

Article

Philosophical Underpinnings of Ethical Theories: A Critical Examination of Corruption in Modern Nigeria

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Abstract

Corruption in Nigerian society is no longer just a subject of speculation; rather, it is now regarded as a national embarrassment. It is among the primary issues brought on by the persistent corruption that permeates contemporary Nigerian society. Throughout the history of this nation, multiple initiatives have been made at different times to halt the spread of this beast. This article states that, given the lack of success of Nigeria's multiple attempts to tackle corruption, address the corruption problem, and achieve long-term, sustainable growth in Nigeria, the behaviour of Nigerians needs to change, and the way they achieve this is by adhering to ethical theories. These theories provide certain moral convictions and perspectives, which then lead people's behaviour in particular ways. The bases of ethical theories are used to develop moral responses to the various issues that leaders and common people face daily. It is possible to analyse hypothetical ethical difficulties as well as real-world scenarios using these theories. As per the principles included in the ethical theory itself, they also highlight several facets of a morally sound resolution.

Keywords: Ethical theories, philosophy, corruption, sustainable growth, Nigeria

Introduction

No nation in the world is completely immune from the threatening grasp of corruption, which is a worldwide issue. However, what sets one country apart from another on the scale of the perception of corruption index is the level of its prevalence on the one hand and the honest, dedicated readiness of the people to eradicate it on the other (Ochulor & Bassey, 2010). In Nigeria, corruption permeates every aspect of our society, including politics, civil society, and the public and private business and commerce sectors. This corruption's pervasiveness indicates deterioration in our ethical principles and ideals. It demonstrates the useless endeavour to construct a democratic community without a fundamental reliance on the religious ethical ideals of fairness, openness, altruism, accountability, and leadership centred on service. It demonstrates a leadership style that advances the vested interests of a select few people at the expense of the greater good, which is frequently hailed by philosophers as the foundation of political society (Uduigwomen, 2011). Every society's lifelines are ethics and morals. This is so because society is made up of moral agents who daily make decisions and interact with others in ways that are shaped by their unique wants, proclivities, and preferences. Human society would quickly descend into the Hobbesian state of nature, when man becomes a wolf to his fellow men, making life ugly, brutish, and short, without a broadly accepted, just, and strong moral norm. In addition, because every human action (taken voluntarily and deliberately) has moral significance and has an impact on the individual's life, the lives of those around him, the community at large, and his ultimate fate or end, every aspect of a person's life is subject to moral scrutiny. All of these behaviours have a moral value and can be classified as



good or bad, just or unjust, harsh or kind, regardless of whether they take place on the political, religious, socioeconomic, interpersonal, or cultural levels of man's life in society (Ochulor & Bassey, 2010).

The goal of ethics is to explain the moral justifications for our conduct, and the field of ethics essentially encompasses every action taken by a person as long as they act morally. The metaphysical premises of man as a rational, free, and inclined to goodness, moral self-actualization, and perfection; as a being with an inherent teleological orientation toward God; as a moral agent with an internal moral principle - an inbuilt conscience open to divine and human positive laws; and as a social being who can only be fully satisfied in the context of on-going social interaction are the foundation for ethical principles (Ochulor & Bassey, 2010).

According to this viewpoint, being is equal to having; what a man has is what matters. The definition of "to be" is "to have material things," and a man's integrity or worth is determined by how much money he has or other quantifiable material possessions he owns. Human and societal values are exclusively evaluated in terms of how well they add to one's assets, wealth, and social standing. Man's tastes, decisions, interests, and behaviours are shaped by this outlook on life and philosophy. Human life has no intrinsic value other than being a bundle of self-propelled matter capable of some socially acceptable behaviour referred to as rationality, and since there are no other ultimate values to be pursued than the merely material, man can be destroyed at the will of the strongest, defrauded by the cunning of the more intelligent, and impoverished by the greed of the more brave (Ochulor & Bassey, 2010). Corruption may be examined from an ethical and moral standpoint since it is a human action with moral and ethical ramifications.

Historical Analysis of Corruption in Nigeria: An Overview

Nigeria's history of corruption predates the colonial period. The African's past and view on public morals are substantially different from those of the modern Briton, according to a Colonial Government Report (CGR) from 1947. The African working for the government looks out for his financial interests (Okonkwo, 2007). Before independence, there were instances of government officials misusing funds for their financial gain (Storey, 1953). Nigeria's wealth has been eroding over time, with little improvement in the standard of living for the populace. The First Republic, led by Nnamdi Azikwe as President and Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa as Prime Minister, was characterised by pervasive corruption (Ogbeidi, 2012). Government employees stole from the public coffers with impunity. Ministers and Federal Representatives showed off their money carelessly. In reality, it seemed as though there were no morally upright men in the First Republic's political leadership. The First Republic Nigerian elite class's political philosophy was founded on using politics to advance their financial interests—making money and leading comfortable lives (Ogbeidi, 2012). The military earned widespread support for the coup as a direct result of the First Republic's corruption, demonstrating that Nigerians had been waiting for such a wind of change to free them from the grasp of the ruling class for a long time. It's interesting to note that there were broad celebrations in the nation despite the deaths of certain important First Republic figures (Ogbeidi, 2012). The

forementioned circumstance, together with other elements, served as a justification for a group of young middle-ranking army officers to overthrow the leaders of Nigeria's First Republic on January 15, 1966, on the grounds of corruption (Ogbeidi, 2012).

Since gaining political independence in 1960, Nigeria's society has never been well-governed due to impunity and corruption (Oluwasanmi, 2007, Ebegbulem, 2009). Oluwasanmi, (2007); and Imhonopi and Ugochukwu, (2013) believe that Nigeria has sadly been run by corrupt politicians who are visionless, weak, parochial, morally bankrupt, narcissistic, egoistic, greedy, and corrupt from the country's first democratic experiment in 1960. According to Ebegbulem, (as cited in Imhonopi & Ugochukwu, 2013), the leadership of the nation since 1960 has criminally managed the affairs of the nation, amassed wealth at the expense of national development, and pushed the populace over the edge into a state of extreme poverty, illiteracy, hunger, rising unemployment, avoidable health crises, and insecurity. The Second Republic saw corruption grow at an alarming rate from its modest occurrence in the 1960s (Aiyede, 2006). For instance, the Shagari administration (1979–1983) was well characterised by Bangura (1991: 21) as "the government of the contractors by the contractors and for the contractors." The investigation panel established by the military government of General Buhari after the Second Republic found numerous government officials and state governors guilty of embezzlement, mismanagement, and diversion of public monies. Numerous millions of Naira was stolen out of the nation, numerous millions were wasted, and numerous millions went missing. Eloquent testimony can be found in the Federal Government White Papers from the Justices Sampson Uwaifo and Mohammed Bello Review Panels' 1986 report (Ogundiya, 2009). Corruption "institutionalised and attacked every aspect of the country's political and socio-economic life" as a result of the many years of military misrule (Aiyede 2006:37). It has become the primary justification for all military coups and authoritarian takeovers in the nation because it is so all-pervasive and hungry. Contrarily, many of the ostensibly remedial governments became embroiled in corruption and became its symbols after assuming power. Massive waste of resources- both human and material- became the norm (Ogundiya, 2009). For example, under the dictatorial rule of Babangida, allegations of corrupt behaviour were regarded with the utmost levity, completely undoing any progress made under the preceding administration. His predecessor, General Muhammadu Buhari, had the cases of corrupt politicians who had been imprisoned examined. Some had their sentences shortened while others were released. Corruption evolved to become a tool for maintaining stability and political legitimacy throughout this time. Gboyega (1996) states the following:

The benign treatment of corruption in the early years of the Babangida administration foretold a much more conscious instrumental use of corruption to ensure regime stability. For a military administration, Babangida's government was unique in its unconcern about corruption within its rank and among public servants generally; it was as if the Government existed so that corruption might thrive (p.5).

Under the pretence of Babangida's human rights stance, some of the worst offenders who had been found guilty and were serving various prison terms were released from prison. Additionally, all of the illicit assets and properties that had previously been seized were given back to the corrupt politicians (Gboyega, 1996). The Forfeiture of Assets (Release of Certain Forfeited Properties, etc.) Decrees N0 24 and 50 of 1993 were used to accomplish this. Babangida made even more significant payoffs to various individuals and organisations in civil society to uphold and increase the legitimacy of the government (Ogundiya, 2009). These include the Nigerian Union of Journalists National Secretariat Abuja (30 million Naira), the Obafemi Awolowo Foundation (30 million Naira), the Zik Hall Zungeru (40 million Naira), the Arewa House Kaduna (35 million Naira), the Yakubu Gowon Centre (30 million Naira), the Ecumenical Cathedral Abuja (50 million Naira), and the Nigeria Labour Congress Secretariat Building Fund (50 million Naira) (Committee for Defence of Human Rights, 1992).

By 1993, it was evident to the public that Babangida's supporters were enriching themselves at the expense of the general populace. As a result, the government no longer received public approval, and when it cancelled the June 12 presidential election, it shrank and fell (Ogundiya, 2009). The Abacha administration was the most illegitimate, careless, and destructive government Nigeria has ever known. Abacha was a symbol of corruption even though he pledged to tackle it by creating the Failed Bank Tribunal and launching the War against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC). The disclosures following his death in office were horrifying (Ogundiya, 2009). The army commander was ordered to give over six ultra-modern structures in Abuja alone, each costing millions of Naira. In addition, his family was required to refund to the government \$625,263,187.19, approximately 75 million British Pounds, and an additional 100 million Nigerian Naira (Ogundiya, 2009). This does not include the 250 million Naira and a total of 96.9 million Naira that his sons, Mohammed Sani Abacha, and Abdulkadir Abacha, forfeited to the Nigerian government, respectively. Abacha nurtured and encouraged corrupt practices up until he died in the Presidential Villa in Abuja in order to maintain his position of power (Ogundiya, 2009). Olusegun Obasanjo, a former general and ruler of state from 1976 to 1979, assumed control of the nation when AbdulSalam Abubakar, who had taken power following the death of General Abacha and had exposed the late General's corrupt actions, hastily arranged a transition programme. Obasanjo's strident crusade and resolve to remove corruption in public life served as the cornerstone of his civilian administration (Ogundiya, 2009).

Philosophy, Morality, and Corruption

In philosophy, ethics is a branch that deals with ideas such as Right, Good, and Duty. Plato and Aristotle in the 3rd and 4th Century BC discussed these concepts in ancient Greece. Philosophers played a pivotal role which was to accurately try to define and promote these concepts based upon logic and reason. A religious person, on the other hand, follows his code of conduct because he believes that it is proper behaviour and reaction to the varying challenges and circumstances which arise during life. Zagury (1990) made the following analogy: Immanuel Kant, a philosopher, stated that moral acts depend upon the motives. He maintained that a

moral act is done for its own sake; an act that is done in self-interest is non-moral. Since a philosopher does his good deed not necessarily for its goodness, but because he has been instructed to do so by God, then, by Kant's definition, his act is non-moral. Kant's definition is a challenge to religion for it suggests that one can be both irreligious and moral. Acting autonomously, doing right for its own sake, suggests that a person has the right to choose what is right. This section is relevant to this study in several ways. Firstly, when the notion that 'bureaucratic' or secular government will facilitate prosperity and all-round development loses its appeal, religion provides alternative ways of organizing society and politics. Secondly, an overwhelming majority of Nigeria's population is religious, and virtually all religions of the world subscribe to a particular set of moral values which, in particular, detest corruption and other acts that are generally regarded to be morally reprehensible. Any act of corruption is a war against society because it works against the common good, which makes it a war against man and the metaphysical foundation of his existence. The practice of accumulating wealth through dishonest methods is an act of sabotage against men, women, and children and impacts their fundamental rights to enjoy decent wealth earned through legal means (Ocholor, 2008). Throughout human philosophy, the *Weltanschauung* (World view) of man has been characterised by a variety of philosophical systems. Materialism and idealism are the two most prevalent points of view.

Thus, in line with the universal imperative of combating corruption and reducing its deleterious effects, typified by the undermining of public institutions, weakening of government's legitimacy and the confidence of the people in their government, destruction of development agenda, increasing inequalities and poverty, as well as unemployment, crime, and violent conflicts, among others, religion or any other aspect of life that could be useful in combating corruption, may be tested for validity and efficacy. Despite Nigeria's official claim of secularity, available evidence shows that the country is better described as a multi-religious state. Not only are public officials sworn into public offices with the use of the Holy Bible or the Glorious Qu'ran, but almost all government engagements officially begin and end with Muslim or Christian prayers. In addition, the government at different levels is also involved in funding religious pilgrimages to Mecca and Jerusalem, just as public funds are sometimes used in supporting the building of churches, and mosques and acquiring some other items these religious bodies may need.

However, as analysed in a subsequent section of the article, religion has not only failed to enhance a significant reduction in the perpetration of corruption in Nigeria, it has also been corrupted. Much evidence, as provided in the section, clearly typifies the gradual process of the religionisation of corruption by prominent figures in Christianity, Islam, and ATRs in Nigeria. For many in this category, religion has become another tool for the manipulation and exploitation of the weak Nigerian political system.

Interpretations of Ethical Theories and Its Significance

There are many ways of Classifying ethical theories. These classifications are important for their roles in organising various types of doctrines and grouping

them into simple, comprehensive forms. There are classical theories of ethics as well as modern theories of ethics. Moreover, it must be emphasised that most classical ethical theories now have their contemporary versions. Classical theories are characterized as those that seek to answer questions about how men should act and what is the good life, while contemporary ethics seeks to apply analysis to moral theories; this involves the process of clarifying the meaning of the questions and answers given to the questions raised by classical ethicists. Having discussed ethical principles, it is deemed appropriate too to discuss some ethical theories. Ethical theories are based on previously discussed ethical principles. They serve as foundations for ethical solutions to different situations encountered by both ordinary people and leaders, on a day-to-day basis. These theories can be used to analyse situations in everyday life as well as hypothetical dilemmas. They also emphasise different aspects of an ethically correct resolution according to the guidelines within the ethical theory itself. According to Omoregbe (1993:12), "ethical theories generate certain moral convictions and outlooks, which in turn influence and guide peoples' conduct in certain directions." People usually base their individual choice of ethical theory upon their life experiences. Some of the most widely accepted ethical theories include deontology, utilitarianism, virtue, casuists, and 'rights'. However, for this study, deontology, utilitarianism, and virtue ethics, which are of great significance to this study, are discussed below.

(a) Deontology

Deontology claims that certain actions are inherently good or bad; right or wrong without regard at all for consequences. Put in another way, whether something is right or wrong does not depend on its consequences, rather, an action is right or wrong in itself. Deontologists believe that morality is a matter of duty. "The theory states that people should adhere to their obligations and duties in analysing an ethical dilemma" (Reamer, 1995:53). In other words, the rightness or wrongness of any act depends on whether the person has followed his or her duty regardless of the consequences. We have a moral duty to do things, that are the right things to do, and a moral duty not to do what is not right to do. For an action to have a moral value, it must be performed strictly for the sake of duty, that is, about the moral law. Omoregbe (1993:220) explains acting for the sake of duty as "acting not because one feels like doing it or because one has a natural inclination to doing such things, but purely out of reverence to the moral law". According to Kant (2002:49), to be subject to moral duty is to be under a categorical imperative. In other words, the idea that we morally ought to act in a certain way, for example, helping the needy, can be analysed as the idea that to act that way is demanded by a categorical imperative. This means that a person would follow his or her obligation to another individual or community because upholding one's duty is what is considered ethically correct. It is my considered opinion that a person who follows this theory is very likely to produce consistent decisions since such decisions will be based on the individual's set duties. It appears though that deontology concerns itself more with motive than actual result; actions are good or bad depending on the motives.

Deontology provides a basis for special duties and obligations to specific people, such as those within one's family or community. For example, an older brother may have an obligation to protect his little sister or brother when they cross a busy street

together. This theory also sings the praises of those who exceed their duties and obligations, which is called “supererogation”. For instance, we know teachers must protect their students while the students are in the care of teachers at school, but it will be a supererogatory action for one teacher to volunteer himself or herself to be killed instead of the students. He or she has done more than his or her normal expectation. Although the deontological theory contains many positive attributes, it also contains its fair number of flaws, just like any other theory. One weakness of this theory is that there is no rationale or logical basis for deciding an individual duty. For instance, a business person may decide that he must always be on time for meetings. Although the choice appears to be a noble duty, we do not know why that person makes this his duty. Perhaps the reason that he has to be at the meeting on time is that he always wants to sit in a particular chair every time. A similar scenario reveals two other faults of deontology. Sometimes a person’s duties conflict.

Secondly, deontology is not concerned with the welfare of others. For example, how is the deontologist who is running late for a meeting supposed to drive? Is he supposed to speed over the limit thereby breaking his duty to society to uphold the law; or is he supposed to arrive at his meeting late, breaking his duty to be on time? This scenario of conflicting obligations does not lead us to a clear ethically correct resolution nor does it protect the welfare of others from the deontologist’s decision. Since deontology is not based on the context of each situation, we may say that it does not provide any guidance when one enters a complex situation in which there are conflicting obligations. One other big criticism of deontology is that it neglects or ignores the outcome as a valid factor in evaluating the morality of an action. While it is not necessarily wise to rely solely on the outcome, it is not a good idea either to completely ignore the outcome altogether.

(b) Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is an ethical theory based on the principle of utility; the principle of the greatest good or the principle of the greatest happiness. The utilitarian ethical theory is founded on the ability to predict the consequences of an action. According to utilitarianism, “utility is the yardstick or criterion with which good actions are distinguished from bad ones” (Omeregbe, 1993: 233). That is to say, the rightness or wrongness of an action is judged concerning its consequences. To utilitarians, the choice that yields the greatest benefit to the people is the ethically correct choice. This is a consequentialist approach to morality.

According to Smart and Williams (1982:9-11), “there are two versions or types of utilitarianism—Act utilitarianism and Rule utilitarianism.” Act utilitarianism adheres exactly to the definition of utilitarianism as described above, that is, those actions that produce good results—the greatest good for the greatest number—are good. Act utilitarianism holds that the rightness or wrongness of an action should be based on the consequences of the action. In act utilitarianism, a person performs the act that benefits the most people, regardless of personal feelings or societal constraints such as laws. Act utilitarianism does not appear to take into account the nature of the action itself; what matters is the consequence of the action; for instance, killing a person could be justified as a good action if it saves ten other

lives. Rule utilitarianism, on the other hand, agrees that moral rules should be based on the principle of utility. However, “only those rules which would result in useful consequences if adopted and obeyed by everybody and which would produce the best possible results for the greatest number of people, should be adopted” (Omogbe, 1993: 237-238). Hence, rule utilitarianism takes the law into account and it is also concerned with fairness. A rule utilitarian seeks to benefit the most people but through the fairest and most just means available. Therefore, the added benefits of rule utilitarianism are that it values justice and includes beneficence at the same time.

One other benefit of this ethical theory is that a utilitarian can compare similar predicted solutions and as a point system to determine, which choice is more beneficial for more people. This point system provides a logical and rational argument for each decision. It also allows a person to use it in a case-by-case context. Faults have however been found with either types or versions of utilitarianism. According to Smart and Williams (1982: 77-81), “both act and rule utilitarianism contain numerous flaws as with all ethical theories. Inherent in both are flaws associated with predicting the future.” Although one can use his or her life experiences to attempt to predict outcomes, it might be difficult to be too certain that his or her predictions will be true. This uncertainty can lead to unexpected results, making the utilitarian look unethical as time passes because his choice did not benefit the most people as he or she predicted. For example, if a utilitarian lights fire in the house to warm the living room, but instead, the fire burns down the house because the soot in the chimney caught fire, then the utilitarian now seems to have chosen an unethical decision even though it is an accident. The unexpected fire is now judged as unethical because it did not benefit anyone.

Another assumption the utilitarian makes is the ability to compare the various types of experiences against each other in a similar case. However, comparing material gains such as money against intangible gains such as happiness is impossible since their qualities differ to such a large extent. A third criticism of the theory is that it does not allow for the existence of supererogation or heroes. Meaning, that no matter how extraordinary one thinks his or her action is, one is still doing what is expected to be done. In other words, no action can be described as supererogatory under utilitarianism because no action is too much. People are constantly obligated to behave in such a manner as to benefit the most people regardless of the danger associated with such an action. For instance, under utilitarianism, the teacher who sacrifices her life to save her students’ life is fulfilling an obligation to society rather than performing a selfless and laudable act (Smart & Williams, 1982).

(c) Virtue Ethical Theory

In most other ethical theories, whether an act is moral or not depends on the act itself as we have seen with deontology and utilitarianism just discussed above. In contrast, virtue ethical theory is agent or character-based. For Aristotle, the rightness or wrongness of an action depends on the evaluation of the character of the agent who performed the act. For example, if a person cheats people out of money all the time, he or she could be judged as a cheater but not when he/she does it only one time due to unavoidable circumstances. Omogbe (1993: 165)

describes virtue ethics as “a state of mind which spontaneously gives rise to good actions as a matter of habit”. In other words, if a person does a good action only once in a while, not as a matter of habit but only when he feels like doing so, his action although good, is not virtuous. This can be explained further that, to become virtuous, one has to constantly and persistently practice virtue until it becomes like second nature; just as a person becomes a good athlete in no other way than by practicing athletics. Some character traits commonly regarded as virtues include, courage, justice, generosity, wisdom, and good temper. The virtue ethical theory judges a person by his or her character rather than by actions that may deviate from his or her normal behaviour. This theory takes a person’s morals, reputation, and motivation into account when rating an unusual and irregular behaviour that is considered unethical. This theory, like others discussed above, has flaws. One of the criticisms of virtue ethics is its failure to acknowledge cultural relativism. Given that different cultures sometimes hold different traits of character to be virtuous, it is difficult to figure out which characteristics count as virtues. It also seems that virtuous characteristics can be exhibited even when the actions carried out are immoral. For example, a bank robber could exhibit courage while robbing a bank, yet we generally agree that robbing is morally wrong. We see this consequence as problematic because, as we all know, any normative theory aims to arrive at standards or norms of behaviour for living a moral life. In the case of the courageous bank robber, it seems that the bank robber lives according to the standard set by virtue ethics by acting courageously but his behaviour is nevertheless immoral.

In concluding this segment, we have seen that ethical principles and theories bring significant characteristics to the decision-making process. Although all of the ethical theories attempt to follow ethical principles to be applicable and valid by themselves, each theory falls short with complex flaws and failings. However, it is our strongly considered opinion that these ethical theories can be used in combination to obtain the most ethically correct answer possible for each scenario. For instance, deontological, utilitarianism, and virtue ethics might make use of the rights ethical theory or even the beneficence theory to arrive at what they can confidently consider to be ethically correct decisions. This brief study of these theories would allow us to compare and see where they have something in common with African traditional ethics.

Manifestation of Political Corruption in Nigeria

Since Independence, Nigeria as a country has witnessed different forms of government led by different leaders, both in military regimes and in the democratic system of government. Judging from the number of years of independent ruling, it is expected that the nation is supposed to have experienced development politically, economically, socially, and technologically. It is saddening to note that the country has only witnessed retrogression and under-development under the regimes of the political champions of the state. This pathetic experience has been traced to immoral and wrong political ideologies. The ‘political diseases’ are contagious and communicable as it has affected virtually all other aspects of Nigerians’ lives.

The Nigerian politicians have excluded moral virtues from Nigerian politics; they have made us believe that morality does not exist in Nigeria. The notion is that once a person starts playing Nigerian politics he must jettison morality, hence the statement "Politics is a dirty game." They hold that what matters is to grab political power by all means fair or foul, and sustain it the same way. The focus of any government is to cater to the citizenry, but this is not the aim of Nigerian leaders, for the means of acquiring political power explains their selfish objectives. This can best be explained in Kantian theory of ethical philosophy which is based on the view that the only intrinsically good thing is good will; therefore an action can only be good if it is principled on good intention. Unlike what obtains in Europe, politicians in Nigeria live out morality from Nigerian politics not because of intellectualism, but because of selfish interest and egoism on the part of the major political players in the nation. The celebration of materialism and position in Africa has blindfolded us to the extent that we are not ready to question the morality of the source of people's wealth or the means through which they get to the position they occupy. The celebration of corrupt leaders and their wealth in society has been the impetus for immorality in Nigerian politics. Acts of immorality manifest in Nigeria, some of these will be considered here.

Corruption and Development in Nigeria

Development in Nigeria has been stunted for decades due to its high level of corruption in different sectors from the economic, political, electoral, and bureaucratic. Corruption hurts achieving development. There are economic, governance, and human aspects of development that have been truncated by corruption. There can be no doubt that Nigeria's political and economic challenges are fuelled by corruption. Some of the negative effects of corruption on Nigeria and its citizens will be examined in this section.

Impact on the Security of Lives and Properties

One of the gravest consequences of corruption is the threat it poses to continued peace and security of lives and property. Since 1960 when Nigeria gained independence from British rule, hopes of poverty eradication and aspiration of becoming a developed country are yet to be realised. Nigeria is ranked very high on the list of the most corrupt countries in the world (Online source). Electoral corruption often sparks violent protests leading to loss of lives. The lack of health determinants like potable water, clean sewage and sanitation systems, a healthy environment, access to qualitative health care, intensive emergency care, and food security are the obvious results of decades of squandering of oil wealth, corruption, and incompetence or ineptitude of concerned government officials who are not accountable to citizens for failures to render efficient social services and delivery of the dividends of good governance. In recent times, the maternal mortality ratio in Nigeria remains one of the highest in the world. Reports have shown a connection between widespread corruption and the high maternal mortality rate in Nigeria (WHO, 2018).

The Niger Delta area has been engulfed in the uprising which has led to the loss of

innumerable lives, incessant kidnappings, and attacks on oil facilities which is the result of mismanagement and corruption among the ruling class. The near absence of social amenities and facilities such as good roads, and functional healthcare centres has led to further avoidable loss of life. It is indeed believed that this state of things is traceable to corruption among the ruling class. The ever-soaring prevailing crime rate in the country is, no doubt, the result of the desperation of unemployed youths who have resorted to armed robbery, and more recently kidnapping (Durojaiye, 2010). Kidnapping has now risen to prominence despite initially being confined only to the Niger Delta and is now a malaise in all parts of Nigeria, with incidents of kidnapping often leading to the death or financial ruin of the victims. Despite all the foregoing, the Government of Nigeria is yet to offer its citizens any succour from these damaging effects of corruption.

Impact on Political, Social, and Economic Development

Corruption is a threat to democracy and democratic institutions. Good governance is undermined by the subversion of formal duties and public roles due to private interest, wealth, or status gains. The electoral process is often manipulated to the detriment of the voting public. These manipulated elections often produce leaders who are not only disconnected from the yearnings and aspirations of the people but are unaccountable to the public or the electorate. When the 'elected' officials do not account for the electorate, they account only for themselves. Hence, good governance is relegated to the back burner while mediocrity and impunity have a field day. The most dangerous result of unabashed corruption is the truncation of democracy itself. Corruption sometimes rears its ugly head at the last bastion of accountability in government – that is the judiciary. This leads to abuse of law and the total breakdown of law and order not to mention the caricature the judiciary is subjected to when this happens. Any compromise of the judicial arm of government spells doom for society (Durojaiye, 2010).

For the economy, there is no gainsaying that corruption not only seriously stifles present economic growth but negatives past economic gains. Loss of revenue, investments, and trade opportunities are all results of corruption as businesses may move elsewhere while seeking a better business climate. Corruption may also lead to ineptitude and inefficiency in handling economic decisions thereby leading to a high cost of transacting business in the country. In most cases where corruption is rampant, awards of contracts are often inflated leading to unnecessary expenditure and increased risk in conducting business. Corruption allows inefficient producers to remain in business, encourages the pursuit of perverse economic policies, and provides opportunities for bureaucrats and politicians to enrich themselves through the extortion of bribers from those seeking government favours. Corruption affects many areas of government business including but not limited to public procurement, revenue collection, foreign direct investment, and application of foreign aid.

Comparative Analysis of Corruption

Corruption is a global phenomenon and it is not a problem that is peculiar to the underdeveloped countries of the third world. However, corruption manifests in

different forms across these climes and that is why the causes and approaches to solving the problem differ and it is based on the way the problem manifests in each country. Between 1990 and 2002, U.S. federal prosecutors convicted more than 10,000 government officials of public corruption, including conflicts of interest, fraud, campaign finance breaches, and obstruction of justice (Glaeser & Saks, 2006).

Moreover, the Governor of New Jersey and the Governor of Connecticut had to resign due to allegations of corruption (Glaeser & Saks, 2006). The last three Louisiana insurers were convicted of illegal activity (Corporate Crime Reporter, 2004). In the United States, this study focuses on three theories about the causes of corruption. The first hypothesis, loosely based on Lipset (1960), is that places with high levels of income and education are less corrupt. An important element of this hypothesis is that educated and high-income voters are motivated and capable of monitoring civil servants and taking action if they violate the law (Mauro, 1995; Alesina et al, 2002). The second hypothesis related to the foregoing is that ethnic heterogeneity increases corruption.

As voters diversify along ethnic and income lines, voting inevitably focuses on redistribution rather than the honesty of high-ranking government officials. The third hypothesis we test is that where government revenues and regulations are high, there are many assets to steal and many rules to violate, resulting in higher levels of corruption. On June 3, 2021, President Biden declared that the fight against corruption was a central national security interest of the United States. As he wrote in the National Security Research Memorandum-1 (NSSM-1), "Corruption threatens US national security, economic justice, global poverty reduction and development efforts, and democracy itself. By effectively preventing corruption, by fighting, and by demonstrating profits under NSSM-1, federal ministries and agencies consider the existing US government's anti-corruption, conducted an inter-ministerial review in identifying and addressing permanent gaps in efforts and the fight against corruption (White House, 2021). The government is to combat corruption and its harmful effects. It established five strategic pillars: modernizing, coordinating, and providing US government resources to improve the fight against corruption, curb fraudulent funding, hold corrupt actors accountable, and multilateral. Further, to maintain and strengthen anti-corruption architectures, strengthen diplomatic involvement, and leverage foreign aid resources to drive policy objectives (White House, 2021). International indicators suggest that the UK does not have serious problems with corruption. In 2010, the United Kingdom was ranked 20th out of 178 countries with a score of 7.6 on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) (Transparency International, 2011). In 2008, the UK was ranked 5th out of 22 countries with a score of 8.8 on TI's Bribery Index. The World Bank's Anti-Corruption Index placed the United Kingdom in the top percentile with a score of 91.4% in 2009. There are few charges of corruption in the UK. Between 2003 and 2007, a total of 27 cases were tried under the Anti-Corruption Act of 1906, and a total of 33 people were found guilty (including prosecutions initiated before 2003). Fewer cases were indicted under the Corruption Act of the Public Institution of 1889, with only 14 indicted between 2003 and 2007 and only four convicted (Transparency International, 2011). The reasons for the very low prosecution are the difficulty of applying the prosecution law and the effectiveness of other laws to

secure convictions, especially the 2006 fraud law and the common law violation of illegal activity in public office (Transparency International, 2011). In December 2017, the UK Government launched the first UK Anti-Corruption Strategy 2017-2022, which provides a framework for government policy and action to combat corruption. This strategy aims to support national security, prosperity, and confidence in the system. Part of the UK Government's anti-corruption strategy is to promote the integrity of the private and public sectors, improve the global business environment, and strengthen policies and institutions to combat and prevent corruption. Developing countries such as China and Singapore are also affected by corruption. Based on Transparency International's rankings, China has a serious corruption problem (Lawrence & Weber, 2017). Although China's economy has been developing steadily since the implementation of the reform and opening policy in 1978, corruption in China has increased rapidly (Wiederman, 2004). Some scholars argue that corruption can distort resource allocation, but unlike other countries, China's economic growth is less affected by corruption due to high public confidence (high public confidence) (Li & Wu, 2007). However, corruption can lead to serious regional income inequality, with serious negative consequences through growing public resentment and social unrest, with even greater economic damage (Wu & Zhu, 2011). As a result, the Chinese government often actively punishes corruption by law (Lawrence & Weber, 2017). Due to the delicate nature of corruption and the lack of effective methods, it is limited to research and case studies, and there are currently few studies focused on corruption in China (Guo, 2008). The causes of corruption in China are: Weakness of people's morals, inadequate supervision of power, and inadequate supervision are the main reasons behind the proliferation and spread of corruption (Yu, 2008), and the government has a systematic and effective legal system. Normative mechanisms for preventing, curbing, and punishing corruption that could not be established (Hao, 1999), lack economic conditions to increase the number of civil servants.

Globalisation and Corruption

Globalisation has several facets and involves cross-border interaction between governments, businesses, and services. Distances have mostly been bridged by recent technological advancements, while ideas and people have become more mobile. The interconnectedness and dependence between nations have increased. According to Freidman (2005), globalisation is an on-going phenomenon that affects the majority of nations and international systems today, if not all of them. Furthermore, globalisation has impacted domestic politics, culture, and the growth of economic and social systems globally. Nevertheless, globalisation has not been without controversy, especially regarding labour issues, environmental concerns, and general social inequalities. Despite the criticisms of globalisation, the world has become more economically, socially, and politically interconnected since the 1970s (KOF Press Release, 2008). As stated by Sung and Chu (2003), countries cannot afford to remain economically isolated because economic development frequently suffers as a result.

Researchers contend that as nations become more accessible to one another and as a result of globalisation, corruption increases as a result of the relationships that are

fostered in an effort to maintain competitiveness; a competitive marketplace for goods, services, ideas, and information. Leiken (1997) and Elliott (1997) highlight that this problem has been exacerbated by globalisation's widespread use of Internet commerce and offshore financial hubs, which has made it more challenging to identify unethical practices. According to Glynn et al. (1997), rapid economic globalisation leads to corruption spilling over and permeating the global economy, and according to Tornell and Lane (1998), corruption opportunities grow as raw material export shares rise. Williams and Beare (1999) also point out that there is broad consensus that globalisation has given corrupt practices a boost, creating opportunities for them, and contributed to the rise and spread of corruption. Williams and Beare (1999) conclude that these institutions have a clear ambition for global economic governance, which is dependent on the two major concepts of access and accountability, after reviewing the policy statements of the IMF, OECD, and World Bank. Therefore, as stated by Sung and Chu (2003), participation in the global economy alone does not reduce corruption; rather, it necessitates the regulation and supervision of supranational institutions, which have specific anticorruption objectives. According to empirical evidence, openness, or the percentage of imports, and corruption levels are negatively correlated, according to Ades and Di Tella (1997; 1999), Brunetti and Weder (1998), Treisman (2000), and Herzfeld and Weiss (2003). Furthermore, Golden (2002) offers proof that Italy's levels of corruption declined as a result of its increased globalisation and integration into the world economy. Globalization as an economic, political cultural, and environmental interdependence of the people of the world ought to change the fortunes of the world. It is believed from the viewpoint of economics and, commerce and trades that privatization and commercialisation are antidotes to economic backwardness but with the caveat that the political economy must be free of corruption.

El-Rufai Nasir (2003:41) thinks it is the key economic policy of the new world of globalization, democracy, and market economy. But in Nigeria, corruption has pushed the so-called private sector to seek to maximise its own value at the expense of the economic empowerment and integrity of the common man. An example is the modus operandi of large-scale corruption by the government in Nigeria. Devastating competition is the hallmark and the motive force of capitalism whose philosophy is encapsulated by the notion nursed under privatization that we live in a "world of win-lose competition between the leading economics" (Krugman 1997:10).

Political Godfathers

Godfathers in politics could be referred to as the phenomenon that occurs when someone hides under the influence of a powerful or wealthy person to achieve his political ambitions which he would not have achieved without the support of the godfather. According to Ayoade, godfatherism is the practice of political office seekers getting connected to an individual who is believed to have the ability to deliver desired outcome of electoral contest (Ayoade, 2006:90). The influence of the political godfather in Nigeria has won them some titles such as kingmakers, boss, mentor and principal, while the godson is seen as the beneficiary

and recipient of the legacy of a godfather (Familusi, 2012:441). The effect of godfatherism on the political system in Nigeria has not been profitable to the electorates and the society at large. This is because the godson will not be able to do anything that is against the will of his master, and many a time, the master's will is always against the will of the populace, therefore, the democratic system will now be a dictatorship in disguise. It also denies the electorates to choose their leaders, this made Gambo argue that when individuals in the society become too powerful to dictate for the rest, the integrity of the process of choosing leaders is compromised (Gambo, 2007:6). Many devilish and immoral acts are carried out by the godfathers in order to remain relevant in the political process of the country; this has negative effects on the development of the country.

Corruption and Statehood

The state being the sole agent of corruption in all its political, business, and economic ramifications has indeed made the state perform or live below its moral and political status.

Corruption has become a norm and practice of politics among the present political class from the Presidency to the Councillors of local authorities. The furniture mentality that this political class brought to governance represents the highest form of corruption and the enslavement of the popular masses of this country (Dukor, 2003:24).

The financial institutions in Nigeria are pinnacles of Corruption, and of course, cannot work in a country like Nigeria without them. Corruption of the state leads to sundry corruption of the individual and the corporate life of the state in economic and business matters. Hence, if the state is corrupt, then everything will collapse or get corrupt making the entire system to be corrupt.

Hence, corruption has endemic, cancerous and oracular tendencies. It is endemic because it normally catches up with a people or community; it is cancerous because it spreads from one person to the other until it engulfs the whole society. It is equally oracular in nature because once it spreads in a system; people tend to believe in it just as people of ancient times believed in and worshipped oracles. Corruption has to do with the consciousness beliefs, institutions and government of the people (Dukor, 1990:xi).

It is believed that the issue of corruption in a nation is a manifestation of the lack of political will on the part of the sovereign and the failure of the state to maintain law and order. Hence, the problem of corruption in Nigeria is a political one. It is pointed out that business corruption is a symptom of the failure to grapple with political corruption which raises questions on the moral uprightness of the state to exist or on the political will of the leadership to pilot the affairs of the state. Akpotor 2000:357; In Nigeria and Africa generally, public office-centered type of corruption has demystified the spiritual legal, and moral high standing of the state as an incorrigible concept. The state itself spearheaded public corruption like nepotism, favouritism, and election frauds witnessed in the April and May elections of 2003 in

Nigeria. It is stated that when this phenomenon grows in the society with the state. Neck-deep in it, it spreads over to the business and economic sectors leading to retardation in economic growth and development.

Gyekye Kwame (2003:395) considers political corruption the kind of corruption that involves rulers and other public officials who run the affairs of a state or a political community is a perennial problem that appears to afflict all politically organized human societies rich or poor, developed or developing ancient, traditional or modern, the running of whose affairs is entrusted to a group of people called public officials.

Conclusion

Corrupt practices are moral issues for a nation. The corruption in the public and business spheres of Nigeria has been primarily caused by the clumsiness, mismanagement, and collapse of the country's government, which has been further compounded by a pessimistic view of statehood. As this study has shown, political corruption- defined as the abuse of one's official or political position for one's own benefit in defiance of socially or morally acceptable norms- is a universal aspect of how governments operate across human society. Despite widespread disapproval, corruption is a universal phenomenon. A sufficient explanation for these phenomena needs to be found. The majority of social researchers appear to believe that deficiencies in the legal and political processes as well as individual people's economic circumstances are the root causes of political corruption. Although morality is undoubtedly at the centre of the phenomenon of political corruption, they place little to no emphasis on the moral circumstances surrounding corruption. Political corruption is thus, at its core, a moral issue. It is possible that strengthening the political system and enforcing anti-corruption laws will reduce the frequency of politically corrupt acts, but these benefits would be limited. Moreover, it is unlikely that all of the flaws and weaknesses in human institutions can be fixed.

The legal and political structures would provide an opening for the morally gullible public officials and others. People cannot be forced to be honest, after all. Thus, it is suggested that the integrity or moral rectitude of law enforcement personnel – who are held to the highest standards of moral behaviour and character as individuals – will ultimately determine how well the law is enforced. It is accurate to state that someone with moral integrity will find it simpler and more natural to follow the law and to take it more seriously than someone who is morally resistive, smug, or irresponsible. This truth suggests the ultimate morality in comprehending or explaining the problem of political corruption as well as in attempting to address it genuinely. A practical strategy for addressing the issue of corruption involves drastically altering how individuals, especially public officials, view and react to established moral (and legal) guidelines and recommendations. This drastic shift in moral behaviour is known as the "committal moral revolution." When a public official engages in political corruption, they are aware that their actions are morally and legally wrong. This is the rationale behind his covert pursuit of those corrupt activities. When faced with the temptation to engage in politically corrupt behaviour, he must decide between fulfilling his moral obligations to the public and

furthering his own interests by abstaining from political corruption. Of course, not everyone who has the chance to gain corrupt advantages takes use of it; yet, some give in to temptation brought on by the chance: Therefore, political corruption is the outcome of moral incapacity on the part of public officials as well as other members of society to commit to actions that will not jeopardize the welfare of the public or the collective. Therefore, more would be required if there were a sincere political desire to significantly reduce political corruption- to the point where it becomes insignificant than only legal tools, better economic conditions for citizens, and political structure changes. In regards to public servants who are in a position to engage in politically corrupt activities as well as members of the general public who beg favours from public officials and lead some of them to give in to temptation, it is necessary to confront issues of personal integrity, character, and honesty. People in the public and private spheres would both have to strengthen their moral resolve to abstain from political corruption.

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