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Corruption and the Challenges of Ethical Practices and Values among Nigerians in the 21st Century

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Abstract

Corruption has become quite common in Nigeria is gradually becoming an acceptable way of doing things for many people. This cankerworm has eaten deep into the fabric of the society to the extent of being perceived as a normal way of life. The paper examines this dangerous phenomenon in its totality. Adopting a historical perspective, the paper examined the various administrations in Nigeria after independence and concluded that no genuine effort has been made towards eradicating corruption from the polity. This has encouraged many Nigerians to engage in several unethical practices thereby negating positive values that could have helped the country in building a strong and virile Nation. The paper therefore recommends stiffer penalties for corrupt officers, reorientation, eradication of poverty and promulgation of laws that will enhance effective and speedy prosecution of offenders amongst others, as a way out of this debacle.

Keywords: Corruption, ethical practices, values, reorientation, governance

Introduction

Corruption in Nigeria is currently perceived by many as a normal practice given that it is embedded into virtually all facets of the country's national life (Ayua, 2001; Lamorde, 2013). As a hydra-headed monster, any genuine attempt to look at corruption must involve an examination of the phenomenon in its totality. It will take courage; resoluteness and a good sense of patriotism in tackling head-long the issues arising from corruption as they relate to ethics and values in the society. This is so because future generation of Nigerians will not forgive us for bequeathing to them a legacy of corruption that undermines

the basic ethics and values of humanity. If not stemmed out, one may find it difficult to explain how and why a naturally endowed country like Nigeria is ranked among the poorest nations of the world. Understanding the challenges posed by corruption to Nigeria's ethical practices and values becomes imperative. Since corruption requires infringing on ethical standards and values of a society, we are therefore dealing with a phase in our history whereby normlessness and the near total collapse of values is not only rampant but pervasive and evident in all sectors of our national life. Societal cherished values such as honesty, integrity, orderliness, prudence, accountability etc are gradually been eroded as a result of pervasiveness of corruption. Ethical standards no longer exist and are indeed not required. It is the end that justifies the means. The restoration of ethical values in the social framework and scheme of things therefore becomes imperative if we are to achieve any meaningful transformation in Nigeria. This paper therefore critically examines in totality the phenomenon of corruption, its origin, development and manifestation in our national life; its typologies, and the various attempts at taming the social vice. It further examines specifically the challenges posed by corruption towards evolving an acceptable ethical practice that will warrant the use of sound values in the conduct of day- to-day business in our national life. The paper then provides a recipe for taming the tide of corruption and restoration of practicable ethics and values that will guarantee development and enhance societal wellbeing.

Conceptual clarification

For the purpose of easy understanding, some concepts used in this paper will be clarified. They include corruption, ethics and values.

The concept of corruption does not lend itself to one generally acceptable definition. This is so because some approaches to defining corruption have been rather hasty, partisan and discriminative in nature. To Nye (1967), any behaviour which constitutes a deviation from the formal roles of public service for the purposes of personal gain constitute corruption. To Omotude (1999), corruption exists where there is a diversion of government revenue and national income inflow in order to augment personal wealth. It involves giving undue favours to people with whom government officials have clientele relationship. Dobel (1978) looked at corruption essentially as a factor of specific cultural attitude regarding loyalty, morality and usurpation of the public good.

In his own exposition on corruption Chuta (2004) explain that in any given system, there are standards of behaviour expected of persons who operate the system. He argues that in every social setting there are rules or agreed code of conduct which members are meant to conform to for the healthy running of the system. These principles according to Sanda (2002) are crafted to conform to universal standards, practices and values of honesty, integrity, prudence, and decency. Human actors within a given system are adjudged mature and sufficiently experienced to abide by the given standards of behaviour. The

overall objective of making these provisions is ensuring efficient performance, healthy growth and remarkable progress for the benefit of the generality. Any deviation from such acceptable standards that involves derogating the core values and ethical practices put in place by a society for personal gain constitute corruption (Okpe, 2001).

Olusegun (2001) adds that corruption is the falling away from standard of integrity as defined by law, upheld by social norms or conscience or recognized by the general conscience of mankind. This definition is considered more plausible and embracing the key issues of corruption and will be adopted for this work. This is because every incidence of corruption involves destruction and pervasion of an ethical and normative standard. Corruption is beyond mere abandonment of standard as some scholars may want us to believe. Mere abandonment of standards may impede growth, but what really corrupts is the perversion of the standards. An act of perversion involves changing an established normative standard, ethic or value in an unnatural and often harmful way. Every act of perversion by a public servant is not only an aberration but is injurious and damaging to the social system.

The concept of ethics on the other hand involves a set of moral principles that influence a person's behaviour. It is a set of values that guarantee appropriate behaviour of an individual in the society. Ethical practices are therefore those practices that are connected with a people's beliefs about what is right and wrong. Ethics emphasize engaging in actions that will be for the collective good. The individual action has to be in such a way that his actions will not infringe on the fundamental values of the society.

Values as a concept refers to what the society cherishes has been necessary for order and stability. Nigeria as a country has cherished values such as honesty, integrity, prudence, orderliness, respect to elders and constituted authority, rule of law etc. These values are respected and revered as individuals holding them are highly esteemed and respected. The duty of the society is therefore to set norms, rules and laws that will protect the values of the society. According to Durkheim (1957) values enhances order, stability and peace that a society require to attain growth and development.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this paper in understanding corruption and the challenges it posed to the attainment of sound ethical practices and values is the social structure theory; a variant of the Marxist tradition. According to Madunagu (1983) this approach examines how the social formation, social structure and power structure of the hierarchically organized society perpetuate the phenomenon of corruption. The theory assumes that corruption is a direct consequence of the type of social, economic and political structure in operation in a society in which people are brought up. Also, the modes of production and reproduction of material life in a given society is a key to explaining the forms of consciousness exhibited in that society (Marx, 1930).

The theory further postulates that corruption is prevalent in the society because society recognizes private ownership of property as the basic foundation of social order. The rush to acquire wealth at all cost has driven the citizenry to engage in corrupt practices. The theory also assumes that it is the power structure of the society that generates and produces conditions which breed, generate and reproduce corruption. It is therefore the postulate of this theory that the fundamental cause of corruption in the society the world over is the present materialistic basis of the society and economy brought about by capitalistic socio-economic structure. The theory further assumes that attempts at understanding the antecedents of corruption would require the knowledge of the historical dialectics that has shaped the general conduct and continued organization of production and how rewards of such efforts are shared and appropriated.

With regards to Nigeria, the context for the emergence of corruption was the introduction of colonialism (Nzimiro, 1983; Madunagu, 1983). Colonialism introduced an exploitative monetary system and abolished the communal and feudal mode of production that was in existence. Robinson (1998) insist that colonialism survives on economic exploitation and political domination of the people placing the poor in any society especially Nigeria at the edge of a dangerous horizon. Colonialism therefore thrusts on Nigerian peasants a world capitalist system whereby they have to sell their products and obtain money for exchange.

The emergence of urban cities and job opportunities encourage people to move to the cities. Most of the youth who moved to cities became traumatized as they found no jobs and were forced to make it through dubious means. In cities, local deities, ancestors and spirits do not exist to act as means of social control. The youth therefore found himself in the state of anomie. Colonial administration in Nigeria left an institutionalized legacy of corruption which has shaped and will continue to shape the subsequent form and extent of corruption through a gradual process of eroding Nigeria's values and ethics of conduct and replacement with western ones (Nzimiro, 1983).

It was rather unfortunate that Nigeria's political leaders who took over power after independence did nothing to correct this rural/urban imbalance created by colonialism. This made our youth more 'determined to escape from 'hell' of rural misery only to end up in the 'hades' of urban poverty' (Alanana, 2000 p. 76). The situation which they found themselves in leads them to engage in corrupt practices. This explains why businessmen/contractors would agree to give a percentage of contract sum (kickback) in order to get a contract which, they execute haphazardly. The girls on the other hand, would gladly offer sex to lecturers and office holders in order to have better marks or secure a job.

According to Odekunle (1983), the main perpetrators of corruption are those in the upper class and apex of the political power structure and the privileged affluent groups. Majority of the Nigerian populace are poor and those who engage in corruption do so as a forced reaction to the actions of the

political leaders and money bags that flung their ill-gotten wealth around and get away with it. The monumental corruption in Nigeria today is because the younger generation is emulating our corrupt leaders who fail to live by example. Corrupt officials and leaders are never made to face the law for violating societal ethics and values. Such leaders or officials are rather revered and given higher positions or responsibilities and their communities award them chieftaincy titles. Nigerians therefore engage in corrupt activities so as to acquire power and wealth so that generations of their families will continue to be wealthy.

Typologies of corruption

The phenomenon of corruption has several typologies:

- (i) **Bureaucratic corruption:** This type of corruption is found among public administrators. corrupt practices that fall within this range include; bribery, favoritism, embezzlement of public funds, diversion of public property, nepotism, ghost worker syndrome, sexual harassment, kickbacks, inflation of contracts, forgery and blackmail. Bureaucrats in Nigeria today collect money from applicants to sell job to them, while others use their offices to illegally amass wealth.
- (ii) **Political corruption:** Political corruption occurs at all levels where political authority is found. Politicians make laws to benefit themselves. Corrupt activities at this level of corruption include, rigging of elections, thuggery, falsification of credentials, God-fatherism, black mail, sycophancy, embezzlement, bribery, favoritism, abuse of power e.t.c.
- (iii) **Economic corruption:** This is also known as business corruption. The categories of corrupt activities here include, sale of substandard products, manufacture of fake products, false declaration of profit, tax evasion, cheating, inflating prices of goods, e.t.c.
- (iv) **Educational corruption:** This has to do with corrupt practices and subversion of ethics and values in the educational sector. In the 1960s and 70s graduates from secondary schools in Nigeria were regarded very high all over the world. Many institutions of higher learning abroad were eager to admit Nigerian students because of their reputation and the quality they brought to such institutions. Today, the reverse is the case. Nigerian universities are producing half-baked graduates due to corruption. It is common place to find dull students graduating with high grades because their parents are wealthy. Government cannot fund education due to corruption. Infrastructure is in total decay in schools in Nigeria. Teachers are not paid their salaries as strikes are common place. Today, our tertiary institutions are hardly in session as strikes have become the norm. Recently, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) suspended an over five months old strike. Many foreign universities now deny Nigerian high school graduates admission. Examples of educational corruption include, examination malpractice, bribery, sexual harassment,

payments for admission, sale of handout, extortion of students, sale of grades e.t.c.

- (v) **Religious corruption:** This type of corruption is prevalent among churches in Nigeria. Indeed, some of the churches in Nigeria have been compromised with money from corrupt politicians. Thanks giving to God have become an avenue where politicians and the well to do in the society display their ill-gotten wealth. The churches have become a shortcut to escape poverty. There are usually fund raisings, freewill donations, payment of tithes e t c. It is amazing that the almighty corruption has found its way to the church.

Corruption in Nigeria and the efforts at curtailing the menace

Under this section the various efforts made by successive governments in Nigeria at curtailing corruption will be discussed and critical insights made. As mentioned earlier, the origin of corruption in Nigeria can be located within the context of colonialism and the practices it introduced. According to Chuta (2004) the concept of corruption as we have it in the contemporary world was unknown to pre-colonial Nigeria. The people lived under a feudal and communal system that guarantees what they needed. The economy was generally simple and subsistent in production. Economic transactions were determined and settled through mutual agreement of parties involved. The introduction of western education, new religion, urbanization and monetized economy exposed Nigerians to new values, which tend to bring more benefits than the traditional system. The quest to acquire wealth and material gains sets in the mechanism for entrenchment of corruption.

The fight against corruption in the first republic

At independence, the leadership that took over the helms of power could not correct this anomaly. Corruption in the First Republic was widespread. Dauda (1997) argues that the dominant characteristic of politics in the First Republic was the use of thugs for electoral rigging. The state managed and widespread rigging at the polls and its initial success set the tune for what we are witnessing today; political assassinations, intimidation, manipulation of the judiciary etc. There were also cases of widespread enrichment by political office holders who were not punished. It was during the First Republic that the maxim you scratch my back, i scratch your back was coined to justify the use of bribery, inducement and kick-backs as modes of private enrichment.

The fight against corruption under the military regimes of Yakubu Gowon, Murtala Ramat Muhammad and Olusegun Obasanjo

The advent of military regime in 1966 made many to believe that things would change for the better. The regimes of Yakubu Gowon, Murtala Ramat Muhammad and Olusegun Obasanjo saw different corrupt practices. Murtala Muhammad came to power with a firm resolve to fight corruption. He launched a frontal war against corruption which had destroyed the Gowon's

government. He set a record by being the first and so far, the only Nigerian leader to have forfeited fraudulent wealth acquired to the nation before carrying out his war against corruption. Murtala Ramat Muhammad promulgated the corrupt practices Decree of 1975 and instituted a Judicial Commission of Enquiry which investigated all the past military Governors that worked during the Gowon regime. Indeed, all the military Governors except two namely, Brigadier Mobolaji Johnson of Lagos state and Oluwole Rotimi of western state were found guilty of corruption and dismissed. They also forfeited property they had acquired with their loot. There was general redeployment of officers both military and public and retirement of redundant and indolent staff. Records of public officers were raked and investigated and those found with the corruption virus were dismissed. This was the first leader in Nigeria to demonstrate strong resolve to save the country from the monster called corruption. Civil servants became more committed to work and even demonstrated sound ethical standards.

Corruption under Alhaji Shehu Shagari

The introduction of civilian government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari in 1979 gave Nigerians hope about the decay in the country. Shagari introduced the ethical revolution and set up the code of conduct bureau in 1981. As lofty as his ideas about ethical revolution appear, the regime turns out to be the worst in terms of fighting corruption. Graft and lack of accountability by politicians significantly eroded the legitimacy of his regime and made mockery of his vow to fight corruption and institute sanctity. Indeed, some officials of the ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN) received huge bribes to award contracts to construction firms. It was during Shagari's government that the Audit Department of Abuja Development Authority's office and the Nigerian External Telecommunications were burnt down in 1983. This fire incident many believed was to cover up corrupt practices (Dauda, 1997).

The military regime of Gen. Muhammadu Buhari and the fight against corruption

The new year of 1984 saw Nigerians celebrating under the third military regime of Gen. Muhammadu Buhari. The commitment shown by this regime in the fight against corruption was unprecedented. The regime launched the War Against Indiscipline (WAI) as a main platform for fighting corruption and enhancing ethical standards. The campaign succeeded in curbing unruliness, sluggishness, lateness to office, jumping queue and indiscriminate dumping of refuse. The regime further took the bull by the horn when it went ahead to arrest several state Governors and commissioners of previous administration and charge them before a military tribunal for corruption. Several of them were found guilty and sentenced to imprisonment and their accounts frozen.

General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida and General Sani Abacha

The General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida's regime ushered in the era of institutionalization of corruption in Nigeria. Officially, Babangida tried to fight corruption like his other predecessors had done. He promulgated the corrupt practices and economic crimes decree. This decree was never implemented. The regime of Babangida launched the Mass Mobilization for Social Justice, Self-Reliance and Economic Recovery in 1987. MAMSER has its objectives; inculcation of correct values and spirit of civic responsibility and patriotism; eschew all vices in public service including corruption, dishonesty, malpractices and cultivation of positive ones. This laudable programme made no impact since there was no strong political commitment towards implementing it. The crisis that rocked the nation in the wake of the annulment of June 12, 1993 elections considered to have been won by Chief Moshood Abiola forced Babangida to step aside. The interim government of Earnest Shonekon revealed to a bewildered nation that Nigeria between 1960 and 1993, lost N8 trillion to corruption.

The government of General Sani Abacha did not demonstrate sufficient resolve in its fight against corruption. Under this regime corruption became institutionalized as the veiled language of official transaction. The regime introduced the National Orientation Agency, (NOA) and the War Against Indiscipline and Corruption, (WAIC). Though General Abacha set forth a good blueprint for the fight against corruption, his administration has been considered the most corrupt in Nigeria. During this time, there was ruthless looting of the public treasury with impunity. Corruption was indeed at its peak during Abacha's government as members of his family, relatives and friends looted with reckless abandon. Indeed, general Abacha himself became an epitome of corruption in Nigeria.

According to Agbroko (2003), when Abacha's government was probed after his death, his loot and that of his family and cronies was excessive. In Abuja seven choice properties were taken along with a high rise building in Victoria Island, Lagos. The cash recovered from Abacha included US \$625,263,187, #475,306,886.93 and N100,000,000 together with 30% shares of West African Refinery in Sierra-Leone worth \$420,000 US dollars. From Abacha's son Muhammad and his brother Abdulkabir, the government recovered up to N346 million. From Isma'il Gwarzo who was Abacha's Security Adviser the Federal Government took possession of 13 properties located in Abuja, Kano and Zaria as well as cash worth N400 million and \$2million. So far Abacha's loot cannot be correctly evaluated as more funds are still been discovered in foreign bank accounts.

The civilian government of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo

In 1999, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo became the president as Nigeria ushers in the third Republic. Upon assumption of office, Obasanjo made the fight against corruption one of his priority policies. Being under pressure from home and abroad, Obasanjo set in place a comprehensive plan for eradication of poverty

so as to enhance the country's battered image abroad and bring about development. He immediately instituted the Anti-Corruption law and set up a commission to go with it. The Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences act was signed in 2000 after so much opposition from senators. Obasanjo also established the Economic and Financial crimes commission (EFCC) by the act 2002. The way and manner in which he aggressively implemented these policies left no one in doubt about his resolve to tackle corruption headlong. By 2007 when he left power not much was achieved in this regard as the monster called corruption was still rearing its ugly head.

Corruption under Umaru Musa Yaradua and Goodluck Ebele Jonathan

The government of Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan pursued vigorously strategies towards stemming the tide of corruption. Many observers believed that the efforts of the regime in fighting corruption were not strong enough. The kid gloves with which the Government handled complaints of corruption against members of its cabinet leave much to be desired. No wonder did the speaker of the house of representative commented that his 'body language suggests corruption'. If this is not the case then, how can one explain President Jonathan's sacking of the former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Sanusi Lamido for raising alarm over the sudden disappearance of \$20billion US dollars oil revenue within 18months. The hasty manner with which this was done made many Nigerians believe that the government has something it wanted to cover.

Another case in point is the manner in which the government treated the allegations of corruption levelled against the former Aviation minister Stella Oduah over N225 million bullet proof cars bought for her by the Nigerian Civil Aviation Agency. The government did not take any drastic action over this allegation until the minister resigned to pursue her 'future political ambitions'. A responsive government that is ready to fight corruption would have suspended the minister and order the appropriate body to investigate the allegations. The inability of government to come out and admonished allegations of corruption against officials is suspect. Nigerians could not unravel the mystery surrounding N10 billion spent by the Minister of petroleum resources, Diezani Allison Madueke to charter and maintain jets for her private use. While investigations were on going over the first jet a challenger 850, it was found that a second plane, a global express XRS plane was also chartered by the minister. A return trip on this plane cost tax payers 600,000 Euros (over N136 million). In 2011 alone, the minister flew in this jet on two occasions (costing 1,200,000 Euros, over N270 million).

The civilian government of President Mohammad Buhari

The present government of president Mohammad Buhari has not given Nigerians any cause to believe in its fight against corruption. Buhari assumed office with a vow to fight corruption to a standstill. He immediately arrested and prosecuted Dasuki, the then National Security Adviser under Dr, Ebele

Jonathan's government who was indicted by a committee for diversion of \$2 billion meant for procurement of arms. Also arrested were judges and justices of the supreme court that were found to have been involved in one form of corrupt act or the other. Men of the State Security Service (SSS) arrested Muazu Pindiga, a judge of the Federal High Court in Gombe state, Sylvester Ngwuta and John Okoro both justices of the Supreme Court and charge them to court. The government also arrested and prosecuted the former chief of defense staff Alex Badeh over mismanagement of public funds.

While many believed that the fight targets mainly members of the opposition, many others believe that members of his political party and particularly his kitchen cabinet were extremely corrupt. Indeed, it was not long before many of the administration top men became entangled in the corruption mess without reaction from the president. Mr. Abubakar Malami, the Attorney General of the Federation was always involved in protecting one personality or the other from prosecution. For example, he terminated the N25 billion fraud trial of the former governor of Gombe, Danjuma Goje and the prosecution of a military officer, Nicholas Ashinze- who was an aide to Mr. Dasuki, the former National Security Adviser to President Jonathan who was charged by the EFCC over embezzlement of funds.

The Buhari government also granted pardon to Governor Jolly Nyame of Taraba State and Joshua Dariye of plateau state who had both been convicted over corruption charges and were serving jail terms. Furthermore, corruption under Buhari's watch became so endemic that even ministries, departments and agencies failed to submit documents for auditing. A report by the office of the Auditor General's office for 2016 showed that over 324 MDA's could not tender their account reports for that year for auditing which is in flagrant disobedience to the Nigerian law.

Dauda (1997) observed that corruption under Buhari, became a norm as persons indicted over corruption were never prosecuted. For example, the former accountant general of the federation Mr Idris Ahmed who stole N109 billion and Jonah Otunla, a former Attorney General of the Federation who catered away N24 billion are still walking freely as their cases are enjoying undue delays. Under Buhari, budget padding became a new terminology for embezzlement of funds by MDAs in collaboration with senators. For example, the independent corrupt practices and other related offences commission reported that MDAs padded over N300billion in the 2021 budget by duplicating projects. The MDA's also duplicated projects in the 2022 budget to the tune of N100 billion. Interestingly, no one was queried or punished for these acts. Under Buhari, many states owed staff salaries up to nine months. The regime's social investment schemes became conduit pipes for looting state funds as their supposedly 'accomplishments' are hardly verifiable. As has been the case with other past regimes, much of this government's financial escapades will become overtly manifest when its tenure may have been over.

Corruption and the challenges of ethical practices and values amongst Nigerians in the 21st century

The analysis of corruption so far demonstrates that whenever a corrupt act is perpetuated, an ethical code or value is being trampled upon. Since corruption involves damaging of the society values, every act of corruption therefore infringes the established norms and rules governing the smooth running of the society thereby creating instability.

The most outstanding challenge corruption has posed on the values and ethical practices of Nigeria is the damage it has done to our work culture. Most Nigerians today see no need to work hard since the system rewards corrupt and indolent people. The Nigerian youth today prefer to cheat in examination and obtain his result instead of studying hard. The Nigerian system places emphasis on certificate more than what the person knows. This discourages hard work and encourages dishonesty. According to Anya (2004) the country's present corruption is because leadership at various levels has failed to inculcate sound ethical values in our youth who copies what the leaders do. Indeed, corruption has destroyed our value system.

The image of Nigeria has been dented both at home and abroad. The dent has gone so far that everywhere in the world Nigerians are dreaded like mad dogs and criminals; cautiously approached like dangerous snakes and avoided like lepers. At airports in foreign countries, Nigerians receive the highest level of suspicion and are thoroughly searched and even harassed.

Nigeria's poor international image owing to corruption has adversely affected our economic growth and expansion as a nation. Foreign investment that would have come into Nigeria is ruined as a result of fears by investors that they may be defrauded. Advanced Fee Fraud and internet scam has denied Nigerian substantial quantity of investment. Many investors are afraid to do business in Nigeria for the fear of been duped.

Corruption has consistently remained a clog in the wheel of our development. All efforts towards development are thwarted by corrupt practices. Bribery and corruption not only create room for costlier public investment, low government revenues but also lower resource surpluses. The cumulative effect of this is poverty, illiteracy, instability, social insecurity, and frustration, a fall in ethical standards, frustration, unemployment and disease.

One of the threats posed by corruption is the threat to lives and property. The production and circulation of fake and sub-standard drugs have sent many to their early graves. Large quantities of sub-standard and adulterated products enter Nigeria from our border following bribe to custom officers. Again, corruption is responsible for the collapse of many buildings, bridges and jetties in Nigeria. Virtually at every stage of any construction project in Nigeria resides an opportunity for embezzlement. Corruption influences the award of contracts, choice of site, appointment of consultants, procurement of materials to be used etc. At the end of the day, the wrong sites are chosen, unqualified consultants and contractors are appointed as contracts are not necessarily

awarded to the most competent contractor. At the end of the day the result is collapsed buildings and bridges.

Our judiciary is not spared from the challenges of corruption. The overt manipulation of the judiciary by the government makes many doubt the truth that the judiciary is the last hope of the common man in Nigeria. Many election petitions at tribunals are often manipulated in favour of people with 'fat pockets'. Extra-judicial killings are on the rise as militants held sway.

Our educational system is in a state of decay owing to corruption. Federal polytechnics and colleges of education have often been on strike. Only recently did the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) suspend their over five months old strike. Infrastructure is lacking in our schools. In states like Benue, primary school teachers have been on strike for over one year.

Concluding remarks and recommendations

In the face of large scale embezzlement of funds and fraud, corruption has continued to be the greatest threat to our common values and survival as a nation. We must therefore work together to eradicate it. Indeed, every Nigerian is guilty of one form of corruption or the other. In fact, no situation has ever existed that is not found exploitable. Every service is an opportunity to demand for an inducement. Any careless miscalculation turns out to be an opportunity to win an unmerited benefit. The interest for self has so much consumed everyone that no one any longer thinks about the other person in this rat race to acquire wealth. I doubt how many of our public officers who are called 'honourable' truly can be men and women of honour in their everyday conduct. One still wonders how many of Nigeria's leaders today can genuinely reflect a sense of personal honour in what they do. In order to stem the tide of corruption and enhance sustainable values, this paper recommends the following:

- (i) Re-orientation of Nigeria's values towards upholding those that admonishes corruption and enhances the dignity of man to equal opportunities and wealth. To achieve this, the family must lead the war against unethical practices. In the socialization of its members, the family must inculcate the values of honesty, integrity, prudence, respect to constituted authority and love for one another into its members. The attitude of Nigerians must change for the better.
- (ii) Urgent steps must be taken to alleviate poverty and enhance the standard of living of Nigerians. The present situation whereby about 80% of Nigerians live below the poverty line is not acceptable. Government at all levels should come up with measures that will create wealth and open up opportunities for the citizens especially the youth.
- (iii) Public and private sector workers found to be involved in corruption should be punished. Let the present leaders emulate the regime of General Murtala Mohammed. Those found to be exemplary should be rewarded and encouraged to do more. Reward for hard work and honest endeavours will inspire and encourage hard work in service. In places of work,

deliberate and conscious efforts should be made to ensure strict and transparent accounting arrangements through the application of formulated fiscal regulations and the mechanism of an efficient auditing system. People found to be involved in financial impropriety should be made to face the full wrath of the law. The idea of 'sacred cows' should be eradicated.

- (iv) The mass media and civil societies must not relent in denouncing corruption and should mount orientation campaigns aimed at de-emphasizing value on wealth and naked power. They must always point out the dangers of ethnicity, nepotism, and religious bigotry in a federation like Nigeria. Labour organizations and Civil Societies in the country must lead in the fight against corruption. They should re-orientate their members on sound ethical practices. They should lead the direction in the efforts to reprimand any corrupt leadership. Non-Governmental organizations should organize seminars and workshops that will provide a platform for cross-fertilization of ideas in the fight against corruption.
- (v) Nigerians must also have a change of attitude towards corruption. Corruption has come to be seen as a way of life for most Nigerians. There is therefore the need to re-examine the behavior of Nigerians in the light of the need to attain growth and development. Corruption must be abandoned so as to pave way for sustainable development that will make Nigerians proud citizens. There is the need to focus on the big picture rather than on ourselves.
- (vi) In order to effect changes that will eradicate corruption and entrench good values, Nigeria need good and competent leadership. Leaders at all levels should take the lead in demonstrating respect for and faithfulness to the country's constitution by diligent compliance. Virtually all public officials solemnly swore to abide by the code of conduct contained in the fifth schedule of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This schedule apart from restraining officers from receiving or giving any gifts, property or benefits of any kind for anything done or as an inducement for granting favors, also prohibits them from operating any bank account in any country outside Nigeria. They are also mandated to declare their assets before assuming office. Any leadership that wants to fight corruption in Nigeria must begin from here and proceed outwards. Such a government should be firm in terms of believing in, and not compromising in taking right actions. A government that is not able to discipline its members within the ambient of the law or curb the excesses of its agents is likely to be itself corrupt. The ICPC and EFCC must be given full support to operate without fear or favour.

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