

# Trust deficit and anti-corruption initiatives

---

## Abstract

This study explores the ways in which trust deficit undermines anti-corruption initiatives in a context with systemic corruption. Anti-corruption measures as panacea to systemic corruption are not new, but their effectiveness is debatable. Whilst understanding the causal relationship between corruption and trust remains germane to fighting corruption, a growing number of recent studies advocate better context sensitivity in developing anti-corruption initiatives. Consistent with this, we unpack the perceptions of a significant section of the population in which corruption is rampant to identify factors that could enhance trust in the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures. Using commentaries from Nigerian Netizens on two critical corruption incidents that are significant to corporations, we uncover poignant narratives of perception of incompetence, dishonesty and confusion that undermine the anti-corruption measures in the context. We argue that donors, international organisations and businesses must encourage and support beneficiaries' governments to secure and sustain trust in the anti-corruption initiatives as a condition for better results.

**Keywords:** *Corruption; Anti-corruption; Trust; Netizens; Nigeria; Commentaries; Internet.*

## Introduction

This study explores the ways in which trust deficit undermines anti-corruption initiatives in a context with systemic corruption. Anti-corruption measures as panacea to systemic corruption are not new, but their effectiveness is debatable (Zhu et al., 2017; Zhang, 2016; Cleveland et al., 2009; Lawson, 2009; Persson et al., 2013; Everett et al., 2006). Failure of anti-corruption initiatives not only mean additional danger for quality of life, it has far-reaching implications for corporations as corruption becomes 'stronger' (Schwartz, 2009; Dunfee and Donaldson, 2002; Dunfee and Hess, 2001). Empirical research presents evidence of bold and strategic initiatives conceived by many national governments to check its spread, with some involving partnership with businesses. According to the Global Integrity (2008), anti-graft institutional initiatives by key sub-Saharan African countries (e.g. Kenya and Uganda) are very strong and effective in theory but less successful in reality (Misangyi et al., 2008). There seems to be a clear mismatch between the huge resources expended in fighting corruption and the meagre palpable success stories of anti-graft reforms and citizens' attitudinal change. The contemporary anti-graft initiatives by most African countries, rather than curb the scourge have seemed to create further avenues and incentives for corruption (Persson et al., 2013). Anti-corruption crusades are often viewed as constituting an existential threat to patrimonial domination of the political elites, posing a grave danger to the continuity of their production and survival (Adebanwi and Obadare, 2011; Wrong 2009).

Theoretically, the anti-corruption initiatives in many African countries are seemingly based on the principal-agent perspective, informing the reform agenda by donor countries and international organisations (Lawson 2009; Persson et al., 2013; Everett et al., 2006). These reform agenda which involved democratisation, bureaucratisation, privatisation, and accountability including the reform of the tax system are aimed to reduce discretion, limit the monopoly of decisions and enhance accountability (Klitgaard 1988). However, their effectiveness is so often undermined by the fissures in the context and the attempt to mollify donors in a vastly neo-patrimonial society where rent-seeking behaviours are enmeshed

even in the reformatory institutions themselves (Lawson, 2009). Thus, Persson et al. (2013) questioned the suitability of the principal-agent theoretical characterisation of corruption in such society, describing them as a collective action problem instead. They argued that in a highly corrupt context, there is no principled principal to hold agents to account and therefore the institutions and the reform agenda are doomed to fail since the monitoring authorities themselves are corrupt. This, according to Persson et al., partly explains the failure of anti-corruption initiatives in highly corrupt climes. They concluded by highlighting the fundamental role of trust in successful anti-corruption initiatives.

Although several previous studies have examined the causal relationship between trust and corruption (Morris and Klesner, 2010; Xin and Ruden, 2004; Anderson and Tverdova 2003; Chang and Chu 2006; Della Porta 2000; Doig and Theobald 2000), findings which are often based on econometric analysis remain inconclusive. For example, whilst Della Porta (2000) reported an inverse relationship between trust and corruption for Italy, France and Germany based on the data from the Eurobarometer survey on the perception of corruption and confidence in government, Morris and Klesner (2010) reported a mutual causality between the two variables based on evidence from Mexico. Others contend that it is corruption that undermines trust (Anderson and Tverdova 2003; Chang and Chu 2006; Della Porta 2000; Doig and Theobald 2000), suggesting that corruption by political elites and government functionaries signal wider acquiescence to it in a corruption invested environment, and reduces personal and institutional trust. Yet there is a general acknowledgement that trust matters for both personal, institutional and governmental effectiveness and in providing enabling environment for business-to-business, and public-private collaborations (Rousseau et al., 1998; Mayer et al., 1995; Lumineau, 2017; Yu et al., 2015; Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2013). Trust can enhance government efforts to mobilise citizens and corporations to fight corruption and reduce public scepticism about government's anti-corruption initiatives (Morris and Klesner, 2010). Along similar lines, several extant studies (Espinal et al., 2006; Warren, 2006; Job, 2005; Seligson, 2002) have

discussed the relationship between trust and corruption in the context of governmental legitimacy. They suggest that trust is fundamental to governmental legitimacy (Jackson and Gau, 2016; Tyler and Jackson, 2014), affecting citizens' attitude to government information including on their policies and projects (Tolbert and Mossberger, 2006).

According to Tyler (2006) legitimacy involves the belief that constituted authorities are trustworthy, honest and care about the welfare of the people, and that they ought to be accepted and people should voluntarily defer to their decisions and directives. However, when governmental legitimacy is challenged, due in part to trust deficit, citizens do not naturally defer to government policy directions, instead they doubt and question them, and in some cases blatantly disbelieve them (Morris and Klesner, 2010), affecting their effectiveness. Similarly, corporate involvement in government initiatives and their implementations may not be optimal if businesses consider that the government cannot be trusted. This could increase corporate uncertainty with impact on corporate strategic decisions as businesses plan to deal with the consequences of such uncertainty in addition to the well-established problems of corruption that corporations face (Rose-Ackerman, 1999).

Following a growing number of extant studies (Everett et al., 2006; Ekeh 1975; Lawson, 2009; Cleveland et al., 2009; Persson et al., 2013; Zhu et al., 2017; Shepler, 2017; Collier, 2002; Misangyi et al., 2008) arguing that understanding the social context of a problem provides a better basis for the development of a holistic solution, we construe trust as an instrument for reducing corruption. This allowed us to generate a deeper perspective on the factors that inhibit trust in anti-corruption initiatives. In doing this, we unpack the perceptions of a significant section of the population in a jurisdiction where corruption is rampant to identify factors that could enhance trust in the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures. Understanding these factors is important considering how the internet is changing the interactions between people and their governments (Linders, 2012). Several extant studies note how the internet is providing citizens with greater access to government

information and enhancing their participation in governance (Tolbert and Mossberger, 2006; Welch et al., 2005; Chadwick and May, 2003). It also facilitates the online presence of many media outlets through which government policies are increasingly subjected to critical social discourse and evaluation with consequences on citizens' perception of their trustworthiness (Santana 2014; Feenberg and Bakardjieva 2004; Graham and Wright, 2015).

Nigeria provides an excellent context to explore alternative approaches to mitigating corruption. A deeply neo-patrimonial society (Lawson, 2009), Nigeria is consistently ranked amongst the Transparency International's list of highly corrupt countries and has decades' history of failed anti-corruption initiatives, despite this being a cardinal objective of all previous administrations. President Muhammadu Buhari's (the President) government elected with similar objective in 2015 is considered different given his image of being a champion of the anti-corruption war. However, despite the several landmark steps and noticeable efforts to tackle corruption (including the establishment of the Presidential advisory committee on corruption, whistle-blowing regulation, production of orientation messages, in addition to reinvigorating existing anti-corruption agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) etc), it seems Nigerians are already weary of the rhetoric of the anti-corruption fight by this government.

This study adopts institutional and trust theoretical perspectives to explore the narratives of Nigerian Netizens' reactions to two critical incidents in the current efforts to combat corruption that have direct resonance to corporations in the context. The first relates to the allegations of plagiarism of the idea and content of the government's anti-corruption publicity message produced in 2016 (Ogundipe, 2016). Working with the private sector, the campaign was aimed at impacting on citizens' behaviours. It suggests that the call for change and fight against corruption start with every individual in the country i.e. 'Change begins with me' campaign. The second incident was about the whistle blowing regulations, and centred on the controversy that followed the government's handling of the reward to a whistle-blower who helped the recovery of approximately \$50m (13billion Naira) stolen

money in April 2017, following the introduction of the whistle-blowing regulation in December 2016 i.e. the 'Ikoyi money' saga, a reference to the location of the house in which the money was found (Kumolu, 2017). We provide further details on these in the methodology section.

We identified and downloaded the online news reports and commentaries on these two critical incidents. We then developed a coding strategy and used several iterations of our coding of the emerging issues from the materials to identify the prominent themes. We used relevant quotes from the materials to explain these themes and to explore the views from the materials alongside the social fissures in the country. These allowed us to relate the views from the materials to the reality of living (both as citizens and corporations) with corruption and anti-corruption initiatives in the country. The analysis in this study resulted in three main perception narratives (perception of incompetence, dishonesty, and confusion) that questioned and thereby challenged the trust in the campaign. Several commentators expressed frustrations at the slow pace of the campaign and the incompetence of the government in dealing decisively with alleged corrupt individuals. The incompetency theme became even more pronounced in the commotion that trailed the 'change begins with me' message. The perceived deficiency of government integrity exemplified in the reticence to adhere to its whistle-blower regulations in the case of the 'Ikoyi money' were identified by many as indicative of the insincerity in the government's approach to fight corruption. Several commentators seem to construe the 'change begins with me' message as an example of the government's dereliction of its responsibility. They thought it would have been better if the leadership in the country led by example and then expect the people to follow in their footsteps rather than asking people to change when they remained indifferent to the campaign they represent. Several quotes from the documents evidenced these views. Our findings support the argument in this paper that successful anti-corruption initiatives in this context must first address these barriers to trust in the initiatives.

We contribute to the literature on corruption and anti-corruption initiatives in three ways. Firstly, our approach to the interaction between trust and corruption bridged the gap in

the extant literature that focuses on their causal relationship by identifying how trust could be instrumental in winning the fight against corruption. In this sense, identifying the drivers of the trust deficit in the anti-corruption measures is crucial in contextualising the initiatives, and customising applicable strategies. Thus, the initiatives should recognise these drivers rather than sticking to the same approaches that have proven to be unsuccessful in fighting corruption in the context. Secondly, our empirical investigation provides evidence based on the perceptions of those who probably confront corruption and interact with anti-corruption efforts in the context daily. Our empirical evidence helps to understand people's reactions to corruption events in their context, and their perceptions of the anti-corruption efforts. These shed lights on how resistance to anti-corruption measures are being shaped by the absence of trust in the activities and pronouncements of those regarded as the champion of the anti-corruption efforts. In particular, we articulate how people construct and interpret these events. Our findings highlight the factors inhibiting the acceptance and compliance with the anti-corruption campaigns of the government with a view to addressing them to improve results. These findings have implications for the theoretical constructs used in this investigation. Our study extends the applications of trust theory beyond the popular domains of inter-personal and inter-organisational relationships to the sphere of citizen, business and governmental relationships, and in particular trust in governmental policies. We show that trust matters for the effectiveness of governmental policies. Furthermore, we extend the theoretical value of institutional theory by advancing its application in the specific consideration of anti-corruption initiatives. Our findings imply that focusing on regulatory institutional approaches alone, to the neglect of the normative and cognitive institutional arrangements in a context is not optimal in addressing an embedded problem such as corruption.

Lastly, our study complements Zhu et al. (2017) on the support for anti-corruption campaign in China. Thus, beyond their findings that support for individual champion of anti-corruption campaign could enhance their individual legitimacy whilst compromising

institutional support, we explore how trust deficit could challenge people's support for both individual and institutional arrangements for anti-corruption initiatives and identify implications for businesses in the context. The rest of the study is presented in five sections. Section 2 presents the literature review. Section 3 presents the study design. Section 4 presents the analysis. We discussed the findings in section 5 and the study concludes in section 6.

## Literature review

### Corruption

Corruption is a multi-disciplinary concept, discussed with a binary perspective which sees it either as 'sand in the wheel' or 'grease in the wheel' (Bardhan, 1997; Mendoza et al., 2015). Most of the literature on corruption considers it as unethical and bad, as we do. They identify many negative impacts of corruption on societies' economic (Rose-Ackerman, 1999), social (Shepler, 2017) and political lives and institutions (Morris and Klesner, 2010; Chang and Chu, 2006). However, some suggest that corruption is not always bad, pointing to the ways in which corruption may facilitate processes (Batabyal and Yoo, 2007; Khwaja and Mian, 2005) in a highly corrupt environment. This study speaks to both political and bureaucratic corruption (please see for example, Everett et al., 2006; Rose-Ackerman, 1999; Shleifer and Vishny 1993 amongst others for an extensive review on the definitions and types of corruption).

A relevant debate is whether corruption is an objective, or a contested construct informed by people's lived experiences, the institutional, developmental and historical antecedents of a society (Bukovansky, 2006; Shepler, 2017). There are several authors (Shepler, 2017; Ekeh, 1975; Lawson, 2009, Yusuf, 2011; Bardhan 1997; Rose-Ackerman 1999) who argue that Western prognosis of corruption in other places, especially in Africa is equivocal because of the failure to adequately recognise the significant effects of these other factors in constructing corruption and anti-corruption initiatives. Shepler (2017:453) notes



that corruption is not peculiar to Africa and that despite the absence of the distinctions between the private and public realms, and the remarkable informality in governance in these contexts, corruption “is indeed omnipresent, including in Western contexts”. Ekeh’s (1975) work on African politics also highlights this distinction. According to Ekeh, the sense of morality in Africa and the West is different and whilst the western notion of private and public morality is the same (Collier, 2002), it is different in an African political context. As a result, post-colonial African political set up identifies with both the primordial (Kinship, ethnicity, and communal set-up) and the civic publics. Whilst the focus of the primordial public is on the protection of the narrowly defined individual, communal or group interests, often at odd with the public interest, the focus of the civic public is squarely on the functionalities of the civil structures such as the civil services and the police (Goddard et al., 2016; Phiri and Guven-Uslu, 2018).

Ekeh (1975) notes how the differences in the two publics seem to conspire to make corruption and anti-corruption initiatives particularly difficult issues in Africa. For example, Ekeh (1975) suggested that whilst a citizen (for example, a civil servant or a politician) who operates in both spheres but with stronger attachment to the primordial public might find the embezzlement or the mis-use of the primordial public’s communal resources repulsive, similar behaviour in the civic public is justified and even celebrated especially if it is used to enrich the primordial public. The idea of the two publics is also evident in the attitude to issues such as public sector financial management and obedience to laws (Goddard et al., 2016; Ijewereme, 2015). Goddard et al. argued that whilst citizens with stronger attachment to the primordial public may see taxation as punitive and an extension of the post-colonial hegemony, they are more amenable to pay community taxes. In the same way, politicians with doubtful credentials in the egalitarian ethos such as transparency, accountability and honesty in the civic public but with strong connections and approval in the primordial public are hailed and would generally enjoy public support compared to politicians who may be diligent and upright in the discharge of their public duties but may not have the same

attachment to the primordial public (Lawson and Rakner, 2005; Ijewereme, 2015). Several studies (Goddard et al., 2016; Misangyi et al., 2008; Collier, 2002; Everett, 2012; Ijewereme, 2015) argued that these type of deeper perspectives on the embedded nature of corruption are crucial to successful anti-corruption initiatives because they affect the effectiveness of the institutional arrangements in the society.

### Institutional theory, corruption and anti-corruption initiatives

Although corruption has been discussed along several theoretical lines, the use of institutional theory is uncommon despite its relevance in enhancing insights on corruption and the failure of anti-corruption initiatives (Nielsen and Massa, 2013). Li et al. (2008:328) note that institutional theory “offers a powerful explanation of both individual and organisational actions and processes” while Misangyi et al. (2008) observe its predominant application to organisational and inter-organisational analysis of unethical behaviours with inadequate attention to its macro-level (national) implications on corruption and anti-corruption initiatives. An institution is described as the deep aspect of social structure that provides necessary guidelines and constraints on people’s behaviour (North 1990; Scott, 2001). It consists of both explicit rules and implicit, taken-for-granted, guides, norms and rules through which society ensures conformity in people’s behaviour (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991). They include the socio-cultural systems and norms that define social reality and consist of the “rules of procedures that actors employ flexibly and reflexively to assure themselves and those around them that their behaviour is reasonable” (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991:20). Institutional theory suggests that every societal actor’s actions (Misangyi et al., 2008) take place within well-defined institutional environments. This is the case with corruption as a social phenomenon.

Scott (2001, 2008) identified three pillars of institutions to include the regulatory, normative and cognitive (cultural) institutions. Regulatory institutions consist of laws and

regulations and their coercive enforcement mechanisms through which society assures reasonable behaviours. The normative institutions comprise the socially shared values, norms of behaviour and expectations which shape interactions among social actors. They are taken-for-granted established code of acceptable behaviour. Finally, cognitive-cultural institutions are the implicit, unconsciously developed, taken-for-granted shared meanings, identities, beliefs and a raft of other symbolic values through which people are connected, serving as the basis of their interactions (Scott, 2001; Zucker, 1977). Cognitive institutions are embedded in the societal culture and frame of judgements, forming part of the basis for interpreting reality in a context (Misangyi et al., 2008; Scott, 2001; Pillay and Kluvers 2014).

Given that social actors (including individuals and organisations) function uniquely within these institutional arrangements, institutional theory provides an important opportunity to consider the causes and approaches to solving corruption in different contexts. Several anti-corruption initiatives are primarily based on the regulatory institutional approach including the use of punishment, efforts at enhancing governmental accountability, transparency, the rule of law and the formal justice systems (Pillay and Kluvers, 2014; Shelifer and Vishny, 1993; Klitgaard, 1988). The regulatory institution and its mechanisms in contexts with systemic corruption such as Nigeria are usually ineffective (Misangyi et al., 2008; Ijewereme, 2015; Uberti, 2016), making it difficult for them to efficiently support anti-corruption initiatives. In many cases, citizens do not trust them to do what is right (Agbiboa, 2015; Akinlabi, 2017). For example, it is a common practice for the police to randomly seek to extract bribe from citizens and for justice to be delayed due to several avoidable reasons including heavy backlog of cases, making the justice system inefficient (Akinlabi, 2017; Yusuf, 2007). The regulatory approach which has been the focus of several years of anti-corruption efforts in the country has been pursued largely to the neglect of the equally important normative and cognitive approaches (Collier, 2002; Ijewereme, 2015).

Whilst regulatory institutions are explicit and may be easily amenable, the informal institutions (normative and cognitive) are enduring and hard to change or reversed (Scott,

2001; Pillay and Kluvers, 2014; Uberti, 2016). This may, in part, explain why it is difficult to curb corruption in contexts with systemic corruption because over time, associated normative and cognitive institutionalised behaviours have changed to support and perpetuate corruption in a self-reinforcing and recursive way (Collier, 2002; Misangyi et al., 2008; Goddard et al., 2016). Available evidence shows that regulatory reforms alone are incapable of dealing with systemic corruption (Pillay and Kluvers, 2014; Shelifer and Vishny, 1993; Klitgaard, 1988; Persson et al., 2013; Misangyi et al., 2008; Ijewereme, 2015; Uberti, 2016). Thus, the present study reinforces the growing number of recent studies advocating context sensitivity in the anti-corruption initiatives by exploring people's trust in the initiatives.

### Trust, distrust and trustworthiness

Like corruption, trust is a nebulous concept with different connotations across disciplines (Mayer et al., 1995; Kramer, 1999; Rousseau et al., 1998; Hosmer 1995; Kramer and Lewicki, 2010). Understanding why and how people trust has been the focus of extensive extant studies in Psychology and Sociology and other social science fields (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2013; Lumineau, 2017; Connelly et al., 2012; Yu et al., 2015). Of relevance to this research is the social and institutional construction of trust. In this regard, Kramer (1999) notes that some authors construe trust as a more "general attitude and expectancy about other people and the social systems in which they are embedded" (571). Barber (1983: 164-165) also described trust as a set of "socially learned and socially confirmed expectation that people have of each other, of the organisation and institutions in which they live, and of the natural and moral social order that set the fundamental understandings for their lives".

Several extant literature on trust also address distrust (Connelly et al., 2012; Lumineau, 2017; McKnight and Chervany, 2001; Lewicki et al., 1998; Hosmer, 1995; Hardin, 2004; Connelly et al., 2012). Lumineau (2017) defined distrust as the "confident negative

expectations regarding another's conduct" where confident negative expectation refers "to the propensity to attribute sinister intention to, or a desire to buffer oneself from the effects of another's conduct" (p1555). Connelly et al. (20012) note that distrust arise from the perception of incongruence between two parties, where one party fears that the other may behave in an opportunistic manner. Beyond definitions, previous studies have also addressed the relationship between trust and distrust (Kramer, 1999; Lewicki et al., 1998; Lumineau, 2017; Connelly et al., 2012).

Two distinct perspectives are evident in the literature; one, where trust and distrust are perfect substitutes (the uni-dimensional approach) and the other, where they are considered to co-exist (the bi-dimensional approach). The former implies that increased trust is tantamount to reduced distrust. This implies that trust and distrust are on the extreme opposite end of the same continuum and are mutually exclusive (Lumineau, 2017:1556), moving along the continuum has implications for both trust and distrust. On the other hand, several studies (Lewicki et al., 1998; Lumineau, 2017; Kramer, 1999; Hosmer, 1995; Mesquita, 2007; Connelly et al., 2012:821) suggest that trust and distrust function as separate but related constructs such that "lack of trust does not necessarily signify distrust". In this sense, both trust and distrust can exist simultaneously.

Empirical studies on this debate argue that trust and distrust function together in contracting relationship between parties (Lumineau, 2017; Connelly et al., 2012), implying that they are context specific. Thus, whilst trust may not be transferable into different context-based relationships, distrust is generalizable and often transferred into other contexts. This further implies that a perception of distrust in one situation is more far-reaching and is likely to be easily supported and transferred to another situation unlike trust (Hardin, 2004; Connelly et al., 2012). Consequently, the factors that support the development of trust are not necessarily the same factors that lead to distrust. Furthermore, extant studies note the predominantly positive and negative connotations ascribed to trust and distrust respectively (Lewicki et al., 1998; Lumineau, 2017). Yet, both have positive and

negative outcomes. Although the literature is unequivocal about the desirability of trust and its many benefits including better relationship and improved performance (Gulati and Nickerson, 2008) and improved governmental efficiency (Morris and Klesner, 2010; Seligson, 2002), studies (Lumineau, 2017; Connelly et al., 2012; Lewicki et al., 1998) have also noted that trust could lead to suboptimal behaviour, flawed decisions which increase personal and organisational risks and provide room for opportunistic behaviour (Gargiulo and Ertug, 2006; Jones and Burdett, 1994). Although distrust is generally construed to be bad, because it could lead to suspicion in relationships, deception, scepticism, sabotage and could escalate tension in already bad situation due to retaliation, there are benefits associated with distrust and it may be healthy in certain circumstances (Lewicki et al., 2006). Previous studies argue that some amount of distrust is necessary at times to increase personal and organisational alertness to possible opportunistic behaviour or potential danger, and it may also be useful in reducing vulnerability by bringing potential negative outcomes to the fore (Lewicki et al., 1998; Lumineau, 2017; Connelly et al., 2012).

Trust is often discussed in the same context as trustworthiness, which describes the characteristics that others see in a person or institution leading to trust. According to Gefen, (2002) whilst trust indicates a general belief about the 'specific other' (person or institution), trustworthiness refers to specific belief in the 'specific other'. Studies on the relationship between trust and trustworthiness consider them as distinct constructs, with the latter as an antecedent of the former (Yu et al., 2015; Colquitt et al., 2007). Several trustworthiness characteristics that can lead to trust have also been identified in the literature (Mayer et al., 1995; Butler, 1991; Butler and Cantrell, 1984). For example, Gabarro (1978) found that ability and character are the most important determinants of trustworthiness. The author described ability in terms of the competence, knowledge and skills necessary to do a task or discharge a responsibility, and character as a multi-dimensional construct that embodies qualities such as honesty, fairness, openness, caring motives and intentions and predictability. Caldwell and Clepham (2003) suggest that trustworthiness is based on six

qualities comprising of honesty, competence, quality assurance, interactional courtesy, legal compliance and financial balance. Similarly, Ennew and Sekhon (2007) note that expertise and competence, integrity and consistency, communication, shared values, concern and benevolence are the antecedents of trustworthiness. Building on Gabarro (1978), Mayer et al. (1995) considered character to be composed of benevolence and integrity, suggesting that trustworthiness is based on three qualities comprising of ability, benevolence and integrity (ABI). Although the literature is equivocal on the determinants of trustworthiness, Colquitt et al.'s (2007) meta-analysis suggest that trustworthiness is anchored on ABI, which is commonly adapted in various fields of inquiry.

Ability (also referred to as competence or effectiveness or expertise) centres on the evaluation of the performance of the government or object of trust. Benevolence (or commitment or care) is an ethical concept that evaluates the way a person, corporation or government institution discharges its functions reflecting its intention and outward dispositions as perceived by the recipient of the service. Integrity (or honesty) is also an ethical concept which according to Grimmelikhuijsen et al. (2013: 577) is the "extent to which the other is perceived to tell the truth or keep commitment". Several recent studies (Yu et al., 2015; Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2013; Colquitt et al. 's 2007) have adapted Mayer et al.'s(1995) model in exploring trustworthiness and trust in different contexts. For example, Yu et al. (2015) in building trust in internet banking and Grimmelikhuijsen et al. (2013) in the context of cross-national comparative study of the effect of transparency on trust in government. Given the discussions above, this study applies these three dimensions of trustworthiness in the context of trust in anti-corruption initiatives.

## Corruption and trust

Much of the contemporary literature on corruption describes trust as both cause and consequence of corruption (Morris and Klesner, 2010). They argued that low level of trust

breeds corruption. In other words, trust deficit within society, especially in the ruling government, undermines popular adoption of universalistic ethos and cooperative behaviours necessary to curtail pervasive corruption. A society that fails to inspire trust tends to extreme care and caution and this diminishes social and economic transactions and impedes social cooperation (Rubio 2007). Thus, trust deficit engenders acquiescent attitude towards corruption, promotes individual participation in corrupt practices, thereby creating the expectation of corrupt behaviour among others. Trust deficit among citizens was attributed to pervasive corruption in Italy during the post-World War II period (Heidenheimer, 1996). Xin and Ruden (2004) also argue that pervasive mistrust promotes perceived corrupt tendencies in society which ultimately provides a justification for such behaviour, affecting the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts. Empirical evidence by La Porta et al. (1997), Moreno (2002), Seligson (1999), Davis et al. (2004) also lends credence to this position. While La Porta et al. (1997) reported lower level of inter-personal trust in cultures with high levels of corruption, Moreno (2002) explains that such societies tend to be more tolerant of corrupt practices, arguably, making anti-corruption initiatives difficult.

Other corruption related studies offer a somewhat different perspective regarding the causal relationship between corruption and trust. They argued that rather than seeing trust deficit (whether political or interpersonal) as causing corruption, corruption itself erodes trust (Anderson and Tverdova 2003; Chang and Chu 2006; Della Porta 2000; Doig and Theobald 2000). Anderson and Tverdova (2003) using a dual empirical approach, reported a correlation between corruption perception among individuals and support for political institutions. According to them, the higher the perception of corruption exhibited by individuals, the lower their support for democratic political institutions. Similarly, Seligson (2002) stresses corruption's negative impact on trust and government legitimacy. This is because it undermines trust in institutional effectiveness and fairness which are key indicators of popular support for institutions (Miller and Listhaug 1999). Thus, the literature is inconclusive on the direction of causality between corruption and trust. However, rather than



take this unresolved functional approach, we explore how trust could be instrumental in reducing the pervasiveness of corruption in a highly corrupt context such as Nigeria, by understanding the dimensions of the barriers to trust in the anti-corruption efforts in the context.

## **Study design**

We used inductive research approach (Hamilton, 2013) to explore the narrative features of the information from the internet on the anti-corruption initiatives of the government, focusing on the two critical incidents identified earlier. We draw on people's lived experiences of the anti-corruption efforts constructed through their interactions on the internet. The value of our interpretative paradigm lies in the ability to reflect people's original perspectives on a sensitive issue which the internet facilitates. Our sense-making of these experiences enhanced our collective understanding of how to improve the success of anti-corruption initiatives. Our reliance on the internet reflects its growing importance in mediating the interface between people and their government, and the increasing readership of online news compared to print versions, where readers can leave comments on the news item, unlike print media (Santana 2014; Feenberg and Bakardjieva 2004; Graham and Wright, 2015). Secondly, the internet seems to give voice to people who may not ordinarily be active in the public sphere. Thirdly, apart from improving citizens' participations, the internet also enhances the quality of their engagement due to its anonymity (Tolbert and Mossberger, 2006; Welch et al., 2005; Chadwick and May, 2003). Zhu et al. (2017) commented on the enormous amount of 'big data' generated on the internet through Netizens' comments and commentaries that remained under-harnessed. In this sense, we provide a structured interpretation of these comments and amplify their implications for the government's anti-corruption efforts, using trust and institutional theoretical perspectives to guide our sense-making process within specific institutional arrangements.

### **The critical incidents**

We focused on two events that happened during the President Muhammadu Buhari's administration, relating to its anti-corruption initiatives due to their uniqueness and significance in the effort to fight corruption, and because they have implications for corporations operating in the context. First was the publicity message of the government on anti-corruption. The swearing in on the 29<sup>th</sup> May 2015 of the All Progressive Congress (APC) presidential candidate Muhammadu Buhari, following the 2015 election victory, marked the commencement of the administration which succeeded the Dr Goodluck Jonathan's administration - People's Democratic Party (PDP). On the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2016, the government launched its 'change begin with me' campaign, credited to the Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed. The publicity campaign was aimed at bringing about attitudinal change in the people to fight corruption and other manifestations of decadence in the society, working in collaboration with the private sector. On the 16<sup>th</sup> September 2016, Adeola Akinremi of *This Day* newspaper reported a news item on the allegation of plagiarism relating to the inauguration speech by the President at the launch of the message. On the 26<sup>th</sup> September 2016, *the Punch* newspaper repeated the claim. It was alleged that parts of the speech were taken verbatim from President Obama's election victory speech on November 4<sup>th</sup> 2008. A second allegation regarding the publicity message was made by Mr Fadeyi who claimed that the ideas of the campaign including the video clips played were his original ideas which were stolen from him by the government. It is relevant to note that the government has denied these claims. The claim and counter claim that followed seem to cast shadows on the 'change begin with me' campaign and seem to exercise a lot of Nigerians as the analysis later shows.

The second event relates to the new whistle blowing regulation introduced in December 2016. On the 12<sup>th</sup> April 2017, the EFCC working on tip off raided an apartment in Ikoyi, an affluent area in Lagos state, the former capital city of the country. Media reports suggest that up to \$50m (approximately N13b) was recovered by the EFCC directly because of the whistle blowing. Whilst the tip-off and the recovery were positive events in the context

of fighting corruption, subsequent events on this issue were unsavoury. There were allegations that the government was negotiating the percentage to pay the whistle-blower and reluctant on the issue, leading to litigation threats from the whistle-blower’s lawyers and insinuations that some powerful individuals in government were against the payment. Others alleged that the whistle blower may have been set-up and may be killed. The public comments by Netizens on these two incidents formed the basis for the data used in this paper.

We chose these two incidents because of their significance in the country’s long experience of failed anti-corruption initiatives. Although orientation messages are not new in Nigeria, none has been so direct; shifting the focus of the fight on corruption to the citizens as the ‘change begins with me’ message did. Moreover, the message also had significant resonance with many people in the country because it seems to bring the personality of the President to the frame as a champion of the anti-corruption programme in the country having been elected on a strong mandate and an electoral manifesto of ridding the country of corruption. More importantly, a cardinal part of the message was the collaboration with the private sector. This collaboration was to enhance information sharing and joint efforts at fighting corruption rather than restricting it to the purview of the government. Similarly, the whistle-blowing policy marked a turning point in the country’s fight against corruption because it was the first ever such regulation in Nigeria with very detailed provisions on the protection and reward that could accrue to a whistle-blower if their action led to the recovery of stolen Nigerian wealth. Table 1 below provides a timeline of the key events.

**Table 1: The timeline of incidents and media reportage**

Date	Event
May 2015	President Mohammed Buhari was sworn in as the next president of the country
October 2015	Alhaji Lai Mohammed became a federal minister for Information and culture

December 2015	Mr Fadeyi claimed to have met the Minister to discuss the campaign strategy	
September 2016	Launch of 'Change Begins With Me' by the Federal Government of Nigeria	
December 2016	Whistle-blower Policy initiated by the Federal Government of Nigeria	
April 2017	Discovery of Ikoyi Money by a whistle-blower	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Media</b>	<b>Caption</b>
11 <sup>th</sup> September 2016	Premium Times	Allegation of intellectual property theft blights 'Change Begins with Me' <a href="https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/210224-allegation-of-intellectual-property-theft-blights-nigerias-change-begins-with-me-campaign.html">https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/210224-allegation-of-intellectual-property-theft-blights-nigerias-change-begins-with-me-campaign.html</a>
16 <sup>th</sup> September 2016	This Day	Buhari's plagiarized Speech in "Change Begins with Me" <a href="https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2016/09/16/buharis-plagiarized-speech-in-change-begins-with-me/">https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2016/09/16/buharis-plagiarized-speech-in-change-begins-with-me/</a>
27 <sup>th</sup> December 2016	Punch	Nigeria's Whistle-blower Policy <a href="http://punchng.com/nigerias-whistle-blower-policy/">http://punchng.com/nigerias-whistle-blower-policy/</a>
12 <sup>th</sup> April 2017	Vanguard	Money Recovered by EFCC in Ikoyi, Lagos <a href="https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/11/whistle-blower-ikoyi-money-now-millionaire-efcc/">https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/11/whistle-blower-ikoyi-money-now-millionaire-efcc/</a>
12 <sup>th</sup> April 2017	Sahara Reporters	EFCC Uncovers \$43.4m, N23.2m, £27,800 In Ikoyi Apartment <a href="http://saharareporters.com/2017/04/12/efcc-uncovers-434m-n232m-%C2%A327800-ikoyi-apartment">http://saharareporters.com/2017/04/12/efcc-uncovers-434m-n232m-%C2%A327800-ikoyi-apartment</a>
14 <sup>th</sup> December 2017	Vanguard	IKOYI CASH: Whistleblower gets N421m, jets out of Nigeria <a href="https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/12/ikoyi-cash-whistleblower-gets-n421m-jets-nigeria/">https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/12/ikoyi-cash-whistleblower-gets-n421m-jets-nigeria/</a>

## Data Collection

We used the online media coverage and commentaries by the media audience of four major newspapers and a news platform (*The Punch, the This Day, the Vanguard Newspapers, the Premium Times, the Daily Trust and Sahara reporters*) in connection to the above events as the source of data for this investigation. We used the online version of these newspapers due to their internet presence, access to extensive commentaries by their online readers on these events, their wide reach and respect in the sector. We also

considered their broad representation of the geo-political divide in the country to achieve balanced coverage and incorporate broad views and fissures in the country. The *Punch*, although a national newspaper is traditionally considered by some to represent South western interests, like *This Day* and *Vanguard*, believed to cater for South eastern audience, and the *Daily Trust* believed to represent the interests of the North of the country. We complemented these with the *Premium Times* considered by many as a modern, investigative, liberal online newspaper and *Sahara Reporters* an online news platform. All the other media outlets in the study have both print and online versions. The readership of the media in the study is heterogeneous, divided along ethnic and religious lines (Musa and Ferguson, 2012; Oso, 1991), although the online versions seem to attract mainly young, professional audience (Dare, 2011). In terms of professionalism, *the Punch*, *This Day*, *Vanguard* and *Premium Times* have well established traditional approach to journalism, whilst *Sahara Reporters* is an example of citizen journalism where readers make up their contents and report their news.

We searched for the news items using the key terms such as the ‘change begins with me’, ‘whistle-blowing laws in Nigeria’, the Ikoyi money’, and ‘corruption in Nigeria’ through google search engine and directly from the home pages of the identified news outlets. We also used alternative search terms such as ‘corruption’ and ‘anti-corruption initiatives’ but found the results to be very general in nature and unsatisfactory. We focused only on the commentaries rather than the way the news items were presented by the media. We identified and downloaded the media reports of these events and the associated comments by the newspapers’ audience into word document. This allowed us to gain a sense of the word count and permitted other preliminary data preparation including removing extraneous news items not directly related to the events under examination.

## Data Analysis

Following the data collection, we used three layers of research analyses to make meanings of the texts and dialogue taking place in the virtual community which involved 1)

content analysis of the data 2) the establishment of agreement on the key themes from the data, and 3) analysis of the narratives from the data to allow us to understand people's perceptions on these events.

### Content Analysis (CA) and Coding Scheme

We used content analysis as our primary and first layer of analysis. We found CA useful in identifying the patterns in the texts and as an analytical tool that allows systematic and objective analysis of documents rather than for statistical analysis (Adelopo et al., 2017). Although CA has a well-established growing application in social science (Guthrie et al., 2012), it is only suitable where the object of the analysis could be translated into quantifiable data. The success of CA depends on the study objective and the clarity in the coding process to avoid subjective categorisation (Adelopo et al., 2017). To aid our analysis, we followed Bell et al.'s (2011) suggestions to maintain and follow a clear coding scheme. Coding was done by two experienced researchers. Given the volume of the data (we had over 200 pages of commentaries, approximately 51,000 words), each coder read part of the downloaded documents (comprising the news items and some commentaries) independently over a couple of weeks to familiarise ourselves with the contents before undertaking the coding for the entire documents. The actual coding exercise and associated reflections took well over six months. We had several face-to-face and internet mediated research meetings to compare notes and to identify emerging themes and their frequencies. We reviewed the consistency and the reliability of the emerging themes from the pilot coding until we gained high inter coder agreement. Inter-coder agreement (alpha co-efficient) calculated based on the method outlined in Krippendorff (1980), pp. 138–139) for the entire document was over 85%.

Our sense-making from the corpus involved several iterations of the content and the emerging themes. In doing this, we not only teased out the apparent views of the Netizens in their dialogues but also integrated our knowledge of the context to derive deeper external contextuality of the conversations embodied in the texts. We leveraged on our own

knowledge of the context in terms of the antecedents and current developments in the country's anti-corruption efforts. Thus, our analysis involved a (re)construction of the narratives from the conversations in the virtual community based on our experience and knowledge of the underlying social mechanisms that helped us to amplify the hidden meanings in the discourse as they relate to corruption and the anti-corruption campaigns of the government from trust and institutional theoretical lenses.

## Analysis

Our analysis is presented in three stages. First, we describe the data focusing on their nature and the outcome of the content analysis. We then present a broad summary of the main themes and their explanations. Lastly, we present the grouping of the broader themes to arrive at a more specific categorisation that captures the broader themes, their explanations and the narratives that support them. We discuss our findings in the context of the extant literature and the fissures in the country.

### ***Nature of the comments and outcome of the content analysis.***

Our engagement with the corpus revealed distinct features of the online communication. Firstly, we found that commentaries are asynchronous, meaning that Netizens comment on news items as time permits and not in any order. Secondly, Netizens use loose languages that often do not conform to norms of communication in everyday situations. For example, they use a lot of abusive language and short form writings, with meaning that is known to other users, but illogical to non-users. Thirdly, in some cases the commentaries are presented in conversational modes where Netizens engage in a one-to-one or one-to-many dialogues. Whilst these dialogues are revealing, at times they degenerate into incivility commonly along ethnic, religious or social status lines including name-calling. Sentence construction rules are rarely followed, and commentaries can range from just a word to extended and long-winded paragraphs. Although commentaries were in English language, at times, Netizens use local terms in their conversations. We clarify local

or informal languages used in the analysis where this is necessary for understanding the comments. Demographic information is not captured on the commentaries. We also found that users post multiple times on the same platform, but we could not confirm if they post on multiple platforms or if they use the same identity across platforms. Although users use pseudo names, they do not reflect their demographic information such as gender, age or tribe. Even when some users seem to indicate this information from their pseudo names e.g. 'Women-leader', 'Yoruba-man' they are not necessarily believable due to their anonymity. The lack of demographic information is a key demerit of using this type of data. However, this is surpassed by the access to invaluable qualitative data that exploring online comments of Netizens affords by bridging the reluctance and confidentiality constraints of discussing sensitive issues such as corruption and anti-corruption initiatives in the open.

### ***Summary of the broad themes emerging from the data***

Our analysis showed that the comments broadly fall into relevant and irrelevant categories. Relevant comments address the issues raised in the news, for example, some of the audience relate their comments to the impact of corruption on economic situation of the people and the country. Some linked their comments to the past failed experiences of fighting corruption in the context and the seemingly intractable nature of corruption highlighting the gross inefficiency of the approach being used to confront corruption. On the other hand, irrelevant commentaries failed to focus on the issues reported in the news. They are often typified with extraneous, trivial comments, abuse, or at times advertisements. The irrelevant comments also include those that address the broader issues in the country without linking them to corruption or anti-corruption initiatives of the government. For example, some of the comments are on the economic problems, or other type of malaise facing the country. Other irrelevant comments focus on specific sections of the country or use the opportunity to highlight further fissures in the country usually along religious and



ethnic lines. These types of comments were categorised as irrelevant as they do not touch on the primary objective of this investigation.

Following the broad categorisation, we explored only the relevant commentaries further. Our further engagement and iteration of the documents resulted in two categories of relevant commentaries. The first category represents comments that support the government's anti-corruption efforts and the second are comments that opposed them. Table 2 below presents these categories and their frequencies. Both supporting (Champion image, track record & Hope for a change) and opposing (perceived incompetence, dishonesty, and confusion) commentaries were presented in several sub-categories. We provide an overview of the findings below followed by specific narratives in support of each of the categories below.

### **Overview of findings**

There is a sense from the commentaries that the anti-corruption initiative started on a good note, indeed some commentators support the efforts and seem to see it as the only credible attempt since independence to address corruption in the country. Many also seem to see the President as a symbol of discipline and hope for a renewal of the country. However, many other commentators were less optimistic, and considered the current administration as morally bankrupt and lacking any conceivable credibility to fight corruption in the context. They cite instances of the President's appointment into government of some individuals consistently accused of corruption and to whom nothing has been done as unacceptable and compromising his symbolic champion of anti-corruption image. Some suggested that the cause has been lost even before it started due to the government's perceived dishonesty and being out of touch with the reality of the ordinary Nigerian.

These views were often discussed in the same context with the perception that the administration's approach was a missed opportunity to tackle corruption given the enthusiasm Nigerians had at the commencement of the current administration. They painted

a picture of an administration that seems to have quickly lost focus, and which is gradually stalling in the normal trajectory of the previous anti-graft efforts. Several commentators were riled by what they considered as a charade and gross incompetence of the government's approach, they rebuked what they perceived as government dishonesty, epitomised by the dereliction of the responsibility to fight corruption and the confusion created by the 'change begin with me' message, and wondered whether the administration and indeed the party were ready for governance. Lack of due diligence also came through in many of the comments regarding the alleged forgery of the change publicity message and this was often discussed in the same context with intellectual property theft, government carelessness and lack of clarity in communication.

**Table 2: Categories of narrative themes and frequencies**

<b>Categories of Commentaries</b>	<b>Frequency of Commentaries</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
<b>Supportive Themes:</b>		
<i>Champion image &amp; Track record</i>	43	13
<i>Hope for a change</i>	70	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Opposition Themes:</b>		
<b>Incompetence</b>		
<i>Unpreparedness for governance</i>	20	6
<i>Lack of due diligence</i>	27	8
<i>Missed opportunity</i>	15	4
<b>Dishonesty</b>		
<i>Dereliction of responsibility</i>	40	12
<i>Lack of integrity</i>	17	5
<i>Complicity of the champion of the fight</i>	23	7
<b>Confusion</b>		
<i>Perceived government inconsistency</i>	47	14
<i>Perception of premeditated deceit</i>	38	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Total for all categories</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>100</b>

The feeling of hopelessness was apparent in comments linking the critical incidents with economic incompetence of the government. Such commentaries refer to the recent economic recession in the country and wondering what the gain to the people would be if the government could not be seen to have started addressing the problem of corruption whilst the economic hardship continues to intensify. In despair, some were of the view that the previous administration was probably better despite acknowledging the rampant level of corruption of the Jonathan regime. They argued that it was not as economically clueless as the current administration. People also seemed very upset about what some considered as the shifting of responsibility by the administration in the fight against corruption. They wondered why the message was about the individuals in the society when the government has not done enough to convince them that it is really serious about fighting corruption. They argued that the fight and the change must start with the ruling elites rather than scapegoating the people. Whilst many commended the administration's efforts in putting together a regulation on whistle blowing they were disappointed at the perception of deception the government created with the perceived reluctance to reward the whistle blower in relation to the Ikoyi money. The perceived reluctance cast a shadow of doubt on the government's willingness and the sincerity to fight corruption. These together brought the question of government legitimacy and political game playing into the picture. Many wondered if the prevalent political rent-seeking culture will ever allow the administration to start to address corruption seriously. The excerpts below are presented to highlight some of the views of the commentators.

### **Supportive themes**

The narratives under this heading capture general support of the administration's efforts in fighting corruption. The three themes are presented under two sub-headings below for brevity:

### *Champion image & Track record*

The commentaries under this heading expressed support for the fight against corruption noting the champion-image of the President and referring to the track record of some individuals in government for their proven integrity. Many commentators considered that the government is making right progress in fighting corruption and pointed to some of its achievements. Others defended the personality of the President, extolling his and the Vice President Yemi Osinbajo's decision not to buy new fleet of cars as examples that the change has started from the leadership. People believe in the President's ability given his antecedent to be the one to deal with corruption in the context:

.....The fact is the administration ALREADY started with the change. Massive, reckless, and criminal looting has STOPPED. Change number 1. GHOST WORKERS STOPPED. Change number 2. .... THIEVING AND CORRUPT MINISTERS NOT PLAYING FATHER CHRISTMAS WITH BOKO HARAM MONIES. Change number 3. BOKO HARAM CRUSHED. Change number 4. You get the picture. Right now, change must begin with the JUDICIARY. This swamp filled with criminal, thieving and corrupt judges must be drained. They're the ones clogging up the system. ....

(Dawood, Vanguard)

Direct your frustrations to the sixteen years of PDP's misgovernance, Pmb (President Muhammmod Buahri) is not responsible for your misery. For the records, Pmb has not bought new sets of cars both for himself, his vice and other cabinet members. And that itself is part of the change we are talking about.

(Opy, Vanguard)

Those who are flying kite that said that change begins with me was stolen they must be sick, lai Mohammed will never do such things he is a man who is so intelligent who also has ideas .

(Progressive, Premium Times)

We support the Apc government. We support president muhammadu Buhari. and our honourable minister Alh. LAI MOHAMMED. All the way

(Stackcrawler, Premium Times)

The quotes above not only expressed supports for the initiatives by listing the achievements of the present administration in fighting corruption, but also recognised the political gaming by the opposition party (PDP) who, expectedly, seemed not to find anything good in the current administration's effort. Beyond this, other commentators wondered why some people are always finding faults and creating distractions from the good efforts of the government, urging people to join the efforts for change in the country. The other relevant narrative coming through was the perception of integrity through track record of discipline associated with both the President, the Vice-President and Alhaji Lai Mohammed who was instrumental in the publicity campaign. It is pertinent to highlight this perception given the contrast that later emerged as would be presented in the opposition narratives. The comments under this theme are reminiscent of Zhu et al.'s. (2017) echo of the role of symbolic champions of anti-corruption campaigns as was evident in the case of China. This is similar to Persson et al.' (2013: 465) reference to 'role model' in the anti-corruption fight and Misangyi et al.'s (2008) reference to the institutional entrepreneurs who are acting as change agent. Zhu et al. note that President Xi Jinping and some other influential member of the Chinese ruling party were also seen as hero and symbolic in the fight against corruption. However, they also note that whilst this enhanced their individual legitimacy it compromised institutional supports implying that it resulted in short term rather than long-term gains in the fight against corruption.

*Hope for a change*

The narratives under this heading canvassed supports for the government efforts and argued that change can only come when the citizens do their fair share to complement the government's efforts. The quotes below support these viewpoints:

Why are we never tired of controversies even where none exists?. In my opinion, the fact that Premium Times even carried this news item shows how journalism has degenerated in our country. This is why such a campaign is absolutely necessary in Nigeria, the change must start with each and everyone of us. While IP rights are protected by law, ideas alone without patent done enjoy the same rights, it is only when you apply for a patent and it is approved that you can enjoy such rights.

(Du Covenant, Premium Times)

..... As a citizen of our Nation, we must grab the bull by the horn and contribute our quota to complement the effort of the FG. It is easy to criticise unconstructively; constructive criticism is what we need. Together we are strong. God bless Nigeria.

(Rick Eson, Premium Times)

I know that you are jobless you all going to fail with your evil plots against this government we all know how pdp (People's Democratic Party have been throwing money around during last year by bribing the media

(Progressive, Premium Times)

This support is further buttressed with a call to stop any negative impression being created by a few. The dialogues below capture this sentiment:

I don't know why some few elements are just flying kite around we are all in the same country we should all embrace good policy that this government is doing

(Progressive, Premium Times)

You have spoken well.

(Omoloyin, Premium Tmes)

Well said.

(StackCrawler, Premium Times)

### Another dialogue

Buhari is the biggest joke of the century and the people that voted him are the most s..... human on the surface of thos earth. Which change is this man talking about when he serve under Abacha as the chairman of Petroleum Trust Fund If at all our memory are too short not to remember anything, but we all know who Abacha is and a co thief who was in control of PTF and who happen to be the president of Nigeria is talking about change. I think Nigerians have loose their sense of purpose and reasoning

(Okojie Ne Ewatto, Vanguard)

The only s..... person here is your pathetic self! The PTF you try to condemn is one of the highest points of the Abacha regime which was supervised by Pmb, other distinguished person like prof. Dora Akunyili were also a product of that project, and the results are there for all to see, but as usual you were too naive to decipher the successes of that project.

(Opy, Vanguard)

These dialogues encapsulate the division in people's perception on the performance of the government regarding anti-corruption efforts in the country.

### Opposition themes

Whilst the quotes and some of the dialogues above expressed support for the government's efforts and indeed are necessary for the success of the anti-corruption efforts as they could reinforce government's legitimacy, it is important to note that the dissenting voices seem louder. The points of dissonance with the government's initiatives emerged

from multiple grounds, ranging from perceived incompetence, dishonesty and confusion which we present below:

### **Incompetence**

The incompetence narratives capture views that relate to the effectiveness of the government in the discharge of its functions on the anti-corruption initiatives. Many were angered by what appeared to be government's incompetence and seemingly unpreparedness for governance. These narratives were strongest in the context of the change publicity message. Many commentators asked the President to sack the information minister due to the central roles his ministry played in the chaos that greeted what should have been a monumental point in the efforts to change people's attitude and mind-set about corruption, as the quotes below show.

#### Unpreparedness

Lair (*correct name is Lai*) Mohammed should resign immediately for rubbishing what remains of this government's reputation. How can a government that steals other peoples ideas and concepts fight corruption? It is a pity that "Change Begins With Me" concept is a fraud from the onset. Intellectual property theft is the worst form of corruption. In less than two years, APC has made Nigerians to start yearning for the return of "corrupt" PDP. The real change should start with Buhari by firing his Chief Propagandist, Lair Mohammed

(Darlington, Premium Times)

What else do you expect from a lazy, incompetent, clueless, dry and useless government?

(KBE, Premium Times)

The Nigerian government is playing a game of words with this change rhetoric, if it begins with every Nigerian starting Mr president then why is the approved budget still unreflective of



a govt committed to changing things? why is the cost of running government still so ridiculously high? If really it begins with each person then the APC Led Executive arm of government, and legislators should set an example by reducing their remunerations (salaries, allowances and all) by 3/4 to allow enough funds for addressing pressing nation wide challenges....

(Neeeye, Premium Times)

The comment linking the incident to the cost of running the government is conflicting with the supporting theme which seem to suggest that the government is somehow prudent. Many wondered how else the government's flagship publicity message for change could become embroiled in allegation of intellectual property theft except through share incompetence, and others discussed this in the context of lack of due diligence, and questioned whether this was not in itself a sign of corruption that the government is trying to fight with the message. The quote below is representative of these views:

#### Lack of due diligence

Mr. Ayanwale (Fadeyi) said his firm (Centrespread) was contracted by the All Progressives Congress during the 2015 elections and worked closely with Mr. Mohammed to design campaign materials for the party." Now that political campaigns are over and this is a national issue, I find it difficult to digest that a company that worked for the APC is working for the federal government in a manner that is not transparent. So in other words, the huge contract to run this campaign all over the country was awarded without any competitive bidding? How does this work with the procurement laws in Nigeria? Is this selective award not one of the acts of corruption the APC accused the PDP of? I have this funny feeling that the more things 'Change' in this country the more they remain the same. Can someone educate me please?

(Ebidou Ebi, Premium Times).

Others see the unfolding event regarding the allegation of intellectual property theft as an unnecessary distraction from the fight and considered it as a missed opportunity for the government in its fight against corruption:

#### Missed opportunity

OMG( Oh My God)!!! Even the campaign for sanitation of the society is in itself corrupt ridden. This is the second time you are causing a major embarrassment to the government in that ministry.

(JasV, Premium Times)

it's a shame that the opportunity to address our excesses at the National level .....has been allowed to slip by an unwarranted suspension of the whistle blower, and lipservicing by our leaders... It's a pity cos God can't help Nigeria if we have refused to help ourselves..

(Neeyee, Premium Times)

Laying the foundation of a good building with beautiful architectural concept on a faulty foundation. Too bad for these poor guys.

(Magnus, Punch)

The incompetence narratives demonstrated above are consistent with the literature on the trustworthiness indicators. Rousseau et al. (1998) argued that government incompetence, or ineffectiveness or what Gefen (2002) termed lack of ability is a crucial indicator of trust deficit. According to Grimmelikhuisen et al. (2013) this is a performatory indicator of trust and it seems that the overwhelming perception is that the government

seems to be inefficient in its discharge of anti-corruption initiatives. Successful anti-corruption initiatives need far more than just having a role model or a symbolic champion. This also has implications for the informal institutions in the context. Prior approaches to anti-corruption focusing on regulatory mechanism have yielded little attitudinal change, thus justifying the need to consider alternative approaches that recognise the importance of the normative and cognitive institutions in a context (Misangyi et al., 2008; Collier, 2002). Thus, for the private-public collaborations that underline the anti-corruption message to be successful, government must address the perception of incompetence that currently characterises its approach to boost general confidence in its anti-corruption initiatives.

### **Dishonesty**

The second theme that emerged from our analysis of the data was the perception of government dishonesty. This theme captures perceived government's dereliction of its responsibility of fighting corruption as reflected in what some perceived as an attempt to shift the responsibility to the people. The other element captured under this theme was the perception of lack of integrity by the administration due to what some perceived to be inappropriate information or actual blatant lies being peddled by individuals associated with the government. Furthermore, the theme also sums up people's rage about some individuals in government who have been accused of corruption or impropriety but who are now posturing as the champions of the anti-corruption efforts. In this regard, some of the quotes suggest that the anti-corruption effort is a non-starter; a travesty, as its integrity is being compromised by the complicity of the so-called champions of the fight against corruption. Expressions such as 'official denial', 'turned the burden on us', 'tell us the truth', and 'intellectual theft' are frequently used in this context. These perceptions and narratives underline the embedded nature of the problem, and partly explain how the normative and cognitive institutions (Scott, 2001; Pillay and Kluvers 2014) in the context seem to assume 'dis-trusting' default position to governmental initiatives. The quotes below are examples of these narratives:

## Dereliction (Shifting) of responsibility

Change cannot begin with me, change must begin with "the one" who promised it and we will then key in. As the legendary Zik of Africa used to say, show the light and people will follow.

(Curious K, Premium Times)

So it is now a virtue to promise much and renege? Instead of leading the way in the promises one made earlier, it has become a norm for the citizens to lead the way to promise while he who made promise dances around? What a society, what a nation, what a people. Gullibility in high places!

(Sab, Premium Times)

It is very unfortunate that we have come to this sorry pass. The change mantra is officially over, they have turned the tables to place the burden on us. The #Change begins with me campaign is an official denial. I just pray that the Nigerian ship will land safely on this auto pilot.

(Curios K, Premium Times)

## Lack of Integrity

If the Minister for information can start by doing his best to tell us the truth some of the time . We will know that the change has started in him and we will follow suit in being honest and the rest will follow.. Otherwise people will always start laughing before he opens his mouth.

(Abodes\_124, Premium Times)

intellectual theft by the Nigerian Government is a thing that has been going on for decades...to the extent whenever contractors are coming to drop proposals in our office, I warn them to be careful not to spill everything to the Management or else they will collect it and never hear from then again...its high time we have a law criminalizing intellectual theft in this country

(Ali A-Iy, Premium Times)

Similar perception of deception and lack of integrity were expressed in respect of the Ikoyi money saga:

.....This government is the most deceitful I have known. If the guy collects anything less, he cannot get anything further. Already the risk to his life is very high both from the government insiders and the "owner" of the money. Nigeria is a terrible place to survive in such circumstance my brother.

(Uko Francis, Punch)

We all know the lies and deceit of APC govt

(Nwebonyi Peter C, Punch)

Yesterday it was Amaechi who lied to us that the Abuja Kaduna rail services was launched and commissioned by Buhari--after spending billions that had already been spent by Jonathan---As if that was not enough--Amaechi again intends to award contract for the operation of the Lagos Ibadan rail services again-----Buhari told the Nation that Jonathan bought fake weapons for our soldiers-----well it turned out that it was a lie-----  
-----Buhari padded the budget----increased money for the aso rock clinic-----  
and went on to steal the budget---from the Senate---after claiming that he is paying rent on aso rock-----Is that the type of government any sane Nigeria will ever dare put his or her hopes on---?----Liar Mohamed is a first class liar-----Every Nigerian knows him for that--  
-All he did was to get some few friends together--collected millions from the Ministry of information for an idea that somebody else initiated-----Whether the concept is

running in Mali or Siberia is not the Issue--somebody sold the idea to us---Sadly anything Buhari touches dies a natural death--separation is the answer

(Vagabonds in Power, Premium Times).

### Complicity of the champions of the fight

. . . . .President Buhari carries a whiff of perjury around him and can't tender clear and convincing evidence or certificate to show he sat for school cert exam in 1961 or at any time before or after. He is the one demanding that honest Nigerians change?-

(Okisiko Abiba, Premium Times)

Not a few notorious criminals are in President Buhari's cabinet and none of them ever echoes the slogan of anti-corruption for CHANGE to begin with them. The people of Nigeria reject this campaign as fraud and vow not to partake in it. President Buhari has no clue to the economic recession he caused with his wholly ignorant hike policies and merely seeks to pass the buck and change the topic. stolen.

(Okisiko Abiba, Premium Times)

Buhari may have a will to bring positive change but his actions at addressing the foundational problem of having too large an overhead cost associated with running government is questionable

(Neeyee, Premium Times)

My friend, to be sincere with you because some of your comments were sensible. I like PMB himself but he surrounded himself with rogues. hence, the major reasons for his government backwardness. Any day he decided to be courageous and kicked out those emptied brains out of his government, then my criticism will be limited henceforth.

(PDPmediadefender1, Vanguard)

The narratives above encapsulate the perception of a significant and informed section of the population (Santana, 2014; Zhu et al., 2017) on the anti-corruption initiatives of the government focusing on the dishonesty that it portrays. Commentators doubt the administration's integrity and questioned the President's credibility given the calibre of people in his cabinet and those he surrounds himself with. Terms such as 'rogue' 'fraud' 'whiff of perjury' 'notorious criminal' were used in connection with this perception which taken together sadly seem to place no confidence in the government's anti-corruption initiatives. The literature on trust and trustworthiness is unequivocal about the centrality of integrity to inter-personal and institutional trust (Rousseau et al., 1998; Gefen, 2002; Grimmelikhuijsen et al. 2013). The current anti-corruption initiative does not seem to command enough people's trust as they continue to doubt the integrity of government's anti-corruption initiatives. And as Persson et al. (2013:465) noted, successful anti-corruption fights need the 'shared expectation that people can be trusted to be honest'. This is central to the need to address the changes required in the normative and cognitive mind-sets of the people and their government (Li et al., 2008; Misangyi et al., 2008; Collier, 2002).

### **Confusion**

Another strong viewpoint that came across from the online commentaries on these incidents was the confusion that seems to permeate the present government and its approach to the anti-corruption fight. This perception was more pronounced in the chaos that the government's reticence on the whistle-blower's reward for the Ikoyi money generated. Many commentators thought the government could not be trusted on its words and expressed confusion at the handling of the Ikoyi money in the context of the whistle-blowing policy. Words and expressions such as 'deception', 'set-up', and 'hoax "something fishy', 'staged managed' were used in commentaries relating to this incident which generally cast

doubt in the government's anti-corruption efforts and in a way challenge the legitimacy of the initiatives. Examples of the commentaries are presented below:

*Perceived government inconsistency*

Look folks, anytime I say something, you guys should listen to me. I predicted that the story of ikoyi cash was a hoax and this rubbish newstory have confirmed it. All these noise about millions of dollars found in an apartment building was planted by the EFCC to encourage people to come forward with similar tale tale stories. Another possible reason is to keep up the drumbeat of corruption stories designed to tar0nish the Jonathan administration. These ..... started planting stories on how the whistle blower have not been paid; how he rejected the pay; how the government made a counter offer; how the whistle blower have now been paid; and finally, how he JETTED off with his riches after he was paid. Bunch of jokers. My name is not OFUZO FOR NOTHING.

(Ofuzo, Vanguard)

Buhari and APC cant get anything right. They have killed this policy of theirs that no one would show interest rattooing on corruption heavies for anything any more. Very soon, they will blame PDP for it.

(Sunday Njokede, Punch)

There is something fishy about this whistleblower policy It is not clear when payment can be made Is it after associated issues on the case is settled or at the point a case is made Is it 2% 3%4%5% of the amount and what basis and who determine that On this particular case Oke stated that Mungono was informed of this money as far back as at 2016 and the EFCC got a wind of it and there were some communication on the matter yet EFCC went on a raid Therefore this atmosphere around this money is actually not secret Now suddenly there is whistleblower Hope this is not an insider corruption taking advantage of an existing



information to defraud government with connivance of top security persons providing information and cover to share in the loot

(Magnus0071mg, Vanguard)

*Perception of premeditated deceit*

They blow the whistle themselves to create avenue to pay themselves as whistle blowers and create good image of fighting corruption. No conviction yet and we cannot see the recovered money. The more you look the less you see.

(Kaima, Vanguard)

This govt is full of crooks ! Set up policy to enrich themselves! Place money somewhere, trumpet-blow themselves and get commission out of the money given them by the law to manage for the people! Sophisticated fraudsters !

(Simplelike chuk, Punch)

What a country we have! This is where "anti-corruption" agents could cheat whistle-blowers. I hope they have not killed the man.

(Den Umeh, Vanguard)

These commentaries are indicative of the lack of ingenuity people have come to associate with the anti-corruption initiatives of the government. The confusion seems to lead

to doubts and growing suspicion even about what should ordinarily be a reasonably laudable anti-corruption move.

## Discussion

Trust plays a fundamental role in the interactions between people not least between citizens and their governments. It is also crucial in the way businesses engage with their external contexts. This study highlights the role of trust in the effectiveness of governmental policies, especially in the context of anti-corruption initiatives in systemic corruption climes. Absence of trust increases people's scepticism and dampens positive attitudes to government actions and ideas, affecting their effectiveness. It also affects corporate involvements in government's initiatives. We showed that trust is important in enhancing the informal institutional structures in a context with potentials to contribute to the overall effectiveness of anti-corruption initiatives beyond the regulatory institution (Scott, 2001, 2008).

Theoretical tête-à-tête between proponents of principal-agent and collective action are very useful but will seem pointless unless they lead to better results in the anti-corruption efforts. Practically, the analyses in this investigation speak volume of the difficulty that anti-corruptions efforts confront in such contexts. It is not enough to have good intention, but the execution must be backed by equally acceptable behaviour. It does not take long for one-time celebrated symbolic champion and hero to turn charlatan in a clime where corruption is pervasive and endemic. Although Persson et al.'s (2013) two-part solution identified trust as a condition for the success of anti-corruption initiatives, the drivers of trust are context-specific. In countries with systemic corruption, anti-corruption initiatives must project trustworthiness. This applies to both the individuals and institutions of governance to enhance people's confidence in the integrity of the relevant measures. It is cardinal that

individuals and institutions involved in anti-corruption initiatives reflect competence, integrity and clarity in approach and messages. Successful corporate collaborative involvements in the fight against corruption is consequent on the trustworthiness of the initiatives and their perception by those who constantly confront corruption and anti-corruption initiatives.

## Ethical implications

Trust, corruption and anti-corruption initiatives all have ethical implications. As Kramer (1999) notes, trust embodies an “expectancy about other people and the social systems in which they are embedded” (571), a perspective consistent with Barber’s (1983: 164-165) description of trust as people’s expectation “.....of the natural and moral social order that set the fundamental understandings for their lives”. The ethical implications of trust are further encapsulated in their links to the characteristics of trustworthiness often anchored on ABI (ability, benevolence and integrity). Both benevolence and integrity are ethical constructs. As Grimmelikhuijsen et al. (2013: 577) note, benevolence reflects the intentions and outwards disposition as perceived by the recipient of a service whilst integrity is “the extent to which the other is perceived to tell the truth or commitment”.

Corruption also bears visible ethical implications to the extent that it signifies abuse of people’s trust and entails a disposition and demonstration of actions that inherently run contrary to what most people will consider as ethical. Even those suggesting that corruption may be seen as ‘grease in the wheel’ (Bardhan, 1997; Mendoza et al., 2015) hold such view only in the instance of dysfunctional contexts where red-tape and administrative bottle-neck could compound an already dire system (Batabyal and Yoo, 2007; Khwaja and Mian, 2005). Neither Ekeh’s(1975) two publics analysis nor Collier’s(2002) or Misangyi et al ‘s(2008) arguments about the insufficient recognition of the institutional contexts in which corruption happens absolves corruption. Furthermore, Sheplar (2017) was unequivocal in condemning corruption whilst drawing attention to the complexity involved in defining its boundaries, and warning against narrow labelling of corruption only as a Global South’s and African

countries' problem. Thus, irrespective of the lens, there seems to be a general perception that corruption is unethical.

However, the ethical implications of anti-corruption initiatives are less obvious and cannot be assumed (Greenwood and Freeman, 2017). Theoretically, anti-corruption is a laudable concept and *should* be antithetical to corruption, but practically, each anti-corruption initiative must be judged on its individual merit. The fact that a government proposes and advertises the intention to fight corruption, or even claims to do so does not automatically imply that the approach adopted is ethical, nor should it be taken for granted that people will simply warm to it and accept the initiatives on its face value. Similarly, corporations are entitled to be weary of the genuine intentions and the integrity of anti-corruption initiative especially when public perceptions are loudly against elements of the methods used (Grimmelikhuijsen et al. 2013). As we showed, people are increasingly sceptical of the government's anti-corruption rhetoric. They are questioning the *modus operandi* of the fight and these are connected to the perceptions of incompetence, dishonesty and confusion demonstrated in the example narratives in this study.

The scepticism and distrust of the anti-corruption initiatives are dangerous because such perceptions are likely to be generalised and transferred to other related context (Lumineau, 2017; Connelly et al., 2012), with the potential result that corruption becomes 'hardened' and altering the normative and cognitive mind-sets that perpetuate corruption becomes even harder (Collier, 2002; Misangyi et al., 2008). Consider for example, that the government's initiatives on whistle-blowing and collaborations with corporations to raise public consciousness about the evils of corruption and general misdemeanour in the country has now resulted in several allegations including calculated deceit and intellectual property theft. Thus, two important anti-corruption tools which seem to have been deployed wrongly with seemingly unethical outcomes could only reasonably be judged to have undermined people's trust in the initiatives.

## Managerial implications

The findings in this study also have implications for businesses in the context and importantly for their future collaborations with government. Corporate involvements in government anti-corruption initiatives present opportunities to deliver corporate citizenship roles. Corporations as social actors can serve as part of the institutional entrepreneurs (Misangyi et al., 2008) who with the right resources and enabling institutional environment, can support the process that will challenge and start to alter the normative and cognitive mind-sets that is permissive of corruption in such contexts. A starting point might be to provide the right ethical tone from the top within individual organisation and then to work with other organisations and the government in fighting corruption. Doing these however, require careful planning and a detailed risk assessment, including the assessment of trust and trustworthiness of the government policy initiatives and actions.

Trust deficit can compound corruption by creating doubt in people's minds. This could be about the sincerity of government intention to confront corruption, creating uncertainty for businesses and increasing the cost of doing business in the context. If businesses are left with the impression that government cannot be trusted and that they lack legitimacy, these will affect their future engagement in government initiatives however well-meaning. Good citizenship thus requires an element of trust from all parties.

## Conclusion

This study explores the ways in which trust deficit undermines anti-corruption initiatives in a context with systemic corruption. This is important because trust affects governmental legitimacy and people's attitude to governmental policies on a variety of issues including on anti-corruption. This is the case especially in an age of unbridled access to

information through the internet. Trust is also central to corporate-government collaborations. Yet the ways in which trust affects the effectiveness of anti-corruption initiatives remains largely under-researched. Using commentaries from Nigerian Netizens on two critical corruption incidents that are significant to corporations, we uncover poignant narratives of perception of incompetence, dishonesty and confusion that undermine the anti-corruption measures in the context. We argue that donors, international organisations and businesses must encourage and support beneficiaries' governments to secure and sustain trust in the anti-corruption initiatives as a condition for better results.

This study contributes to the literature on corruption and anti-corruption initiatives in distinct ways. By exploring the views of Nigerian Netizens, we provide deeper perspectives which complement findings from econometric analyses that showed that there is a relationship between trust and corruption. Beyond these relationships, however, we construed trust as an instrument that can lead to better anti-corruption outcome by uncovering the drivers of trust deficits. Shedding lights on these drivers provides important opportunity to address them and offers a chance for better future anti-corruption outcomes provided that relevant government, international donor organisations and countries act on these findings in their future anti-corruption initiatives. By using both trust and institutional theoretical perspectives to understand our empirical evidence, we argue that anti-corruption initiatives based only on the regulatory institution is unlikely to lead to attitudinal change in the people and contexts with systemic corruption. Instead, we canvass for a holistic approach where both formal and informal institutions are recognised and embedded in anti-corruption initiatives. In doing this, it is likely that the entrenched normative and cognitive perspectives in systemic corruption contexts may start to be challenged, shifted and changed with persistence. Achieving this will require clarity in anti-corruption messages and strategies and buy-in by key stakeholders including businesses. By focusing on specific anti-corruptions events with resonance with businesses both in terms of business involvement in the anti-corruption publicity message and the whistle-blowing regulations, we highlight

opportunities for businesses to demonstrate good corporate citizenship but also alerted them to the need to undertake a detailed risk assessment regarding their involvement in government initiatives.

Our study is useful to many stakeholders who are interested in and challenged by the increasing difficulty in dealing with corruption both at national and international levels, including businesses. Regulators, international donors and corporations need to encourage and support beneficiaries' government to secure and sustain people's trust to enhance the success of anti-corruption initiatives. Trust cannot be secured or sustained in an atmosphere of perceived government incompetence, dishonesty, and confusion. People want an anti-corruption campaign that reflects competence and clarity by its champions who must also be above board to instil confidence and improve the believability of the campaign efforts.

It is imperative to note that although our focus on the commentaries by Nigerian Netizen is unique, it imposes limitations on our analysis as we do not know the actual identity of the commentators including their gender, whether they maintain the same identity across multiple platforms and their actual nationality. Thus, the interpretations of our findings should recognise this caveat. These limitations could be addressed as part of future investigations exploring the impact of demographic factors on the effectiveness of anti-corruption initiatives.

## **Compliance with Ethical Standards**

Funding: This is not a funded study

Ethical approval: This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by any of the authors.



## References

- Adebanwi, W. and Obadare, E. (2011). When corruption fights back: democracy and elite interest in Nigeria's anti-corruption war, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 49(2), 185-213
- Adelopo, I., Asante, J., Dart, E., and Rufai, I. (2017). Learning groups: the effects of group diversity on the quality of group reflection. *Accounting Education*, 26(5-6), 553-575.
- Agbibo, D. E. (2015). Protectors or predators? The embedded problem of police corruption and deviance in Nigeria. *Administration & Society*, 47(3), 244-281.
- Akinlabi, O. M. (2017). Do the police really protect and serve the public? Police deviance and public cynicism towards the law in Nigeria. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 17(2), 158-174.
- Anderson, C. J. and Tverdova, Y. V. (2003). Corruption, political allegiances and attitudes towards government in contemporary democracies. *American Journal of Political Science*, 47 (1), 91-109
- Barber, B. (1983). *The logic and limits of trust*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Bardhan, P. (1997), Corruption and development: a review of issues, *Journal of Economic Literature*, 35(3),1320-1346

Batabyal, A. A., and Yoo, S. J. (2007). Corruption, bribery, and wait times in the public allocation of goods in developing countries. *Review of Development Economics*, 11(3), 507-517.

Bell, A., Kelton, J., McDonagh, N., Mladenovic, R., and Morrison, K. (2011). A critical evaluation of the usefulness of a coding scheme to categorise levels of reflective thinking. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 36(7), 797-815.

Bukovansky, M. (2006). The hollowness of anti-corruption discourse. *Review of International Political Economy*, 13(2), 181-209.

Butler, J. K., Jr. (1991). Toward understanding and measuring conditions of trust: Evolution of a conditions of trust inventory. *Journal of Management*, 17, 643– 663

Butler, J. K., Jr., and Cantrell, R. S. (1984). A behavioural decision theory approach to modeling dyadic trust in superiors and subordinates. *Psychological Reports*, 55, 19 –28.

Caldwell, C., and Clapham, S. E. (2003). Organizational trustworthiness: An international perspective. *Journal of business ethics*, 47(4), 349-364.

Chadwick, A., and May, C. (2003). Interaction between States and Citizens in the Age of the Internet: “e-Government” in the United States, Britain, and the European Union. *Governance*, 16(2), 271-300.

Chang, E.C. and Chu, Y. (2006). Corruption and trust: Exceptionalism in Asian democracies? *Journal of Politics*, 68(2), 259-271

Cleveland, M., Favo, C. M., Frecka, T. J., and Owens, C. L. (2009). Trends in the international fight against bribery and corruption. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 90(2), 199-244.

Collier, M. W. (2002). Explaining corruption: An institutional choice approach. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 38(1), 1-32.

- Colquitt, J. A., Scott, B. A., and LePine, J. A. (2007). Trust, trustworthiness, and trust propensity: a meta-analytic test of their unique relationships with risk taking and job performance. *Journal of applied psychology*, 92(4), 909-927
- Connelly, B. L., Miller, T., and Devers, C. E. (2012). Under a cloud of suspicion: Trust, distrust, and their interactive effect in inter-organizational contracting. *Strategic Management Journal*, 33(7), 820-833.
- Dare, S. (2011). The Rise of Citizen Journalism in Nigeria-A Case Study of Sahara Reporters. *Reuters Institute Fellowship Paper*, 1-74.
- Davis, C.L., Camp, R.A. and Coleman, K.M. (2004). The influence of party systems on citizens' perception of corruption and electoral response in Latin America. *Comparative Political Studies*, 37 (6), 677-703
- Della Porta, D. (2000). Social capital, beliefs in government and political corruption. In S.J. Pharr and R.D. Putnam (Eds.), *Disaffected democracies: What's troubling the trilateral countries?* pp.202-230. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Doig, A. and Theobald, R. (Eds). (2000). *Corruption and democratisation*. London, UK: Frank Cass
- Dunfee, T. W. and Donaldson, T. (2002). 'Untangling the Corruption Knot: Global Bribery Viewed Through the Lens of Integrative Social Contact Theory', in N. Bowie (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Business Ethics* (Blackwell Publishers, Malden, MA), pp. 61–76.
- Dunfee, T. W. and Hess, D. (2001). Getting from Salbu to the 'Tipping Point': The Role of Corporate Action Within a Portfolio of Anti-Corruption Strategies', *Northwestern Journal of International Law & Business* 21(2), 471–490.
- Ekeh, P.P., (1975), Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 17 (1), 91-112.

- Ennew, C., and Sekhon, H. (2007). Measuring trust in financial services: The trust index. *Consumer Policy Review*, 17(2), 62.
- Espinal, R., Hartlyn, J., and Kelly, J. M. (2006). Performance still matters: Explaining trust in government in the Dominican Republic. *Comparative Political Studies*, 39(2), 200-223.
- Everett, J. (2012). 13 Corruption in the developing countries: 'thinking about' the role of accounting. *Handbook of accounting and development*, 224.
- Everett, J., Neu, D., and Rahaman, A. S. (2006). The global fight against corruption: A Foucaultian, virtues-ethics framing. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 65(1), 1-12.
- Feenberg, A., and Bakardjieva, M. (2004). Virtual community: no 'killer implication'. *New Media & Society*, 6(1), 37-43.
- Gabarro, J. J. (1978). The development of trust, influence, and expectations. In A. G. Athos & J. J. Gabarro (Eds.), *Interpersonal behaviors: Communication and understanding in relationships* (pp. 290 –303). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Gargiulo, M., and Ertug, G. (2006). The dark side of trust. In R. Bachmann & A. Zaheer (Eds.), *Handbook of trust research*: 165-186. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.
- Gefen, D. (2002). Reflections on the dimensions of trust and trustworthiness among online consumers. *ACM SIGMIS Database: the DATABASE for Advances in Information Systems*, 33(3), 38-53.
- Global Integrity. (2008). *Global Integrity Report*. Washington, DC: Global Integrity.
- Goddard, A., Assad, M., Issa, S., Malagila, J., and Mkasiwa, T. A. (2016). The two publics and institutional theory—A study of public sector accounting in Tanzania. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 40, 8-25.
- Graham, T., and Wright, S. (2015). A tale of two stories from “Below the Line” comment fields at the Guardian. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 20(3), 317-338.

- Greenwood, M., & Freeman, R. E. (2017). Focusing on ethics and broadening our intellectual base. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 140(1), 1-3.
- Grimmelikhuijsen, S.G., Porumbescu, G., Hong, B. and Im, T. (2013). The Effect of Transparency on trust in government: A cross-national comparative experiment. *Public Administration Review*, 73 (4), 575-586.
- Gulati, R., and Nickerson, J. (2008). Interorganizational trust, governance choice, and exchange performance. *Organization Science*, 19(5): 688-708.
- Guthrie, J., Ricceri, F., and Dumay, J. (2012). Reflections and projections: a decade of intellectual capital accounting research. *The British Accounting Review*, 44(2), 68-82.
- Hamilton, S. E. (2013) Exploring professional identity: the perceptions of chartered accountant students. *The British Accounting Review*. 45 (1), 37-49.
- Hardin, R. (2004). Distrust: Manifestations and management. In R. Hardin (Ed.), *Distrust: 3-33*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation
- Heidenheimer, A. J. (1996). The topography of corruption: explorations in a comparative perspective. *International Social Science Journal*, 48(149), 337-347.
- Hosmer, L. T. (1995). Trust: The connecting link between organizational theory and philosophical ethics. *Academy of Management Review*, 20(2), 379–403.
- Ijewereme, O. B. (2015). Anatomy of corruption in the Nigerian public sector: Theoretical perspectives and some empirical explanations. *Sage Open*, 5(2), 1-16
- Jackson, J., and Gau, J. M. (2016). Carving up concepts? Differentiating between trust and legitimacy in public attitudes towards legal authority. In *Interdisciplinary perspectives on trust* (pp. 49-69). Springer, Cham.

- Job, J. (2005). How is trust in government created? It begins at home, but ends in the parliament. *Australian Review of Public Affairs*, 6(1), 1-23.
- Jones, W. H., and Burdett, M. P. (1994). Betrayal in relationships. In A. L. Weber & J. H. Harvey (Eds.), *Perspectives on close relationships*: 243-262. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Khwaja, A. I., and Mian, A. (2005). Do lenders favor politically connected firms? Rent provision in an emerging financial market. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 120(4), 1371-1411.
- Klitgaard, R. (1988), *Controlling Corruption*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA
- Kramer, R. M. (1999). Trust and distrust in organizations: Emerging perspectives, enduring questions. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 50(1), 569-598.
- Kramer, R. M., and Lewicki, R. J. (2010). Repairing and enhancing trust: Approaches to reducing organizational trust deficits. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 4(1), 245–277.
- Krippendorff, K. (1980). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. London: Sage.
- Kumola, C. (2017) The Vanguard Newspaper. Available at <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/12/ikoyi-cash-whistleblower-gets-n421m-jets-nigeria/>. (Accessed on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2018)
- La Porta, R., Lopez-De Silanes, F., Shleifer, A. and Vishny, R.W. (1997). Trust in large organisations. *American Economic Review Paper and Proceedings*, 137 (2), 333-338
- Lawson, L. (2009), The politics of anti-corruption reform in Africa, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 47(1), 73-100.
- Lawson, A., and Rakner, L. (2005). Understanding patterns of accountability in Tanzania. *Final Synthesis Report commissioned by the Governance Working Group of the Development Partners to Tanzania*. Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute.

Lewicki, R. J., McAllister, D. J., & Bies, R. J. (1998). Trust and distrust: New relationships and realities. *Academy of Management Review*, 23(3), 438-458.

Lewicki, R. J., Tomlinson, E. C., and Gillespie, N. (2006). Models of interpersonal trust development: Theoretical approaches, empirical evidence, and future directions. *Journal of Management*, 32(6), 991-1022.

Li, J., Moy, J., Lam, K., and Chu, W. C. (2008). Institutional pillars and corruption at the societal level. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 83(2), 327-339.

Linders, D. (2012). From e-government to we-government: Defining a typology for citizen coproduction in the age of social media. *Government Information Quarterly*, 29(4), 446-454.

Lumineau, F. (2017). How contracts influence trust and distrust. *Journal of Management*, 43(5), 1553-1577.

Mayer, R. C., Davis, J. H., and Schoorman, D. (1995). An integrative model of organizational trust. *Academy of Management Review*, 20(3), 708-734.

Mendoza, R. U., Lim, R. A., and Lopez, A. O. (2015). Grease or sand in the wheels of commerce? Firm level evidence on corruption and SMEs. *Journal of International Development*, 27(4), 415-439.

McKnight, D. H., and Chervany, N. L. (2001). Trust and distrust definitions: One bite at a time. In *Trust in Cyber-societies* (pp. 27-54). Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg.

Miller, A. H. and Listhaug, O. (1999). Political performance and institutional trust. In P. Norris (Ed.), *Critical Citizens: Global support for democratic governance* (p. 204-216). New York, NY: Oxford University Press

Misangyi, V. F., Weaver, G. R., and Elms, H. (2008). Ending corruption: The interplay among institutional logics, resources, and institutional entrepreneurs. *Academy of Management Review*, 33(3), 750-770.

- Moreno, A. (2002). Corruption and democracy: A cultural assessment. *Comparative Sociology*, 1 (3-4), 495-507
- Morris, S.D. and Klesner, J.L. (2010). Corruption and Trust: Theoretical Considerations and Evidence from Mexico. *Comparative Political Studies*, 43 (10), 1258-1285.
- Musa, A. O., and Ferguson, N. (2013). Enemy framing and the politics of reporting religious conflicts in the Nigerian press. *Media, War & Conflict*, 6(1), 7-20.
- Nielsen, R. P., and Massa, F. G. (2013). Reintegrating ethics and institutional theories. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 115(1), 135-147.
- North, D. C. (1990). *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ogundipe, S.(2016) Premium Times Newspaper Available at <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/210224-allegation-of-intellectual-property-theft-blights-nigerias-change-begins-with-me-campaign.html> (accessed on 8th January 2018).
- Oso L. (1991). The commercialisation of the Nigerian press: Development and implications. *Africa Media Review* 5(3): 41–51.
- Persson, A., Rothstein, B., and Teorell, J. (2013). Why anticorruption reforms fail—Systemic corruption as a collective action problem. *Governance*, 26(3), 449–471.
- Phiri, J., and Guven-Uslu, P. (2018). Institutional pluralism, two publics theory and performance reporting practices in Zambia’s health sector. *Journal of Accounting in Emerging Economies*, 8(1), 141-162.
- Pillay, S., and Kluvers, R. (2014). An institutional theory perspective on corruption: The case of a developing democracy. *Financial Accountability & Management*, 30(1), 95-119.



- Powell, W. W., and DiMaggio, P. J. (1991). *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Rose-Ackerman, S. (1999) *Corruption and Government: Causes, Consequences and Reforms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rousseau, D. M., Sitkin, S. B., Burt, R. S., and Camerer, C. (1998). Not so different after all: A cross-discipline view of trust. *The Academy of Management Review*, 23(3), 393–404.
- Rubio, L. (2007). Impasse Social (Social impasse). *Reforma*
- Santana, A. D. (2014). Virtuous or vitriolic: The effect of anonymity on civility in online newspaper reader comment boards. *Journalism Practice*, 8(1), 18-33.
- Schwartz, M. S. (2009). Corporate efforts to tackle corruption: An impossible task? The contribution of Thomas Dunfee. *Journal of business ethics*, 88(4), 823-832.
- Scott, W. R. (2001). *Institutions and organizations*. Thousands Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Scott, W. R. (2008). Approaching adulthood: the maturing of institutional theory. *Theory and society*, 37(5), 427-442.
- Seligson, M.A. (1999). Nicaraguans talk about corruption: A follow-up study of public opinion. Arlington, VA: Casals & Associates.
- Seligson, M. A. (2002). The impact of corruption on regime legitimacy: A comparative study of four Latin American countries. *The journal of Politics*, 64(2), 408-433.
- Shepler, S. (2017). We Know Who is Eating the Ebola Money!: Corruption, the State, and the Ebola Response. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 90(2), 451-473
- Shleifer, A., and Vishny, R. W. (1993). Corruption. *The quarterly journal of economics*, 108(3), 599-617.

- Tolbert, C. J., and Mossberger, K. (2006). The effects of e-government on trust and confidence in government. *Public administration review*, 66(3), 354-369.
- Tyler, T. R. (2006). *Why People Obey the Law*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Tyler, T. R., and Jackson, J. (2014). Popular legitimacy and the exercise of legal authority: Motivating compliance, cooperation and engagement. *Psychology, Public Policy and Law*, 20(1), 78–95.
- Uberti, L. J. (2016). Can institutional reforms reduce corruption? Economic theory and patron–client politics in developing countries. *Development and Change*, 47(2), 317-345.
- Warren, M. E. (2006). Democracy and deceit: regulating appearances of corruption. *American Journal of Political Science*, 50(1), 160-174.
- Welch, E. W., Hinnant, C. C., and Moon, M. J. (2005). Linking citizen satisfaction with e-government and trust in government. *Journal of public administration research and theory*, 15(3), 371-391.
- Wrong, M. (2009). *It's Our Turn to Eat: A Story of a Kenyan Whistle Blower*. London: Fourth Estate
- Xin, X., and Ruden, T.K. (2004). The context for political corruption: A cross-national analysis. *Social Science Quarterly*, 85 (2), 294-309
- Yu, P. L., Balaji, M. S., and Khong, K. W. (2015). Building trust in internet banking: a trustworthiness perspective. *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, 115(2), 235-252.
- Yusuf, H. O. (2007). Travails of truth: achieving justice for victims of impunity in Nigeria. *The International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 1(2), 268-286.
- Yusuf, H. O. (2011) Rule of Law and Politics of Anti-Corruption Reform in a Post-Authoritarian State - The Case of Nigeria. *King's Law Journal*. 22 (1), 57-83.

Zhang, J. (2016). Public Governance and Corporate Fraud: Evidence from the Recent Anti-corruption Campaign in China. *Journal of Business Ethics*. 1-22

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3025-x>

Zhu, J., Huang, H., and Zhang, D. (2017). Big Tigers, Big Data: Learning Social Reactions to China's Anticorruption Campaign through Online Feedback. *Public Administration Review*.

Zucker, L. G. (1977). The role of institutionalization in cultural persistence. *American Journal of Sociology*, 42, 726–743.

---

<sup>i</sup> We later removed Daily Trust as there were no commentaries from its online readership.