

**COMBATING CORRUPTION FOR NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA: A
CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CRIMES
COMMISSION'S INTERVENTIONS**

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Abstract

Corruption remains a critical impediment to national development and security in Nigeria. This study investigates the role of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in combating corruption and its implications for national security. Anchored on the Institutional Theory and State Fragility Theory, the study adopts a qualitative case study approach, relying exclusively on secondary data sources, including official reports, academic literature, and policy documents. Content analysis was employed to interpret and evaluate the EFCC's institutional performance and its contribution to the broader national security framework. Findings reveal that while the EFCC has recorded significant achievements in prosecuting high-profile corruption cases and recovering looted assets, its operations are constrained by political interference, weak judicial processes, and limited integration into Nigeria's national security architecture. Furthermore, public trust in the EFCC remains fragile due to perceptions of selective prosecution and lack of transparency. The study concludes that anti-corruption interventions, if not strategically aligned with national security objectives, will remain insufficient to address the structural and financial drivers of insecurity. Four key recommendations are proposed: legal and institutional reforms to strengthen EFCC autonomy; the establishment of special anti-corruption courts; the integration of anti-corruption measures into national security policy; and enhanced civic engagement and oversight. The study contributes to the growing discourse on governance and security by emphasizing the strategic importance of anti-corruption enforcement as a tool for state stabilization. It underscores the need for a holistic, coordinated, and politically insulated anti-corruption regime in Nigeria.

Keywords: Corruption, National Security, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Institutional Reform, Governance

Introduction

Corruption is a deep-rooted and systemic challenge that continues to undermine Nigeria's quest for development, good governance, and national security. It erodes public trust, weakens institutional capacity, and diverts critical resources meant for infrastructure, education, health, and security into private pockets. Insecurity in Nigeria—manifested through terrorism, banditry, insurgency, and economic sabotage—has been linked to the looting of public funds, the financing of non-state armed actors, and the subversion of law enforcement and intelligence systems (Akinola, 2021). As a result, addressing corruption is not only a moral imperative but also a national security necessity. To combat the scourge of corruption, the Federal Government of Nigeria established the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in 2003. The EFCC was tasked with investigating, preventing, and prosecuting financial and economic crimes, including money laundering, embezzlement, and fraud. Since its inception, the Commission has made high-profile arrests and recovered substantial assets. However, the question remains: to what extent has the EFCC contributed to enhancing national security through its anti-corruption efforts?

Despite the institutional presence of the EFCC and its recorded successes in prosecution and asset recovery, Nigeria continues to experience systemic corruption and growing insecurity. The continued prevalence of corruption suggests that existing interventions may be insufficient, ineffective, or compromised. The Commission's activities have also been criticized for alleged political bias, legal bottlenecks, and limited institutional independence. These issues raise concerns about the actual impact of the EFCC's work on national security outcomes. A critical gap exists in empirical and policy-oriented literature assessing the direct and indirect ways in which the EFCC's anti-corruption interventions influence national security. This study seeks to fill that gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the EFCC's contributions and constraints within the context of national security in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. To what extent has the EFCC contributed to combating corruption and promoting national security in Nigeria?

2. What are the major challenges faced by the EFCC in the execution of its mandate?
3. How do the Commission's activities influence public trust and the perception of security governance in Nigeria?
4. What reforms can strengthen the EFCC's institutional capacity to effectively combat corruption and enhance national security?

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to critically examine the interventions of the EFCC in combating corruption and their implications for national security in Nigeria. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Assess the impact of the EFCC's anti-corruption strategies on national security outcomes.
2. Identify the operational, legal, and political challenges constraining the effectiveness of the EFCC.
3. Evaluate the influence of EFCC activities on public confidence in state institutions.
4. Recommend institutional and policy reforms to enhance the EFCC's role in promoting national security through anti-corruption efforts.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in that it offers a critical evaluation of the role played by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in addressing corruption and promoting national security in Nigeria. While several studies have examined corruption in Nigeria, this research uniquely situates anti-corruption efforts within the broader framework of national security. By exploring how corruption weakens state institutions, facilitates insecurity, and undermines governance, the study provides valuable insights into the strategic importance of anti-corruption enforcement beyond economic dimensions. It further highlights the need for institutional synergy between anti-corruption and security agencies, thereby informing future policy development in both sectors.

In practical terms, the findings of this study are relevant to policymakers, anti-corruption practitioners, and security agencies in Nigeria. The recommendations offered—such as the need for legal reforms, creation of special courts, and greater inter-agency collaboration—

provide actionable strategies for strengthening the EFCC and aligning its mandate more closely with national security objectives. Moreover, the study emphasizes the importance of public confidence in anti-corruption institutions, which is crucial for enhancing civic engagement and fostering a culture of accountability. In this regard, the study serves as a guide for institutional reforms that can improve transparency, restore legitimacy, and rebuild public trust in state mechanisms.

Academically, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on corruption, institutional performance, and security governance in fragile states. By applying Institutional Theory and State Fragility Theory, the research enriches theoretical discussions on the structural factors that influence institutional effectiveness in the Global South. It also offers a framework for comparative analysis in similar socio-political contexts where corruption and insecurity coexist. Thus, the study not only fills a gap in the literature but also opens avenues for further research on the intersection between anti-corruption policy and national security outcomes.

Conceptual Clarifications

Corruption

Corruption has been variously defined in academic and institutional literature, reflecting its complex and multifaceted nature. The World Bank (1997) famously defines corruption as “the abuse of public office for private gain,” encompassing acts such as bribery, embezzlement, extortion, cronyism, nepotism, and rent-seeking. This definition has served as a foundational point for analyzing both political and bureaucratic corruption globally. Transparency International (2022) adds that corruption is the misuse of entrusted power for private benefit, highlighting that such practices erode the legitimacy and effectiveness of institutions. In scholarly discourse, corruption is often categorized into different forms. Petty corruption involves small-scale bureaucratic abuses, typically at the point of service delivery, such as bribing customs officers or police. Grand corruption involves high-level political figures manipulating policies, institutions, and rules for elite advantage. Systemic or institutional corruption refers to a situation where corruption is entrenched within the system and becomes normalized as part of everyday institutional functioning (Rose-Ackerman, 1999).

In the Nigerian context, corruption is both systemic and institutionalized, manifesting across all levels of governance and sectors of the economy. Odekunle (2008) asserts that corruption in Nigeria is embedded within political processes and public service delivery, where state institutions are often used as instruments for personal enrichment and political patronage. Political appointments are frequently made based on loyalty rather than merit, and public procurement processes are riddled with irregularities. The situation is further exacerbated by weak enforcement mechanisms, limited transparency, and a lack of accountability, which collectively sustain a culture of impunity (Ayoade, 2016). Corruption in Nigeria also facilitates broader societal dysfunctions, including poverty, inequality, infrastructure decay, and insecurity. It impedes national development, distorts resource allocation, and breeds citizen disillusionment with the state. Importantly, the proceeds of corruption are often laundered or redirected to fund violent non-state actors, creating a direct link between corruption and insecurity (Akinola, 2021).

National Security

National security is a multidimensional and dynamic concept that has evolved beyond traditional concerns of military defense to include economic, political, environmental, social, and cyber dimensions. Achumba, Ighomereho, and Akpor-Robaro (2013) define national security as “the aggregation of the security interests of individuals, the state, and its institutions against internal and external threats capable of undermining the stability, survival, and sovereignty of the state.” This comprehensive view reflects the changing nature of threats in contemporary global and domestic environments. Contemporary scholars emphasize that national security encompasses the protection of a state's sovereignty, territorial integrity, critical infrastructure, and citizen well-being. In fragile or developing states like Nigeria, national security also includes combating terrorism, insurgency, ethnic conflict, economic sabotage, and transnational organized crime (Obi, 2015). Thus, effective national security goes hand-in-hand with good governance, the rule of law, and robust public institutions.

In Nigeria, national security has been severely compromised by a combination of internal threats—including Boko Haram insurgency, banditry, militancy in the Niger Delta, and farmer-herder conflicts—and external vulnerabilities, such as porous borders and illicit arms proliferation. Corruption exacerbates these threats by undermining the capacity and integrity of security institutions. For instance, security votes meant for intelligence and

counterinsurgency operations are often misappropriated, and unqualified personnel may be appointed to critical roles due to nepotism or patronage (Chatham House, 2017). Furthermore, the failure of anti-corruption institutions to enforce accountability contributes to weakened state legitimacy and growing public disaffection, which in turn fuels radicalization and violence. Therefore, national security in Nigeria cannot be meaningfully achieved without addressing the underlying governance deficits that facilitate corruption and impunity. Anti-corruption efforts, such as those led by the EFCC, are thus central to any sustainable national security strategy.

The Nexus between Corruption and National Security

The relationship between corruption and national security is increasingly recognized in scholarly and policy literature as both direct and multidimensional. Corruption undermines the legitimacy, capacity, and operational effectiveness of the state, thereby creating fertile ground for insecurity, conflict, and fragility (UNODC, 2011; Chatham House, 2017). In states with weak institutional frameworks, such as Nigeria, the effects of corruption are more pronounced, contributing to the erosion of governance structures, the proliferation of violent non-state actors, and the breakdown of law and order. Corruption is a key enabler of insecurity through the diversion of public resources meant for defense, law enforcement, and intelligence services. When funds earmarked for security operations are misappropriated or embezzled, the state's capacity to prevent or respond to security threats is severely compromised (Obi, 2015). For instance, in Nigeria, several cases have emerged where defense contracts were awarded without due process, often resulting in the purchase of substandard or non-existent equipment. These scandals not only deprive security forces of the necessary tools to combat threats such as Boko Haram, but also demoralize personnel and create operational vulnerabilities (Akinola, 2021).

Moreover, corrupt practices within the security sector—such as bribery, extortion, and favoritism in recruitment and promotions—undermine discipline, morale, and public trust in security institutions. The infiltration of security agencies by corrupt elements facilitates the leakage of classified information, the proliferation of arms, and the movement of terrorists and criminal networks across borders (Agbibo, 2013). There is growing evidence that corruption contributes to the financing of terrorism and the entrenchment of organized crime. Insurgent groups often exploit corrupt border officials, customs officers, and immigration agents to smuggle weapons, launder money, and establish safe havens (Onapajo & Uzodike, 2012). In

the case of Nigeria, Boko Haram has reportedly benefited from corrupt law enforcement and military personnel who either collude with or turn a blind eye to their activities due to bribes or political pressure. Similarly, corruption facilitates the expansion of illicit economies—such as drug trafficking, illegal mining, and oil bunkering—which generate significant revenue streams for criminal syndicates and violent groups. These activities undermine the formal economy and challenge the state’s monopoly on violence, often resulting in parallel governance structures controlled by non-state actors (Osumah, 2013).

Empirical studies in Nigeria highlight the practical manifestations of the corruption–security nexus. For instance, Aliyu and Olanrewaju (2021) argue that corruption in the Nigerian defense and justice sectors has impeded counterterrorism efforts, delayed the prosecution of terror suspects, and weakened the rule of law. Similarly, Achumba, Ighomereho, and Akpor-Robaro (2013) emphasize that endemic corruption across all tiers of government has aggravated the country’s security challenges by alienating the citizenry and creating fertile grounds for radicalization and armed resistance. The 2015 arms procurement scandal, in which billions of naira were allegedly diverted under the guise of purchasing weapons to fight Boko Haram, exemplifies how corruption directly undermines national defense and enables insurgency. In such scenarios, anti-corruption interventions—particularly those targeting high-level misappropriation in the security sector—are essential to restoring state functionality and security (Edeh, 2020).

Anti-Corruption Institutions and Interventions in Nigeria

The Nigerian government has established several institutional mechanisms to combat corruption and promote transparency, accountability, and good governance. These institutions include the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB), and the Public Complaints Commission (PCC). Each agency is empowered by specific legislation to carry out investigations, enforce anti-corruption laws, and promote ethical standards in public life. The EFCC, established in 2003 through the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (Establishment) Act, stands out as the leading anti-corruption agency with a broader mandate to investigate, prevent, and prosecute economic and financial crimes, including money laundering, cybercrime, and official corruption (EFCC, 2020). These

institutions are part of Nigeria's broader strategy to institutionalize anti-corruption efforts within its legal and governance frameworks.

Over the years, various interventions and strategies have been implemented by these agencies, particularly the EFCC, to tackle corruption. These include asset recovery programs, high-profile prosecutions, public awareness campaigns, and collaborations with international bodies such as the FBI, INTERPOL, World Bank, and Financial Action Task Force (FATF). For instance, between 2015 and 2020, the EFCC reportedly secured over 2,000 convictions and recovered over ₦700 billion in assets looted by public officials and private actors (Aliyu & Olanrewaju, 2021). In addition, Nigeria has domesticated international anti-corruption conventions, such as the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) and the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, reinforcing the country's commitment to global anti-corruption norms (UNODC, 2021).

Despite these efforts, the effectiveness of anti-corruption institutions in Nigeria has been undermined by several structural and political challenges. Chief among these are executive interference, selective prosecution, weak legal frameworks, and insufficient funding. The leadership of agencies such as the EFCC and ICPC is often appointed by the presidency, and tenure insecurity has resulted in allegations of political manipulation and compromised independence (Ayoade, 2016). In many instances, prosecutions appear to target political opponents while shielding allies of the ruling elite, thereby eroding public confidence in the impartiality of anti-corruption efforts. Moreover, judicial delays and procedural bottlenecks have allowed high-profile corruption cases to drag on for years without resolution, effectively diminishing the deterrent effect of prosecution.

Another critical issue is the lack of synergy and information sharing among anti-corruption institutions, which often results in duplication of functions and ineffective enforcement. While institutions like the CCB are constitutionally empowered to investigate asset declarations and ethical violations by public officers, they often lack the operational capacity and forensic tools to enforce compliance. The fragmentation of institutional mandates and absence of a coordinated national anti-corruption strategy have hindered collective efficacy. Additionally, there is a limited integration of anti-corruption efforts into Nigeria's national security strategy, despite the growing evidence that corruption directly fuels insecurity and state fragility. Therefore, beyond isolated institutional reforms, there is an urgent need for systemic overhaul,

enhanced inter-agency collaboration, and depoliticization of anti-corruption enforcement to ensure meaningful progress in Nigeria's fight against corruption.

Evaluating EFCC's Impact: Successes and Limitations

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has recorded notable successes since its establishment in 2003. It has become the most visible and active anti-corruption agency in Nigeria, particularly in the prosecution of high-profile individuals involved in financial crimes. The Commission's activities have led to the arrest and conviction of former governors, ministers, lawmakers, and corporate executives. According to its 2020 Annual Report, the EFCC secured 976 convictions and recovered assets worth over ₦32 billion in a single year (EFCC, 2020). These figures underscore the Commission's role in enhancing deterrence, disrupting illicit financial flows, and signaling the state's willingness to combat economic crimes. Its collaborations with international bodies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), INTERPOL, and the United Kingdom's National Crime Agency (NCA) have further extended its capacity to track illicit assets and prosecute transnational crime networks.

In addition to prosecution and asset recovery, the EFCC has played an important role in raising public awareness about the dangers of corruption. Through its Public Affairs Department, the Commission organizes campaigns in schools, communities, and religious institutions to educate citizens about financial crimes and encourage whistleblowing. The establishment of EFCC Integrity Clubs and Zero Tolerance publications contributes to anti-corruption consciousness, particularly among the youth. These educational interventions help shift public attitudes, fostering a culture of accountability and reinforcing societal resistance to corrupt practices (Aliyu & Olanrewaju, 2021). The EFCC has also enhanced Nigeria's international standing by fulfilling requirements for compliance with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) recommendations, thereby improving the country's attractiveness for foreign investment.

However, despite these achievements, the EFCC's overall impact has been limited by several structural and systemic constraints. One of the most prominent criticisms is selective prosecution, where anti-corruption efforts are perceived as targeting political opponents while shielding allies of the ruling elite (Agbibo, 2012). Such perceptions undermine the credibility

of the Commission and fuel public cynicism about the sincerity of anti-corruption efforts. Furthermore, the lack of prosecutorial autonomy, given that the EFCC requires clearance from the Attorney General of the Federation in some cases, compromises its independence. In many instances, high-profile corruption cases are either withdrawn, indefinitely delayed, or dismissed on technical grounds, reinforcing the culture of impunity. The Commission's effectiveness is also hindered by prolonged judicial processes, limited manpower, inadequate forensic capacity, and bureaucratic bottlenecks within the criminal justice system.

Another notable limitation of the EFCC is the insufficient integration of its activities into national security frameworks. While the Commission has investigated cases of terrorism financing and fraud linked to insurgent networks, its operations are largely reactive and disconnected from broader security sector reforms. There is also a gap in addressing systemic corruption within the military and security agencies, despite numerous audit reports and public inquiries revealing embezzlement of defense funds. Without tackling corruption in the security sector—where illicit practices contribute directly to operational failures, morale deficits, and vulnerability to insurgency—the EFCC's efforts remain constrained in terms of national security impact. Therefore, while the EFCC has made meaningful strides in prosecuting economic crimes and raising awareness, its long-term success requires enhanced autonomy, deeper institutional reforms, and alignment with Nigeria's overall national security architecture.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two complementary theories: the Institutional Theory and the State Fragility Theory. These frameworks provide a robust foundation for understanding the structural and institutional dynamics of corruption and how they intersect with national security in Nigeria. While Institutional Theory emphasizes the role of formal rules, norms, and governance structures in shaping organizational behavior, State Fragility Theory highlights the vulnerabilities of states in maintaining order, delivering public goods, and upholding legitimacy, particularly in the face of corruption and insecurity.

Institutional Theory, developed by scholars such as North (1990) and Scott (2001), posits that institutions defined as the formal and informal rules governing behavior shape the conduct of individuals and organizations. In the context of anti-corruption, institutions like the EFCC are

expected to uphold transparency, accountability, and rule-based governance. However, in environments where political interference, weak legal frameworks, and normative acceptance of corruption prevail, these institutions may become compromised or ineffective. The theory thus explains the divergence between formal mandates and actual performance of anti-corruption agencies in Nigeria. The EFCC, although constitutionally empowered, operates within a broader institutional environment marked by legal bottlenecks, patronage politics, and fluctuating executive support.

On the other hand, the State Fragility Theory provides a macro-level explanation of the link between corruption and national security. According to Rotberg (2004) and Carment et al. (2008), fragile states are characterized by their inability to perform core functions such as maintaining security, delivering basic services, and ensuring justice. Corruption exacerbates state fragility by weakening institutions, delegitimizing authority, and fueling grievances that may lead to violence or insurgency. In the Nigerian context, pervasive corruption has undermined the state's ability to provide effective security, particularly in regions plagued by terrorism, banditry, and separatist agitations. The EFCC's role in combating corruption thus becomes critical to strengthening state capacity and restoring national security.

The integration of these two theories enables a multidimensional analysis of the EFCC's interventions. Institutional Theory helps to interrogate the internal dynamics of the EFCC—its autonomy, legal framework, and procedural integrity—while State Fragility Theory situates the Commission's performance within the broader governance and security architecture of the Nigerian state. Together, they underscore the argument that anti-corruption is not merely a legal or administrative issue but a strategic imperative for state survival and security. By applying these theoretical lenses, the study critically evaluates how the EFCC can be repositioned to more effectively address both financial crimes and the systemic vulnerabilities that threaten national security.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative case study research design to explore and critically analyze the interventions of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in combating corruption and promoting national security in Nigeria. The case study approach was selected because it allows for an in-depth, contextual, and multifaceted investigation of a specific institution—EFCC—and its operational dynamics within the broader governance and security

landscape of Nigeria. As Yin (2014) posits, the case study method is particularly appropriate for examining complex social phenomena within real-life contexts where the boundaries between the phenomenon and its environment are not clearly defined. Thus, by focusing on the EFCC as a single case, the study provides nuanced insights into the institutional, legal, and political factors shaping anti-corruption efforts and their implications for national security.

The study relied exclusively on secondary sources of data, given the need to analyze existing records, reports, and policy documents that chronicle the EFCC's activities from its inception to the present. Data were obtained from a variety of authoritative sources, including the EFCC's Annual Reports (2015–2022), public audit reports, official publications of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Transparency International, and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). In addition, academic journal articles, media reports, books, and working papers from reputable institutions such as Chatham House and the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) were consulted. The use of multiple secondary sources enhanced the credibility of the study through data triangulation, enabling the researcher to validate findings across different sources.

For data analysis, the study employed qualitative content analysis as the primary analytical technique. Content analysis is a systematic method used to interpret and categorize patterns, themes, and meanings within textual data (Krippendorff, 2013). The analysis was both thematic and interpretive, focusing on key variables related to the EFCC's mandate, institutional challenges, prosecutorial outcomes, public perception, and contribution to national security. Texts were coded manually and grouped into analytical categories that aligned with the study's objectives and theoretical framework. The interpretive lens was guided by the Institutional and State Fragility theories, enabling the analysis to connect operational data with broader governance and security concerns.

Data Analysis

Objective One: Assess the impact of the EFCC's anti-corruption strategies on national security outcomes

Secondary data from the EFCC Annual Reports (2015–2022) reveal that the Commission has made significant strides in prosecuting corruption-related offenses. Within this period, the EFCC secured over 5,000 convictions and recovered assets exceeding ₦1.5 trillion, including cash, properties, and forfeitures linked to public officials and private actors. Despite these

accomplishments, Nigeria continues to grapple with persistent insecurity—such as terrorism in the North-East, banditry in the North-West, and secessionist agitations in the South-East—highlighting a disconnect between anti-corruption enforcement and national security outcomes. Reports by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2021) suggest that while the EFCC contributes to accountability, its operations are not systematically integrated into national security strategies. This indicates that while EFCC activities are impactful in disrupting illicit financial flows, their direct influence on reducing insecurity remains limited without broader institutional coordination.

Objective Two: Identify the operational, legal, and political challenges constraining the effectiveness of the EFCC

Secondary sources such as Chatham House (2017) and Transparency International (2022) consistently point to several institutional and structural barriers impeding the EFCC's performance. Key among them are executive interference, selective prosecution, inadequate budgetary support, and a slow judicial process. Political turnover often leads to the abrupt replacement of EFCC leadership, undermining the agency's independence and continuity. Moreover, the Commission frequently struggles with complex litigation due to outdated procedural laws and a judiciary often susceptible to delays and technical dismissals. For example, several high-profile corruption cases have remained unresolved for over a decade, diminishing the deterrent effect of prosecution. These challenges indicate that the EFCC's operational constraints are systemic, requiring legal reforms, political will, and enhanced prosecutorial autonomy to improve its effectiveness.

Objective Three: Evaluate the influence of EFCC activities on public confidence in state institutions

According to the Afrobarometer Round 8 Survey (2022) and reports by the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD, 2020), public perception of the EFCC remains mixed. While a significant segment of Nigerians (about 60%) acknowledges the Commission's visibility and high-profile prosecutions, fewer believe that it operates impartially or free from political influence. The perceived selectivity in prosecution—where opposition politicians are more frequently targeted than members of the ruling party—has contributed to skepticism about the EFCC's integrity. Additionally, the lack of transparency in asset management and

plea bargaining practices has raised concerns over accountability. As a result, although the EFCC has helped raise awareness about corruption, it has not consistently translated into increased trust in the broader state apparatus, which is critical for national cohesion and governance legitimacy.

Objective Four: Recommend institutional and policy reforms to enhance the EFCC’s role in promoting national security through anti-corruption efforts

Secondary policy documents from the Office of the Auditor-General of the Federation (OAuGF, 2020), the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU, 2021), and anti-corruption policy think tanks recommend a series of reforms to strengthen the EFCC. These include the amendment of the EFCC Act (2004) to guarantee prosecutorial independence, the establishment of a special anti-corruption court to expedite trials, and the institutionalization of performance-based oversight. Furthermore, integrating the EFCC more directly into Nigeria’s national security architecture—for example, through regular intelligence-sharing with the DSS, NIA, and police—could amplify its preventive capacity in curbing the financial infrastructure of organized crime and terrorism. Without these reforms, the EFCC’s efforts will remain reactive and fragmented. Therefore, effective anti-corruption enforcement requires both legal autonomy and systemic policy alignment with the national security agenda.

Discussion of Major Findings

The findings of this study reveal that while the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has made measurable progress in combating economic and financial crimes, its contribution to national security remains indirect and limited. Data from EFCC Annual Reports (2015–2022) indicate notable achievements in terms of convictions, asset recovery, and international collaboration. However, the persistence of widespread insecurity in Nigeria—manifested in terrorism, banditry, and organized crime—suggests that anti-corruption efforts have yet to translate into improved security outcomes. This underscores a gap between enforcement outcomes and strategic national security objectives, thereby confirming the assertion of Achumba, Ighomereho, and Akpor-Robaro (2013) that national security is multidimensional and requires coordinated institutional action beyond prosecution.

Secondly, the study identifies significant institutional and systemic limitations that hinder the EFCC’s effectiveness. These include executive interference, selective prosecution, prolonged judicial processes, and inadequate forensic capacity. Despite its constitutional mandate, the

EFCC operates in a politicized environment where leadership turnover and legal ambiguities affect operational autonomy. The perception that the Commission targets political opponents while shielding allies of the ruling party undermines public trust and diminishes the legitimacy of its interventions. This finding aligns with Institutional Theory, which posits that formal rules and mandates may be rendered ineffective in contexts where informal political norms—such as clientelism and elite impunity—prevail (North, 1990; Scott, 2001).

Another major finding is the erosion of public confidence in anti-corruption institutions, particularly the EFCC. Although surveys from Afrobarometer (2022) and the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD, 2020) indicate that citizens recognize the EFCC's visibility and occasional successes, many remain skeptical of its impartiality and long-term impact. The use of plea bargaining, lack of transparency in asset disposal, and media sensationalism without substantive outcomes contribute to the perception that anti-corruption is more performative than transformative. This situation not only hampers the credibility of anti-corruption campaigns but also weakens citizen-state relations, which are crucial for national cohesion and internal security.

Lastly, the study finds that anti-corruption interventions are insufficiently integrated into Nigeria's broader national security architecture. While corruption is acknowledged as a driver of insecurity—facilitating terrorism financing, arms trafficking, and institutional decay—there is little evidence of strategic collaboration between the EFCC and security agencies such as the Department of State Services (DSS), Nigerian Police Force, and the military. This disconnect limits the EFCC's ability to address high-level corruption in the security sector, including the misappropriation of defense budgets and operational funds. Consequently, as supported by the State Fragility Theory (Rotberg, 2004), the continued failure to align anti-corruption with security imperatives perpetuates weak state capacity and governance vulnerabilities.

Conclusion

This study critically examined the role of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in combating corruption and its implications for national security in Nigeria. Drawing on secondary data and guided by Institutional and State Fragility theories, the research revealed that while the EFCC has made commendable strides in investigating and prosecuting economic crimes, its overall impact on national security has been modest and largely indirect. Corruption remains deeply entrenched within Nigeria's political and institutional systems, weakening state legitimacy and exacerbating insecurity through the diversion of public resources, institutional inefficiencies, and the erosion of public trust. The study also highlighted the systemic

challenges that constrain the EFCC's performance, including political interference, selective prosecution, weak inter-agency coordination, and limited prosecutorial capacity. These factors have undermined the Commission's credibility and effectiveness, contributing to a cycle of impunity and institutional fragility. Moreover, the lack of integration between anti-corruption efforts and the national security framework limits the strategic potential of the EFCC in addressing the financial roots of terrorism, insurgency, and organized crime. For Nigeria to make meaningful progress in securing its territory and improving governance, anti-corruption interventions must be repositioned as central components of the national security agenda.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The EFCC Act (2004) should be amended to ensure prosecutorial independence, financial autonomy, and secure tenure for its leadership. This would shield the Commission from political interference and enhance its credibility in investigating and prosecuting corruption cases without fear or favour.
- ii. To expedite the adjudication of corruption cases and reduce judicial delays, Nigeria should establish dedicated anti-corruption courts with trained judges and simplified procedures.
- iii. There is a pressing need to institutionalise collaboration between the EFCC and security agencies such as the Department of State Services (DSS), the Nigerian Police Force, and the military.
- iv. The EFCC should deepen its engagement with civil society organisations, the media, academic institutions, and grassroots movements to promote anti-corruption education and participatory monitoring.

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