

THE FAMILY AND CORRUPTION MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Fight against corruption is emerging as one of the key concerns in Nigeria in recent times. More than ever, efforts to control corruption have risen considerably among actors like the government, civil society groups, academics and the general public as part of the process of ensuring broader good governance agenda. In a bid to curb this menace, several steps have been taken by past and present administrations towards institutionalization and enthronement of accountability and transparency through policies formulated and agencies established to combat various forms of corruption in Nigeria. No doubt, this overwhelming recognition of corruption as a problem and the expressed commitment to control it, is an indicator that the acceptance of corruption as normal way of life in Nigeria is unacceptable. But in spite of governments' anti-corruption measures and incessant claim of "Zero-tolerance" for corruption and several other anti-corruption measures of civil society advocacy groups, Nigerians and other keen watchers of unfolding activities in the polity are still agitating for enduring panacea to a menace which has constrained development of the national economy, and inhibited good governance with adverse effect on, trust and ethos of democracy in the country. To ordinary Nigerians, events before the recent democratic rule and preceding eras, have shown that the 'monster' called corruption has grown uncanny-resistance to several efforts made to tackle it in the country; hence the urgent need for enduring panacea to the problem. Corroborating the broad consensus that corruption is a problem that requires crosscutting task to prevent its spread, this article examines definitional considerations of corruption, negative impacts of corruption on the populace, economy and finally recommended re-affirmation and strengthening of institution of the family (a bedrock or foundation on which other anti-corruption measures should rest) as a pathway towards corruption reduction in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of corruption worldwide has been greatly revived over the past decades. This issue is one that continues to excite controversy and debate at both academic, public and other several levels. However, in recent times, the phenomenon of corruption has moved to various stages of popularity as facts and evidences about the woes, problems and gains associated with corruption are becoming more widely disseminated from literature. Corruption is a global phenomenon that cuts across sectors, classes and other boundaries (Smarzynska & Wei, 2000, Lipset and Lenz 2000, Global Corruption report, 2004): This menace, over the intervening millennia, is regarded as one of the world's greatest challenges that attracts condemnation from all (Fjeldstad, 2008, UNGI, 2008). A great deal of existing research on corruption has shown that the phenomenon is by no means endemic to the continent, although the effects are clearly more devastating in Africa. In reality, it is a common vice in both developing and industrialized countries while countries in transition are not also spared of the scourge (Lipset and Lenz, 2000). No doubt, deep-rooted corruption is one of the most serious contemporary developmental challenges facing the continent of Africa (Kaufmann, 2004). Various impacts of corruption on Africans have shown that the claim of scholars and researchers that, corruption undermines the economic and political foundations of African modern states and hinders the growth of trade and investment needed for development are just to affirm the obvious. However, findings from social research, facts emerging from the activities of local and international agencies working in the area of corruption and poverty (donor agencies), vis-à-vis constant formulation of anti-corruption policies and establishment of anti-corruption agencies by governments in Africa, are indicators that, there is a significant increase, recently, in the attention paid to corruption as a central component of the broader good governance agenda in Africa. In other words, the pace of growing attention paid to the study of corruption in Africa directly mirrors the pace of the increasing awareness of the economic and social consequences of corruption and also a pointer to the fact that the problem

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has assumed a dangerous dimension (Suphachol, 2005). Moreover, the unprecedented attention recently paid to the phenomenon of corruption worldwide, might tempt one to conclude that, the problem of corruption is new or that its effects are just being felt. But contrariwise, the problem is far from being new but much more visible now due to factors such as new political and media conditions operating in many countries, growing role being played by nongovernmental organizations, such as Transparency International, in publicizing the problems of corruption, globalization which results in bringing individuals from countries with little problem of corruption together with others whose country is experiencing endemic corruption, political changes which have increased reporting of corruption, and increase in countries with democratic governments and free and active media among (Lipset and Lenz 2000, Tanzi 1998). It is evident from literature that corruption affects every society, although the incidence and magnitude of the problem is not the same. In Nigeria, it has become endemic and as a result its negative impacts on the polity, economic development, living standard of people, and provision of infrastructural amenities are manifold and well established (U.N. document, 2005). Moreover, corruption undermines the economic and political foundations of African modern states and hinders the growth of trade and investment needed for development. Reports from organizations like Transparency International, United Nations Global Impact and various successive governments in Africa indicate that corruption thrives in various forms and hinders sustainable development, with a disproportionate impact on poor communities in Africa (Dike 2003, Cooksey, 1999). It has also been established further, that corruption weakens core democratic values, challenges political stability, undermines the credibility of public institutions, and erodes the consolidation of good governance. Another evil of corruption is that it unarguably limits economic growth because it reduces the amount of public resources, discourages private investment and savings, and impedes the efficient use of development assistance (Sida, 2003). The World Bank, for example, has identified corruption as the single greatest obstacle to economic and social development and given priority to anti-corruption initiatives in its strategies for improving the quality of governance (U.N. document, 2005). Furthermore, factors such as fragile public institutions, weak civil society organizations, lack of an independent judiciary, inadequately paid civil servants and hiring and promotion systems that are not merit-based have been given as causes of corruption in Africa. These factors have all interacted to create a climate in which corruption can flourish within the continent (USAID, 2007).

WHAT IS CORRUPTION

Corruption being a secretive transaction is controversial in several respects, including definition and measurement. Consequently, definition of corruption varies and also perception of what constitutes corruption in different societies. Various definitions of corruption are rife in literature; yet, no single comprehensive and universally accepted definition of corruption has been given. However, several past attempts made in some countries to develop one were met with legal, criminological and political brick walls (UN materials, 2007). Other notable reasons adduced for definitional inexactness of corruption are multiple perversion of corruption on societies throughout human history, and the paucity of criminal convictions (Senior, 2006). As a way out of this ambiguity, Tanzi opines that though, it may not be easy to define corruption yet the problem is not generally difficult to recognize when observed (Tanzi, 1998). In a bid to devise a means out of the aforementioned predicament, some scholars have adopted different working definitions of corruption. Victor (2000) citing the works of Osoba (1996), Nye (1967), and Banfield (1961) defines corruption as "a behavior which deviates from the formal duties of a public role, because of private [gains] - regarding (personal, close family, private clique, pecuniary or status gains). It is a behavior which violates rules against the exercise of certain types of [duties] for private [gains] - regarding influence". He further argued that, corrupt practices include such behavior as bribery, nepotism, and misappropriation. Also, corruption has broadly been defined as a perversion or a change from good to bad. Specifically, corruption or corrupt behavior involves the violation of established rules for personal gain and profit (Sen 1999). Corruption is regarded as efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means, private gain at public expense; or a misuse of public power for private benefit (Lipset & Lenz, 2000). Explaining a common variant of corruption, Amundsen (2000) referred to bureaucratic corruption as the type that occurs in the public administration or the implementation end of politics. He argued further that bureaucratic corruption is the kind of corruption that the citizens encounter daily at places like the hospitals, schools, local licensing offices, police, taxing offices, ministries etc. In summary, corruption is the abuse or complicity in the abuse of private or public power, office or resources for personal gain (Chinhamo and Shumba, 2007). From the foregoing, definitions of corruption based on explanations in the literature can be categorized into two major typologies: definitions that focus on the behavioural aspect of corruption and the

second group defines corruption by roping in the relationship between and among the principal-agent-client relationships (Johnston 1996).

PAST EFFORTS OF CURBING CORRUPT PRACTICES IN NIGERIA

As established above, corruption to a large extent is an enemy of development. Various estimates indicate that corruption is a serious problem in Nigeria. Cases of corruption at different levels are rampant and has hitherto risen to a level where one can conclude without gainsaying that, apart from cultural and linguistic differences, one thing that unites Nigerians almost unanimously is the agreement that corruption has clamped an almost vice-like grip on the country. Therefore, the consensus is such that, corruption has been so established in people's national life that it appears that everybody is involved in it and if not, knows of someone who is corrupt. Reacting to the realization that corruption has become an issue of major political and economic significance in Nigeria, and that the phenomenon (with its varied consequences) has acquired the status of a continental emergency, various regimes in their apparent efforts to tackle corruption, had all introduced different measures to curb the problem. A cursory examination of the phenomenon reveals that past administrations in some of their responses to this challenge fostered reforms such as Gen. Murtala's Assets Investigation panels who in their probe indicted ten (10) of the then twelve (12) governors and subsequently had their assets confiscated, former President Shehu Shagari's Ministry of National guidance established to carry out ethical revolution, Muhammed Buhari's War against Indiscipline and tribunals to wipe out corruption and help probe political actors of second republic, Former Leader Abacha's War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAI-C) and Ex-president Obasanjo's Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPCC) as bodies responsible for fishing out corrupt officials and prosecuting them in the law courts (Dike, 2003). In spite of this catalogue of anti-corruption measures introduced in Nigeria, recent revelations from organizations such as Transparency International, World Bank, IMF etc, and also conditions of infrastructural amenities in the country (despite billion of dollars budgeted for this every year) and standard of living of Nigerians, attest to the fact that, as far as corruption reduction and eradication are concerned in Nigeria, repressive measure alone is inadequate and thereby not effective. This conclusion however, now leads us to the question of 'what exactly can be done to effectively reduce corruption in Nigeria'? This according to this study is strengthening of familial institution.

STRENGTHENING OF FAMILIAL INSTITUTION

Although corruption is ranked one of the gravest societal ills in the world very little is known about measures to counteract it. Curbing this phenomenon and improving economic governance has become a daunting task. However, with increased awareness of the detrimental effects of corruption, strategies to fight corruption have become more important in policy circles around the world. The continent of Africa is not left out as significant numbers of them have adopted some sort of anti-corruption strategies, although there exist great differences in terms of scope, impact and political will as far as these strategies are concerned. As a matter of fact, there is no universally applicable strategy to fight corruption. So, for any strategy to be effective there is the need for the strategy to be contextual and also taking into account certain local conditions. In this wise, this study is of the opinion that strengthening the institution of family and upholding values that support it will ultimately help in building a strong and enduring foundation on which other anti-corruption strategies would rest and thereby be effective. Broadly, social institutions are recognized as the broadest organizers of individuals' beliefs, drives, and behaviors. Evolving to address the separate needs of society (e.g., the military institution out of the need for defense; the family out of the social needs for procreation, socialization, and intimacy), social institutions are free-standing social units with their own inner dynamics and rhythms. Like separate musical scores, each has its own melodies, harmonies, and rhythms. The more powerful a given institution is in any given society, the more likely it influences everyday life. Having established few (out of many) significance of social institutions above, the first and most important of all is the family. It is evident in literature that the place and importance of family as an institution can not be overemphasized and contested. Studies have confirmed the family as one of the two major social institutions of socialization upon which control theory relied (Lilly, 1989). Although the institution of family exists in all human societies, its form varies from one society to another. An individual's life revolves around the family at one stage or another. Sociologists therefore, regard the family as the basic social unit in all human societies (Erinosho, 2005). Therefore, it is pertinent here, to assert that the smallest unit of analysis for sustainable development is not the household or the individual, but rather the bio-social group, the family with its hereditary, physical, social and material endowments. It is obvious that without any healthy and functioning families, culture cannot survive. It is only by strengthening the family can society be revitalized so as to

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guarantee the future of humanity. The family is essential in the development of society. It is in the family that one first becomes aware of his or her dignity and learns what it means to love and be loved, and what it actually means to be a person. One key concept of the family system is recursive causality, in which family members reciprocally influence each other over time (Iruonagbe, 2007). Also, it has been observed that the most influential learning environment for any child is that created in the home. This is where the attitudes toward learning, the motivation, support and rewards are the most profound. Learning Family encourages parents to take a very active role in their children's education, working together with the child to develop skills needed for learning and discerning. This is much more than simply delivering the child to a learning institution, making sure homework is done, etc. While Parent Teacher Organizations can be instrumental in developing continuity for the child between the parent and teacher, the ideal is achieved when parents and children learn together as teams, or "Learning Families," to study, research, and explore. Sharing the joy of learning together builds patriotism as well as national citizenship and the sense of social cohesion. All these functions of the family are embedded in what is termed family values. Family values is a political and social concept or term that has been used in various nations across the world to describe a set of varied and often ambiguous moral beliefs in society specifically in response to the perception by social or religious conservatives of declining morality within a nation. In Africa, the place of family values among different nations and cultures cannot be overemphasized. Very high premium is placed on these values especially in areas where culture of the people has not yet eroded by effects of globalization. African family value was forged on the basis of communal values. It is a common saying in Africa that "I am what I am because of who we all are". Embedded in African family values are virtues like Honesty, Caring, Equality and Social Justice, Integrity, Responsibility and Restraint among others. This value system contrasts markedly with the values of a rampant free market capitalism under globalization with its emphasis on individual wealth acquisition. The family values of Africans inform Africans about their humanity; these values maintain that people of African origin are human by virtue of the mutual support they give one another. Greed and avarice that characterized modern society was relegated the background and reduced to minimum. This was the spirit traditional Africans committed themselves to have created a socially cohesive and inclusive Africa. The adoption of Eurocentric family value systems by Africans and the neglect of their family value is the bane of African various societal ills. The family values of Africans which by nature are communalistic, socialistic, sacred and magical though linked with underdevelopment and primitiveness, had paved way for transparency and love of others which are strong factors to lure people away from activities that are detrimental to societal peace and oneness especially corruption. Whereas the Eurocentric type though highly modernized and compatible with capitalist objectified ideals has materialistic and secular tendencies which could easily lure people into different vices (Nyasani, 2007). It has been established that what largely makes the difference or created the will to resist temptation is the introduction and sustenance of ever present vertical power structure of the society in Africa over the freedom of individuals (Nyasani, 2007). There is a fundamental difference between the traditional African child and the child in the western culture. The child in Africa was muzzled right from the outset and was thereby drilled into submission to authority from above (including that of his parents and other older people in the locality).

CONCLUSION

Nigeria, a country that is proudly regarded as giant of Africa by many in the continent, as a result of abundance of natural and human resources, and which by now suppose to be experiencing rapid economic development and the citizens to know no poverty is currently bedeviled with many unresolved problems, but the issue of corruption is more pronounced and troubling. Perusal of literature has shown that corruption in Nigeria is like a 'disease' whose cure is yet to be discovered. This can also be inferred from the revelations of probe panels that have been set up at different times by different regimes in the country (Gbenga, 2006). Also, Transparency International ranking of most corrupt countries of the world lends credence to this, Nigeria was ranked the first in the world in 1996, 1997 and 2000 and third most corrupt 2004 and 2005 respectively with low corruption index of 0.69 which improved in absolute terms to 2.2 for the first time in 10 years in 2006 (<http://www.data360.org/index.aspx>, copied on 3/11/07 at 2 pm). This however is an indicator that pervasive corruption permeates many levels of Nigerian society. Unarguably, the case of corruption in Nigeria is a systemic one that goes beyond the individual to the structural and the institutional levels and is mainly rooted in the pursuit of individual prosperity as opposed to the common good. Fundamental to high prevalence of corruption in Nigeria is the acceptance of Eurocentric value by Nigerians with its very high individualistic tendency at the expense of African value that preaches communalism. However, the emergence of this rugged individualism which is an offshoot of Eurocentric value has led to the atomization of Nigerian society and given

rise to a rampant pursuit of individual gain. Consequently, this possessive individualism has undermined the goals and objectives of national and community level development and also encouraged in no small measures, the practice and involvement of many in social vices especially corruption. Based on the above, this study recommends that re-affirmation and strengthening of familial institution and its attendant values with its communalistic and socialistic tendencies would pave way for transparency and love of others which are strong factors to lure people away from activities that are detrimental to societal peace and oneness especially corruption. In essence, the paper suggests that the fight against corruption in Nigeria, though not muted, would be more meaningful and result-oriented when traditional African family values that transcend religion, culture and ethnicity are embraced and re-introduced into the modern society. With fully re-affirmed and strengthened family and its values in place, other anti-corruption strategies of the governments and other actors would find a pivot on which to hinge.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Supporting the broad spectrum of scholars who argued that corruption is an ubiquitous vice that requires crosscutting task to prevent its spread, and also affirmed the necessity of abating corruption to achieve sustainable development, this article, having explored the contrast of family value systems of both Eurocentric and African societies in an attempt to offer an explanation on how to reduce corruption in Nigeria submits the following recommendations which are as follows:

1. The urgent need by the governments at all levels to tackle poverty which is a major factor that denies many parents and caregivers the opportunity of spending quality time with their wards at home. In order to make ends meet most parents especially in urban areas leave home early and come back late so as to get enough money to cater for the upkeep of their children. However, these neglected children easily pick up antisocial behaviour that negates African family value in the neighbourhood. Government should embrace The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in order to address extreme poverty and its many dimensions.
2. Nigerians should be educated on the benefits and importance of embracing and learning of African family values and how this would help in steering people away from misconduct of any form.
3. Also needed is a greater focus on adoption of measures that promote incentives for families that have embraced African family value.
4. The need and importance of embracing African family values should be included in school curricula for students and pupils and in religious centres for people to learn.
5. Public office holders and other leaders should jettison aspect of Eurocentric family values that encourages vices and imbibe African family value and its other good virtues.

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