

## **CORRUPTION IN STANDARD ORGANIZATION OF NIGERIA AND THE PROLIFERATION OF SUBSTANDARD GOODS IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*There is a relative unchecked mechanism to fight the continuous influx of the goods in the Nigerian market which has to large extent affected the economy. In this situation, there is no doubt that there are no government institution thrust with the responsibility of ensuring that fake, illicit and substandard product have no place in the Nigerian market. As such, this study examines the challenges facing Standard Organization of Nigeria in their fight against the proliferation of substandard goods in the Nigerian economy. To articulate the above view, it examines ways corruption affected the efforts of Standard Organization of Nigeria in addressing the proliferation of substandard goods in Nigeria. The study utilized survey method of data collection where 625 questionnaire were distributed and 570 recovered with only 524 used for analysis. Thus, the study was analysed using SPSS statistical package. The study discovered that corruption has in several ways affected the efforts of Standard Organization of Nigeria in addressing the proliferation of substandard goods in Nigeria. Based on the above, the study recommended that Legal institutions should be empowered and strengthened beyond what it used to be to deal more against corruption and impunity through the provision of basic logistics, personnel and infrastructures needed to fight against wage war against the proliferation of the economy with substandard goods.*

**Keywords:** Corruption, Organization, Proliferation, SON and Substandard

### **Introduction**

Faking and counterfeiting of products is a global phenomenon but some countries are more affected than others, especially African countries. The problems may not be publicized in some of these countries, as they are in Nigeria, because of weak or non-existence of strong regulatory authorities. There have been several reports of deaths from fake, counterfeit and substandard products. The high incidence of fake and counterfeit products has, for decades, been a matter of concern, given the number of lives lost and the impact on the economy which suffered losses through mass unemployment as a result of low capacity utilization in industries, capital flight, divestment and decline in trans-border and international trade (Abel, 2019).

The challenges posed by substandard products in Nigeria and the challenges faced by SON in their efforts to rid Nigeria of fake, adulterated and substandard products were enormous. Hardly will one procure goods in the Nigerian market without a possibility of picking up one substandard product in the market. These are seen in consumable and service products (that is perishable and non-perishable; edible and non-edible goods). To a large extent, over the years the consumption of these substandard products in fake, diluted, expired, adjusted and repackaged forms amount to billions of Naira made by producers every year, but has caused the loss of human lives and property which has gone unreported due to the nature of the Nigerian state (Egwuonu, 2023).

Despite, the nature of the above, importation and local production of fake, adulterated and substandard products are on the increase in Nigeria. Thus, consumers are faced with about 80 per cent chance of buying

fake products in a market which made customers prefer second hand goods over original (Okorie & Agbo, 2016). These substandard products pose grievous threats to both survival of local industries and the health of consumers. Furthermore, the depth of counterfeiting and substandard products in the market was further strengthened by the result of an inspection carried out in Abuja markets by SON Task Force on Substandard Products and was reported to have observed that about 95 percent of products in the markets visited were either fake or substandard (Okoye, 2013:12). This situation regrettably, is not peculiar to any state but a reflection of what obtains in other markets in Nigeria.

In line with that Okolie and Agbo (2016) noted that Nigeria is losing over 1 trillion naira annually to importation and domestic production of substandard items. Consumer Protection Council (2018) remarked that about 1 million lives are lost annually in Nigeria following the use and consumption of substandard products ranging from food, drinks, automobile and electrical parts to building materials and In 2023, SON Report stated that Nigeria lost N15trillion to substandard goods annually (Egwuonu, 2023). The economic and health challenges posed by the menace of importation and local production of substandard products necessitated this inquiry. Therefore, the focus of this study is to examine corruption of Standard Organization of Nigeria in combating the proliferation of substandard goods in the Nigeria.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Nature of corruption in SON**

It is no longer new that corruption is a major factor bedevilling the Nigerian state. Virtually every sectors of the economy is affected by corruption and as such have reduced the based input of the various structures in the system. Nye (1967), views corruption is a deviation from the formal duties because of private gains. This includes such behaviour as bribery (use of reward to pervert the judgment of a person in position of trust); nepotism (appointment because of relationship rather than merit); and misappropriation (illegal appropriation of public resources for private regarding use). This definition will be very difficult to operate, where corruption is widespread and regarded as the norm by majority of the people. Similarly, Otite (2000) views corruption as the perversion of integrity, which could be presented in acts such as bribery, inordinate favours or moral depravity. It occurs when two or more parties interact to upturn the structure and processes of a society. It is concerned with the behaviour of functionaries which promote dishonest situations. World Bank (2015) defined corruption as an abuse of public office for private gain, where an official accepts, solicits, or extorts a bribe. Corruption is also an abuse, whereby private agents actively offer bribes to upturn public rules and processes for individual/personal advantage and profit. Corruption can also be depicted in acts such as patronage and nepotism, theft of state assets or diversion of state resources. The Vision 2010 Committee views Corruption as inordinate activities geared towards the changing of the normal course of judgments and position of trust (Otite, 2000). It is on the bases of the above that we looked at some corrupt aspects that have continued to hold SON to ransom in the discharge of their responsibilities.

### **Sabotage by government agencies:**

Unscrupulous importers severally tried to thwart SON's plans by pulling on Governors, Traditional Rulers and the like. Odumodu (2016) noted that:

Importers and dealers caught in raids have sometimes boasted that they have Abuja contacts to force us to return the seized goods to them. One importer of substandard AVR reported us to his Abuja contact and came with him to our office. In the big Oga's presence, we tested thirty of the AVR and they all failed. Then the big Oga, realizing that we won't succumb to pressure, began to urge him to comply with the standard. We were vulnerable only when we didn't have testing equipment.

That is why labs are being developed... Governmental organizations have equally stood in SON's way. For instance, the upgrade of SON's metrology laboratory in Lekki, Lagos was once discouraged by a Lagos State Government order to the standard body to quit within seven days.

Again, there has been so much duplication of offices and responsibilities in Nigeria that there is always a clash of interest and strong effort by one group to outdo the other. This same incident has continued to manifest itself between Nigerian Custom Services and that of Standard organization of Nigeria to the extent that government has to ask all other monitoring group to vacate the ports giving Custom the space to

manipulate the process. It was in recent submission that Udemé (2017) notes that the Federal Government gave a standing order, telling some agencies including SON to leave the ports. Today, importers are complaining about what they allege as illegal entry by SON's officials into the ports, even when they are not invited by Customs for examination? It questions the rationale behind the fight against fake and substandard products which this instruction by the Federal Government of Nigeria has jeopardized so much. This has to a large extent given the organization a herculean task of limiting the huge influx of substandard goods into the Nigerian economy with ease. He went on question the allegations on them that they are performing some illegal function against owners of containers. To start with, he said that the statement illegal entry is erroneous. How could you say an agency of government created by law with the mandate to perform its statutory functions is entering the ports illegally? In 2011, the Federal Government directed some agencies to stay outside the ports, not to be physically located in the ports, but be invited during inspection of products under their mandate. So, SON responded immediately by opening this office strategically located close to Apapa port, Tican Island port and other terminals to ensure effective response, to safeguard Nigerians from consuming fake and substandard products. It is a one-stop office where we handle Port inspections, SONCAP verification and enforcement, which is monitoring compliance in all issues relating to port inspections.

It is on that note that Cole (2019) questions what stops goods not up to standards to be imported into Nigeria. Originally, SON was at the ports to check standards but lately they have been withdrawn. SON also is empowered to carry out market surveys to see whether what is sold meets standards. To do this, the SON should have an army of inspectors and vehicles to send out and collect goods for examination in their laboratories. Regretably, the institution has numerous challenges facing them both from government and clearing agent who come up with unending allegations against the institution.

#### **Unnecessary duplication of offices:**

The Federal Government has a large number of institutions aimed at monitoring the power of the executive, increasing personal freedom, protecting consumers from exploitation, ensuring justice and so on. These institutions include the Public Complaints Commission, the Code of Conduct Bureau, Legal Commission, Consumer Protection Commission, National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON), Trade Promotion Commission, etc. According to Cole (2017), none of these institutions have made any impact in achieving their stated goals: they are what in the UK are called quangos and their Director Generals (DGS) seem to have secured cushy sinecures. Their existence confirms the erroneous idea that the civil service does not do any work and that those who work in these organisations have a safe place from which to exploit their position for profit either through that office or in some other enterprise.

This above situation tells more on the major challenges SON is facing in the fight against fake, substandard and unlicensed products that have found multiple entrance into the market. At times, they face deceptions from custom due largely to corruption and erosion of responsibility (Aminu, 2019).

#### **False declarations and products and deception by agents**

Technically, there should be no substandard goods in Nigeria if SON is working efficiently. It knows where most of the substandard goods come from into Nigeria: ideally our inspectors or eyes should be in and on those countries. There is a whole lot of substandard goods in Nigeria, especially electrical goods, some of which may lead to death – wires used for buildings, steel rods that are substandard, long life bulbs which are not long life; everyone has had experience of buying goods which are below standards (Cole, 2017).

He went further to state that their mandate is to ensure elaboration of industrial standards for goods made in Nigeria and products imported into the country, to monitor compliance of the products to the standards, but the major challenge facing SON is false declaration of goods. Since the clearing agents realized that we see things coming into the voluntary through the integrated information system, they will deliberately import SON's regulated products and declare them like that of National Agency for Food, Drug, Administration and Control (NAFDAC) to deceive people. For instance, you see a container carrying SON's controlled goods being declared as food items. Edeh (2019), notes that these importer and their clearing agents will not do this at the point where NAFDAC can monitor the goods. They will declare one thing at the point of Pre-Arrival Assessment Report (PAAR) and a different thing at the process where the cargo is going to be

released. They will connive and move the container before you know what is happening. You see a situation where you open the single window information system and discover that all the products declared there are not real contents

### Data Presentation and Analysis

In what ways has corruption affected the efforts of Standard Organization of Nigeria in addressing the proliferation of substandard goods in Nigeria?

**Table 1: Respondents on how corruption affected the efforts of Standard Organization of Nigeria in addressing the proliferation of substandard goods in Nigeria**

S/N		SA	A	D	SD	N	Mean	Remark
<b>Mean rating of respondents on how corruption affected the efforts of Standard Organization of Nigeria in addressing the proliferation of substandard goods in Nigeria</b>								
1	Corruption in the system is a major problem affecting the proliferation of substandard goods in Nigeria	120	364	27	13	524	3.1275	Agreed
2	Substandard goods that threaten the lives of Nigerians are everywhere because of Sabotage by government agencies	82	405	13	24	524	3.0397	Agreed
3	Man know man is a major problem affecting the efforts made by SON id flushing out fake products in Nigeria	114	398	6	6	524	3.1841	Agreed
4	Most of the people caught have been freed after illegal ransom has been paid to some government representatives	172	343	4	5	524	3.3031	Agreed
5	The business of flooding every parts of Nigeria with fake and substandard product is become of huge compromise by some agents of SON	182	321	16	5	524	3.3003	Agreed
6	SON staff do not see the proliferation of substandard goods as a major problem since they do not have clear data on the victims of substandard products	189	322	13	-	524	3.3343	Agreed
<b>Cluster Mean</b>							<b>3.20513</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2024

### Discussion of the Result Hypothesis

From the table above six (6) instruments were utilised to get the respondents view on how has corruption affected the role of Standard Organization of Nigeria in addressing the proliferation of substandard goods in Nigeria. It shows that the people concurred that corruption affected the role of Standard Organization of Nigeria in addressing the proliferation of substandard goods in Nigeria. What it means is that corruption affected the role of Standard Organization of Nigeria in addressing the proliferation of substandard goods in Nigeria. Looking at the table, it reveals the big margin at which the respondents accepted that corruption affected the role of Standard Organization of Nigeria in addressing the proliferation of substandard goods in Nigeria. This is attributed to what Respondents 1 and 2 opined that corruption affected the role of Standard Organization of Nigeria in addressing the proliferation of substandard goods in Nigeria. Though there varied opinion, but all confirmed that the magnitude of corruption in the state is second to none. As such they noted that corruption is a major factor that is affecting the role of Standard Organization of Nigeria in addressing the proliferation of substandard goods in Nigeria. Thus, the cluster mean at 3.205 is in acceptance that corruption affected the role of Standard Organization of Nigeria in addressing the proliferation of substandard goods in Nigeria.

### Test of Hypothesis

H<sub>01</sub>: Corruption has negatively affected the role of Standard Organization of Nigeria in addressing the proliferation of substandard goods in Nigeria.

**Table 2: Test of Hypothesis One**

**Correlations**

		COR	PSSG
SERQTY	Pearson Correlation	1	.955**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	524	524
EMTR	Pearson Correlation	.955**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	524	524

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Source: Field Survey, 2024**

**Computation: SPSS Ver. 20**

**Where:**

**COR = Corruption**

**PSSG = Proliferation of Substandard Goods**

Table 1 shows there is a correlation between Corruption and the proliferation of substandard goods in Nigeria. The result reveals that there is a high positive relationship existing between the variables ( $r = .955$ ) and that this relationship is statistically significant at .05 (p-value < 0.05).

**Implication:** Reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis which says that there is a correlation between Corruption and the proliferation of substandard goods in Nigeria.

This study is imperative as it explored Standard Organization of Nigeria Operations and the Proliferation of Substandard Goods in the Nigerian Economy, 2010-2022. As a matter of fact, the study was guided by three hypotheses that were drawn from the three research questions.

The first hypothesis of the study made use of six (6) instruments to generate responses from the respondents. The first hypothesis tested whether Corruption has negatively affected the role of Standard Organization of Nigeria in addressing the proliferation of substandard goods in Nigeria, 2010 - 2022. According to the six (6) instruments utilized in Table 4.7, it shows that the respondents agreed that there is a relationship between corruption and the infiltration of Nigerian market with substandard products in Nigeria. In other words, the study utilizing the necessary instruments combined with interview, queried the role of SON in enforcing compliance among infiltrators of Nigerian market with substandard products. Regrettably, from the responses given by the respondents, Corruption has negatively affected the role of Standard Organization of Nigeria in addressing the proliferation of substandard goods in Nigeria, 2010 - 2022. **Respondent 7** argued that

Most times due to the endemic corruption that has ravaged the entire system, it is hard for the Nigerian government through its agencies to wage war against illegality because those who perpetrate the heinous crime are related and close friends to the politicians who occupies juicy position in the state houses.

Thus, the study having considered the views of the respondents, it is germane to note that corruption and its attendant effects among the operators and workers of SON are responsible for the spate of decay prevalent in the state to regarding waging wars against the proliferation of the market with fake and substandard drugs in the state.

**Conclusion and recommendations**

In conclusion, this study has shown to a large extent that Standard organization of Nigeria operation in Nigeria has been bedeviled with numerous challenges ranging from inadequate personnel, corruption, impunity and gross ineptitude. The study has revealed through the three tested hypotheses that the above listed challenges were the major problems limiting the operations of SON in waging war against the

proliferation of Nigerian economic market with fake and substandard goods. As such, the manifestations of such fake, illegal, outdated, expired and substandard goods has resulted in unleashing dangerous and harmful impact on the lives and property of Nigerians. Regular consumption of these fake and substandard products has amounted to economic wastage and sabotage. So many people are trapped in the hospitals across Nigeria due to the consumption of fake, expired and substandard products. These products range from: consumables, drugs, food contents to public utility products, pipes, cement, building rods and machines.

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