

## **THE CONCEPT OF CORRUPTION IN AFRICAN CONTEXT AND SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS**

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### **Abstract**

Corruption in Africa has become cancerous and thereby eaten deep into the fabric of many countries. There is an iota and element of corruption in Africa's educational system, various departments, nongovernment and governmental organisations, families and some churches. The paper through quantitative research methodology explores the concept of corruption in African context and suggests solutions. However, corruption has become a virus unlike AIDS that is spreading at an alarming rate to all the nooks and crannies of African Nations. Presently, it has become a system and a pattern in many establishments, to the extent that it is no longer, regarded by some as antisocial activities. The paper recommends that various establishments that include governmental, and non-governmental organisations, political groups, schools, families etc. should adopt holistic measures regarding the curbing of corruption. This development will checkmate corrupt practices in African countries. More so, religious organisations should place a premium on messages that are channelled against corruption. The paper therefore concludes that the corruption rate can be reduced drastically if African people adopt the various measures highlighted in this paper.

**Keywords:** Corruption, Government, Measure, Africa, Religious, Countries, Nations

### **Introduction**

In Africa, corruption remains one of the factors that has become an impediment to her development in many sectors. The impact and influence of colonial rule on local elites and some notable people in Africa continue to surface in their political lifestyle. The British colonial rule in Africa laid the foundation of corrupt practices in many dimensions. Many of the Local African chiefs were badly influenced by the leadership style of the Colonial British leaders. After independence, the negative impact of the British colonial rule continues to surface in the lives of African people and their leaders.

Colonial rule introduced different patterns of corruption in Africa. The pre-colonial African communities' leadership and administration were conducted without written laws. Such laws can be forgotten easily. Most of the colonial agencies were established to aid their selfish interest.

The history of police and military formations in several parts of the world can be traced to the need to protect citizens and ensure territorial integrity. Conversely, in the case of Africa, the police and military were established primarily to crush civilian opposition to colonial rule. Police engagement with the populace was founded on the need to enforce hateful and debilitating colonial laws, including forced taxation, segregation, and quelling of anti-colonial uprisings. (Sahara Reporters, 2023)

In many African countries, the primary activities of some security agencies are not to protect the citizens but to prevent protest and freedom of speech. After colonialisation, the newly independent African states inherited a system that had a culture of citizen oppression and extortion. The immediate post-colonial police and military were designed to inflict terror on innocent citizens, and citizens had internalized the art of buying their way off unwarranted harassment. (Sahara Reporters, 2023)

Corruption has become a pattern and lifestyle that is visible in African politics, governmental and non-governmental establishments, some churches and some families. Even though the continent is endowed with human and natural resources. The region continues to crawl politically, economically and socially because of the corrupt nature of many people on the continent. The corruption phenomenon in the continent keeps spreading from one person to another.

Leadership in Africa whether educational, political or religious has an element of corruption in one way. Many that are fighting corruption in some establishments have been swallowed by the spirit of corruption. Corruption has become a daily lifestyle of many in the educational, private, governmental and religious sectors. Various African governments have adopted many measures to curb corruption, yet it is still increasing daily in many sectors. This has resulted in the mass exodus of many from African soil to the West where they have a stable economy.

In 2011, there was a serious protest in some North African countries due to the corrupt nature of African leaders. Such a revolution was termed as Arab Spring. It was staged to fight corruption in Africa. Tunisia and Egypt were among the earliest and the most visible of these revolutions (Anderson, 2011),

In Africa, corruption is among several factors that continue to affect economic and social development. The geographical analyses of this phenomenon are limited and thereby confined to a few case studies of India (Robbins, 2000; Corbridge and Kumar, 2002; Jeffrey, 2002), and a critique of anti-corruption campaigns (Brown and Cloke, 2004). In the same vein, Bracking (2009) offers a rare exception concerning Africa, noting that corruption in Zimbabwe is not an exception to neoliberal rule but an integral part of it.

Presently, corruption continues to reflect in the cultural norms of many countries in Africa, which is spreading like a pandemic disease. When it spreads it is often accepted as another pattern of business style. Bardhan (1997) notes, that it is regarded in one culture as corruption that may be considered a part of routine transactions in another. Masculinist cultures tend to exhibit more corruption than do societies in which women hold larger shares of public office. (Goetz, 2000; Swamy et al., 2001). Notwithstanding, Parboteeah et al. (2014) suggest that varying ethical climates, including the teaching of ethics in the corporate and public sector, and human resources departments, help to explain the geography of African corruption.

In Africa, corruption is a visible feature of African political, social and economic history. Most corrupt government in the world is found in Africa. According to (Barney Warf, 2017);

The prevalence and severity of African corruption reflect several enabling forces, that include poverty and illiteracy, patrimonial political cultures, a high degree of dependence on natural resource exports, poorly developed civil societies and the lack of an independent media that could expose corrupt practices.

Corruption has a wide array of effects on the people of Africa. It leads to nepotism, incompetence, and distrust of the state. Corruption distorts the allocation of public services, minimizes the beneficial effects of foreign aid and also discourages foreign investment. It is high time African people start the fight against corruption. This is because it continues to spread daily to the nook and cranny of the continent. Many have adopted a corrupt lifestyle as a normal and acceptable pattern of life. This phenomenon keeps surfacing in schools and many government establishments.

### **Corruption in Africa Context**

The word corruption does not have a generally acceptable definition. Corrupt activities vary depending on the country's belief systems and practices regarding what such a country calls corrupt activities. Corruption is a dishonest activity which is carried out by a person or group of people who are in a position of authority just to acquire illicit wealth or abuse power for one's gain. Corruption involves many activities that include bribery, influence peddling and embezzlement and it may also involve practices which are legal in many countries. ( Report, 2012). It is a sociological occurrence that appears with regular frequency in many countries in varying degrees and proportions globally. Each country allocates domestic resources to checkmate and regulate corrupt practices. Strategies which are undertaken in order to counter corruption are often summarized under the umbrella term anti-corruption. ( Lehtinen, 2012).

In African politics, corruption is very common. Political corruption is the illegitimate use of public power to benefit a private interest. (Morris, 1991). Political corruption occurs when a governmental or nongovernmental employee act with an official capacity to illegally acquire wealth for personal gain. This aspect of corruption in Africa continues to underdevelop

Africa's socioeconomic life. It has contributed and continues to contribute to the migration of young African youth to developed countries.

Economist Ian Senior defined corruption as an action to secretly provide a good or service to a third party to influence certain actions which benefit the corrupt, a third party, or both in which the corrupt agent has authority. (Senior, 2006). Corruption in developing countries is more pronounced than in developed countries. Developed and developing countries have established various anticorruption agencies to eradicate the menace of corruption in their various administrations. Some of such organisations that are fighting corruption include the African Union (AU), the United Nations (UN), the United Nations Development Programme (UNPP), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank to mention a few (Ogbeidi, 2012).

The phenomena usually encompass abuses by government officials such as embezzlement and cronyism, as well as abuses linking public and private actors such as bribery, extortion, influence peddling, and fraud, to mention but a few.

African countries are prone to severe corruption, with low average incomes, low literacy levels and numerous repressive governments. Nigeria has been widely cited as a state enveloped in corruption. (Fagbadebo, 2007; Smith, 2007; Ologbenla, 2008; Agbibo, 2012). These antisocial and unacceptable societal activities have destabilized the government which is visible in the area of inadequate provision of services such as electricity and as well hampered foreign investment and also helped to fuel insurgencies such as Boko Haram.

In the same vein, Gettleman (2015) notes that:

In Kenya, police corruption starts even before officers are hired. Analysts say it is so stubbornly ingrained that it begins with young men raising money from their villages, usually around \$2,000, to bribe recruitment officials just to get the job. The young officers, who make only \$200 a month, then have a stiff debt to repay. Some motorists and passers-by then become their quarry. Superiors in the police department are widely believed to demand a cut, sustaining a system in which countless men and women in uniform are on the take.

This corrupt lifestyle in Kenya in the area of employment is also visible in many countries in Africa. It has led to a situation of employing people who are not professional. This continues to affect many Africa's government agencies in many dimensions regarding administration. In Somalia, which has effectively lacked a functional government for two decades, the government consists essentially of spoils obtained in a Darwinian struggle for power and survival (Menkhaus, 2007).

### **The Solution to Corruption in Africa**

The governments of many countries in Africa have adopted many means in order to checkmate the menace of corrupt practices in schools, governmental and non-governmental organisations, churches and other organisations. Despite, the various means that some of these African countries have adopted to eliminate corruption, yet corrupt activities are still visible in schools, government establishments, churches and nongovernmental organisations. However, this paper holistically presents the following as a way to fight and eliminate corruption in Africa.

**Placing of Premium with Good Record of Candidates Before Election:** The government of many countries in Africa should place a premium on electing those who have a high moral standard, good moral foundations and good governmental record. Many people in Africa are craving for leadership positions just to use the avenue to exploit others and thereby illegally acquire public wealth and resources. For a government to have transparent leadership, the place of good leadership cannot be overemphasized. Most African leaders are contributing to the moral decadence of their nation because of bad and unacceptable moral standards. A good leader notwithstanding makes a good and transparent leadership that is void of corruption.

**Reverting to Some Positive African Value Systems and Institutions:** Some countries in Africa, have laid down rules and doctrines that are inimical to corruption. They have a way to punish whosoever is found guilty of corrupt practices. As a result, these people are afraid to involve themselves in corrupt activities. Reacting to the importance of the Indigenous value system, (Philips & Akpokighe 2014), note that indigenous solutions to corruption must once again be explored followed by the rediscovery of indigenous systems of administration. Good Africa's value system should be revived, particularly the value systems that are against corrupt practices. Such a system will have a long to go regarding cases of corruption in Africa.

**Religious Leader's Messages in Africa Should be Geared Towards Fighting Corrupt Practices:** Africa is a multireligious country, where many worshippers adhere to Christianity, Islam or African Traditional Religion. These religions have leaders on whom the people usually place in high premium. Such leaders should use their position to emphasize the need to avoid corrupt practices and activities that are antisocial. (Forae and Gold, 2024, 8)

**Africa Should Establish More Civil Organisations that Will Checkmate Corruption:** In Africa, there are a lot of civil establishments that have been established to fight corrupt practices. Such organisations in one way have completely failed regarding the purpose of the establishment. As a result, Africa needs more anticorruption agencies, that will combat corruption in all nooks and crannies of African countries. Commenting on the need for the establishment of civil organisation, (Gbenga 2007) notes;

there is a need for African countries to develop institutions such as the civil service, parliament and the judiciary, which in turn will create interlocking

systems of oversight and self-regulation. All of these institutions have to be free of corruption themselves and active players in the fight against corruption. Rule of law is also important to guarantee the protection of human rights, ensure governmental predictability, create a climate conducive to private sector activity and domestic and foreign investment and enforce adherence to formal rules of behaviour. Court rulings have to be protected from political interference and judicial independence has to be assured. A functioning and professional legal system and access to justice are also necessary. Furthermore, parliaments should create a legislative framework for addressing corruption, as well as promoting governmental accountability and acting as a check on the executive. The creation of a meritocratic civil service is a basic requirement for limiting corrupt practices and rebuilding public confidence in the government bureaucracy.

Notwithstanding, African people should cultivate a culture of honesty, truthfulness and transparency. This development will greatly influence every organisation and all governmental parastatals.

**Exemplary Leadership is Needed in Africa:** Every African leader needs to live by example, whether religious, economic or political leader. When a leader is living a transparent life, it will reflect in the country's sectors. African political leaders should cultivate the spirit and lifestyle of exemplary living. In recourse to this (Gbenga 2007) affirms that;

Political leadership is required to both set an example and to demonstrate that no one is above the law by setting a high-profile focus on specific actions which can be extremely useful in sending a strong signal that corruption will not be tolerated.

Many African leaders do not care about the aftermath of their actions before the general public. When a leader is leading by example, it will reflect in the economy and the political life of such country in which the leader resides.

### **Conclusion**

It is a fact that most countries in Africa are corrupt, and this continues to affect her development in many sectors. There is no iota of doubt that the colonial legacy has contributed in one way to Africa's corrupt practices. Despite this, it is high time for African leaders to devise a reliable means of fighting corruption. Various African leaders should start living an exemplary and transparent life. This will go along to checkmate corrupt activities and practices in many sectors.

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