

Corruption and Nigerian Society: Biblical Perspective

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Abstract

The United Nations Global Programme against Corruption (UNGAP) defines corruption as “abuse of power for private gain”, corruption is an act of economic, social, political and moral sabotage. it is a crime against humanity and divinity, it has permeated into every fabric of the Nigerian society, it is responsibility for the ardent failure and breakdown of critical infrastructure in all sector of the Nigerian economy, it is also responsible for the erosion of the nation value system. The paper examined corruption in the Nigerian society based on biblical perspectives. It further conceptualizes corruption in the eyes of the bible. Hence, methodology adopted in the study is mixed method, and the research design used is historical and explanatory design. And content analysis was also adopted to examine the various texts sourced from primary and secondary sources. Historical and cultural theory of corruption was also adopted as the theoretical framework. The findings of the study identifies corruption as the main source and cause of religious, social, economic, and political violence in the Nigerian society. It further fuels religious killings and killings in the north east of Nigeria, and deepens underdevelopment and poverty. Its therefore, recommends the restructuring of the Nigerian state in the light of its ineffective and efficient composition via corruption, As this will address unnecessary tensions and agitations coming from corrupt conducts which is at variance with God's laws and commandment. The paper concludes that, government should be unbiased and proactive by providing good governance in all sectors of the Nigerian society, and that Bible clearly states that “the days of ignorance, God will ignore, let all men depart from wickedness. Judgment day is coming when all men will give account of their stewardship.

Keywords: Corruption; Bible; God's Laws; Corrupt Officials; Ineffective; Nigerian Society

Introduction

Corruption has eaten deep into every fabric of the Nigerian society, it is a cancer that has paralyze every sectors of the nation's economy, its manifestation, visibility and consequences are noted in the failure, non- performance and non-workability of the Nigerian state as a whole.

The effect or consequences and indeed the negative impact of corruption in Nigeria is evident in the patronage politics and big money syndrome in the nation's polity. Occasioned by abandonment and non- execution of several developmental and public oriented national projects and infrastructures nationwide. Hence, the negative impact of corruption in the Nigerian society cannot be quantify, measured or overemphasis, it is generally bad, destructive and unfortunates. Hence, it is reflected in the conduct, behavior, attitude of the people in the society.

But corruption is human conduct and nature and it is characterized by human behavior, altitude, desires, greed and postures. Corruption is fuel by man's desire and quest to outwit others, amass evil gotten and unaccounted wealth, properties, position, status, recognition and promotion via unexplainable, unconventional, unethical, criminal and questionable means and platforms.

It is getting paid for doing nothing, particularly in the civil service, where they are reported cases of ghost workers across several states of the Nigerian federation, corruption is bidding for a project or several projects and being awarded eventually, but abandon at the point of

execution, yet certificated and paid for its completion (when in actual terms those projects were and are abandon and left to decay and rot away) as manifested in the failure and total breakdown of all critical infrastructural and developmental projects, initiatives and concerns across the nation as a whole, particularly the roads and the railways to mention but a few.

Corruption is also the acts of rigging elections, manipulating electoral votes and results sheets by politicians to gain undue and undeserved advantage. It is a crime against humanity, it is an act evil in nature, and destructive in character and conduct, and it is an act of sabotage against Nigerian state and its people.

But it is carried out and perpetuated by people or human beings not spirits, it is human in nature and by no means spiritual or otherwise. It is people in the Nigerian society that perpetuates these acts of corruption in the different sectors of the Nigerian society and they are usually not reprimanded, condemned or prosecuted.

Rather there are always celebrated, honored, recognized and in most cases awarded with chieftaincy titles, honorary doctorate degrees by different institution of higher and their kinsmen respectively, hence corruption in Nigeria is institutionalized, has cultural, ethnic, sociological and societal coloration, affiliation and consideration. Corruption can further be describe and defined as breaking the rules pertaining to a certain office, it can be defined economically, and it can be defined as acting against general interest.

However, it should be stated clearly here, that the focus of this paper is not to contend with or argue on the type of the definition of corruption already postulated by scholars or in existence or is best suited, but to assert, highlight and establish the heinous implication of corruption as a form of human conduct and activities in relation to

Biblical perspectives, that is, how does the Bible sees such conduct and activities?

Having said that, therefore, corruption according to Ms Farida Waziri, former EFCC chairperson posit that, corruption comes from the greek word 'corropius meaning an aberration or a misnomer, hence corruption is a negation or shift from the originally intended purpose or plan of what was established or design, to the extent that, it has becomes an aberration or a misnomer. Furthermore, the United Nations Global Programme against Corruption (GPAC) defines it as "abuse of power for private gain".

The Transparency International has chosen a clear and focused definition of the term as "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain". It can also be defined as a pervasion or change from the general accepted rules or laws for selfish gain [1].

The World Bank however defines corruption as: The abuse of office for private gains. Public office is abused for private gain when an official accepts, solicits or extorts a bribe. It is also abused when private agents actively offer bribes to circumvent public offices and processes for competitive advantages or profit.

Agbu [2] further observed that public office can be abused for personal benefit even if no bribery occurs, through patronage and nepotism, the theft of state assets, or the diversion of state resources. Given this development therefore, corruption connotes any behavior that deviates from an established norm with regards to public trust.

It also means theft of public trust whether the person concerned is elected, selected, nominated or appointed and it does not matter whether the person affected holds office or not since anybody can be corrupt. Corruption in whatever form, meaning or circumstance it will assume, will always remain a condemnable act, a crime against humanity, a crime against man and a crime against God in general.

The Research Questions is that why is corruption so prevalent and common in almost all countries of the world, despite heavy religious presence in all these countries particularly Nigeria? Has religion or its messages of these various religious bodies also been corrupted? Is corruption Biblical? Or who is corrupt, is it those preaching religion or the religion itself? Has religion failed the world or has corruption conquered the world?

It is found in the Bible and in the Koran, "thou shall not steal, and thou shall not bear false witness" this is common in all religion. There is no religion in the world today who encourages its followership to engaged in corruption and in any form of misconduct and behavior that is against the people in particular and the state in general. In fact the Bible clearly admonishes its followership to obey the law and respect, honor people in power.

People in Nigeria are noted to be a very religious people but very also very ungodly, because in their daily conduct and behavior they ignored the basic teachings of their faith, this reflected in their daily dealings with one another, in spite of abandon projects, stealing and embezzlement of public funds in the various sectors of the economy

Review of Literature

The theory of history and culture serves as the theoretical frame work of this paper and it also serve as a tool of analysis and examination of Various theorists as well as many popular accounts attributed to countries with different rates of corruption. While it

noted here that, corruption is not applicable or prevalent in the Nigerian society alone.

But, also it is very rampant in other countries of the world, it is a global phenomenon, because, it is a sole function of human conduct and behavior, to that extent, it is common in every part of the world. Again, According to Grey Wint cited in Treisman [3], in nearly all Asian countries there has always been a tradition of corruption.

Public office means prerequisites Myrdal [4]. Also, Kohli [5], observed that corruption in India has with the passage of time become a convention, a psychological need and necessity to say. According to Prince Bakunin cited in Sajo [6], "there is stealing and corruption everywhere, but in Russia I think there is more stealing and corruption than in any other state".

Within Western Europe, Southern Italy is the home of "amoral familism"– including the propensity to offer and accept bribes – and Spain is home to amuguismo, the use of contacts and intermediaries in dealing with the bureaucracy, and influence trafficking in political life" [7-9].

Further west, the Argentine playwright, Mario Diamant cited in little and Posada-Carbo [10] asserts that "corruption in Latin America is not merely a social deviation; it is a way of life". In many ways corruption has undeveloped the African state. This is noted in the high of level of poverty and societal and economic degradation across many African society, particularly the Nigerian society.

The activity of corruption and its subsequent impact has hindered growth and development in the Nigerian society, and has deepened divisive tendencies, social and economic isolation of the people at different strata of the society.

Many scholars contend that corruption in the Nigerian state, particularly in the north east of the country is responsible of the advent of the Boko Haram terrorist group in the polity. The mismanagement of resources and the abuse of public offices resulting in the complete isolation and abandonment of the people in term of provision of basic social and economic infrastructures prompted the rise of these group in the bid to fine social expression, recognition and economic relevance and survival in the Nigerian society.

Failure of the Nigerian state via corruption in its social responsibility and contract to the Nigerian people may have responsible for the outburst and break of these groups calling for secession in the south east, islamization in the north and restructuring in the west. Religion also contributes the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian state and society.

Corruption is an act of human conduct and activity, carried out by people who are entrusted or who occupy position of authority and responsibility and by their greed and selfishness betrayed the public trust and confidence repose on them by the public for private and personal gains.

The Bible frowns at such acts and behavior, and called it a sin, it is a sin to steal public funds, it is a sin to divert and abandon projects that has been fully paid for yet not executed or completed, it is a sin to be corrupt.

All these are condemned by God, when he said in Deuteronomy, thou shall not steal, and thou shall not commit murder. Corruption is an act of stealing and murdering, the activity of corruption is murderous in nature and stealing in nature, because of the after effect and consequence of such evil acts and conduct.

It is in the same vein amounting to killing somebody or destructing somebody in like manner, when you divert public funds, misappropriate or out rightly steal monies meant for the public good to personal use and benefits, the resultant effect of such acts and conduct is the same as killing or murdering a person physically, because, by that very act or misconduct, you have deprived somebody in particular and the public in general the benefits expected from that office or position, and this is murder and it is killing.

In certain countries of the world, particularly in China, corruption is a capital offence, perpetrator are usually subjected to stiffer punishment including death by firing squad and the bullets paid for by the perpetrator's families other countries subjects their corrupt perpetrator to long term jail sentences.

The Bible admonishes people to love one another as themselves, and to ignore these commandment is to be murderous and in conflict with the God almighty and who can fight God and survive it.

Corruption is an act in conflicts with God's laws and commandments, the Bible says in Proverbs 14: 34 "Goodness makes a nation great, but sin is a shame to any people". Sin bring shame to any nation and its people, Nigeria fits this description.

Sin (corruption) has brought shame to the people of Nigeria in all sectors of the economy, resulting to the failure and collapse of the Nigerian state in all its fundamental areas of governance and leadership, be it the educational sector, the agricultural sector, power and housing sector and in governance and government in general, solely because of the effect and consequence of corruption in commonplace in Nigeria.

The Bible clearly states that, righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to the people. The reproach of corruption in Nigeria in particular and in the world in general in alarming and monumental to say the least, the failure of government is a function of corrupt leaders, a nation is an abstraction, it is people that makes up a nation, not the trees, rivers, geographical location or the topography of the nation, but the people in it, constitute a nation, hence the quality, conduct, altitude, character and the general behavior of the people in that nation is what constitute a nation.

As the Bible clearly that righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach to its people. Sin brings a reproach and shame to the people in a nation, just as corruption has brought underdevelopment and backwardness to the Nigerian state as a whole. it was reported in channels News, by Transparency International, that since independence 1960, that over three hundred billion dollar have been looted and stack in foreign accounts abroad at the expense of the Nigerian state and its people by its corrupt officials and leaders.

Corruption is an act of human conduct, it is an activity of a people driven by greed, selfishness, self-centeredness and evil desire, which the Bible clearly condemned such acts and conduct as noted in Galatians 4:1-24, God frowns at such behavior and have stipulated an unending punishment for those who engaged in such behavior and conduct. God had brought his wrath to the city of Sodom and Gomorrah for violating his laws, and exalting sin in various degrees particularly, corruption and others.

When he (God) said to Abraham on his way to the city of Sodom and Gomorrah to destroy it. "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave"(Genesis 18:20-21) and the city of Sodom and Gomorrah was eventually destroyed with fire and brimstones, only the disobedience perished

with the wicked and nothing was ever hear from Sodom and Gomorrah till date. God hates sin including corruption it pays to obey God and follow is commandment and laws.

Problem Discussion

The problem of this study is noted in the inefficient and ineffective state of the Nigerian society via monumental and unprecedented corruption and sharp practices. Its composition and political structures are characterized by monumental corruption and imbalances in governance, in social structure, in economic structures, in religious structure, in the allocation and in the distribution of the nation's common wealth and resources.

The political structure and the composition of the Nigerian state somewhat drives home corruption in every fabric of the Nigerian society, remains a problem, hence, the degree of imbalances in the political, economic and social structures and also in the allocation and distribution of political offices, appointments and available resources.

These are imbalances via corruption in the Nigerian society, constitutes sources of political, Social and religious conflicts in the Nigerian state.

Again, as earlier noted above, corruption thrives in an atmosphere of fear and suspicion, the amalgamation of 1914 by the British colonial master was ill conducive and without any consideration to the various tribes and ethnic groupings of what is now known as the Nigerian state.

Though, the sole purpose and intent of the British colonial master was primarily commercial and economic in nature, what later emerged was a nation polarized by fear, suspicion, rancor, strife, tribal war, ethnicity, nepotism, ineffectiveness and political imbalance in structure and character, etc.

All these create an atmosphere for corruption to thrive, hence a safe haven for impunity and lawlessness in the Nigerian society, as evident in the breakdown of various critical infrastructures and facilities nationwide.

Solely, because every tribe and ethnic grouping is seeking to outdo one another for personal, tribal and ethnic interest at the expense of merit, efficiency, probity, accountability, transparency and productivity.

Furthermore, corruption has created a class state in the Nigerian society from the very rich through ill-gotten wealth to the very poor through neglect and failure of the government of the day, who by the actions and consequence of corrupt officials are made poor.

Corruption also manifest itself in a state of anarchy, nepotism, religious bigotry, favoritism, social injustice and failure of the government of in the execution of its constitutional responsibilities and duties to the very people for which, it is constitutionally bound, hence, a safe haven and atmosphere is created for corruption to blossom and thrive accordingly.

Again, the composition and indeed the way and manner the Nigerian state is structured politically, socially, economically as a nation, breeds and encourage among other things inefficiency in governance, ineffectiveness in the administration and management of all interests, (particularly scarce resources, people etc),wastefulness, incompetence, lack of transparency and accountability in general. Corruption thrives in an atmosphere of division, fear, tension intimidation and imbalance.

Many scholars contend that Nigeria is a consuming nation, a wasteful one for that matter; they import and consume what they not produce and abandon what they can produce, this is seen in the petroleum and gas industry, Nigeria ranks the highest among the nations that flare gas in the world, Nigeria is the eighth largest producer of crude oil in the world and largest producer of crude oil in Africa.

Yet, it does not have a workable, reliable and substantive refineries that refines petroleum products in maximum capacity to the benefits of all its citizenry. Rather it's re-sought to importing of all petroleum products, thereby earning the status of a wasteful and corrupt state.

Many have contended that Nigeria's present political structure creates and makes corruption possible and easy to perpetuate solely because of the magnitude of inefficiency and ineffectiveness in the administration and allocation of resources.

This paper agrees with the proponent of those calling for the political re- structuring of the Nigerian state without tempering with its unity to reflect the existing reality of the present times, perhaps it may stem some of these excesses in nation building, taking into consideration the vast nature of the nation's topographical and geographical status.

Historically, the Nigerian state came into existence in 1914, following the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Protectorates could be said to be built on a tripod stand. That is, North, East, and West. This tripod, which of course represents the major ethnic groups notably, Hausa and Fulani, Yoruba and the Igbo respectively, virtually dominates every facet of the Nigerian society.

Therefore, it was this division and domination of the minorities by the dominant ethnic groups that brought about competition, anxiety and mutual distrust for one another by the groups that make up the country, hence the advent of corruption through schemes, manipulation, deception and several other unethical practices by these grouping to again advantage and undue advantage above and among them. Therefore, corruption in Nigeria is endemic with cultural phenomena. Also, the Nigerian society is bedeviled with corrupt practices such that once a person is appointed into any political office the expectations from his people will be so high in terms of what the office will offer. Hence, corruption in Nigeria knows no bound irrespective of tribes or cultural affiliations and social standing.

Objectives of Study

The main Objectives of this study is to investigate corruption and Nigerian society. Hence, the specific objectives are as follows:

- Review the prevalence and common places of corruption and corrupt behavior in the world and extension, Nigeria, despite heavy presence of religious organizations in the Nigerian society (churches, mosque and traditional institutions).
- Review the contributions of religion and religious organizations in the Nigerian society.
- Examine religious messages or information from the various in the light of the Bible, and corruption in the Nigerian society.
- Access corruption and corrupt behavior in the Nigerian society in the light of the Bible specifically .
- Investigate who is corrupt, whether the Preacher, prophets, messengers or the religion itself.

- Investigate whether religion has failed the world, or corruption has helped the world.

Limitations of Study

The major limitation of this study is that information sourced on corruption and Nigeria's society may have been overtaken time, event, development and space, since society is dynamic, and ever evolving. More so, another major limitation to this study, is the limitation of quality or outcome of data extracted.

From secondary and documentary sources, which may be limited in knowledge, content, conduct, exposure, circumstance, and experiences surrounding the interviewee at the time of personal interviews or otherwise. Hence, the details of the study are likely to be limited to some extent.

Research Method

This is the techniques and procedure adopted in obtaining data and relevant information for analysis and explanation. It also explains the structural framework of the research. Hence, the methodology adopted in this study is qualitative method.

Again, the research design for this study is historical and explanatory design. Hence, the reasons behind these research designs is that the study is reviewing events, conduct, behavior and activities that had taken place in the past and still ongoing in the Nigerian society in particular.

Population and Justification

The population of this study is the Nigerian society or state. However, considering vastness of the Nigerian state, an attempt to study such a large population will be vain effort and energy. As such the study purposively selected six states that have high population of church members or attendees and further narrow the study to the individual churches where there are high influx of personalities like politicians, government workers, banker, and businessmen and women.

Again, the justification of this study is particularly noted from the comments and remarks made On July 16, 2018, by the former United States president, Barack Obama, on the recently held, Nelson Mandela Memorial public lectures, "that strong men are ascending in politics globally, under the pretext of democracy, thereby undermine democratic institutions and every politicians lies and when they are caught they lie some more (BBC NEWS)".

Clearly, politician lie to the electorate and promise heaven and earth during campaign, when they are eventually voted into office, the renege of the campaign promises made in time past. Lying is corruption because is deception and creating false impression about a particular time. In this context therefore, politician represent the character and conduct of individuals in the Nigerian society, including the pastors, prophets and God's messengers.

These politicians are humans that live in a society and even hold position of authority in the society, family, and churches, yet they lie at will. Where is the influence of religion here or in their lives and on the society? Religion should have a positive impact on the people in general and by extension politician in particular. It should not turn a blind eye corrupt conduct and behavior in the society

Sample Selection and Method of Data Collection

As stated above the population of this study is the Nigerian society and the sample selection is the various religious organizations observed in the various state of the federation. These religious organization including mega and minor churches were selected from six states out of the thirty six states of the Nigerian federation.

The reason is because of the high population of church attendees or church members, including politicians, government personnel and virtually people from all spectrum of the Nigerian society. These states include: Lagos, Cross River, Imo, Oyo, Delta and Benue states.

Hence, the method of data collection is the used of interviews and document analysis which is anchored on the adoption of mixed methodology as a research method. The application of these method of data collection (interviews and document analysis) is design to add value and credence via improved validity and reliability of the findings of the study.

Hence, There were 50 interviews /respondents in the enlightened category who are scholars, pastors, Bankers and government officials. Again, information were extracted informed journal, newspapers articles, published books, and internet materials.

Ethical Issues

The people interviewed preferred to remain anonymous and their identity concealed, particularly people in the professional cadre. Hence, the researcher agreed to these terms by respecting their confidentiality. However, the absence of their identity anonymity did not in way erode the quality and value of the information sourced in the course of the study.

Analysis of Data

The method of data analysis adopted in this study was basically content analysis and textual approach. The result sourced from qualitative and quantitative data via structure interviews and document analysis were analyzed accordingly, via the means of content analysis and textual approach comparing and evaluating relevant information for authentication, verification and accuracy.

Results and Conclusions

The findings reveal the depth of corruption in Nigerian society, particularly in public institutions and religious organization especially in churches. The notion whereby the church will amass so wealth at the expense of vulnerable public was alarming and appalling and so unreligious.

It further shows that corruption is somewhat connected to the degree of dissatisfaction and aggressive behavior in the society, because of the failure of these public institutions. Hence, a major source for political, social, economic and religious conflicts in the Nigerian state.

A typical example is the rise of militancy and terrorism via Boko-Haram in the north east of Nigeria. More so, from the biblical perspectives, corruption is a sin and every sinner will have their place in the lake of fire reserved for the devil and his cohort, so says the Bible.

Every Sunday and Friday our churches and mosque are usually filled to the brim people from all works of life, yet on Monday and every other day, somebody somewhere in Nigeria in particular and in the

world in general will perpetrate fraud, and several crime against and divinity, one government official will be an accessory to the embezzlement of public funds and abandonment of several projects.

Nigerian are very religious people, yet very ungodly in their day to day living, and corruption is an ungodly act. The paper further buttress the call for the re-structuring of the Nigerian state as a way to stem corruption and every other excess associated with it in all facet of the Nigerian society.

Good governance (which is the absence of corruption) is another requirement needed to stem corruption from the face of the Nigerian society, without good governance, there can be no accountability, probity, prudence and resourcefulness.

Good governance plays a critical role in ensuring collaborative, peaceful, coexistence and progressive process of democratic culture and socialization. It also attracts investment to a country, improving productivity and competitiveness, promoting political stability and enhances rapid socio-economic development and growth.

There is therefore, a nexus between corruption and the fear of God which describe it as a sin, which brings shame and reproach to the nation. Hence, Religious leaders should be admonished in the area of preaching and teaching the Bible in the right perspectives and promoting the biblical value system.

It is sad to note that corruption and indeed indecent acts and behavior are condone and supported by religious leaders in the places of worship today, religious leaders should be reprimanded when it is discovered that they have deviated from communicating the true message and by these act and conduct, eroding our value system. The culture of impunity, unaccountability, inefficiency, ineffectiveness and injustice should be address as a way to stem corruption from our shores.

We also recommend that all the public loots should be thoroughly investigated and the offenders, once found guilty should be prosecuted and the loots taken back on the face value of what has been stolen to serve as deterrent for would be corrupt officials.

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