

Political Corruption in Modern Africa: Implication For Traditional Culture And The Need For Social Morality

Laleye, Solomon Akinyemi

Abstract

Corruption is one of the social malaises confronting contemporary human society. The phenomenon has been portrayed to be a two edged sword; it has positive utilitarian value and more importantly, negative consequences on the developmental quest of society particularly, African society. Scholars have argued that the prevalence of the phenomenon in Africa is intricately connected with the cultural world-view of the people: it is argued that African culture provides the foundation, aids and abets corrupt practices. Some other scholars have also argued that greed and avarice associated with corrupt practices are the display of human nature hence, the survival of the self or preservation of one's identity predisposes Africans to corrupt practices. This paper however argues that traditional African culture epitomizes the virtues of trust, selflessness, care for others and oneness consequently, it abhors corruption in all its ramifications. The foundation of corrupt practices in contemporary African society is essentially the dearth of social morality. The paper, therefore, argues for the deconstruction of ethnic, class, group and other parochial interests in favor of a social community ethos that prioritizes public interests and respect for commonwealth. The paper is strictly philosophical; it employs the analytic and prescriptive methods of the discipline.

Key words: Corruption, Social Morality, Public and Personal interests.

1. Introduction

Corruption is a value-laden concept that could be subjected to various interpretations; the variations and its illicit nature makes what constitutes the practice to be broad and difficult to define. Also, what constitutes act of veniality, gratitude or hospitality also suggest context-dependency of the concept. However, most societies are in agreement that fraudulent business transactions, election rigging, nepotism, inflation of contracts in return for kickbacks, book-cooking, perversion of justice, bribery and graft, budget padding, clinging obstinately to power are some of the elements of wide range anti-social behaviours called corruption.

The level of corruption in a given society has symbiotic relations with the functionality of the

institutional framework for anti-corruption emplaced, the political will of the leaders and, the level of compliance with existing codes of conduct in that society. Given these, countries such as Singapore, Netherlands, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, New Zealand, Denmark, Luxembourg are ranked as some of the least corrupt countries in the world while, Somalia, Sudan, Angola, Nigeria, Liberia and Morocco are described as some of the most corrupt countries in Africa. The phenomenon is a stigma that is openly detested. In spite of the wide condemnation, corrupt practices are prevalent in the world particularly, African society.

Comments abound on the high rate of corruption among public officers in Africa. For instance, according to De Sardan (1999: 28) “Corruption has become in almost all African countries a common and routine element of the functioning of the ... [state] from top to bottom. This being the case, corruption is neither marginal, or sectionalized or repressed, but is generalised and banalised”¹. The British Government Department for International Development claims, with reference to Nigeria that 55 percent of all corruption is perpetrated in the presidency.² (Bagudu, 2004: 9). Collin Powell, a former United States’ Secretary of State located the vice within the domain of African culture. He argued that, corruption is ingrained in the culture of the Africans³ (Ellis, 2016: 3). Some other commentators extended this scope to include the entirety of humanity. In this regard, corruption is seen to seats in the heart of every man; waiting to unveil. This further suggests that every man has a tendency to engage in corrupt act if unrestrained, as Kant opined in *The Metaphysics of Morals* as juridical or ethical duties⁴. Restrain in this context, could be made by the coerciveness of law or through moral reasoning. This paper is concerned about political corruption among various types of corruption, and examines, why corrupt practices continue to assume disheartening dimensions in Africa. It also seeks to appraise critically if African culture and beliefs predispose people to corrupt practice, and why efforts at eradicating the menace only yielded marginal results., Finally, the paper suggests ways by which existing measures at addressing the menace of corruption could be strengthened to make them more effective and productive.

¹ De Sardan, O. (1999). A moral economy of corruption in Africa? *Journal of Modern African Studies* .p28

² Bagudu, N. (2004). *Corruption and sustainable democracy in Nigeria Jos*: League for Human Rights Publishers, p9.

³ Ellis, S. (2016). *The present darkness: a history of Nigerian organized crime*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p3.

⁴ Kant, I. (1996). *The Metaphysics of Morals*. Cf. Woods, A. Duties to oneself, duties of respect to others. In Thomas E. Hill Jr. T. (Ed). *The Blackwell guide to Kant’s ethics*. (229-251) West Sussex: Wiley- BlackWell. p229.

2. Typology of Political Corruption in Africa

Corruption evolves in different shades, kinds and spans through all spheres of human endeavour: the economic, religious, social and political institutions. It also transcends age, gender, colour, racial and cultural affiliations. Adrian Blau (2009) in his analysis of Thomas Hobbes on corruption identified six types of corruption: they include physical, semantic, moral, constitutional, political and cognitive corruption. Physical corruption is in relation to decomposing bodies and rotting food. Semantic corruption has to do with words or expression that changes meaning or spelling. Moral corruption is concern with sinful conduct and other vices such as drunkenness, wantonness, gaming etc. While constitutional corruption denotes deviation from good forms of government like monarchy corrupting to tyranny; cognitive corruption describes subversions often done by judges in judgement and in the interpretation of the law. Finally, political corruption describes subversive conditions or actions like factional strife or public officials accepting bribes. It implies the subordination of public to non-public interests, especially self-interests⁵. Whereas this paper concerns itself with political corruption in Africa, it does not assume a total coverage of the continent. Thus, it is predicated on seemingly common practices in relation to social and political institutions in some notable African countries.

Political corruption is the immoral and illegal appropriation of the power and authority vested in a particular office to curry undeserved advantage(s). Public office holders in Africa exploit the administrative and bureaucratic machineries of government institutions to their own advantages at the policy implementation levels of governance. Ugwu Ikenna (2011: 166-167) rightly captures political corruption as the product of unchecked or abuse of the authorities conferred on an office holder by virtue of his/ her office either in the administrative, legislative, judicial, executive or the parliamentary segment of a society.⁶ Access to such undeserved advantages is often facilitated by over concentration of power in the hands of few individuals or the absence of checks and balances. Unregulated or over concentration of power often result in the corruption of its usage.

Evidence abound in most African countries that political leaders emerged through the manipulation of the electoral processes. Thus, nepotism replaces rules for government business and greed and

⁵ Blau, A. (2009). Hobbes on corruption In *History of political thought* 30(4), 596-616.

⁶ Ikenna, U. (2011). Corruption in Nigeria political authority and experience In Akanmidu, R.A.(Ed), *Thoughts in the humanities*, 166-167.

avarice dominate activities in public offices, as the commonwealth is looted and siphoned abroad. This development undoubtedly, undermine the legitimacy, weakens and rubbish democratic institutions. Political corruption in Africa is also a catalyst that promotes underdevelopment, injustice, inequality and deprivation. Public officials extort others in the guise of providing services that ordinarily should be free or prevent others from accessing what ordinarily all should have access to. In other words, political corruption is classified into two: grand and petty. Grand corruption often involve high ranking political office holders and large sum of money while, petty corruption involves lower level of civil servants and smaller amounts of money⁷ (Lambsdorff, 2007). More importantly, in both types of corruption there are deviations from standard norms of morality that includes breach of trust, selective applications of societal rules that benefits some and deprived others. Both grand and petty corruptions are prevalent in the socio-political sphere of contemporary African society thereby, suggesting a nexus between African culture and the phenomenon of corruption. Before an analysis of the veracity of this, it is important to first examine the supposedly link between corruption and human nature.

3. Corruption and Human Nature

Reconstructing Thomas Hobbes account of conflict in human society, a close affinity exist between corruption and human nature. “Man by nature is egoistic they scramble for everything they covet and would have all the world if they could”⁸ (Irele, 1998: 40), but for the emergence of civil society and laws that regulate excesses. If and, whenever these laws are breached with impunities, the society tends to gravitate towards a disorderly one. Therefore, it could be said that a state of nature is practically possible when the people do not consider the interests of others and the legal processes are constantly breached without sanction. This line of thought is what informed the equation of corruption with human nature by Hobbes and some other scholars. According to Hobbes, (1978) three principal things are discernable in the nature of man - competition, diffidence and glory. Competition makes man invade to gain, diffidence for safety and glory for reputation. In his own words,

⁷ Lambsdorff, J. (2007). *The institutional economics of corruption and reform: theory, evidence, and policy*. Cambridge University Press.

⁸ Irele, D. (1998). *Introduction to Political Philosophy*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, p40.

... in the nature of man, we find three principal causes of quarrel. First, competition, secondly, diffidence, thirdly glory. The first, maketh man invade for gain; the second for safety; and the third for reputation. The first uses violence, to make themselves masters of other men's persons, wives, children, and cattle; the second is to defend them; the third, fortifies...¹ (99-100).

African leaders and public office holders manifest these traits in their official dealings. They make deals designed to foster self-interests rather than public interests by employing violence to gain political power, perpetuate selves in offices so as to continue to enjoy immunity or largesse of office. Power to them is, “man’s present means to some future apparent Good”⁹ (Piiirimaee, 2006: 5). As part of the quest for security, looted commonwealth is made available for personal and family medical services abroad, protection by stern looking able-bodied men and dogs, fortification of residential buildings and secured life assurances for children and family members. The examples of Yahya Jammeh of Gambia, Paul Biya of Cameroun, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Paul Kagame of Rwanda, Dennis Sassou-Nguesso of Republic of Congo, Mouhammad Ghaddafi of Libya and Sanni Abacha of Nigeria among others buttressed this assertion.

However, to equate corruption with human nature leaves much to be desired. Human nature is neutral, it could be directed to be or not to be corrupt. This is because there are records of individuals within and without Africa that lived above boards. Although, the numerical strength may not compare favourably with those of corrupt persons, it is undeniable that this group of individuals does not lack the supposedly general nature of humans. Corrupt practice is the display of indiscipline, immoral and unreasonableness of men to reconcile personal interests with public interests and not a product of human nature. This default is common in all societies.

4. Corruption and African Culture

Corruption is a universal phenomenon and its history dates back to the emergence of human society. Without recourse to long chain of historical development, records have it that “during the reign of Louis xvi in France, the class structure of the ancient regime allowed for measure of corruption.”¹⁰ (Moore, 2007: 18). Corruption allegation pervades the European Union, The Federation of International Football Association (FIFA) is replete with allegations of corruption. Park Geun-he,

⁹ Piiirimaee, P. (2006). The explanation of conflict in Hobbess’s leviathan *Trames*, p5

¹⁰ Moore, C. (2007). Causes of demand for international bribery. *Electronic Journal of Business Ethics and Organisation Studies* p18.

the President of South Korea was impeached on corruption allegations.

The pervasiveness of corruption at various levels in contemporary society attracted the attention of world leaders, civil societies, multinational organizations who converged in London, United Kingdom on 12th May, 2016 under the auspices of global anti-corruption summit to find practical ways of checkmating the menace. At the summit, the common opinion was that corruption explains the underdevelopment of African countries. The penchant for corrupt practices in Africa is so alarming that the phenomenon is believed to be ingrained in the culture of the people.

It is undeniable that one of the hiccups confronting African states in their bid to evolve “a societies of well organised peoples”¹¹ (Rawls, 2002: 14) is corruption. It is fashionable for African political elites to channel public funds to abroad, embezzle borrowed funds, connive with contractors to inflate contracts, misappropriate state funds, over invoice, refuse to declare one's assets on the assumption and expiration of public office, use one's official status to frustrate the administration of justice and, smuggle the state's natural resources. Nevertheless, that corruption and African culture are synonymy is arguable.

It must be emphasised however that culture is dynamic; it responds to evolving socio-political circumstances in and around the environment where man lived. The autochthonous culture of any society is better evaluated from the basis, the untainted and uninfluenced stage that consists of the norms and beliefs of the people under consideration. It follows that the traditional African society provides the stem from which African culture can be properly assessed.

According to Nkrumah (1964)¹², Nyerere (1968)¹³, Senghor (1968)¹⁴ and Makinde (2014)¹⁵, traditional African society was egalitarian, communalistic and humanistic in structure. What perhaps, seems to suggest the link between corruption and African culture could be the communitarian spirit of the society whose elements endure to contemporary time. In this society, the individuals protects and promotes the interests of others. In other words, the traditional African

¹¹ Rawls, J. (2002). *The laws of the people*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p14.

¹² Nkrumah, K. (1964). *Consciencism: philosophy and ideology for decolonization and development with particular reference to the African revolution*. London: Heinemann;

¹³ Nyerere, J. (1968). Ujamaa: The basis of African socialism In *Freedom and Socialism*. London: London University Press;

¹⁴ Senghor, L. (1968). *On African socialism*. NewYork: Frederic A. Praeger;

¹⁵ Makinde, M. (2014). *Logico-philosophical studies*. Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press;

person shares the pains, worries and needs of others in the community; he or she is born into a duty-bound environment where the individuals have unreserved obligations to others. The existence and actualization of the aspirations of the individual person is tied to the apron- spring of others in the community and vice-versa. The individual exists because the community exists, so whatever the community owns is equally owned by the individual. That spirit of oneness that binds the traditional African people is expressed by John Mbiti thus,

Only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and towards other people. When he suffers, he does not suffer alone but with the corporate group; when he rejoices, he rejoices not alone but with his kinsmen, his neighbours and his relatives, whether dead or living. What happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am.¹⁶ (1969, 108-109).

It is this communitarian spirit that some scholars erroneously interpreted to be responsible for the inability of political office holders to resist pressures from kith and kin and other community members, to use the power of their offices to meet requests for assistance. This according to critics, largely predisposes Africans to corrupt practices. It could hardly be disputed that some of the Africans' past are embedded in Africa's present, as the past of any human society cannot be totally separated from their present, since there is no complete disconnect between tradition and modernity. The subsisting elements of communalism which include kindness, being one's brother keeper etc. that did not succumb to the pressures of globalization and individualism of the west tend to buttress the position of Collin Powell who argued that African culture promotes and protects corruption.¹⁷ (Ellis, 2016: 3). The fact, however, is that corruption in African cultural system is immoral and condemnable, especially, when the proceeds of the practice are basically for self-aggrandizement.

It is often true that political office holders who employed nepotism to secure employment, admission or reduced taxation for people of his or her ethnic affiliate, friends and acquaintances, are not likely to be condemned by the beneficiaries, if and whenever the office holder is to account for his or her actions. Also, the success or failure of an office holder is strictly assessed on the basis

¹⁶ Mbiti, J. (1969). *Religion and philosophy 2nd ed.* London: Heinemann Educational Books; p108-109

¹⁷ Ellis, S. (2016). p3.

of the value added or, the direct impact made to the community or its members. In addition, the pressures from kin, community members, religious group, friends and associates for assistance are known to be overwhelming and beyond the perquisites of public offices hence a tacit encouragement to deviate from the laid down rules. Furthermore, religious and social institutions celebrate rather than condemn corrupt practices; corrupt officials donate huge sum of money to churches and mosques without the religious leaders asking question pertaining to the source(s) of their wealth. These are the rationale for the position of Daniel Jordan Smith that Africans are active participants in the social reproduction of corruption (2007: 5).¹⁸ All the afore-mentioned notwithstanding, corruption is often condemned by the generality of the people as rightly observed by Sardam (1999: 29).¹⁹ that, “at the everyday level, there is scarcely any conversation without hostile or disgusted references to corruption”. Makinde (2014: 500).²⁰ also observed rightly that accumulation of personal wealth and power at the expense of others was regarded as anti-social in traditional African society.

The communal spirit of Africans as epitomized in the philosophies of *Ubuntu*, *Ujamma*, *Omoluwabi* portrayed values of selflessness, trust and honesty in both public and private dealings of the Africans. They demonstrate the existentialist philosophy that encourages man to be “a being with others” and “a being in the world”²¹ (Unah, 996: 60). This shows that the existence of the self is more meaningful when such existence is a reconciliation with others. The poser therefore, is what makes corruption attractive to Africans?

The deviation from the traditional virtues of hard work, trust, respect for others, personal integrity, selflessness and responsiveness is caused by the foundation upon which modern African society was based. Sogolo (1993: 187), argued that Africa would not be what it is today if the colonial phase it had never existed.²² Following the balkanization of Africa, colonialism merged two or more dissimilar nation–states. As a result, the merging and de-merging there was mutilation of the hitherto coherent but diverse groups in Burundi, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Cote d’Ivoire

¹⁸ Smith, D. (2008). *A culture of corruption : everyday deception and popular discontent in Nigeria*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press; p5

¹⁹ Sardam, J. (1999). Smith, D. J. (2008). p57

²⁰ Makinde, M. (2014). *Logico-philosophical studies*. p 500

²¹ Unah, J. (1996). *Heidegger’s existentialism : an essay on applied ontology*. Lagos: Panaf, p60

²² Sogolo, G. (1993). *Foundation of African philosophy*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press p187

(Ogundowole, 2014: 12).²³ This unfortunate restructuring created deep-seated affection for ethnic loyalty as a means of identity preservation. This partly accounts for the seemingly protective cocoon provided by ethnic group or class whenever a public officer is alleged of corruption. It is therefore, the survival instincts of the ethnic groups that accounts for the pervasiveness of corruption in Africa and not the cultural beliefs of the people. Each group covet a fair share of the national cake even if gotten through illegal means or accessed by one of their own.

In addition is the attendant economic possibilities orchestrated by capitalism during and after colonialism. This greatly influenced an average Africans to have little regard for the hitherto communalism of the society in favour of crude capitalism. A new class of “haves” and “have-not” were created through property acquisition. To sustain and consolidate the occupation of a class of “haves”, greed and avarice with attendant disdain for social morality took the centre stage of socio-political relations. Furthermore, the neo-colonial leaders entrenched through their erroneous conception of what nation-building entails, the spirit of capitalism in governance and the civil populace. According to Ogundowole (2014: 95), “the fact that the federation as constituted today collects royalties from economic activities going on in the different territories belonging to different nationalities amounts to someone collecting something to which that person is not entitled. From here sets in not only unethical practices, corruption... and illegal practices”²⁴ that are conceived as the legal norms of a developing nations. In the words of Dukor Maduabuchi, “If the conception and practice of the state is corrupt then the civil society will also be corrupt”²⁵(2006, p52-53). What is described as corruption of the state may connote positive actions to the state.

5. Corruption as Harmless Immorality within Social Morality

While, Mohammed²⁶ (2015: 209) catalogued the negative effects of corruption, scholars such as

²³ Ogundowole, K. (2014,) *From kakistocracy to institution of democracy*. Ibadan: Hope;p12

²⁴ Ogundowole, K. (2014). *From kakistocracy to institution of democracy*. p 95

²⁵ Maduabuchi, D. (2006). Corruption in Nigeria : the moral question of statehood in Africa In Saliu, Hassan et.al (Eds), *Democracy and Development in Nigeria: Social Issues and External Relations* p52-53.

²⁶ Jade, M. (2015). De- transcending corruption to culture and tradition in Nigeria: imperative of anti-corruption laws for the attainment of economic justice In Y. Salami, J. Famakinwa and G. Fasiku (Eds.). *Nationalism and economic justice in Nigeria* (pp209-224). Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press; p209.

(Otite, 1986: 16)²⁷, (Amujiri, 2002: 77)²⁸, (Ogungbemi, 2007: 45-46)²⁹, (Peil, 1976: 50)³⁰ also argued that corruption is a Trojan horse with both positive and negative perspectives. A modicum of corruption, they argued, is necessary for societal progress. The conception of corruption as a positive phenomenon is anchored on both the principles of harmless immorality and utilitarianism. Utilitarianism as an ethical principle stipulates that morally right act or policy is that which produces the happiness for the members of the society³¹ (Kymlicka, 1990: 9). This ethical principle suggest therefore, that greater priority should be placed on human actions that promote and protect that would be beneficial to the greatest number of people than the one that would inflict pains on them. Simply put, the end or the consequence of an action determines its rightness or wrongness. In other words, If Mr A should take advantage of his public office to pilfer the commonwealth and redistribute the resources among his kith and kins, no moral wrong has been committed, in as much the beneficiaries were able to invest the looted proceeds to provide employment opportunities for others or discover cure to *hitherto* incurable disease that would be beneficial to the whole world, through researches funded with the looted funds.

This position has a close link with the arguments on harmless immorality. By harmless immorality reference is to actions that are offensive yet not injurious to others. The acts of depleting the commonwealth or extorting from a potential beneficiary of an undeserved favour are harmless actions that cannot be said to be injurious to any identifiable person. And since no particular person is inflicted with injury then the action is assumed to be morally permissible. This paper is averse to this position.

In a civil society, the individual is an entity with rights and duties. The individual can only actualise his/her aspirations within the context of the society which consist of different individuals with varying interests but who choose to reconcile these varying interests and pursue a shared goal culminating therefore, into a commonwealth. Individual or personal interest includes the interests of direct families, relatives, business associates and ethic group. The less consideration for these

²⁷ Otite, O. (1986). Sociological study of corruption in Nigeria In F. Odekunle (Ed.), *Corruption in development*. Ibadan : Ibadan University Press; p16.

²⁸ Amujiri, B. (2002). Corruption in the government circle. In Ugwu, C.O.T (Ed.), *Corruption in Nigeria: critical perspective* Nzukka : Chuka Educational Publishers, p77.

²⁹ Ogungbemi, S. (2007). *Philosophy and development* Ibadan: Hope, p45-46.

³⁰ Peil, M. (1976). *Nigerian politics: the peoples view*. London: Cassell, p50.

³¹ Kymlicka, W. (1990). *Contemporary political philosophy: an introduction* Oxford : Clarendon Press, p9.

interests and the more consideration for broader interests, which is public interests, is the overriding aim of government institutions. In other words, the institutions of government, the officials and agencies of government exist for and to serve the public interests. Unfortunately, public officials especially politicians paid no more than lip-service to the ideals of national unity, they devote energies to cultivating ethnic loyalty whenever it would advance their self-interests. Corruption and related vices are motivated by self-interest and not public interests or societal values. The reconciliation of personal interests with public interests is better done when there are shared values contractually agreed to by all. There will be absence of sincere commitment to the goals and aspirations of the state when there are no shared moral values subscribed to by the generality of the people. It is around these shared values that the commonwealth oscillates. Put in another way, the consequent of the reconciled interests of individuals, classes and groups in a state ought to create a moral community with social morality that the entire citizens should key into. Social morality is the norms and values or guiding principles that forms the basis of rights and duties of individuals, and groups that come together to form a country or nation state. Corrupt practices are negation of the social morality; it fans the embers of personal, ethnic, class, group interests at the expense of the general or public interests. Ekeh (1975) puts the distinction between personal, sectional/group and public interests in brighter perspective in his analysis of the two public realms (primordial and civic) in African social and political universe.

In the primordial realm, the individual “sees his duties as moral obligations to benefit and sustain a primordial public of which he is a member.”³² (1975: 106). While the individual seeks to gain from in the civic realm, there is no moral urge on him to give back to the civic public in return for his benefits ³³ (1975: 107). In other words, there is an unrestricted urge to appropriate the commonwealth in the civic public for the benefit of the self or his primordial group. Public offices are institutions that the office holders have moral obligations to ensure are in good health and every attempt to illegally draw from such institutions for personal benefits weakens the institutions and the society at large. The general public has stakes in public office, whenever the commonwealth is depleted for personal benefits it is an affront on the general interest. The general interest promotes

³² Ekeh, P. (1975). Colonialism and the two publics in Africa: a theoretical statement In. *Comparative studies in society and history*, 17(2), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
p106.

³³ Ekeh, P. (1975). Colonialism and the two publics in Africa: a theoretical statement. p107.

personal interest but personal interest does not always promote general interests

6. Actualizing Social Morality for Anti-Corruption

What is responsible for high level of corruption in Africa is neither the culture nor human nature. Much has also been said on the need for Africans to take a departure from colonial experience.

Basically, corruption in Africa or any other part of the world is human-centred. It is the human element that has to be re-oriented to have a shared value for social morality. In doing this, corruption practices would be prevented or minimised to the barest minimum, efforts of the anti-corruption agencies would have been strengthened for effective control and management of corrupt practices through the instrumentality of the law and finally, prosecution of offenders without any sacred cow.

Africa, a predominantly multi-ethnic group, is yet to come to terms with reality that each ethnic group operates within the context of a larger community of groups that has to be respected as an entity. It is a negation of the dictates of social morality for any individual or sub-group to act otherwise by using public office for personal benefits or provide refuge or support for corrupt public officer. The fulfilment of one's obligation to the society includes the protection of the commonwealth in the interest of the larger society rather than sacrifice the general good at the altar of parochial interests. In respect for social morality, individuals and groups within the larger society ought to cultivate the attitude of exposing ill-gotten wealth of any member of the society instead of celebrating corruption at any level of Africa's social existence. Whistle blower policy on corruption of various types and at all levels should be encourage as an act of patriotism by the society and relevant institutions, while whistle blowers should be protected and rewarded accordingly.

In achieving the above, spiritual and social morality should be the pivot on which educational curricula of the citizens should oscillate at all levels, this would cultivate in the minds of the people an attitude of respect for collectivism rather than individuality. Practical demonstration of reward for display of collectivism devoid of sectionalism should begin at the elementary level of education. The existing laws and social institutions charged with anti-corruption should be strengthened, better emplaced and focused to prioritise the demands of social morality. By this, as in Kant's syllogistic illustration of the relationship between the arms of government; the legislature formulates law (major premise), the executive takes up the means (minor premise), and the judiciary makes the

binding determination (conclusion)³⁴ (Ripstein, 2009: 178). This is necessary to ensure checks and balances among the arms of government. In other words, the legislature should comprise of men and women of integrity, who will enact laws for the good of all, disregard personal preferences, reject egoistic and perfectionist's alternatives for justice as fairness. The executive should not engage in prosecutorial selectivity. A level playing ground should be provided for all alleged corrupt officers irrespective of their party affiliation, ethnic group or social status. Acting contrary on grounds of "unsubstantiated evidence" and the likes will only succeed in whittling down the fight against corruption. Finally, the interpretation of laws on corruption should be devoid of equivocation. Judges must guide against creating technical loophole for corrupt officials to escape the wrath of law and sanctions for corrupt offences should commensurate with one another. On the International level, evidence abounds that looted funds from Africa are siphoned abroad. The traditional morality of Africans implicates the west as partner in crime. Most African cultures believed that those that provides safe haven for ill-gotten wealth are guiltier than the original looters. The international community ought to key into the global initiative and global morality of fighting corruption by discouraging the savings of ill-gotten wealth in their territories.

7. Conclusion

The paper examined corruption as a universal phenomenon and its prevalence in African society. It argued that being a universal phenomenon it is erroneous to claim that the social menace is genetically and culturally ingrained to a particular part of human society. Arguments that situate a universal instance to a particular one such as this could be said to be racially inclined. In the same vein, it is observed that what is often explained as the cultural basis for political corruption is the informal obligations that political office holders have to kins, ethnic groups, clans and other entities. Furthermore, the paper contested the claims that corrupt practice was a product of human nature. Human nature is neutral but it is capable of being directed to achieve the whims and caprices of any individual or group. Hence, corrupt practice in the political sphere is a display of the unreasonableness of public office holders.

Although, the prevalence of corrupt practices in the political space of the continent is worrisome but the foundation for this prevalence is traceable to the colonial experience and the attendant

³⁴ Ripstein, A. (2009). In. Thomas E. Hill Jr (Ed) *The Blackwell guide to Kant's ethics*. West Sussex: Wiley- BlackWell, p178.

capitalist structure imposed on it. This and other factors that enhanced political corruption in Africa are surmountable. The paper is of the considered opinion that more fundamental factor that facilitates corrupt practices is the dearth of social morality. The paper reasoned that the phenomenon required proper measures for its prevention and control. This is possible when the political class have a shared vision of social morality.

References

- Amujiri, B. (2002). *Corruption in the government circle*. In Ugwu, C.(Ed.), *Corruption in Nigeria: critical perspective* (66- 84) Nzukka : Chuka Educational Publishers.
- Bagudu, N. (2004). *Corruption and sustainable democracy in Nigeria*. Jos: League for Human Rights Publishers.
- Blau, A. (2009). Hobbes on corruption. *History of political thought* 30(4), 596-616; <https://adrianblau.wordpress.com> accessed 30th September, 2017
- De Sardan, O. (1999). A moral economy of corruption in Africa? *Journal of Modern African Studies* 37(1), 25-52.
- Ekeh, P. (1975). Colonialism and the two publics in Africa: a theoretical statement. *Comparative studies in society and history*, 17(2), 91-112.
- Ellis, S. (2016). *The present darkness: a history of Nigerian organized crime*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hobbes, T. (1978). *Leviathan*. London: Collier.
- Irele, D. (1998). *Introduction to Political Philosophy*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 40.
- Jade, M. (2015). De-transcending corruption to culture and tradition in Nigeria: imperative of anti-corruption laws for the attainment of economic justice. In Y. Salami, J. Famakinwa and G. Fasiku (Eds.). *Nationalism and economic justice in Nigeria*, 209-224. Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press.
- Kant, I. (1996). *The metaphysics of morals*. trans. G. Mary. Cambridge: Cambridge University

Press.

Kymlicka, W. (1990). *Contemporary political philosophy: an introduction*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Lambsdorff, J. (2007). *The institutional economics of corruption and reform: theory, evidence, and policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Maduabuchi, D. (2006). Corruption in Nigeria: the moral question of statehood in Africa In S. Hassan et. al. (Eds). *Democracy and Development in Nigeria: Social Issues and External Relations* 3(1), 52-86.

Makinde, M. (2014). *Logico-philosophical studies*. Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press.

Mbiti, J. (1969). *Religion and philosophy 2nd ed*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.

Moore, E. (2007). Causes of demand for international bribery. *Electronic Journal of Business Ethics and Organisation Studies*, 12(2), 18-23.

Nkrumah, K. (1964). *Consciencism: philosophy and ideology for decolonization and development with particular reference to the African revolution*. London: Heinemann.

Nyerere, J. (1968). *Ujamaa: The basis of African socialism*. In Freedom and Socialism. London: London University Press.

Ogundowole, K. (2014). *From kakistocracy to institution of democracy*. Lagos: Gourmet Honey.

Ogungbemi, S. (2007). *Philosophy and development*. Ibadan: Hope.

Otite, O. (1986). Sociological study of corruption in Nigeria. In F. Odekunle (Ed.), *Corruption in development* 11-19. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.

Peil, M. (1976). *Nigerian politics: the peoples view*. London: Cassell.

Piirimae, P. (2006). The explanation of conflict in Hobbes's leviathan. *Trames*, 1(1), 3-21.

Rawls, J. (2002). *The laws of the people*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.



Ripstein, A. (2009). Kant on law and justice. In Hill Jr. T. (Ed). *The Blackwell guide to Kant's ethics*, 161-178. West Sussex: Wiley- BlackWell.

Senghor, L. (1968). *On African socialism*. NewYork: Frederic A. Praeger.

Smith, D. (2008). *A culture of corruption: everyday deception and popular discontent in Nigeria*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Sogolo, G. (1993). *Foundation of African philosophy*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.

Ugwu, I. (2011). Corruption in Nigeria political authority and experience. In Akanmidu, R.A.(Ed), *Thoughts in the humanities*, 164-180. Ilorin: Decency Printers.

Unah,, J. (1996). *Heidegger's existentialism: an essay on applied ontology*. Lagos: Panaf.

Woods, A. (2009). Duties to oneself, duties of respect to others. In Hill Jr. T. (Ed). *The Blackwell guide to Kant's ethics*, 229-251. West Sussex: Wiley- BlackWell.

HOW TO CITE THIS PAPER

Laleye, S. (2022). Political Corruption in Modern Africa: Implication For Traditional Culture And The Need For Social Morality. *International Humanities Studies*, 8(1), 1-16.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Solomon Akinyemi Laleye, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Department of Philosophy, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko. Ondo State. Nigeria. Email: laleyesolomon@gmail.com