



CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON LEADERSHIP AND THE CHALLENGES OF CORRUPTION TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The challenge of corruption in Nigeria has become endemic and all attempts to find lasting solutions by successive governments is proving abortive. The importance of leadership in organizations and communities cannot be over-emphasized. Leadership is about influencing others. However, leaders are supposed to note that God is the ultimate, while He employs them as human beings to be His regents, agents or representatives on earth. This study therefore examines, among others, leadership in the biblical perspective and in the contemporary time; biblical perspective of corruption and corruption in the present time; and causes and effects of corruption on sustainable development in Nigeria. Primary and secondary sources were adopted for data collection with materials from library and interviews as instrument. Analytical and interpretative methods constitute method of data analysis through interpretations of opinions by scholars. The study revealed that leaders, especially Christian leaders, should note that the power to be in a position belongs to God only, and that they, should lead by being models to other Christians and the society at large. The work, recommended among others that religious leaders should re-orientate their members towards, the source and essence of power and shun greed and acts of corruption as a way to follow the tenets of Christian religion as light and acts of the world to crudity rising wave .of corruption and to promote sustainable development

Keywords: *Leadership, corruption challenges, Sustainable and Development*

Introduction

The importance of leadership in organizations and communities cannot be over-emphasized. Leadership is a process whereby a person influences a group or groups of other people to achieve agreed objectives. Manoj, (2013) submits that leadership is the process through which a person influences others to

accomplish an objective and direct the organization in such a way so as to make it more cohesive and coherent. Northouse, (2007) earlier opined by that leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to a common goal and ac

Nigeria as a nation has faced the challenge of lack of good leadership and corruption (from time immemorial. This is not without strong effects on sustainable development which entails judicious use of resources to cater for both the present generations yet unborn. Since independence, the leader has failed the follower in many ways in this regard. The expectations of having a great nation by the citizenry, are yet to be realized. More so, corruption has taken its toll on all aspect of .Nigerian national life. There is the need for effective and impactful leadership at all levels ,of Nigeria's political journey.. However, a lot of leadership issues remain, unresolved in the life of Nigerian nation which keeps on affecting the nation's sustainable development.

Leadership in Nigeria has been characterized with problems such as corruption, lack of integrity, ineffectiveness and reckless abuse of power, Despite the abundant human and material resources available to Nigeria,, she finds, it difficult to overcome the .leadership challenge confronting her. Nwagbosoi and Duke (2012;230)| traced the leadership problems to the colonial adventures into Nigeria. They argued that the colonialists deliberately created a situation whereby it would be difficult for nationally acceptable leaders to emerge. From this premise, it can be argued that the leadership problem in Nigeria is due to lack of vision by the past and present leaders. Due to this, efforts to have good governance in Nigeria are hindered;. The vision to lead the nation to the right track for development is lacking in her leadership. Thus, the need for pragmatic and visionary leadership is highly necessary to move the nation forward and to ensure sustainable development.

Another factor resulting in leadership problems is corruption. The case of corruption has become alarming. Corruption here encompasses financial mismanagement, perversion of justice, financial fraud and embezzlement. There are several cases of financial crimes being perpetuated at all level of government. It is quite unfortunate that there is high level of corruption at all levels. All efforts to fight this menace yet to yield desirable results. In order to proffer the right thing to do to bring about a change in the orientation of the

leadership about corruption, it therefore behooves to examine the biblical concept of leadership.

Biblical Concept of Leadership

The concept of leadership in the Old Testament stems from the belief that G6a is the leader of his people. Brueggemann, (1997) pointed out that, it was the testimony of the Israelites that Yahvveh leads them in every circumstance, the readiness of Yahweh to enter into risky situations, vulnerability, even the exile so as to be in' dangerous and transformative solidarity with his people who are at risk is demonstrated at all times in the Bible. Brueggemann argued further that the loudest testimony of Israel was that Yahweh brought them out of Egypt into the Promised Land. Israel's, theological reflection and testimony on the leading ,of Yahweh focuses on the contradictions of the fact that life in Israel was subjected to processes.

Brueggemann (1997) added that, part of Yahweh's leadership is leading, testing and feeding of the Israelites. The use of the term, governing term 'lead' is intensified with the use of the phrase "to humble you" in reference to the. Israelites so as to make them subjected to drastic need and to be unambiguously .depended,, on Yahweh, Yahweh dealt with Israel for his sake and his reputation; thus made him to go to any length because of Israel. This attests to Yahweh's generosity, attentiveness, willingness and capacity to dangerous and deadly situations including those he created to test them. Brueggmann concluded by saying that leadership forms the basis for human leadership as found in the Bible.

Leadership in the Bible suggests that religious leadership is a response to God's call to service. The earliest record of leadership in the Bible is Abraham's leadership; It started with an act of faith. He began the journey bless all the f of faith which is to bless all the families of the earth. Leadership from Abraham is a journey of faith that involved risk. Leadership is therefore, a response to faith. Without faith leadership in response to God's call looks impossible .

According to Harry (pdf), Moses found leadership difficult. He became, frustrated over and over again. The new community proved^ difficult for Moses, Idolatry and, corrupt visions of what God's purpose was became: to formidable obstacle for Moses' leadership. Also, the Egyptian culture and consciousness were retained. By the people as they moved in slow progress to

the Promised Land. Moses paid the prices for the leadership he gave to the Hebrew community as he found leadership among the Hebrews difficult. With regards to the New Testament, Harris submitted that Jesus' Pillar, lived a remarkable life of complete trust and commitment to the kingdom of God; Jesus instilled in his disciples the true meaning of leadership. This is what brought him into conflict with the authorities of the kingdom of the then world. Jesus' leadership was about liberating, redemption, prophetism, transformation and salvation. This, he pointed out and was the reason for his crucifixion. Kingdom priorities come first in the life of a leader in Jesus' teaching of leadership. There are numerous biblical narratives that show that leadership standard of God is different from human standard. Saidi (2013:30-32) pointed out that there are values, attributes and behaviors that are specific in Christian leadership. These attributes are truth, accessibility, discipline, accountability, respect, justice, tolerance, unity and many more. He acknowledged that there are several models in Christian leadership among which is Christ's model. He cited the shepherd model of Jesus relates to North African cultural context which pointed out the functions of the shepherd to include leading, feeding and protection. The metaphor of Yahweh as Shepherd points to the primary function of a shepherd of deliverance out of distress and relationship between the leader and deity. The implications of fighting corruption to promote sustainable development is enormous.

Concept of Leadership in the Contemporary Society

There are many definitions to the word leadership. Silva (2016:1) sees leadership as one of those concepts very hard and difficult to define because each person defines it from his own understanding and society level. Variations in the definition of leadership points to the fact that there is no consensus of what leadership, and therefore, the search for a better and acceptable definition of leadership continues everyday. Silva stressed that the purpose of leadership process is to make the shared goals between the leader and the followership accomplished. Between the leader and the followers, there must be agreed goals, which, they set to achieve. It is therefore, the duty of the leader to ensure he influences the rest of the team to accomplish the goals. When the followers discover the leader is not acting on their behalf, the leadership process is then affected. When a leader is not acting in the interest of the team of followers, the

set goals of the team are not set to be achieved and the interest of the team is jeopardized.

Corruption in the Biblical Parlance

The concept of corruption is as old as human civilization. The underlying meaning of the concept is universally understood. Morality and corruption are the two sides of this same coin. Rothstein and Varraich (2017:30-31) opined that the soul represents purity while sin represents immoral act that corrupts the soul. It is decomposition that takes place through moral decay; it is a general category of all kinds of practices which are regarded to be dysfunctional and morally corrupt. Corruption takes many forms and shades. It includes bribery, fraud, dishonesty and lack of integrity. Others are injustice, unfair play, lies, greed and a lot more. Also, the word corruption comes from two Latin words *cor*, meaning 'altogether' and *rumpere*, meaning 'to break'. Putting the two words together, means "to break together," Vulgate Bible for the origin sin of Adam and Eve where they deviated, from God's plan for them as they were lured with temptation by Satan. Corruption could also be linked to the breaking of covenant as inferred from the Old Testament which resulted from breaking of God's commandments. This broke the covenant relationship between Yahweh and his people, Israel. Corruption in whatever type form and shade,, breaks the covenant of love between God and his people.

In the New Testament, Vine and Unger (2000:59) likened corruption to the word *remove* which means 'destroy' by means of corruption or to bring into worse state. It was used to express the effect of evil company on the believers' manner or in other words, the effects of an association with those that they did not stay with truth, but held on to false doctrine. In 2 Corinthians 11, it signifies the effects made, on minds or the thoughts of believers by getting them corrupted toward Christ. In Ephesians 4:22, it means 'corrupt,' morally decaying or after lust of deceit. The other word used to mean corruption is *8sa<j)9evpa*) meaning 'to corrupt utterly' or to be 'corrupted in mind,' resulting from the doctrine of false teachers;|(I Tim. 6:5).

Concept of Corruption in the Contemporary Society

Corruption, according to Myint (2000:35) connotes "the use of public office for private gain." In other words, it can be described as "the use of official position,

rank or status by an office bearer for his own personal benefit." Examples of corrupt behavior, include bribery, extortion, fraud, embezzlement, nepotism, cronyism, misappropriation of public assets and property for private use and influencing peddling all of which are inimical to sustainable development. From the list of corrupt behaviours, fraud and embezzlement can be carried out by an official alone without involvement of any other person. Others like bribery, extortion and influence peddling involved two parties.

Myint (2000) expatiates that the religious life of Israel ,at that time was not better than, the social, moral, economic and political lives of the nation. The people especially ,the rich, were very religious, with the religious service, well attended. They often made pilgrimage to Bethel, Gilgal and as far as Beersheba. Tithes and offerings were given with joy and punctuality. Also, religious festivals were held, with high music, singing and dancing thinking that they were in the favour and protection of God. The religious corruption include idolatry and temple .prostitution. Their act of worship was corrupt in nature and practice

Corruption is not limited to only developing countries. It is .found even in the developed societies such as Europe, America, Soviet Union, Japan and a lot more Though lyanda (2012:37) pointed out that some authors have made arguments that corruption is rampant in the Third World countries, however, it is worth noting that it is also prevalent in the developed nations. Three categories of corruption, obtains as follows::

1. Street level corruption which shows corruption in the administration \$\$ citizens interact with officials of the government.
2. Business corruption, being the kind of corruption that occurs among the low and medium level business organizations. This may involve connivance with equivalent public officials or not.
3. High level corruption which involves huge amounts of money in the highest level of finance, public service and administration (lyanda, 2012:37).

It is unfortunate to say that the church is not exempted from this ugly situation as lyanda (2012) pointed out. He stated that the society is a reflection of what takes place in the church. Churches are established on daily basis in many parts of the country, but unfortunately the impacts are not being felt. Nigeria perhaps, is the most religious country on the African continent and has a great Christian

influence, yet it is paradoxically that the most morally and ethically corrupt nation on the African soil is Nigeria, This is of grave effect of sustainable development.

Commenting on the depth of corruption in Nigeria, Lere (2007:133-13-134) listed some of the vices that have eaten deep into the Nigerian society as below:

1. The use of fraudulent means to amass wealth from the public fund leading to exploiting the masses. By this, they corruptly amass wealth, in ,Nigeria by using fraudulent ways to dip hands into the public coffers, to make corrupt gains. This leads to robbing the masses of their rights on many things such as social amenities, security, meaningful living, good governance and-the rest, Several public officials are in the habit of illegally gaining access into the public funds to divert the money into private pockets for their personal use.
2. Rigging and falsification of election results. This is seen everyday in Nigeria. The unfortunate aspect of this is that immediately after the, elections⁷, the electorates are completely neglected. Corrupt politicians Continue to make promises to the electorates during election campaigns, which they (cannot fulfil.
3. Living extravagant lifestyle. The rich (mostly the politicians) do this to the detriment of the poor masses. They are also insensitive to the needs of the poor and needy. They only care for only their own personal welfare, without considering the poor and the needy and even go to the; extremes in suppressing the poor and needy all in the name of power.
4. Bribery. This has taken the highest level in Nigeria, both in the public and private domains. Politicians ask for gratifications before appointments, to mention but a few. The resultant effects of all these on the sustainable development of the nation cannot be over-emphasized.

Causes of Corruption in Nigeria

Scholars have written volumes of literature on some of the various reasons for the prevalent corrupt practices in Nigeria. Babalobi (2008) gave the following as some of the causes of corruption in Nigeria. The first on this list is weak government institutions. Government institution are too weak to perform their

statutory functions assigned to them. Laws giving legal backings are too weak and inadequate to provide measures that will cover the effective functioning of the institutions.

Poor incentives has been identified as another factor by Babalobi. The culture of not paying workers measurable amount of salary is a case for corruption. The least paid workers find the cost of living very high. They are unable to meet their basic? needs. But the fact remains that they must survive. In a bid to survive, they use every opportunity at their disposal to involve in corruption in one way pr, the, other.

It has been discovered that there are low punishments to be meted to culprits in Nigeria. In view of this, people are not afraid to get involved in corrupt practices. Insecurity of informants also do promote corruption. It is not uncommon to hear that the identities of informants are disclosed to the persons involved in the crime when gratification is given. This endangers the life of the informants as some are assassinated in the process.

More so, corrupt method of 'win it at all cost' has encouraged corruption. The lukewarm attitude of those who are supposed to enforce the law also encourages corruption. Such law enforcement agents include police, judiciary, etc. These ones are even more corrupt than the ones they are supposed to check as could be observed in everyday transactions of the said agents on the Nigerian roads even in the broad day light. Many innocent souls have been reportedly shot just because of #100 or #200.

Some cultural and institutional factors such as nepotism and strengths of family ties and value, are usually linked to the feeling of obligation such that rights of individuals are sometimes subordinated to group interests. Another factor is the bureaucratic bottlenecks in the public sector. All these gives rise to the state of corruption generally.,

Effects of Corruption on Sustainable development in Nigeria

Corruption has always given negative consequences on the affected society or community. The Nigerian case is not an exception. It has brought untold hardship and unqualified destruction on the country. The effects spread across all facets of life. Such effects are inimical to growth and development as well as sustainable development of the nation. Some of the effects are as below:

Corruption has devastating effects on the country. Corruption lowers economic growth because in the first instance, it reduces incentives of private investment. It also distorts public investment decisions. Corruption impedes economic growth and development through investment, openness and political instability (Dong, 2011:67). Corruption reduces direct foreign investment and increases expropriation risk. Corruption reduces the level of foreign private investment and expenditure on necessary infrastructure reduced.

Corruption has adverse effects on the environment and some communities because it affects the income distribution of the country at large. Corruption makes it impossible to resolve some problems in some sectors of the country, some of which are electricity, transportation, health, education and communication. Above all, corruption has taken Nigeria into the ditch.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The work defined corruption as submitted by the opinions of a few scholars. The biblical concept of leadership was discussed inter-alia the present view of leadership in the contemporary society, A peep was made into the biblical view of corruption followed by that of the contemporary world. Some causes of corruption were surveyed with their attendant effects on the nation Nigeria. This work wants to conclude by highlighting that greed for wealth and power are the main causes of corruption in Nigeria. Some of our leaders in the nation and churches have let go their rightful concern about God, i.e. "No fear of God" in them. They should go back to that to serve as examples and models to the political leaders.

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations, are proposed with the view to help curb corruption in Nigeria for sustainable, development. There should be conscious efforts by religious leaders, especially, those of the church to re-orientate members of their religious faith towards the source and essence of power. It should be made known that power belongs to God who alone is, the ultimate ruler in the affairs of men. Electoral process reforms in Nigeria should be carried out to minimize the financial burden it involves.

Also, election malpractices should be avoided. This will reduce the domination of the public offices by corrupt, godless and self-seeking men and women parading themselves as perfect fits for these offices. This would go along in

reducing corruption which is the bane of sustainable development. Leaders should be encouraged to shun greed for material wealth. This will lead to temptation to steal public funds for private use with its attendant effects on sustainable development. The society's perception of riches should be reappraised so as to question the source of questionable wealth. There should be efforts to strengthen the laws that enable the anti-corruption agencies such as Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) and Financial Investigation Unit (FIU) so as to serve the purpose for which they were established. There should be enlightenment units in these organizations which will liaise with the public on the dangers of corruption in the Nigerian society. Religious organizations should be enlisted enlightenment campaign so as to make it more effective and result-oriented for sustainable, development. Finally, those guilty of corrupt practices should repent of their evil ways and turn a new leaf so as to end corruption in Nigeria. By this, they are to make, restitution by returning what they have stolen and stored away to the commonwealth of the nation so as to compensate for the havoc they have wrecked on the masses of the nation and for effective sustainable development. Leaders should a bridge the gap between the leadership and the followership. Followers should also elect leaders who are ready to be part of them rather than those that will be alienating themselves from the masses.

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