

Corruption and Development in Nigeria: A Psychological Perspective

Dr. Adedeji Julius Ogunleye¹

¹ Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria.

Received: 11 December 2011 Accepted: 2 January 2012 Published: 15 January 2012

Abstract

Corruption is an 'evil': a social vice that hampers national development. It is a global phenomenon that devastatingly affects developing economies. It is an act, internalized acts and, or, behavior by observing some significant persons around us who are otherwise referred to as our 'model'. Since corruption is a learned behaviour, this paper, thus, attempts to analyze it from a psychological perspective, using the relevant psychological theories for analysis. It is recommended that if we appreciate the relevance of Psychologists as professional human helpers and society builders, they would be handy in helping to reshape our orientations regarding value appreciation most especially in Nigeria, through their use of behavioural change interventions. Since corruption is a learned behavior, it can be unlearned through some forms of situational and environmental manipulations. A model is presented to explain how behavior is influenced by both a person and his environment.

Index terms— Corruption, Development, Manipulations, Nigeria, Psychology.

1 I.

2 Introduction and Definition of Corruption

Several economies across the world have suffered set-backs resulting from corruption and corrupt practices of both the leaders and the led. Nations, tribes, and ethnic groups have turned to warring because of corruption; and banditry that wrecked many parts of Europe and America had been largely attributed to corruption and corrupt practices (Mauro, 1997). That Nigerians (both the leaders and the led) are corrupt is not an over-statement. This fact is attested to by Dike (2003) who submitted that corruption is 'pandemic' in Nigeria. Corruption is an evil, which when perpetrated by men, lives after them and affect generations.

One may pause for a moment and ask 'what is this evil that men do and yet lives after them?'

The answer to the above question has been a contentious one for ages. However, corruption has been broadly defined as a perversion or a change from good to bad. Corruption or corrupt practices have been said to involve the violation of established rules for personal gain and profit (Sen, 1999). In his own words, Nye (1967) defined corruption as behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role, because of private gains regarding personal, close family, private clique, pecuniary or status gains. It is a behavior which violates rules against the exercise of certain types of duties for private gains regarding influence.

Corrupt behaviours include bribery, misappropriation, nepotism, fraud, embezzlement, extortion, favoritism, rigging of elections, and falsification of voters register, over-invoicing, money laundering, examination malpractices and even the present day cultism;

(most especially among college students).Corruption is a cankerworm that introduces arbitrariness and discrimination in decision makings so that rules, regulations and procedure are circumvented within a course of action for selfish gains. Corruption is a concept, a harmful phenomenon to personal growth and the economic development of a nation.

A corrupt individual is better referred to as a sociopath who will often require the attentions of a personologist; and or behaviour therapist for behavioural change interventions.

II.

4 Historical Development of Corruption

The emergence and development of corruption can be traced back to the first man created to live on earth; Adam. Biblical accounts in Genesis 3, verses 1 to 12 have it that Adam and Eve had an interaction with the serpent and the aftermath is the having to go into hiding by Adam and Eve when God came calling. The inference from the account is that Adam and Eve felt a need which should be satisfied, not minding God's instructions against unequal yokes with deceptors (unbelievers).

The French revolution of 1879 can be linked with corruption too. The revolution is often described, as a result or some conspiracy by an active minority that was demanding a new deal having been 'taught' and 'touched' by the teachings of the educated elites among them. Before the revolution, a clique of elites in partial control of France resources, called the bourgeoisies, started living in affluence and in 'government reserved areas'. They flaunted their ill-gotten wealth at the peasants and after a while, some of the so-called peasants got influenced by the teachings of the philosophers and demanded a new deal. Thus, warring started as a result of 'corruption'.

III.

6 Corruption in Nigeria: Causes and Effects

It might be difficult to say with precision when corruption started in Nigeria. However, one might not be too wrong to argue that the evil started with the emergence of the entity called Nigeria. From the period of colonial administration in Nigeria in Circa 1800, through the civilian administration of Tafawa Balewa and Nnamdi Azikwe (of blessed memories), to the military regimes of Aguiyi Ironsi, Yakubu Gowon, Murtala Mohammed, Olusegun Obasanjo; and to the civilian rule (again) of Alhaji Shehu Shagari; to the military rules (again) of Mohammedu Buhari, Ibrahim Babangida; to the interim reigns of Ernest Shonekan; through the military reigns of Sani Abacha and Abdusalam Abubakar to the civilian reigns of Olusegun Obasanjo; Musa Yar Adua and the present administration of Ebele Goodluck Jonathan, corruption has pervaded Nigeria, spreading from the cities and urban centers to the inter-land. The corrupt practices that pervaded most of these regimes are reminiscent in the continual breaking of the entity called Nigeria into 'sovereign states', protectorates, to regions, and to the present thirty-six states plus Abuja (FCT). These regions and states' creations are the result of agitations from people requiring a government nearer to them. It may be important to note, however, that these agitations are most often laden with some selfish undertones. Such selfish undertones impact national unity, integration, and development. Bryce (1921) reasoned that the absence of a strong sense of national community often results in conflicts and corruption. More often than not, apostles and chronicles of state creation turn out to manifest behaviours characteristic of people who are materialistically obsessed, compelled for a short cut to affluence and desiring glorifications and approbation of ill-gotten wealth by the general public. A very good example of the above can be found in Ekiti State; created in 1996 by the Late General Sani Abacha administration out of the old Ondo State, and where cliques of individuals who parade themselves as the chronicles of the state creation now cringe on the state government for money, materials and recognition.

It is pertinent to record that corruption is at its top in Nigeria because most Nigerians measure good life by flamboyant affluence and conspicuous consumption. An individual, in Nigeria, whose age ranges between 18 and 45 years and yet has no house(s) and car(s) (exotic and sleekly) of his own is rather perceived as cursed and doomed for life. An attempt to prove to the world and Nigerians that one is not cursed, and, or doomed, accounts for why many Nigerians engage in dubious activities to cut corners to affluence. For example in 1996, one Clement Duru (alias Otokoto) who owned 'Otokoto' Hotel in Owerri was nabbed for killing and selling body parts of human beings to some of the travellers that checked into his hotel at Owerri. Sometimes too, in July 7, 2002; Thisday Newspaper reported the issue of beheading of an SSS 3 female student and a middle-aged woman in Akure, the Ondo State capital.

Instances of ritual killings, as in the cases of fraud, forgery, embezzlement and abuse of office; are issues of loss of moral reasoning, moral values, and moral judgment. All these are indices of corruption. Other factors, no doubt, include those of poor reward system and greed as noted by Dike (2002). Our greed, even as noted by Harrison (1985) and Onalaja (1997) are products of our peer community, extended family pressures and polygamous households. In the words of Harrison (1985), extended family system is effective as a clinical setting for therapy and social support. Nonetheless, he noted that it poses a big obstacle for development owing to the long familial chains that must be socio-economically attended to if one would not want to be ostracized and negatively labeled. The socioeconomic care for the family members may inadvertently affect the growth and development of the carer while even possibly inducing corrupt practices and acts.

That corruption permeates through the cities to the inter-lands is evident in the observations of Akande (1953) who wrote that: "glancing through any of Nigeria newspapers, one is often than not stared in the face by the numerous and over increasing cases of fraud, swindling and theft and other forms of dishonesty and corrupt practices in Nigeria. At a second thought, one wonders what type of citizens Nigeria is breeding and what will be

the ultimate end of a dishonest country. One finds a little consolation in thought that these cases are limited to Lagos and a handful of other big and civilized towns of Nigeria” Like Akande rightly observed, in many villages, where there had not been any direct administrative contact with the western civilized countries, corruption has never been an issue because there are established traditional administrative ways of dealing with individuals who contravene established social rules. Suffice it to say therefore that corruption is an ‘evil’, a social vice exacerbated by western civilization.

Corruption and corrupt practices sometimes bring about war within, and even between, nations. No warring nation will boast of a healthy socio-political and economic development. This is evident in the words of Mauro (1997) who, argued that corruption affects a nation’s economic growth by reducing public spending on social and human capital formation. Socially, the effects of corruption could be enormous. For example, in the United States of America, and in California precisely, activities are being crippled by power-outages, like does Nigeria NEPA; now PHCN. This is quite saddening and rather unexpected in a place like the United States. However, such is the effects of corruption. Power generation and distribution in California is privatized and is being handled by Enron Corporation. Enron is however, charged with fraud having manipulated her balance sheet, profit and loss accounts and tax liabilities. This is not surprising as it gives an insight into why the current call for privatization of Nigeria Power Holding Company and deregulation of the Nigeria economy is being critically opposed by some Nigeria elitists. Most revealing is the recently submitted result of the oil subsidy probe in Nigeria, as reported by Vincent Ovia, where it was found out by the Honourable Lawan Farouk probe panel that fuel consumption in Nigeria was inflated by about 30 million litres per day and thus resulting in the government expend of over 2.4 trillion Naira in the year 2011 alone (ThisdayLive, 15th April, 2012).

Politically, corruption destabilizes and lead to social revolution and military take over. It might be pertinent to recall the many excuses usually giving during military takeover. One of such is the words of Brigadier J. Dongoyaro at General Buhari’s post-coup broadcast to Nigerians in 1983. Dongoyaro, in the broadcast, emphasized that the toppled Shagari’s administration has grossly been corrupt. One may be apt to say, however, that the incursion of the military in Nigeria politics in the excuse that Nigeria politicians are corrupt may no longer be tenable if lessons from the past military leaders are anything to go by. It is evident that many of the past military leaders in Nigeria were more corrupt than the civilian politicians and a great number of these past military leaders are even turning to civilian politicians. One of such individuals is ‘President’ I. B. Babangida who said he was stepping aside in 1993 as military president and head of state of Nigeria and who has since been in the political arena jostling to be Nigeria’s civilian president. Despite a plethora of accusations of corrupt practices levied against General Babangida, he is yet to prove to Nigerians the he was never a corrupt public servant. Rather, he chose to describe himself as an ‘evil genius’. The question now is whether there can be any genuity in ‘evil’.

In a corrupt economy, the quality of life generally, and even those of goods and services produced in the economy are often reduced. This is because most of the companies providing the goods and services would always cut corners to increase their profit margin. That corruption affects the quality of life generally is attested to by the Daily Trust (2002) which pointed out that the price of corruption is poverty.

7 IV.

8 Psychological Explanations of Corruption

An understanding of corruption for the purpose of combating the evil without a real exposition of the concept from the behaviour analytical point of view will not be adequate. After-all corruption is a behavioural practice, a demonstration and, or, manifestation of some kinds of ‘abnormal’ behaviour. All kinds of abnormal behaviour, no doubt, retard growth and the development of a people, nation or economy. Thus, if we agree that corruption is prevalent in Nigeria; then we can understand the reasons for Nigeria’s stunted growth and development.

The phenomenon of corruption is better explained from the psychological point of view using Sigmund Freud’s Psychoanalytic Theory, Albert Bandura’s Social Learning/Cognitive Theory and Abraham Maslow’s Need Theory.

9 V.

10 Corruption from the Psychoanalytic Perspective

In the explanations of Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, all humans are driven by two biological instincts (inborn motives). The instincts are the life and death instincts. Life instincts relates with the motive to survive against all odds and the fulfillment of other bodily need, while death instinct was viewed as a destructive force in all human beings. Freud (1933) argued that the instincts are divided among three components of personality which are Id, Ego and Superego. The instincts are also called psychic energy.

According to Freud, the id obeys the pleasure principle by seeking immediate gratification for instinctual needs. The id acts on impulse that is often unrealistic. This is why the id is often referred to as not being in contact with reality but lives on fantasy principle. Because the id operates on pleasure principle, it often propels humans to contravene the rules and rather ensures the gratification of an individual’s needs; even without minding ‘whose ox is gored’ so long as survival is guaranteed.

The Ego, according to Freud, emerges when psychic energy is diverted from the id to energize important cognitive processes such as perception, learning, and logical reasoning. This structure of personality is often referred to as the executive of the personality because it is in contact with reality and therefore regulates and controls the activities of the id.

The super-ego is the third component of the Freudian personality. It is often referred to as the judicial branch of the personality. It relates with individuals' internalized moral standards. According to Freud, the(D D D D) A 2012 u J n e

super-ego develops from the ego and strives for perfection rather than for pleasure or reality.

In the explanations of Freud, the three components of personality conflict one with another. Freud posited that in the matured, healthy personality, a dynamic balance operates in which case the id communicates basic needs and the ego restrains the impulsive id long enough to find realistic methods of satisfying these needs. The superego, in effect, decides whether the ego's problem-solving strategies are morally acceptable. Thus, Freud (1964) argued that psychological problems arise when the fixed amount of psychic energy a person has is unevenly distributed among the id, ego and super-ego. Inferring from this analogy, it is arguable that a sociopath routinely lies and cheats to achieve his aims (a corrupt individual), has a very strong id, a normal ego and a weak superego, having never learnt to respect rights of others.

11 VI. The Cognitive Social Learning Theorists View Point

Albert Bandura (1977), influenced by Hull and Skinner's social learning experiences, propounded the Observational/Social Learning Theory. According to the theory, the majority of the habits we form during our lifetimes are acquired by observing and imitating other people.

According to Bandura, much complex behaviour could never be learned unless people are exposed to some other humans who modeled them. Thus, observational learning permits human to acquire many new responses in settings where their 'models' are simply pursuing their own interests and are not trying to teach anyone anything.

In Bandura's attempt to explain the dynamics of imitative learning where a 'model' is no longer present and yet component responses involved in an act are acquired, he contend that the acquisition of modeled behaviour is governed by four interrelated processes of: attention, retention, motoric reproduction and motivation. Bandura explained that a child, for example, attends carefully to a model to learn by observation and the child also commit the model's behaviour to memory; if the child must have to reproduce the responses later, when the model is no longer present to serve as a guide, reproducing such responses, apparently, requires some symbolic coding activities of either verbalizations or images, so that, translation of symbolized images and verbal codes into action can become less cumbersome. Thus, a child who is able to effectively translate symbolic representations or a modeled sequence into action is said to have imitated the model's behaviour. Now, the question that arises is: how does Bandura's observational learning theory explain the prevalence of corruption in Nigeria? The answer to the question is very simple and near. There is no gain saying that many Nigerians, even on a daily basis, witness cases of corruption everywhere. In both public and private organization, employees are daily stared in the face with the realities of 'kick backs' from contracts awarded. We often see public servants who, by every standard, live above their salaries and cruise around town in sleekly and expensive cars, live in palatable mansions of their own, and send their wards to highly expensive schools. These individuals are revered and 'worshipped' as the high and mighty. As such and most importantly because humans are essentially hedonistic, we tend to learn and internalize behaviours of people who live in affluence and opulence and they, invariably, serve as our models'. This phenomenon is most apparent where, even, persons that have been indicted of corrupt practices are celebrated rather than punished. For example, many of the second republic politicians who were found guilty of corrupt practices, and even a host of the past military leaders who were accused of corruption, are today in the corridors of power in Nigeria. The likes of Salisu Buhari, Jim Nwobodo, Chief Bode George, Boni Haruna, Olagunsoye Oyinlola, Ibrahim Babangida and Joshua Dariye to mention a few, are some of the individuals who has either been accused, or found guilty of corruption but today dictate the shots in Nigeria. Late Chief S. M. Afolabi was accused of corrupt practices involving the National Identity Card. Alas, however, his death was celebrated as it attracted, even, the presidency that showered encomiums on him. The case of treasury lootings of late General Sanni Abacha and family is another example. Interestingly, rather than that these corrupt individuals be punished to serve as deterrent to would-be looters, they are often celebrated. The Federal Government, under the leadership of President Olusegun Obasanjo, compromised the sums of \$100,000 and \$400,000 for Abacha's family to release the billions of Dollars that was embezzled by the Late Gen. Abacha and family (The Guardian Newspaper, October 3, 2002). Alas! Erastus Akingbola, the erstwhile Managing Director of Intercontinental Bank of Nigeria, have had to answer to charges of corrupt practices as the Bank's Managing Director. Yet, he was once made the Chairman of Council of a Nigeria citadel of learning, an ivory tower. Not long ago too, a serving Senator in Nigeria was linked with terrorism and surprisingly, there seem to be nothing serious done about the claim. The case of Kabiru Sokoto, the alleged mastermind of Christmas Day(2011) bombing of a Catholic Church at Madalla and his escape from police custody, and Zakari Biu's involvement as the police officer in charge calls for serious reflections on corruption in Nigeria. How best are we to describe the acts of the London jailed Onanofe James Ibori, the erstwhile governor of Delta State? Because corrupt government officials and public servants are not 'really punished' for their corrupt practices but are rather celebrated and even awarded Chieftaincy titles as rewards, therefore some other persons learn corruption, internalize the act and subsequently

reproduce such acts at the opportunities to do so. Thus, virtually all Nigerians become corrupt and corruption is prevalent in Nigeria.

VII.

Corruption from the Need

Theorists' Point of View Abraham Maslow is one of the prominent need theorists who propounded the hierarchy of needs theory in 1954. The main tenet of the theory is that humans are motivated to behave in certain ways that are instrumental, or could lead, to the gratification of their needs. Maslow argued that human needs are in hierarchy starting from physiological needs at the base of the hierarchy through safety needs, love and belongingness needs, esteem needs, and up to selfactualization needs. Maslow went further to argue that the satisfaction of a lower order need propels movement to efforts at satisfying the next higher need on the hierarchy. That is, that it is only when an individual's physiological needs (clothing, shelter, hunger, thirst and even sex) have been satisfactorily met that he aspires to satisfy his safety needs.

Several analysts and Nigeria scholars have reasoned that Nigerians are influenced by the search to satisfy physiological needs (e.g Orji, 2003; ??gbuzor 2002). These, they reasoned, is largely responsible for the nation's loss of social values. Ikubaje (2002), while quoting Gire, reported that the fear of job and future insecurity made so many Nigerians to see corruption as the best way to safeguard against future economic insecurity; since Nigeria economy seem to be nosediving. Extrapolating from above therefore, it seems potent to argue that corruption, in Nigeria, is propelled by Nigerian's desire to gratify their varied needs. 'Sufficient unto the day is evil thereof' (Mat. 6, verse 34b) though.

VIII. The Way Forward/Conclusion

Corruption, like all other forms of behaviour, is influenced by an individual's emotions, situations, and needs to achieve. Indeed Kurt Lewin's (1936) familiar equation ($B = f(P,E)$) embodies our shared desire to understand the ways in which behaviour (B) is shaped not only by properties of the person (P), but also by features of the situation, or social environment. Kelley, Holmes, Kerr, Reis, Rusbult and Van-Lange (2002) have attempted expanding Lewin's formulation by arguing that an interaction between and among persons is better conceptualized in terms of their needs, thoughts and motives in relation to one another in the context of the specific social situation(s) in which their interaction transpires.

Thus, a healthy environment devoid of stimulation to learn, internalize and reproduce criminal tendencies and corrupt practices is advocated.

Further, successive Nigeria governments must wake up to their responsibilities of providing essential services for her citizenry, ensuring a safe haven for peaceful co-existence, and punishing corrupt individuals and other sociopaths adequately, to prevent others from performing other or similar criminal acts.

We must not also lose sight of the fact that a learnt act can equally be unlearned. Therefore, through reinforcements and public enlightenment campaigns, Nigerians can learn to appreciate social values and change their orientation through moral value judgments. A model of corruptive behavior is presented here: From this model, it is maintained that the behaviors' or individuals are influenced both by innate tendencies, personality dispositions and the environment. Thus, a normal non-corruptive behavior will require an absence of corruptive cues in the environment, social organization, and orderliness in the environments. These will invariably influence people's moral development and perception, vis-a-vis a stable personality development and a resultant non-corruptive behaviour. Where the reverse, in the environment, is the case, corruptive behaviours from persons evolve.¹

¹© 2012 Global Journals Inc. (US) Corruption and Development in Nigeria: A Psychological Perspective



Figure 1:

-
- 263 [Akande and Olu (1953)] , Akande , C S Olu . 1953. January 13. Nigeria Tribune.
- 264 [This Day News (2002)] , This Day News . July 7, 2002.
- 265 [Kelley et al. ()] *An atlas of Interpersonal Situations*, H Kelley , J G Holmes , N L Kerr , H T Reis , C E Rusbult
 266 , P A M Van-Lange . 2002. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- 267 [Freud ()] 'An outline or psychoanalysis in'. S Freud . *The Standard edition of the complete psychological work*
 268 *of Sigmund Freud*, J Strachey (ed.) (London) 1964. Hogarth Press. 23.
- 269 [Nye ()] 'Corruption and Political Development: A cost Benefit Analysis'. J S Nye . *The American Political*
 270 *Science Review* 1967. 2 p. .
- 271 [Kimberly] *Corruption and the Global Economy*, Ann Elliot Kimberly . Washington, D.C.. Institute for
 272 International Economics
- 273 [Dike ()] 'Corruption in Nigeria: A new Paradigm for effective Control. Online Publication: African Economic
 274 Analysis at www'. V E Dike . AfricanEconomic Analysis. org 2002.
- 275 [Corruption, Democracy and Development in Nigeria. National Interest J. G (2002)] 'Corruption, Democracy
 276 and Development in Nigeria. National Interest'. <http://www.sakinternational.org/essay.html10>.
 277 lkubaje J. G 2002. May. 2.
- 278 [Sen ()] *Development as Freedom*, A Sen . 1999. New York: Anchor Books.
- 279 [Onalaja and Onalaja ()] 'How polygamy Wrecks Nigeria'. T Onalaja , K Onalaja . *Africa. UK: CAPWONA*
 280 *books* 1997.
- 281 [Bryce (1921)] *Modern Democracies*, James Bryce . 1921. July 9. 2002. New York: Free Press. Daily Trust.
- 282 [Orji ()] 'Motivation: A basis for an ethical re-orientation'. A A Orji . *Psychology in the Service of Nation*, B
 283 Babalola, I S Kemmer (ed.) 2003. Lagos Deutchetz Publishers.
- 284 [Freud ()] *New Introductory Lecturers in Psychoanalysis*, S Freud . 1933. New York Basic Books.
- 285 [Dike ()] *Nigeria and the politics of unreason: A study of the Obasanjo's regime*, V E Dike . 2003. London:
 286 Adonis and Abbey.
- 287 [Lewin ()] *Principles of Topological Psychology*, K Lewin . 1936. New York: McGraw Hill.
- 288 [Bandura ()] *Social Learning Theory*, A Bandura . 1977. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- 289 [Lipset and Lenz (ed.) ()] *The effects of corruption on growth*, S M Lipset , G S Lenz . L.E. Harrison and S.P 15.
 290 Maunro, P. (ed.) 2000. 1997. (Corruption, Culture and Markets. investment, and Government expenditure:
 291 A cross-country Analysis)
- 292 [The Guardian Newspaper, Thursday (2002)] *The Guardian Newspaper, Thursday*, pg. 15. October 3, 2002.
 293 Nigeria.
- 294 [Welch (ed.) ()] *The military and the states in Africa: Problem of Political Transition*, Claude (WelchJr .
 295 23.www.kzoo.edu/africa/corruption-JSDA99 Zaki Ergas (ed.) 1987. New York: St. Martins Press.
 296 (The African State in Transition)
- 297 [Harrison ()] *Underdevelopment is state of mind: The Latin American Case. Cambridge: Centre for International*
 298 *Affairs*, L E Harrison . 1985. Lanham, Md: University Press. Harvard Univ.