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CORRUPTION AND MALADMINISTRATION: THE MAIN CAUSES OF POVERTY IN NIGERIA

ASOGWA, EMMANUEL CHUKWUJINDU (PhD)
Department of Religion and Cultural Studies,
Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu- Alike Ikwo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria
jindusemman@gmail.com, +2348030999226

ABSTRACT

There is no section of government in Nigeria that is corruption free, be it the executive, judiciary, legislature, private sectors etc. Some individuals are deeply involved in corrupt practices. That is why people say that corruption is a way of life in Nigeria. It has devastated the economy to the extent that the government of the day cannot do without borrowing and no plan of paying the debts. A time will come when government will find it difficult to pay its workers. The truth is that if government of the day decides to take decisive effort in recovering the looted funds and use it judiciously, Nigeria will be better again and the level of poverty will reduce drastically. Furthermore, if government should do the needful and not being selective in fighting and punishing the culprits, people will turn a new leaf but if reverse is the case, things will continue to get worse by the day. This looting has caused more havoc not only to the government and economy but also to the poor masses who finds it difficult to feed one square meal per day. The paper examined the failure of government to listen to the yearnings of the people and also punish the offenders without which, Nigeria cannot progress politically and economically. Therefore, with the use of comparative phenomenological method of analysis, this paper proved government efforts not good enough and there was need for government to go back to the drawing board to tackle corruption and maladministration in order to reduce poverty to the barest minimal.

Keywords: corruption, maladministration, poverty, insecurity, economy.

Introduction

In any country that corruption is not checked properly, there will be likely no significant development and improvement in the economy. High rate of corruption kills a nation just as Nigeria is both in political and economic disarray. Nothing is moving in the country due to fabulous looted funds which would have been used for investment and development. Instead of investing it in Nigeria for the benefit of all, corrupt individuals use it and invest or stashed it in overseas account for their selfish interest thereby impoverished the country the more. The Corruption Perception Index (CPI) 2020 rated Nigeria the second most country in West Africa with Guinea – Bissau more corrupt than Nigeria in the sub-region. Also the Transparency International cited that corruption Rank in Nigeria increased to 149 in 2020 from 146 in 2019 (Transparency International, 2020).

However, many thought at the inception of this present regime, that corruption will drop to the lowest minimal but reverse is the case. During the corona virus disease (Covid 19) pandemic, corrupt politicians received palliatives from the Federal government to distribute

to the poor masses knowing fully well that there is serious hunger on ground, these was done to cushion the effect of suffering of the masses at the peak of the pandemic, some States stacked them in their warehouses, some politicians in their homes until hoodlums broke into them and carted away everything (Guardian, 2020). This was caused by the government maladministration of failing to monitor the distribution of palliatives that gave rise to the hoarding in almost all parts of the country. Even at the mist of suffering, some corrupt politicians used it to cheat the poor masses.

However, Nigeria is in a state of acute economic recession in which people are dropping dead while some who have lost hope in Nigeria, society and themselves are resorting to suicide as an escape route. The looting in Nigeria has no boundary, imagine money meant for pensioners being looted by former Head of Civil Service of the Federation, Oronsaye, former chairman of the Pension Reform Task Team, Maina etc accused of siphoned_over ₦1 billion from pensioners' funds (Aiyetan 2015). Those who served the country for many years and they are being denied of their pension. In 2018, a staff of Joint Administration and Management Board (JAMB) claimed that a snake swallowed N36 million cash from the vault of its office in Markurdi, Benue State (Ebirim and Adesoji, 2018). What a shameful and deceit story. The case of looting by Diezani, the former minister of petroleum resources is still hanging on the balance since 2019 as she is on the run and the government has not done much in other to recover every penny she looted. The Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), only recovered jewellery worth ₦14 billion and house worth $80 million dollars (Guardian, 2021).

The government of the day which was believed to fight corruption has been caught on its web. Majority of the masses have lost hope on the present administration and its methodology in fighting corruption. The recovered loots was enough to change the economy of Nigeria to a better shape but due to the fact that the government plays politics of ethnic chauvinism or gives lopsided appointment thereby placing the wrong people on the wrong positions. Moreso, those appointments were given as a result of settlement to his political supporters that might know nothing about that field and thereby endangering the economic growth of the country. The opposition party in the country has challenged the All Progressive Congress (APC) government to account for the ₦800 billion, claimed to have been recovered, especially given allegations that recovered monies have been re-looted and shared among the top most officials of the Buhari's led administration and party faithful of APC leaders (Osaretin, 2020). According to (Yakubu, 2021), the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), which is the opposition party, said that:

> "the revelation of $65 million (₦31 billion) fraud in the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBA), in which President Buhari's son in-law, Gimba, is reportedly involved, is a confirmation that the Buhari presidency is a sanctuary for for fraudsters, treasury looters and common criminals. The PDP holds as wicked, afflicting and provocative that while millions of hardworking Nigerians cannot afford their daily meals and other basic necessities of life due to the misrule and corruption of the All Progressive Congress (APC), and the administration, they are daily assailed by revelations of unbridled treasury looting and President Buhari's watch".

It is heart rendering that those elected to lead us right are leading us wrong by sharing our money and resources to each other thereby impoverishing the masses. They care less about

the members of the society; it is only the remnants that are pushed down to the citizens which cannot affect any change. Corruption is rooted into this administration, if the National House of Assembly can be easily bribed to pass a bill to the favour of Mr. President; it implies that we cannot move forward. Imagine Senate President collecting ₦823million, Speaker of House of Representative receiving ₦617million, which each Senator was bribed ₦8.2milllion and House of Representative ₦2million fast to pass controversial Bill (Sahara, 2021). All these monies being shared, stolen or carted away by our so called leaders are the main reasons why Nigerians are poor and economy somersaulting day in, day out. Those in the position of authorities are not being fair at all, they are not for the interest of the masses in any way but rather, they are there to loot the more. If all these looted funds and even the recovered funds are being invested well, Nigeria will be a better place and if our leaders should be able to do the needful, poverty and hunger will be a thing of the past.

Causes and the effects of corruption and maladministration

There are many reasons behind these evils of corruption and maladministration in the country and they can be seen as follows:

1. Corruption and maladministration are the main cause of poverty in Nigeria. Asogwa (2021) is of the view that the problem facing Nigeria today can be seen from the perspective of bad government and maladministration. It involves misrule in the exercise of power, misuse of our economic resources, lack of accountability, managerial skills, reckless spending, over borrowing of loan etc. the government of the day have been sustaining the country with the numerous loans acquired from foreign countries. Any government in power be it the military or even democracy, is there to get his own loot from the the country. They do not have the interest of the poor masses at heart, but rather, they gather to share the resources with no plan to improve the country's economy" (p.10). Moreover, the method of party system is not in order in Nigeria. During the party primary election, the incumbent president or governor singlehandedly appoint a successor of his choice and impose him on the party members and at the same time give instruction to the party delegates to vote him in. The candidate might not be fit for the position, but because an instruction was given by the incumbent, they sheepishly follow suit. The reason for the incumbent to appoint a successor might be because of his wealth, role he might have played in his personal life, or someone to cover his loots, he automatically becomes the party ticket bearer. During the campaign and election periods the incumbent will use state's resources or the power of incumbency to win election for his candidates. This is called godfatherism and a good example was the case of Senator Chris Ngige, a former governor of Anambra State and his estrange godfather, Chris Uba. Both engaged themselves in bitter political fight in the name of who should control the state's treasury and it led to the kidnap of a sitting governor (Otigbu, 2013). This is an example of how politicians' loot the treasure of state, money meant for the development will be carted away by selfish individuals thereby impoverish the masses.

2. Furthermore, the way and manner appointments are being given in this country is one of the major reasons for corruption, marginalization, and backwardness in terms of improvement in the economy. Most of the appointments in this political dispensation are seen as being lopsided in nature. It was on this note that the former Chairman of Economic and Financial Crime Commission Magu was appointed to fight and prosecute corrupt individuals or government agencies in the country which he was later accused and suspended of the same corruption (Premium Times, 2020). According to River State governor, Wike, the exclusion

of other regions in the country from key appointments and absence of social justice were some of the factors causing unrest and violence in the country (Omolaoye, 2021). Favoritism, nepotism, ethnic chauvinism, etc are the other of the day and unless these sentiments are abolished, the claim to improve this country is just a charade. One part of the country cannot be better in everything. Nigeria is a diverse country with multi-ethnic groups which recognized diversity and imbibe the constitution of Federal Character Commission Act. When one zone or section is continuously being favored in appointment, it results to more development to that particular zone at the detriment of others, looting becomes more institutionalized within themselves. It leads to impoverishment of others. In 2015, the early appointments President Buhari made, Northerners got 75 per cent of it and that led to widespread outcry of 'Northernisation' (Olu, 2020). Lopsided appointment breeds corruption and mismanagement as they are from the same side or region.

3. Failure of both past and present government to punish the offenders. Corruption is on the increase today because both past and present government have not taken stringent effort in punishing the offenders and that is the major reasons why almost all the politicians and the appointees are still looting. The agency of EFCC that is empowered to fight corruption is corrupt and that is why the whole system has failed. The suspended chairman of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Ibrahim Magu was accused for his failure to give proper account of missing 332 out of the 836 recovered real estate property in March 2018 which worth billions of Naira (Premium Times, 2020). He failed to preserve and realize the economic value of the recovered assets which would have yielded profit for the betterment of the country. The government which are the leaders are not serious about this menace because they are aware that almost all of them are involved in this cankerworm called corruption, if not they would have enacted a serious law against corruption. For instance, if a law has been enacted that any corrupt politician should be disposes of his properties and it is being implemented, all of them would have learnt their lessons thereby changing the economy positively which would have reduce drastically the poverty level of this country.

4. The involvement of Judiciary. The judiciary is known as the last hope of the common man. This presupposes that it guarantees equal access to justice and equity; and equally ensues that the rights of the citizens are adequately accommodated, and judgments handed down in accordance with the dictates of the law and facts presented to the court. But gone are the days. Most of the times, the common man is denied justice because he has no money or connection. The failure of the judiciary to carry out their duties according to the ethics of the law or constitution is one of the major reasons our country is in dilemma till date. Nnochiri, (2018) agreed that corruption in the judiciary was not limited to bribe-taking, but included the giving of judgment or orders based on considerations other than legal merit. In our law court today, judgments are being delivered based on instructions or directives from the "Above" or higher authority. The governor of Imo State, Hope Uzodinma is on power today which many people see as aberration of law which has resulted to hardship and economic failure which was caused by the Apex Court. The interpretation that the person who took 4th position becomes the winner was seen by many as an injustice. The inclusion of results from 388 polling units which were wrongly excluded by the electoral commission (INEC) made Mr. Uzodinma to emerged the winner of the election (Yahaya, 2020).

Furthermore, most of the judges make millions of naira through election petitions. This period is the highest bidder wins the case not minding who is wrong or who is right. The Nigeria Corruption Index reported of a pilot survey the independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) through its chairman Bolaji that six female judges were offered ₦3,307,444,000 billion and five male judges were offered ₦392,220,000 million, these bribes were linked to election matters (Onyekwere, 2021). This is why wrong people are ruling us due to the fact that they bribe their way out and justice was perverted. The judiciary quest for illegal money has affected the economy of Nigeria in the way that those money given to them by corrupt politicians, when they came into power, they try to recover whatever they spent double or even more. These are done to the detriment of the innocent citizens who bear the burden in the hard way.

5. Government insatiable quest for foreign loan: President Buhari's quest for borrowing loans from foreign government is alarming and it has worsened the economy thereby increasing the poverty level of the country. The National Bureau of Statistics showed that Nigeria took loans from China, France, Japan, India and Germany taking the country into total $33 billion foreign loan amidst dwindling revenue and low standard of living generally for Nigeria (Sahara, 2021). It is not in the good interest of the country to borrow in this manner regarding the fact that Nigeria is in economic recession at the moment. The worse part of it is that the borrowed loans are not judiciously used in order to improve the economy rather, they are being looted again by those on top.

6. Corruption as the main brain of poverty in Nigeria: Nigerians would not have been poor if not the high rate of looting by the politicians and top government agencies. Corruption impedes good governance and provision of public goods and services which throws many citizens into the line of poverty in Nigeria. The mess of hardship or poverty in the country today was as a result of reckless looting of politicians which had endangered our economy. Asogwa (2018) averred that "there is no disputing fact that endemic corruption in Nigeria poses devastating consequences in all ramification of national development social, economic, political, educational, religious and socio-cultural which has directly or indirectly contributed to poverty" (p.112). In Nigeria where corruption is endemic, it has direct linkage with human development which resulted in poverty, hardship, valueless of currency, diseases and illiteracy etc. According to Transparency International (TI), in 2020, it was disclosed that Nigeria ranked 149 on Corruption Perception Index (CPI), out of 183 countries (Vanguard, 2021). With this high rate on corruption, it has affected the economy so badly and it has impoverished the people because funds meant for developments or for injection into our economy are being embezzled by few corrupt individuals. Imagine ex-governor Orji and his son were interrogated by Economic Finance Corrupt Commission (EFCC) over mismanagement of ₦2billion Ecological Fund and mismanagement of Sure-P funds (Premium Times, 2021). If this money and other looted funds were injected in the economy of Abia State, the non-payment of salaries, the unemployment and the poverty level will change for better. Before the re-election of President Buhari in 2019, eight politicians who worked with him had pending corruption cases worth ₦232bn for ₦100bn for each of the politicians (Akinkuotu, et al, 2018). The problem with this country is that very few are too wealthy being money looted from this country and majority are too poor being the outcome from the looters. It is not in our blood to be poor, or is it from our environment, nor is it that we are daft, our

problems lies in our corrupt politicians who vowed to be looting instead of investing the country's money and recourses into our economy to make lives better for all.

7. Insecurity. Insecurity is one of the most challenges that Nigeria is passing through which if no drastic action is taken to avert it , might lead to anarchy. The government inability to effectively and efficiently protect lives and properties are also taking another dimension on the economy: cost of food, raw materials, doing businesses in the affected zones and Nigeria in general is dwindling the economy of the country. Book Haram, banditry and kidnapping in the North, Fulani herdsmen terrorizing in the Middle Belt are on rampage while in the South East, unknown gunmen are causing havoc and the Eastern Security Network (ESN), Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), etc are on course with agitations. No business can grow on volatile or crises zone. Peace, stability and good governance has been noted to be prerequisite for economic development and meaningful achievement of any Nation.

However, in Borno State for instance, according to the secretary of the government, Usman, agreed that Boko Haram insurgency and insecurity have stifled Nigeria's economic growth and development. It has devastated the economic livelihood of the people of the zone at the local level in farming and commercial activities among others (Marama, 2021). In some areas, armed bandits insisted that farmers must pay before having access to their farmlands during the planting season, only to return during harvest period. With insecurity, food production is very low due to climate change and insecurity caused by herdsmen versus farmers violent conflicts, the cost of food is on the high increase, driving food inflation to 21.79 percent, while allied industries that depend on the agricultural sector for raw materials look unto the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) for limited foreign exchange for importation (Adekoya, 2021). As it affects the North, so also to the middle belts whose means of livelihood based on food production. The region produces most of the food eaten in the country's commercial nerve (Ibekwu, 2015). The havoc perpetrated by armed Fulani herders included killing of farmers, crops being destroyed by cows, inability of farmers to cultivate their land, due to fear of the unknown. These have affected the economy of the region and the brain behind the high cost of food in the country.

Furthermore, as the North and other regions are boiling, so also the South East that is known for business. The South East is groaning over the sit-at-home order by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) for the release of their leader Kanu which has continued to cripple the socio-economic activities in the region (Nnachi et al, 2021). No business is allowed to operate on that day be it government or private establishment, banks, markets, shops, filling station, transport firms, even government workers do not attend on Mondays. This disruption is not good for the development of the South-East, it is adding hardship to the people (Sahara, 2021). With the rate of economic disarray in the country coupled with this every Monday sit-at-home at South-East, it has affected the sources of livelihood and has degenerated to insecurity problems. This has spilled into months, the effect on the economy was felt, businesses, transportations, markets activities are grounded and Monday code named "Ghost Monday" (This Day, 2021). Monday has been unconstitutionally declared public holiday for both private and government workers in South East. The compliance to sit-at-home every Monday has adversely affected the Gross Domestic Product and the general economy of the South-East and Nigeria in general.

Remedies to Corruption and Maladministration in Nigeria

The problem of corruption and maladministration are not spiritually caused but man-made and the remedies must come from man. The constitution of the country should stipulate seizure of the properties of the looters and a jail term as a follow up without any sentiment, religious or ethnic attachment. The chairman of the EFCC must be no nonsense man and should not be controlled by the president to avoid detecting to him. The members of the judiciaries should be checkmated on the delay or manners of delivering judgment.

To avoid lopsided appointment which breeds corruption, mistrust, agitation, segregation e.t.c. the law of Federal character commission should be followed to the later.

- The government should take insecurity in the country serious without playing politics with it. There had been a lot of statements pointing accusing fingers on the side and top individuals in the government for masterminding some security challenges in some areas the security agencies one time made intelligent report linking one of the North-West governors of colluding and sponsoring the violent and criminal activities of bandits in the zone (Adenekan, 2020). Personal interest should not supersede general as some crises are politically motivated.

Furthermore, the security agencies should endevour to fish out bad eggs among themselves as there are many saboteurs. An example is the arrest of Army officer and his girlfriend who were engaged in assisting bandits with military uniforms and ammunition in active connivance with other saboteurs (Maishanu, 2021). There should be an over haul of the military service to avoid security lapses. On august 24, 2021, bandits in large number attacked Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna, kidnapped one officer; Major Datong, while Lt. Col Wulah and Flt Lt Cmdr Okoronkwo were shot dead while 2Lt Onah sustained gunshot injury (Vanguard, 2021). This is a big slap not only on the military but Nigeria in general. This is an indication of how security works in Nigeria.

Finally, the president should marshal out procedures of paying back the loan taken and not thinking of taking more. The worse part of the loan taken is that it was not used to establish companies that will yield more profit but rather, it was used in paying salaries of government workers and some are being looted thereby increase the poverty level of the citizenry.

Conclusion

The level of poverty in the country is on the increase as many find it very difficult to have a meal per day. The poverty was not caused by our environment nor is it spiritually made but rather it was caused by corruption and maladministration. Leaders are not leading us right as almost all the politicians and top government agencies are interested in embezzlement of the public funds. They see any position being occupied as an avenue to loot. Despite all the mineral and human resources that the country was blessed with, some few individuals diverted them for their personal benefit. A drastic action needed to be taken in other to correct the anomalies. The security agencies should go back to the drawing board to fashion out best ways to tackle boko haram, banditry, kidnapping, unknown gunmen and rotten eggs should be rooted out of the service.

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