EFCC, Police, almost all the agencies, ICPC as long[if] as (pause). From within EFCC and outside EFCC, other agencies as well, I work for police, from army, from ICPC. I think DMI also I work for them, but then we conduct forensic analysis (Participant 17).

Essentially, EFCC is a leader in Nigeria as far as fighting corruption is concerned. By so doing as a Financial Intelligent Unit (FIU), it coordinates other anti-corruption agencies in the fight. The EFCC Establishment Act, 2004 is very emphatic on this role.

(a) Taking charge of supervising, controlling, coordinating all the responsibilities, functions and activities relating to the current investigation and prosecution of all offences connected with or relating to economic and financial crimes.
(b) The coordination of all existing, economic and financial crimes investigating units in Nigeria.
(c) Maintaining a liaison with the office of the Attorney- General of the Federation, the Nigerian Customs Service, the Immigration and Prison Service Board, the
Central Bank of Nigeria, the Nigerian Deposit Insurance Corporation, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, all government security and law enforcement agencies and such other financial supervisory institutions involved in the eradication of economic and financial crimes.

(d) Carrying out and ensuring rigorous public enlightenment campaign against economic and financial crimes within and outside Nigeria.

(e) Carrying out such other activities as are necessary or expedient for the full discharge of all or any of the functions conferred on it under the Act (EFCC Establishment Act, 2004).

CONCLUSION

The nature, frequency and intensity of corruption in Nigeria have been examined to indicate the seriousness of corruption in Nigeria. In addition, the causes have been identified to emanate from multiple angles and dimensions. Efforts by successive governments in Nigeria have led to the emergence of some anti-corruption bodies in Nigeria. Prominent among the anti-corruption agencies set up to tackle the issue of corruption in Nigeria is the EFCC. Ever since its inception, EFCC has been making efforts in the fight against corruption Nigeria. Therefore, this study examined the role of EFCC in this noble pursuit. Employing the machinery of qualitative research paradigm, data were collected using interview and documentation methods. Three findings have finally emerged from the interview and the document analyses. The study found EFCC playing reduction, prosecution and leadership roles in the fight against corruption and other financial crimes in Nigeria.

Despite all these roles identified, still others believed not much is being done as corruption and other financial crimes seemed to be on the increase. Furthermore, more modern methods are to be explored in the investigation of public sector corruption. Forensic accounting has been identified as the ideology in fashion as far as the investigation of corruption and other financial crime. There is equally the need for EFCC to re-strategize for improvement and thus making much more impact in the fight against corruption.

However, the major limitation to this study is that the data obtained particularly from the interviews is from the experts based in EFCC. Similarly, majority of the documents reviewed are products of the EFCC. Other stakeholders in the country such private legal practitioners, professional accountants, media practitioners as well as other interest groups need to be consulted on the issue, further research should take care of this limitation. Furthermore, comparative study should be carried out on the most influential anti-corruption bodies in Nigeria should equally be carried out. Finally, a cross country study will provide a strong understanding on the phenomenon under study.

Reference


African Studies Quarterly, 12(1), 17–44.


