

Corruption and Tribalism in Nigeria Political Context

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ABSTRACT

The menace of corruption and tribalism in Nigerian political context remains a critical problem that entangles the stability of peace, well-being and development of the nation. The chronic implications of this menace can best be understood through the atrocities that has colored the media. This observation calls for the need to engage the significance of church leaders not only in the church but in the Nigerian society. This paper employs an analytical and contextualized methodology. Corruption and tribalism in Nigeria began through the deviation from the rule of conduct because of personal interest; therefore, this study proposes a curbing platform through reconciliation of the society and rule of conduct through the Church and Church leaders. In other words, the viability of the Church can inherently influence the Nigerian society and curb the menace that has crippled its values. The walls of corruption and tribalism in Nigerian politics do not actually stand a chance; rather it can be leveled just like the walls of Jericho through the awakening of the Church.

Keywords: Church, Corruption, Nigeria, Politics, Tribalism.

Introduction

Corruption is a feature of African social, political and even religious life, with disastrous consequences (Kunhiyop, 2008). It is very obvious that the escalation of corruption accompanying by tribalism is alarming to an extent that is already saturating every spheres of Nigerian society. The degree to which atrocities are becoming a normal human activity seems to turn down some strategies that have been put in place to combat corruption and tribalism. While the menace keeps gaining ground and sabotaging the well-being of the inhabitants of Nigeria, the situation keeps calling for a potent and reliable ways of curbing the menace. However, this paper strife to unveil the evaluation of the church leaders in curbing the menace as well as enhancing a socio-economic wellbeing alongside the peaceful coexistence of the inhabitances of Nigeria. Also, this paper in partnership with some scholarly sacrifices pictures the urgent need in curbing corruption and tribalism which seems to have run directly or indirectly through the veins of the inhabitances to ensure sound growth of the country, Nigeria.

Corruption and Tribalism: A Conceptual Understanding

Corruption is a derivative of the Greek word which means an aberration or a misnomer (Waziri, 2010). Corruption incorporates smuggling, fraud, illegal payments, money laundering, drug trafficking, falsification of records, false declaration, evasion, underpayment, forgery, and concealment (Fagbedebo, 2007). Corruption is the act of making someone morally corrupt or becoming morally corrupt by one's self. Corruption is not an impulsive crime; instead, it is calculated and premeditated (Kunhiyop, 2008). Corruption transcends regional dichotomy as its manifestations are felt in developed and developing countries (Annan, 2004). Thus, corruption is

an attractive discourse in the human society simply with its negative implications.

Tribalism means behavior or attitudes that are based on being loyal to a tribe or other social group. Tribalism encompasses the condition of being tribal which connotes loyalty to one's tribe with primitive interest, tranquility and intrinsic allegiance. Tribalism is in direct contrast with the idea that all of humanity belongs to a single moral community. Khan defines corruption is an act which deviates from the rules of conduct because of private motive and interest that is non-public (Khan, 1996). The fact that corruption is the end result of tribalism unveils the relationship that exists between them. The statement 'private motive and interest' connotes a sense of tribalism which sponsored the deviation from the rules of conduct.

The subject of corruption and tribalism can as well be explicated in the context of an infant(new born baby) who feed on breast-milk and later as the baby grows he begin to feed on solid food. The process of the baby feeding on breast-milk could represent tribalism while the feeding on the solid food could symbolize corruption which is the end result of the feeding on breast-milk. Tribalism starts from the primitive sense of interest and end-up deviating from the rules of conduct for the benefit of a particular tribe. Manifestations of corruption includes; favoritism, nepotism, tribalism, sectionalism, undue enrichment amassing of wealth, abuse of offices, the use of official position for private gains, derivation of undue gains and benefits.

Arowolo and Adekunle in an article, liken the evaluation of corruption in Nigeria to the theory of amoral familism postulating that an analysis of corruption in Nigeria can be situated in the theory of *Amoral Familism*, such that the parochial tendencies of the political class are revealed in the principle of loving self and immediate family over the citizenry (Ogbeidi, 2012). Meanwhile, Banfield's analysis in 1955 is

congruent with this stance (Banfield, 1958). Banfield argue that family-centric society prefers nepotism to the public good. Although, corruption and tribalism have saturated the Nigerian society; it is a preternatural vice which exists as a consequence of self-centeredness and an abuse of morality. In Nigeria, there are several terms used for corruption: give and take, chop make I chop, fraud and extortion (Shields, 2004; Olagbemiro, 2005; Kunhiyop, 2008).

According to Nihilola (2013), in 2004, the Annual Corruption Perception Index Report of the Transparency International ranked Nigeria as the third most corrupt country in the world. The embarrassing news seems to be of no effect as Nigerian fraudsters gain national and international recognition through their activities within and without the country (Kolawole, 2019a). 419 perpetrators in Nigeria just as people call them seems to have gone international; with other report that one of the biggest fraud cases in the world involving about 242 million dollars arising from a bank fraud in Brazil is connected to people in Nigeria (Onwubiko, 2005).

Brief Cases of Corruption and Tribalism in Nigeria

There are many notable instances that stood as a practical evidence of corruption and tribalism in Nigeria. In respect to this shameful menace, Nwaobi avers that Nigeria is one of the very few countries in the world where a man's source of wealth is of no concern to his neighbours, the public or the government (Nwaobi, 2017). In view of this, there are some policies that have been engaged to combat corruption among many other deleterious menace. While the principal essence of engaging these policies is to exposing of some corrupted acts in the governing system, this policy has paid off in recent time as \$9.8m stashed inside a fire-proof safe in a dilapidated building in Kaduna in February 2017 by the NNPC former managing director, Andrew Yakubu, has been recovered by the EFCC through whistle blower and has been temporarily forfeited to the Federal Government (Adeyemi, 2016).

Similarly, in April 2017, \$43m, N23m and 27,000 pounds were found in an apartment in Ikoyi area of Lagos State allegedly meant for NIA's covert operation (www.premiumtimes.com/news/223742-corruption-efcc-secured-1,500-conviction-2016-official.html).

Furthermore, it seems to be shameful experiences when some corrupted individuals are celebrated in one way or the other. Arowolo and Akinola unbiasedly posit that it was the former Governor of Adamawa state, James Ngilari, who was Convicted by the court. All corruption case against the former governors and other PEPs(Politically Exposed Person) have remained inconclusive. The case against the Senate President, Bukola Saraki, was unnecessarily prolonged and heavily politicized (Arowolo and Akintola, 2018). The EFCC, for instance, has in recent times, lost a number of high profile corruption cases in court, including cases against Dame Patience Jonathan, wife of the former President, Governor Ayodele Fayose of Ekiti State and Senate President, Bukola Saraki (Arowolo and Akintola, 2018). These cases are notable one among some cases of corruption alongside tribalism in Nigeria.

However, it is never an exaggeration to posit that even our elections in Nigeria are coloured with corruption and tribalism. The social media are full of numbers of atrocities under the spectacle of political campaigns and hypocritical “free and fair election” (Adelodun and Kolawole, 2020). All these are constant variables that consolidate evidences of corruption and tribalism in Nigeria. It is more shameful that even among the less privilege citizens, corruption and tribalism are majestically celebrated and thereafter shifting the blame on the dignitaries and leaders in Nigeria. Adebayo (2018) in his excellent postulation of the generalization of corruption in Nigeria posit as follow:

Corruption is deeply seated in the social life and worldview of many Nigerians. It is preponderant

in the Nigerian society: a messenger in an office wants to use his office to collect bribe; little children cheat their parents by falsifying their school fees, mechanics in the streets, car dealers, spare parts dealers want to get money than what their services deserve; they remove spare parts and steal petrol from their customers; pepper grinders (*elero ata*) want to gain from their customers at all costs.

This show how the virus of corruption has circulated among the Nigerians which eventually allow the celebration of corruption and tribalism in Nigeria regardless of their position or occupation. More seriously, Adeboye (2018) further present the involvement of the Arm force who were expected to frown at corruption and tribalism due to the nature of their job unfortunately, reverse is the case as they are no longer ashamed even to practice corruption in the public.

...police men, Federal Road Safety Corps members have turned their duty on the road to a major money-making venture; bricklayers and carpenters steal cement and nails from their customers; school principals and head teachers cheat their students by enforcing illegal payments; students run to 'miracle centers' for exam malpractices; many taxi drivers, cheat passengers and so on. All these corrupt attitudes and acts are a result of inhuman activities of man (misuse of one's freewill) which have adversely affected our society.

While the postulation above shows the misuses of one's freewill which eventually affect the wellbeing of other, it is in respect to the implication of corruption in Nigeria that Adebayo emphasized that the criminal diversion of the nation's economic resources for personal benefits has variously contributed to the leakage of capital from Nigeria for

illegal deposits abroad (Adebayo, 2013). In the same vein, unless the Nigerians see the need and are ready to combat corruption and tribalism, the desire to curb the menace may continue to become a mirage. corruption and tribalism is deeply rooted and must be deeply uprooted to ensure peaceful and good development.

Effects of Corruption and Tribalism in Nigeria

Adeboye explained corruption as an impediment to morality, lack of integrity, and ethical values (Adeboye, 2018). In time past and even now, Nigeria is one of the most vilified countries threatened by breakdown of core moral, social, and cultural values through tribalism (Oyewole, 2018). While tribalism is prevailing in northern Nigeria; it is also gaining ground in the south-west. Here are some notable effects in Nigeria:

Bad governance: Aristotle, a famous Greek philosopher argued that the key element of politics is plurality or diversity of interests and views. He posit that politics is the way that people from different backgrounds manage to negotiate their clashing interests in order to solve public problem but presently in Nigeria, reverse is the case; the reactionary on diversity of interest are mostly displayed under the spectacle of corruption and tribalism. Nigerian leaders seek self satisfaction they mostly turn out to be like ethical egoist rather than being a utilitarian (Ayantunde and Kolawole, 2019). Politics in Nigeria especially have deray from the initial unanimity and selfless motive of the founding fathers (Kolawole, 2019b). Among many other factors that keep fostering the vilification of Nigeria in other part of the world is the bad governance. Other deleterious effects of corruption and tribalism through bad governance includes; political violence, masses killings, kidnapping, stealing and embezzlement.

Insecurity: the emerging of Maitasine sect in 1980s has depicted a state of fragility in security context of Nigeria

whereby the sect progressively metamorphosis to different botanical names popularly known today as 'Boko-haram' and 'Fulani herdsmen'. Kukah, lamenting on the amnesty of the Nigerian, said it is a horror posted by some deceptive promises on the security matters of the nation (Kukah, 2011). It is no longer a silent saying that Nigerian security arms are not reliable due to the level of impotency parading the horizon of the security arms as a result of corruption and tribalism. It is painful that the Nigerian arms forces are indirectly encouraging criminals through negotiation that is obviously self-centered (Onwubiko, 2005).

Moral decadence: What strengthens the life of the community is held to be good and right; what weakens the life of the community is held to be evil and wrong (Mbiti, 1973). The level to which morality keep depreciating in Nigeria is shamefully unbearable to the extent that demonstrations of immorality are celebrated in all sphere of life in Nigeria: bribing, injustice, stealing, disrespect for constituted authority, indecent dressing, sexual immorality and cohabitation among the youths. All these among many other are direct product of the prevalence of corruption and tribalism in Nigeria.

Abuse of Fundamental Human Right: Another major effect of corruption and tribalism in Nigeria is the abuse of fundamental human right whereby citizens in Nigeria is ever afraid of claiming rights, knowing that the criminal can be celebrated in Nigeria.

Escalation of Poverty: Pillay argues that corruption creates, sustains poverty and ultimately destroys life (Pillay, 2005). The upsurge expansion of a consistent state of lack which a larger percentage of citizens in Nigeria are victims are a direct result of corrupt individuals who keep accumulating national incomes for selfish enrichment (Kolawole, 2019c).

Religious Intolerance: Ethnicity and religiosity have emerged as the most basic and politically salient identities of the

Nigerians (Canci and Adeodoyin, 2003). This is because religion happens to be a very platform for influence. While the sociologist defined religion as the opium of the masses, the horror of religious crises has left an incredible mark on much right thinking people of Nigeria so much that people wonder whether there can ever be guaranteed security for life and property in the nation (Malomo, 2016). When one critically diagnoses religious intolerance in Nigeria, the very result will be corruption and tribalism.

The Effectual Place of the Church

While it's the principal essence of the Church leaders is to lead the church in shining the light of Christ to this darken Nigeria (Mk 16:15), it is so pathetic that reasonable percentage of church leaders are now busy with the gospel of corruption and tribalism in Nigeria (Ayantayo, 2010). The Nigerian Church leaders who are expected to speak against have swallowed the forbidden fruit of corruption and tribalism either through cash or influence; thus become incapable of refuting or rebuking the debacle (Kolawole, 2019d).

Church leaders in Nigeria have institutionalized idleness and laziness. They employ falsehood methods to impress members. They manipulate testimonies and many a times claim to have been inspired by the Holy Spirit; meanwhile, the so called message is somewhat incongruent with the biblical standpoint (Ayantayo, 2010). In April 29 – 1st May, 2005 healing crusade conducted by Benny Hinn in Lagos brought a major rancor and counter-accusations among the organizers concerning the handling of funds (Nihilola, 2013).

In Acts 11:26, they were called 'Christian' because their behavior, activity and speech were like Christ Jesus. The word Christian means "follower of Christ" or "belonging to the body of Christ". An important fact about the term Christian is the imitation of Jesus Christ which must be captured in the life of an individual who claimed to be Christian. The term church

stemmed from the Greek word *Ekklesia* which connotes an expression of a collection of Christian for the advancement of Christ's kingdom on the basis of apostles' teaching and the prophets which Jesus Christ himself is the chief cornerstone (Acts 2:42-47, Eph 2:20). Therefore, church could simply be referred to as an assembly or aggregation of those who have been regenerated through the salvific work of Jesus Christ; empowered by the Holy Spirit toward ensuring a replica of God's kingdom here on earth.

Usually, the Church is pilot by certain individuals who have been anointed and appointed to enact the instructions of the Holy Spirit (Burns, 1978). These individuals varied in their operation but are inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit for the edification of the body of Christ which will eventually lighten the darken society as well (Abiola, 2010). Church leaders are saddled with the responsibility to be servant-hood for the advancement of Christ's kingdom. Apostles Paul mentioned five major offices: the Apostles, Prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers for the equipping of the body of Christ (Eph 4).

The church leaders are indispensable arm of the church with respect to the significant roles they played in leading the church. Realistically speaking in Nigeria, the church leaders have been a major channel of influencing the Church in Nigeria (Kolawole, 2020a). With respect to the greater level of religiosity in Nigeria, it is expected of the church leaders in Nigeria to reason alongside the divine principles of the Bible and contextualize through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit (Kolawole, 2020b). The principal responsibility of the church and to be specific, church leaders is to witness Jesus Christ and not their self-centeredness in the world (Acts 1:8).

The Role of Church Leaders in Curbing the Vice

Duewel rightly observed; God has created us so that a spiritual alive Christian longs for rich spiritual food. Woe to

the shepherd who does not know how to get deep and spiritual thrilling messages from God and His Word. God always has a message for His people, and a real person of God who is diligent in prayer, Bible reading, and Bible study will be given God's message for the people week after week (Duewel, 2000). Obviously, the mendacious mentality of favor from some political personality that is really parading the horizon of the church in Nigeria have cause the church to sell her birth right through compromising attitude of corrupt Church leaders (Kolawole, 2020c). Clear enough, the nonchalant attitude of some church leaders in Nigeria seems to sabotage the Church effectiveness; however, the study posits that a re-understanding and re-construction of the Church's position makes it effective and sufficient in tackling the vice (Kolawole, 2021a).

Nelson Mandela in one of his speeches said "As we let our light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to the same (Bello, 2015). Though many church leaders are involved in corruption, this should not discourage the remnant in the Christian community. The research explores several dimensions through which church leaders can effectively curb the observed menace.

Sincere Understanding and Practice of True Discipleship

Malomo explained discipleship as a spiritual process which may involve activities such as spiritual participation in a course of study, Bible study series and other Christian programs that help believers to grow to Christ likeness (Malomo, 2015). Church leaders in Nigeria need to re-examine the subject of true discipleship. This will reinstate discipleship as growth in Christ-likeness and not human mimicking.

Genuine Unity and Sincere Love among Church Leaders

The subject of unity and sincere love among the Church leaders which will eventually saturate through the body of

Christ and thereafter lightening the society at large is another way of curbing the menace of corruption and tribalism in Nigeria (Kolawole, 2020d). Awolalu avers: “in maintaining the society, God has brought the divinities in to being. They act both as His ministers in the theocratic government of the world, and as intermediaries between Him and man. Through these functionaries, God gives society cohesion and persistence (Awolalu, 1979). The coming together of church leaders in Nigeria for reconciliation and resolution rather than the hypocritical denominationalism is a potent strategy in curbing the menace (Kolawole, 2021b).

Sound Morality with Spirituality

There is a need for genuine revival and re-orientation on balancing morality and spirituality among the Christians which thereafter reflects and influences the society at large in order to dehumanize the survival of corruption and tribalism (Kolawole, 2020a; Kolawole, 2021a).

Engagement of Christian in Politics: The Church should pull off the wrong mentality about politics which is sponsored by the spirit of deception, ignorance and fear (Zolberg, 2008). Church leaders should encourage Christians to engage in politics. Christians must show interest in decision and policy making in the country, to give platform and opportunities to change bad polities.

Investment in the Youth

Church leaders should proactively invest in the youth through their spiritual and mental intelligence rather than trying to accumulate resources. Young people search for new ideas and are open to new challenges (Dissel, 2009); Chiroma (2018) posits that the youth have the capacity and ability to create ideas that solve old problems in innovative ways. If the power and the potential of the youth could be harnessed effectively,

it will help in dealing with the old problem of corruption as well.

Conclusion

Corroborating the fact that corruption and tribalism are deleterious elements responsible for maximum sabotaging of the national well-being alongside quality development, the aggravating level of atrocities stemming from corruption and tribalism maintain an evidences that the need to curbing the menace is not optional but compulsory. In view of this, there are parameters that show very clearly the reality and the effects of corruption and tribalism in Nigeria. These effects includes: bad governance, insecurity, moral decadence, abuse of Fundamental Human Rights, escalation of poverty and religious intolerance. It is in respect to this that the effectual place of the church through the church leaders in curbing the menace appear to be potent and reliable strategy. However, the effectual place of the church in curbing the menace can be manifested through the following: sincere understanding and practice of true discipleship; genuine unity and sincere love among the church leaders; sound morality with spirituality; engagement of Christian in politics and investment in the youth. With respect to these proposition, corruption and tribalism could be curb to a very appreciative minimum. Corruption and tribalism is a deviation from the rules of conduct and it can be curb by reconciling the society and rules of conduct through the instrumentation of the church leaders.

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