

FIGHTING CORRUPTION IN WEST AFRICA: A COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS AND LAGGARDS

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Abstract

Corruption is a widespread issue that plagues societies across the globe. It is imperative to address this problem to safeguard human rights and promote sustainable development. By encouraging transparent and responsible governance, we can strengthen democracy and foster a culture of integrity among public officials and civil servants. Since its establishment in 1994, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) has garnered international attention for its commitment to peace efforts and anti-corruption initiatives. Over the past decade, it has become a hub of public and private sector corruption scandals, mainly due to its declining performance on the Corruption Perception Index. This paper aims to evaluate the progress of some West African nations, specifically Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso, in their battle against corruption. The study will compare their performance and anti-corruption policies implemented in recent years to determine which countries are progressing and which are lagging. This study employed a mixed methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The primary objective was to evaluate various countries' capacity to combat corruption. Data was sourced from the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index and the World Governance Indicator to accomplish this. The gathered information was then classified and assessed using a comparative research design and strategy. By conducting time series analysis, the study aimed to identify commonalities and variations between the countries and draw insightful conclusions. The data will be presented graphically to exhibit trends, which this report will explore further. The paper compares the efforts of different West African countries in fighting corruption. It highlights the countries making significant strides in combating corruption and the laggards falling behind in their efforts. This assessment promotes transparency, accountability, and good governance in West Africa.

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1 Introduction

Corruption has been defined as the abuse of public power for private gain [11]. This abuse has a long history involving more than accepting bribes. A corrupt public official is mainly noted for acquiring valuables, taking advantage of their authorized services, and even using their position to favor friends and relatives. This graft exists in rich and poor countries but differs in nature, the extent of the effect, and the general indications in each country [1].

According to the Transparency International 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), the world urgently needs action because most countries fail to stop corruption. Africa remains the lowest performer on the CPI, with an average score of 32/100 [18]. Most African countries have signed the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combatting Corruption (AUCPCC), which has been a formally shared roadmap for member states to implement governance and anti-corruption policies and systems designed to have impact on the fight against corruption and other international organizations but has still not being effectively implemented hence the outcome has been seen in the trends from the previous decade of the transparency international report which has been the benchmark for the subject under review.

This article focuses on how Ghana and its neighboring countries are making efforts to fight corruption, their level of participation, and the implementation of various anti-corruption policies by discussing and describing the different countries' existing anti-corruption efforts. The other part of the discussion also analyses the trends of performance and current state of corruption of the countries under study in fighting corruption with their Corruption Perception Index and the World Governance Indicators (Control of corruption) for ten years. The final part of the paper compares and discusses various countries' implementation of the established anti-corruption policies, investigates the shortcomings, and assesses which countries are learners and laggards in fighting against corruption in West Africa to assist in learning from countries that have implemented good policies.

1.1. Public Administration and Corruption

For years, the public administration has been dealing with the persistent corruption issue, which poses a considerable obstacle to its functioning. This challenge has complex technicalities that require careful handling to address effectively. Institutional shortcomings and the interaction of various organizational units often must be addressed. Research has mainly explored the effects of corruption on the efficiency, transparency, and innovation of the public sector. According to [9], regions with elevated levels of corruption tend to exhibit lower dedication to upholding transparency within their public administration. The African governments place a high emphasis on combating corruption. Establishing an ethical culture in the public sector is crucial to this endeavor. This calls for educating officials on moral conduct and clearly outlining the definition of corruption.

These fundamental elements are necessary for anti-corruption initiatives to prove effective [22]. Despite the mixed findings on the impacts of corruption on the efficiency and growth of economies, some studies analyze and argue that engaging in corrupt practices can enhance firm performance, compensating for formal institutional imperfections in developing economies [23]. Authorities should prioritize institutional reforms and integrity-building to combat corruption rather than increasing offender penalties. Innovative activities in public administration may be hindered by corruption stemming from insufficient resources or a lack of trust in institutions [12]. As a result, the quality of services provided to citizens may be substantially reduced, hindering progress toward societal goals. Fighting corruption highlights the need to combat corruption in public administration for equitable and efficient service delivery, citizen trust, and sustainable development in developing countries.

Corruption is a complex issue with many facets [3], surpassing the typical indicators used to evaluate it. While perception indices such as the Corruption Perceptions Index are best known and widely employed to provide valuable insights into public opinion and awareness, they do not capture the full extent of corruption's complexities. Corruption extends beyond perception indices in several ways.

First, corruption involves more than just monetary transactions and bribe-taking. It encompasses various forms, such as nepotism, favoritism, embezzlement, fraud, and abuse of power [2]. This graft also has wide-ranging effects beyond just economic consequences [15]. It undermines trust in institutions, erodes societal values, and hampers social development [14]. Furthermore, corruption is not limited to individuals or specific sectors of society. It permeates various levels of government, business, and culture, creating a web of interconnected corrupt practices that can be challenging to unravel.

Furthermore, corruption is a highly intricate issue, as it often operates in secretive and covert ways, making it challenging to detect and combat effectively. Various factors drive corruption, including motivation and opportunity, organizational culture, competence, leadership, and internal control [8]. These factors interact, creating a complex web of influences shaping corruption's prevalence and manifestations. Finally, corruption is deeply rooted in power dynamics and institutional structures. It is not just about individual actions but also about systemic and structural factors that enable and perpetuate corruption. These complexities emphasize the necessity of a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach to addressing corruption.

2.0. Methodology

This study employed a mixed-method approach combining quantitative and qualitative research to explore fighting corruption in West Africa thoroughly. Firstly, the study reviewed the literature on anti-corruption efforts in West Africa, using various academic articles and data reports.

The quantitative analysis used data from corruption perception indices, including Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index and World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators, to compare the selected five West African countries. The criteria for choosing these data sources were based on their relevance, credibility, timeliness, data availability, and comparability to aid in understanding anti-corruption efforts to determine the learners and laggards in fighting corruption.

Descriptive statistics and data visualization were utilized to analyze the measurable corruption indicators. Descriptive statistics techniques were used in calculating the average range of trends to summarize and simplify the data. Data visualization techniques were employed to present these statistics in table and chart format to exhibit the trends and relationships within the data.

The study conducted a qualitative evaluation to comprehensively investigate the anti-corruption efforts of selected countries, including those making progress in this area and those not. The researchers employed a thematic analysis approach, coding and organizing various documents to identify recurring themes and trends within the dataset. The analysis included reviewing policy documents, legal frameworks and reports from international organizations to gain valuable insights into the anti-corruption measures being implemented in these nations.

Next, identified trends were interpreted using descriptive statistics and data visualization. This step provides meaning and understanding to the patterns and trends visualized in the data, mainly as they apply to differentiating between learner and laggard countries in their anti-corruption efforts. Interpretations were made in the context of each country's effort in fighting corruption.

Finally, a comparative analysis was undertaken to understand the difference between the learners and laggards and the factors contributing to their success and failures in the study period.

2 Results and Discussions

3.1. Anti-Corruption Efforts

West Africa has long been known for high levels of corruption, which has significantly impacted the region's economic and social development [21]. Over the past few years, there have been various efforts to combat corruption in West Africa, both at the national and regional levels [17]. Several regional initiatives have been undertaken to combat corruption, including the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocol on the Fight against Corruption. Each country in West Africa has legal frameworks to combat corruption, including constitutions and anti-corruption laws. Therefore, civil society organizations and the media also play a critical role in exposing and reporting corrupt practices, and several organizations have been established to monitor corruption and promote

transparency and accountability in public institutions [13]. Fighting against corruption is a significant challenge across West Africa, leading to several initiatives to address this issue. For example, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a regional coalition of 15 countries in West Africa, has established various anti-corruption initiatives. In 2001, ECOWAS member states adopted The Protocol on the Fight against Corruption but faced challenges in achieving the statutory conception to be effective until 2019 [20].

In review, it is indicated that all 16 countries in West Africa are parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (AUCPCC), ECOWAS Protocol on the Fight against Corruption has 15 member countries exempting Mauritania. However, not all 16 West African countries are parties to the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention. The OECD Anti-Bribery Convention is a treaty between OECD member countries and a few non-OECD countries that have signed and ratified the convention. As of September 2021, only two West African countries have signed and ratified the convention: Ghana and Nigeria. Other West African countries, such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, and Togo, have expressed their intention to join the convention and have taken steps to comply with its provisions. However, they have not yet completed signing and ratifying the convention.

3.2. The current state of corruption

The Corruption Perception Index (CPI) is a combined index that ranks countries based on the perceived levels of corruption in their public sector. The data from the CPI are analyzed to identify trends and levels of corruption in the countries.

The table below gives an overview of corruption in the five countries under study, drawing on the various corruption ranking and score trends for the past decade.

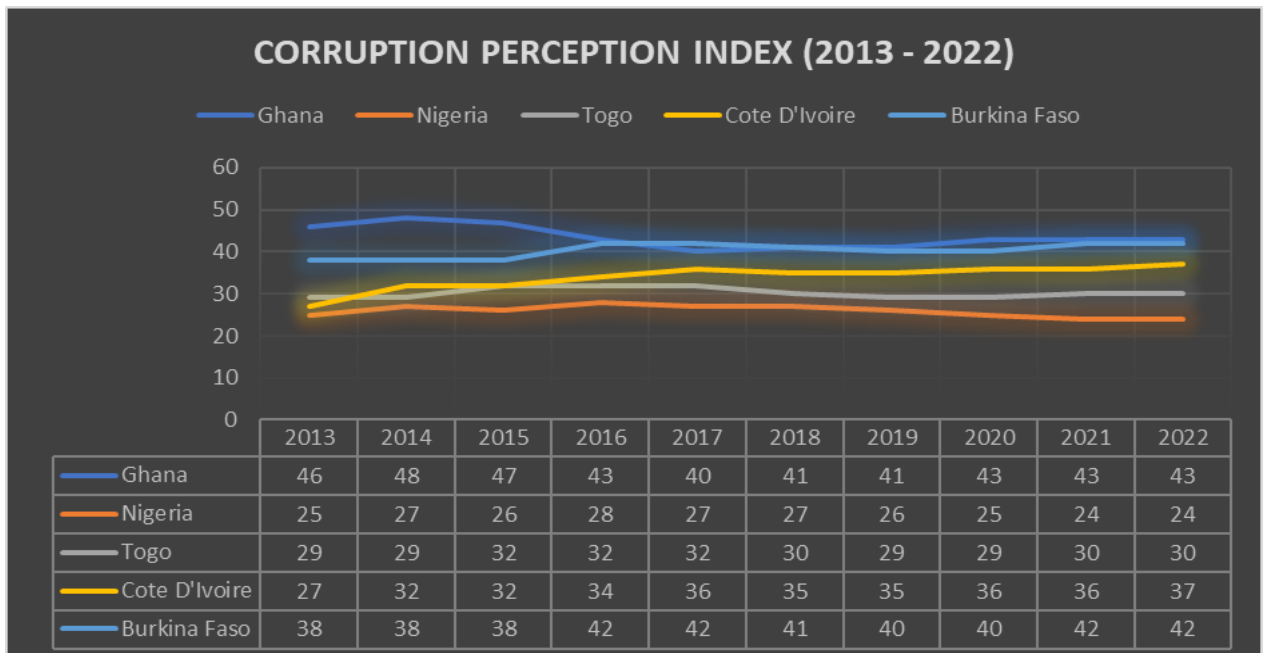
Table 1. Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International), 2013 -2022

Year	Ghana		Nigeria		Togo		Burkina Faso		Cote D'Ivoire	
	CPI Rank	CPI Score	CPI Rank	CPI Score	CPI Rank	CPI Score	CPI Rank	CPI Score	CPI Rank	CPI Score
2013	63/177	46	144/177	25	123/177	29	83/177	38	136/177	27
2014	61/175	48	136/175	27	126/175	29	85/175	38	115/175	32
2015	56/168	47	136/168	26	106/168	32	76/168	38	106/168	32
2016	70/176	43	136/176	28	116/176	32	72/176	42	108/176	34
2017	81/180	40	148/180	27	117/180	32	74/180	42	103/180	36
2018	78/180	41	144/180	27	129/180	30	78/180	41	105/180	35
2019	80/180	41	146/180	26	130/180	29	85/180	40	106/180	35
2020	75/180	43	149/180	25	134/180	29	86/180	40	104/180	36
2021	73/180	43	154/180	24	128/180	30	78/180	42	105/180	36
2022	72/180	43	150/180	24	130/180	30	77/180	42	99/180	37
Trends		Slightly decrease and then stable.		Slightly increase and then decrease.		Slightly increase and then stable.		Steady increase		Steady increase

Source: Researchers construct from Transparency International CPI (2013 -2022)

Note: The corruption perception index (CPI) ranks countries based on a score of 0 to 100, with 0 indicating a highly corrupt country and 100 indicating a spotless country with no corruption.

Chart 1: CPI score of Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Cote D'Ivoire and Burkina Faso.



Source: Researchers construct from Transparency International (2013 – 2022).

In analyzing the data from the table and chart above, Ghana's CPI score has remained relatively stable over the past decade. Looking at the trend in Ghana's CPI from 2013 to 2022, there is a noticeable improvement in the perception of corruption. In 2013, the corruption score for Ghana was 46 points, which increased to 48 points in 2014 and dropped to 43 points in 2016. In 2017, the score dropped again to 40 points, and it slightly improved to 41 points in 2018 and remained at 43 points from 2020 until 2022. The trend shows a slight decrease in the corruption perception score and is stable for Ghana between 2013 and 2022, indicating that corruption continues to be a challenge in the country.

Nigeria's CPI score has slightly increased and decreased over the past decade, ranging from 25 to 28, with no significant overall change since 2013. However, there was a peak in 2016 when the score reached 28, but it has since fallen back to 24 in 2022. Nigeria continues to be ranked poorly in global corruption rankings. The country continues to struggle with corruption, which has been identified as a significant impediment to its development and progress.

Togo's CPI score has fluctuated over the past decade, ranging from 29 to 32. However, from 2013 to 2017, Togo's corruption perception score remained relatively stable, fluctuating between 29 and 32. Then, from 2018 to 2020, the country's score significantly decreased, from 30 in 2018 to 29 in 2020. However, in 2021 and 2022, Togo's corruption perception score slightly increased to 30 points. While this decline is not as significant as the increase in previous years, it suggests that corruption may become more prevalent in the country again. Togo's corruption perception score trend shows some progress in reducing corruption in the country and potential setbacks in recent years.

Cote d'Ivoire's CPI score has shown a steady increase trend over the past decade, increasing from 27 in 2013 to 37 in 2022, with some fluctuations. The score peaked in 2017 at 36 but fell back to 35 in 2018 and 2019. However, there has been a steady improvement in the score since then, with a 37 in 2022, the highest score recorded in this period. Although there have been fluctuations in the scores over the years, the trend for Cote d'Ivoire shows a gradual improvement in the perception of corruption in the country.

Burkina Faso's CPI score has remained relatively stable over the past decade, ranging from 38 to 42. From 2013 to 2022, Burkina Faso's corruption perception index score fluctuated but steadily increased. The country started with a score of 38 in 2013, increased till 2017, and then experienced a decline to 41 in 2018, stabilizing with a score of 40 for 2019 and 2020. However, the score gradually

increased over the next few years to reach 42 in 2021 and 2022. This trend suggests that while there have been some improvements in the country's control of corruption, there is room for improvement to achieve a consistently high level of control.

Some possible causes of change identified include Ghana establishing an independent anti-corruption agency in 2017 [7], which may have contributed to the slight improvement in their CPI score in recent years. Nigeria has faced significant economic and political challenges in recent years [24], which may have contributed to its relatively low and stable CPI score. Civil society organizations in Burkina Faso have been actively advocating for greater accountability and transparency in government [16], which may have contributed to the stable but relatively high CPI score in recent years. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has supported Cote d'Ivoire in improving public financial management and strengthening anti-corruption efforts, contributing to the upward trend in their CPI score.

3.2.1. CPI Learners and Laggards Comparison

This paper categorizes countries as learners or laggards in the fight against corruption. Learner countries are actively addressing corruption and improving transparency, while laggards must catch up and progress. Learner countries are making progress by learning from best practices and successes in other countries. On the other hand, laggards must make more progress in addressing corruption despite their developing efforts.

Some observations can be made based on the Corruption Perceptions Index trends from 2013 to 2022. Ghana and Burkina Faso have consistently improved their CPI scores so they could be classified as learners. Cote d'Ivoire had fluctuations in its CPI scores over the years, but it has improved its overall score, making it a potential laggard. On the other hand, Nigeria and Togo have slightly improved their CPI scores over the years but remain low so that they could be classified as laggards.

3.3. World Governance Indicator (Corruption Control)

The World Governance Indicators (WGI) is a composite index and dataset that measures the quality of governance in countries worldwide [4]. It is produced by the World Bank and is based on six elements of governance, including voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption, which allows for comparisons across countries and over time and can help identify areas where improvements are needed [10].

The World Governance Indicators (WGI) measure the control of corruption as one of the six governance dimensions, focused explicitly on this study, in analyzing the fight against corruption.

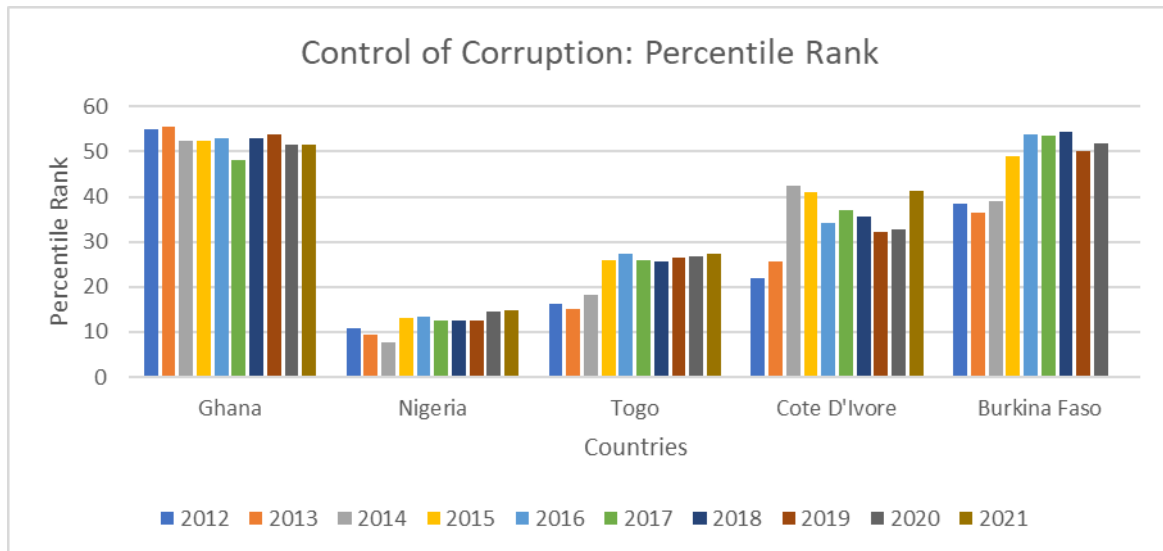
Table 2: Percentile rank of control of corruption.

Year	Ghana	Nigeria	Togo	Burkina Faso	Cote D'Ivoire
2012	55.0	10.9	16.1	38.4	21.8
2013	55.5	9.5	15.2	36.5	25.6
2014	52.4	7.7	18.3	38.9	42.3
2015	52.4	13.0	26.0	49.0	40.9
2016	52.9	13.5	27.4	53.8	34.1
2017	48.1	12.5	26.0	53.4	37.0
2018	52.9	12.5	25.5	54.3	35.6
2019	53.8	12.5	26.4	50.0	32.2
2020	51.4	14.4	26.9	51.9	32.7
2021	51.4	14.9	27.4	51.9	41.3

Average Percentile Rank	52.28	12.7	23.52	47.81	34.35
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Source: *Extracted from Worldwide Governance Indicators (2012 – 2021).*

Chart 2: *Control of corruption, percentile rank*



Source: *Worldwide Governance Indicators (2012 – 2021).*

Based on the data provided in the table and charts above, we can analyze the control of corruption in the five countries using the World Governance Indicators percentile rank data from 2012 to 2021.

Comparing the average percentile rank for each country over the ten years, Ghana had the highest average percentile rank, indicating better control of corruption, with an average of 52.28. Nigeria and Togo had the lowest average percentile rank at 12.7 and 23.52, respectively. Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire had average percentile ranks of 47.81 and 34.35, respectively.

Based on the analysis of the World Governance Indicators data from 2012 to 2021 for Ghana, Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Togo, and Burkina Faso, comparatively, it appears that Ghana has made the most progress in controlling corruption over the past decade, followed by Burkina Faso and Cote D'Ivoire. Nigeria and Togo have shown less improvement in controlling corruption during this period.

3.3.1. WGI Learners and Laggards Comparison

Ghana and Burkina Faso can be classified as learners, as they show a consistent upward trend in controlling corruption over the years.

Cote d'Ivoire shows a mixed trend, with some years showing improvement and others showing decline, indicating them as potential laggards.

Togo and Nigeria, on the other hand, have shown a consistent decline in controlling corruption over the years, making them laggards in this regard.

3 Conclusions

In conclusion, preventing and fighting corruption is a critical challenge confronting many countries worldwide. While some countries have significantly progressed in preventing and combating corruption, others must catch up. These laggards can learn from the experiences and

best practices of the learners and implement effective anti-corruption measures and strategies that have been successful for other countries.

The trends observed in the corruption perception index and WGI control of corruption scores show that some countries have made significant progress in fighting corruption while others are falling behind.

Regarding learners, Ghana and Burkina Faso have improved their corruption perception index scores. Although the scores fluctuate, the overall trend shows a positive trajectory. This suggests that these countries have implemented adequate measures to tackle corruption.

On the other hand, Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, and Togo have been identified as laggards. These countries have shown slight improvement or a decline in their corruption perception index scores over the years. This may suggest a lack of effective measures to tackle corruption or a failure to implement existing measures. Based on the analysis, it is clear that corruption remains a significant challenge in West Africa, and more needs to be done to improve governance structures and strengthen anti-corruption efforts.

3.1. Limitations of Study

This research aimed to compare countries that have made significant strides in anti-corruption efforts with those still struggling to progress. However, comparing these countries proved challenging as different sources define and measure corruption in various ways. Each country has a unique political, social, and economic context that can impact corruption and anti-corruption efforts, making direct comparisons difficult. Furthermore, anti-corruption efforts and their outcomes are subject to rapid change, making it challenging to keep the study current. The study focuses on only laggards and leaders, ignoring the countries that fall in between, where valuable insights could be gained. Future studies that address these limitations can help enhance the validity and reliability of research findings on anti-corruption efforts in West Africa.

3.2. Recommendation for further studies

The study suggests that more research could advance scholars' comprehension of the topic. It can be achieved by focusing on political and institutional factors contributing to successful anti-corruption efforts. Additionally, the study can analyze the role of leadership in anti-corruption efforts since leadership plays a crucial role in driving anti-corruption efforts. Investigating the leadership styles and approaches of leaders in the countries identified as learners and comparing them to those in the laggard countries can be studied further to gain more insights.

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