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Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs): Wedging War against Corruption in Nigeria

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Abstract – Many scholars have written on corruption in Nigeria but not much articles on the use of ICT in wedging war against corruption in Nigeria. This paper is aimed at examining the use of ICTs and its tools as a weapon in the fight against corruption in Nigeria. This study was carried out on 250 respondents consisting of 50 staff working in the Federal secretariat, 50 staff working with the Nigerian Police, 25 staff working with Benin Electricity Distribution Company (BEDC), 25 staff working with Delta State University, Abraka, 50 staff working in various banks within Delta State and 50 staff working with the Independent National Electoral Commission. The choice of these sectors could be tied to the fact that incidence of corruption are more pronounce in these organizations because every average Nigerian believe that corruption is not just common but has become a norm among these groups of workers. The result of the study showed that ICT and its tools provide powerful tools that can be used to curb, control and eliminate corruption in Nigeria. Despite the fact that corruption is still endemic in the country, the use of information technology in controlling corruption in different sectors is expected to manifest positive results in the near future. Recommendations were made to support the fight against corruption using ICT and its peripherals as weapons in different sectors of Nigerian's economy.

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1. Background

Information technology is the use of computer software to convert, store, process, transmit and retrieve information (Ayodotun, 2004, 2006; Inmon, 1986). In every sector, information and communication technologies (ICTs) are powerful tools for controlling corruption (Heeks, 1998). According to Heeks (1998), corruption is defined as inducement to wrong by bribery or other unlawful or improper means. As an issue, corruption tends to stir strong reactions. Corruption is a broad term covering a wide range of misuse of entrusted funds and power for private gain. Corruption has remained one of the most complex problems that have impeded development in Nigeria. According to Ogundun (2007), between 1960 and 2014, nothing more has ravaged the foundation of the nation than corruption. Ribadu (2006) stated that corruption is one of the most dangerous social ills of any society because corruption like a deadly virus attacks the vital structure that makes for society's progressive function, thus putting its very existence into serious perils. Corruption involves a deliberate use of one's position to get illegitimate benefits and undue advantage which could be financial or in other forms (Ribadu, 2006).

The history of corruption in Nigeria is strongly routed over 29 years of military rule, out

of 54 years of our statehood since 1960. Between 1960 to date that is, 54 years after independence, military rule has lasted for 25 years, leaving 19 for civilian rule. Between these periods, various governments have attempted to fight corruption through establishment of agencies, commission of enquiry. However, the role played by some of these agencies still leaves food for thought with respect to corruption. Corruption, a conceptualization and review of the problematic loopholes in a nation, seems difficult to define. Its high degree of relativity has attracted the use of methodological pluralism by scholars to scientifically explain the concept. There have been various definitions and explanations attached to it. Webster's Dictionary of the English Language, International Edition submits that corruption in modern usage connotes debase, decay, rottenness, dishonest and immoral behavior. Corruption is a behavioural attitude contrary to or at the variance with the set rules and agreed norms (Onyeziri, 2004). The development of ICTs has now offered great opportunities to fight against corruption in different sectors in Nigeria. However, this study seeks to discuss how ICT can be used as a weapon to fight against corruption in Nigeria.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Considering the enormous damage corruption has caused in the past years, even presently, ICT acquisition and implementation in the various sectors of Nigeria's economy is facing a lot of problems. This research work is being conducted to expose some of the inhibiting factors that are hindering the use of ICTs to fight against corruption in Nigeria. These factors include lack of capital to buy ICTs & equipment, erratic power supply, lack of technical know-how amongst others. However, these and other problems prompted this study.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The main focus of this research is to examine ways in which ICT can be used as a weapon to fight against corruption in Nigeria. However, this paper's central research objectives are:

- (1) To determine the different types of corruption common in the different sectors in Nigeria;
- (2) To know the causes and effects of corruption in Nigeria;
- (3) To discover if staff of Nigeria's anti-corruption body have the required knowledge and skills in using ICTs to fight corruption;
- (4) To establish if ICTs can be used to fight corruption in Nigeria and
- (5) To find out the various factors militating against the application of ICTs in fighting corruption in Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate, create, disseminate, store, and manage information. ICT is regarded as heart of any sector because of the role it played in formal and non-formal settings and public and private organizations (Blurton, 1999). Several researchers (Iqbal and Ahmed, 2010; Shaikh, 2009; Amjad, 2006) argued that, this century demands confidence and efficiency in ICT use in all fields, at both the industry and governmental levels. Where IT infrastructure is

available, ICT users are often unwilling to use available technology that, if used, would generate significant performance gains (Swanson, 1988). In our environment, it is not so, the infrastructure is not adequate compared to other countries.

Causes and Effects of Corruption in Nigeria

The causes of corruption are myriad and they have political and cultural variables. Some studies point to a link between corruption and social diversity, ethno-linguistic fractionalization, and the proportions of a country's population adhering to different religions traditions (Lipset & Lenz, 2000). Yet, other studies noted that corruption is widespread in most non-democratic countries and particularly in countries that have been branded 'neo-patrimonial', 'weptocratic' and 'prebendal' (Hope *et al*, 2000' Lewis, 1996). Thus, the political system and the culture of a society could make the citizens more prone to corrupt activities.

The causes of corruption in Nigeria can be grouped according to the following:

- (i) The false perception of government as "they" as opposed to "us" thereby making the people detached from the government. And so, their business is to get as much from the government as they can without getting into trouble (Ogbonnia, 2000).
- (ii) Lust for power: the struggle by individuals and groups to get position of authority at all costs induces corruption. This usually manifest in bribes, electoral malfeasance.
- (iii) Paying for official positions: when corruption is pervasive, position in the state bureaucracy becomes valuable assets and there will be derived demand for jobs in the state sector (Susan, 1997).
- (iv) Poor pay incentives to workers
- (v) Absence of key anti-corruption tools
- (vi) Culture and acceptance of corruption by the populace
- (vii) Ineffective political processes etc.

However, it has been noted from observations that the fight against corruption in Nigeria is not working because of the following factors:

- Insincerity of government
- Nepotism (Aluko, 2009)
- Systemic disorder
- Weak government institutions
- Corrupt electoral system
- Low public participation in governance
- Insecurity of informants etc.

Effects of Corruption

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.

Ineffective taxing and records keeping systems: Nigeria does not have an effective taxing and records keeping system to keep track of people's sources of income like the end-of-the-year income tax filing system in the United States. However, Lotterman (2002) who noted that bad rules breed corruption acknowledged that ineffective taxing system makes it difficult for societies to track down people's financial activities.

Corruption negatively impacts economic growth: According to Lipset and Lenz (2002), their effect on growth is in part, as a result of reduced level of investment, as corruption adds to investment risk. Corruption reduces public spending on education (Mauro, 1995 & 1997).

According to Haijia Aisha Ismail (Former Minister of Women Affairs and Youth Development) in a report in This-Day Newspaper of July 7, 2002, corruption and immorality are among the causes of injustice against women, thus, human trafficking which is a corrupt behavior and is one of the ways to lure women and children into prostitution and slavery. Nevertheless, corruption leads to slow traffic, potholed, trash-filled roads and streets. In fact, because of the dangers posed by pot-holed roads and unhygienic nature of the streets in the society, they should have signs that read "stay out and stay alive". Corruption impedes the ability of developing countries to attract foreign investors and distorts capital allocation as well as impedes international trade. Corruption also causes financial hemorrhage. It can lead to unhealthy power struggle, loss of social and moral values and unequal distribution of wealth.

Using ICTs to fight Corruption in various sectors in Nigeria

Corruption is as old as civilization itself and in the particular case of Nigeria; it is as old as the history of the country itself (Aluko, 2009). Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become within a very short time one of the basic building blocks of modern society. ICTs have successfully changed the social, economic and political spaces globally.

Forms of corruption in the following sectors (education, power, industry etc.) and ways ICTs can combat them include:

- (1) *Power Sector (cases of corruption)*
 - (i) The senior officers tend to sell transformers that were meant for public use
 - (ii) Giving bills that are not in line with meter readings
 - (iii) Cancellation of bills (Ameh, *et al.*, 2008)
 - (iv) Award of illegal contracts.

ICT can be used to get rid of corruption in the power sector by completely replacing manual meters with electronic meters which will enable users to buy cards for their use. This will strongly reduce the extent of corruption associated with staff of the power sector (BEDC). In some cases, the loading of such cards should be controlled by the use of communication technologies or devices.

- (2) *Government Industry Sector*

Corruption in the governmental sector usually takes the form of conspiracy offering of ratification to influence judgment or attract favours etc. Although, ICT has been greatly remarked in this sector, there is need to expand the security features in the electronic processes of the industry. Such features include the inclusion of biometric features such as fingerprints in addition to the use of passwords and Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) cards. This can sustain the security of the customer if there is password or ATM number leakage. There is also the great need to make the account of all customers to be accessible to security agents electronically so that the issue of bank aiding corruption cannot be feasible.

(3) *Education Sector (cases of corruption)*

Corruption in this sector takes the following forms:

- (i) Leakage of examination papers (Punch, 2008)
- (ii) Arbitrary award of marks or certificates under financial or sexual inducement
- (iii) Operation of illegal universities / polytechnics / colleges of education campuses (Sam, 2008)
- (iv) Falsification of results and other data
- (v) Corruption through copyright and plagiarism
- (vi) Appointment of unqualified officials under favoritism or undue process
- (vii) Undue favouritism in promotion and selection for award or study leaves etc.

ICT enhances educational institutions in a number of ways:

- (i) Creation of database to keep records of all students in tertiary institutions
- (ii) ICT enables the reduction of information quantity towards a higher and better structure
- (iii) ICT can be integrated into teaching and learning strategies and used to support relative learning theories
- (iv) It can help to tackle examination malpractices by providing online examinations
- (v) ICT (computers, inter and intranet) can be used to create new types of interactive learning media for improved quality, equity and access in higher education (Rosswall, 1999).

Factors militating against the use of ICT in fighting Corruption in Nigeria

Considering the enormous damage corruption has caused in the past years, even presently, ICT acquisition and implementation in the various sectors of Nigeria's economy is facing a lot of problems. Some of the inhibiting factors that are hindering the use of ICTs to fight against corruption in Nigeria include lack of capital to buy ICTs & equipment, erratic power supply, lack of technical know-how amongst others. Also, Daniel (2003) noted that poor facilities, poor funding, foreign exchange constraints, expertise requirement and apathy constitutes barriers to the use of ICTs and its peripherals in the fight against corruption in Nigeria. Matthews (2009) identified gross underfunding of most sectors as a major obstacle in the acquisition and application of ICT and its tools in the fight against corruption in Nigeria.

3. Materials and Methods

The research instruments used for the study were structured questionnaires, newspapers, textbooks, journals etc. Simple percentage statistical tool was used to analyze the data obtained from the questionnaire. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to 50 staff working in the Federal secretariat, 50 staff working with the Nigerian Police, 25 staff working with Benin Electricity Distribution Company (BEDC), 25 staff working with Delta State University, Abraka, 50 staff working in various banks within Delta State and 50 staff working with the Independent National Electoral Commission. All the questionnaires were retrieved immediately after the respondent has concluded filling the responses.

4. Results and Discussions

Demographic Variables

Table 1: Gender Distribution of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	110	44%
Female	140	56%
Total	250	100%

The male respondents are 110 (44%) and their female counterparts 140 (56%).

Table 2: Age Distribution of the Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18 – 28years	80	32%
29 – 38years	60	24%
39 – 48years	60	24%
49years and above	50	20%
Total	250	100%

Table 2 shows that 80 (32%) of the respondents are between 18 – 28years, 60 (24%) are between 29 – 38years, 60 (24%) fall within 39 – 48years while 50 (20%) respondents are between 49years of age and above.

Table 3: Qualification Distribution of the Respondents

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Ph.D	35	14%
M.Sc./MBA/M.A.	105	42%
B.Sc./B.A./B.Ed./HND	50	20%
OND/NCE	20	8%
Senior School Cert	25	10%
First School Leaving Cert	15	6%
None	-	-
Total	250	100%

Table 3 displays the educational qualification of the respondents. 35 (14%) respondents have doctorate degrees, 105 (42%) respondent have master’s degree, 50 (20%) respondents have bachelor degrees, 20 (8) have ordinary diploma, 25 (10%) have senior school certificates while 15 (6%) respondents only have first school leaving certificate.

Research Question 1: What are the different types of corruptions common in different sectors in Nigeria?

Results of this question asked to the respondents are complimented by information obtained from other sources.

Different Types of Corruptions in different sectors

Civil Service

- (a) Falsification of records
- (b) Cases of ghost workers in top organization / government positions
- (c) Collaboration with contractors for corrupt reasons
- (d) Unnecessary delay in processing individual’s or public documents without undue inducement

Police Force

- (a) Deliberate destruction of case files
- (b) Unlawful detention
- (c) Crooked planting of fake evidence
- (d) Indictment of innocent citizens

Benin Electricity Distribution Company (BEDC)

- (a) Award of illegal contracts (Ameh, 2008)
- (b) Cancellation of bills
- (c) Selling of public transformers
- (d) Fake meter readings

Educational Institutions (Tertiary)

- (a) Nepotism in promotion
- (b) Leakage of examination papers
- (c) Giving marks under financial or emotional inducement
- (d) Appointment of unqualified staff under favouritism
- (e) Falsification of results and other data
- (f) Corruption through plagiarism

Banking Sector

- (a) Unlawful defrauding of customers
- (b) Wrongful deduction from clients' accounts
- (c) Top officials fostering fraud (yahoo)

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

- (a) Declaration of wrong candidate as winner after elections
- (b) Alteration of voting results (Oyedele and Aborisade, 2008).
- (c) Delivery of fake voting materials

Research Question 2: What are the causes and effects of corruption in Nigeria?

Results of this question asked to the respondents are complimented by information obtained from other sources.

The respondents (84%) highlighted various reasons why corruption is being fostered in Nigeria. The fundamental factors according to them that cause corrupt practices in Nigeria include but not limited to the following:

- (a) Political office as the primary means of gaining access to wealth
- (b) Obsession with materialism and compulsion for shortcut to affluence
- (c) Glorification of ill-gotten wealth by the general public
- (d) Conflict between changing moral codes

- (e) Absence of a strong sense of national community
- (f) Great inequality in the distribution of wealth

Research Question 3: Can ICT be used to prevent or fight against corruption in Nigeria?

Results from this survey revealed that majority of the respondents 67% were positive that ICT has a major role to play in lifting the situation of the nation concerning corruption. According to the respondents, ICTs can be applied in fighting corruption in Nigeria through any of the following ways:

Civil Service

The respondents opined that setting up a database with biometric features such as fingerprints, age, year of first appointment, promotions among others can be used to eliminate ghost workers in the system. Such database should be designed with the understanding that only authorized officers or consultants have access to modify or add data to the database.

Benin Electricity Distribution Company

Analysis of the responses from the respondents confirmed that corruption can be got rid of in this sector by complete replacement of manual ways of meter readings with electronic meters so as to enable users to buy vouchers for their use. In some cases, the loading of such cards should be controlled by the use of communication technology like the mobile phone (Eddy & Akpan, 2009).

Banking Sector

Respondents from this survey revealed that there is the need to expand the security features of the banking industry so as to eliminate corruption in the banking system. Such features include inclusion of biometric features such as fingerprints in addition to the use of password and ATM cards (Eddy & Akpan, 2009). There is also the great need to make the accounts of all customers to be accessible to security agents electronically so that the issue of bank aiding corruption cannot be feasible.

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

The respondents revealed that in order to check diverse forms of corruption occurring in INEC, there should be systematic adoption of electronic voting system like the use of the PVC (Permanent Voter's Card) used during the recently concluded general elections. Such voting

system should be able to transmit the thumb print of a voter to a central database which can be assessed by restricted or qualified INEC officials. As such, multiple voting can be eliminated and through a properly designed website, INEC officials as well as voters can monitor the progress (Eddy & Akpan, 2009).

Research Question 4: What are the factors militating against the effective implementation of ICTs in fighting corruption in Nigeria?

Results of this survey confirmed that the respondents highlighted various obstacles facing the application of ICTs in the fight against corruption in the nation. Some of these factors include design and management decisions, environmental factors, etc. The respondents also pointed out that the introduction of ICT into a system may be strongly rejected by the populace due to the fear of loss of jobs, redundancy, health and safety issues (Eddy & Akpan, 2009).

It was however noted that lack of capital to buy ICT equipment, erratic power supply, lack of technical know-how, inadequate ICT facilities, poor funding, foreign exchange constraints, expertise requirement and apathy were other factors seen by respondents as barriers to the effective use of ICTs and its peripherals in the fight against corruption in Nigeria.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study have clearly revealed that ICT and its tools provides powerful tolls that can be used to curb, control and eliminate corruption in Nigeria. Despite the fact that corruption is still endemic in the country, the use of information and communication technology in controlling corruption in different sectors is expected to manifest positive results in the present and near future. Given the above conclusion, the researchers hereby recommend the following:

- ICT tools should be provided at all levels of government and full support of top government officials and management of organizations in the implementation of ICTs in all sectors
- Introduction of transparency and accountability in government functions
- Automation, which can reduce the opportunities for corruption in repetitive operations
- Preventive detection through monitoring of networks and individuals
- Deterrence by disseminating information about reported cases of corruption
- Reducing red tape and bureaucracy (Zinnbauer, 2012).

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