

Exploring the Strategies of Addressing Pertinent Forms of Corruption and Accountability in Selected African Countries

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ABSTRACT With corruption levels reaching unfathomable levels in some African countries, it is critical that research that avails plausible strategic recommendations is conducted. This is to give hope that these countries public civil service will be effective and efficient. The aim of this paper is, through a review of literature, to discuss the plausible and pragmatic recommendation that can be to mitigate, reduce or annihilate states of corruption significantly. Although the paper has discussed the manifestations of only four types of corruption, that is, political corruption, gender based corruption, white-collar corruption and tax evasion, it has come with the following possible intervention/strategies to curb corruption: Instituting and strengthening public watch dog; Instituting and strengthening corruption awareness sessions and programs; enforcing public accountability in service delivery; Instituting the office of the ombudsman; and training of law enforcement officers.

INTRODUCTION

From a layman's understanding, corruption constitutes a constellation of dishonesty deals that are against the laws of the land. This is stealing public funds, abuse of office for those holding both elected and appointed offices. Corruption could also constitute all illegal ways by which the employees both from the government and private organisations collect money from the public for their own financial gains (Public Service Commission (PSC) 2002). It is undeniable that levels of corruption for many African countries have reached unfathomable proportions (Mulinge and Mufune 2003; UNDP 2007; Olowonmi 2008; Abdullahi et al. 2012). This has had pinching and horrendous effects to the economies of these countries. They have been growing at a snail's pace (Mulinge and Mufune 2003). This is because acts of corruption results in gross mismanagement of resources, misallocation of resources, and illegal diversion of project money to other projects to create an opportunity for the directors and their cronies

to benefit directly. Corruption, usually displayed by the United Nations through corruption indices is a "cankerworm" that messes all the productive capacities of a country, with most of the wealth going into the pockets of a few, usually those who are from the ruling class, or those connected to them (Nwel and Richard 1999: 43; UNDP 2007). With the most corrupt countries according to Transparency International being in African continent, and with those countries ironically asking for foreign aid from the western world, it is critically important that various researchers are conducted with the hope of bringing new insights of what need to be done in order to turn down the tables of the state of corruption (Mulinge and Mufune 2003). This is because the state of corruption is sacrificing the future of the younger generation. This is especially when the countries that cannot afford to fund most of the developmental activities such as education, health etc. Perhaps of poignant importance is to force accountability to those holding public offices. This may perhaps demand that the leaders themselves are clean. Unfortunately, many African leaders are also corrupt, usually doing it through cronies and other politically connected individuals they may have appointed to loot the wealth on their behalf.

Indubitably, corruption in many African countries has dented, destroyed, and brought down many public organizations that should be

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generating resources for the country, or serving the citizens (Amundsen 1999: 7). Although many African countries such as Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Cameroon and Kenya have always been among the very corrupt according to the Transparency International, one of these researchers remembers vividly that during the reign of President Moi in Kenya (1978-2002), virtually all the parastatals went on their financial knees. This was because those who were appointed did not have to be qualified, but were the government appointees rewarded for supporting the ruling party, or were financially being prepared to vie some elective posts within the ruling party hierarchies. The scenario mirrors what other countries such as Zimbabwe and Nigeria undergo (Osinakachukwu and Jawan 2011; Agbiboa 2010, 2012; Chitakunye et al. 2015). This is the time when foreign donors froze their aid to Kenya. Ironically, when the country was in financial malaise, most of the top ruling class had stashed huge sum of money in foreign accounts. This is the characteristic of African leadership. Lack of integrity and mindfulness of others, lack of public accountability, lack of ethical and morality to do what is right, and unfathomable levels of greed constitute huge norms of governance (Thomas et al. 2004).

Problem Statement

With Transparency International still indicating that African countries are the most corrupt in the globe (Agbiboa 2010, 2012; Chitakunye et al. 2015), this phenomenon has continually dented the integrity of these countries. This also has an impact of how the Africans are viewed by other countries. For example, they are viewed as people who cannot adequately manage their resources, lacking in integral capacities of leadership, people without care of their future posterity, and generally greedy people who never care for their future generations. This presents a pathetic state of affairs and calls for researchers, lovers of Africa and the public itself to engage in various efforts, be it advocacy, lobbying, or research that can possibly come up with plausible and pragmatic recommendations as to how best this state of corruption can be reduced, mitigated, or annihilated altogether. The fact that research indicates that African continent still espouses more resources that fits better than other continents is an indicator that

if Africans can improve their governance and management, and of course curb gross levels of corruption, and then countries can achieve an economic take off. Africans should not always be begging for assistance. Countries need to put their houses in order.

METHODOLOGY

The paper has used a desk review methodology to debate, reflect, critic, and discuss the strategies of addressing corruption in selected African countries. The paper has reviewed different documentary sources to give insights of what can possibly be done to address the plight of corruption. The paper has immensely used government oriented journals and books; and also these researchers' intuitive experience and knowledge in public administration.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Manifestation of Pertinent Kinds of Corruption in Selected African Countries

Indubitably, many countries of the developing countries, or the so called third world countries are deeply enmeshed in higher levels of corruption (Riley 1998; Mulinge and Mufune 2003). This is indicated by resource mismanagement, poor governance, public embezzlement of funds, nepotism in the appointment of public office, and a fewer government connected individuals taking billions and billions to foreign banks, while the citizens are dying of hunger, lack of medicine, housing etc. (United Nations (UNs) 2007; Handley et al. 2009). This is a pathetic scenario that leaders of the third world have portrayed and perfected. The survey conducted by the Transparency International in Philippine revealed that corruption within the government organizations was overwhelming.

Political Corruption

Indubitably, political influence as observed in this current political dispensation has played an adverse role in shaping the socio-economic, growth and development in the African countries (Mulinge and Mufune 2003). Pathetically, the majority of the African leaders are highly corrupt (Oyeshile 2004; Ikenna 2009; Ogbeidi 2012). Ironically, the introduction of democratic

system of governance was expected to bring joy, peace and tranquility and harmony to citizens, but the reverse has been the case. Apparently, the majority of the African political institutions have decomposed, disintegrated, deteriorated, or crumbled as a result of immense and rampant corruption (Silva 2012). Previous studies have pinned most corruption resting within the governance structures, usually pointing to the top brass members of the countries (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009). According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009), democratic institutions can play an important role in limiting the scope of corruption, with the best example being India – the world's largest democracy. However, democratization is not a panacea, but its efficacy and effectiveness in checking corruption largely depends on the goodwill and motivation of those in the leadership helm. If the ruling class is corrupt and want to gain outside their allowances and salaries, then the country may not attain level zero tolerance for corruption (Shleifer and Vishny 1994b; Husain and Hazel 2013).

Gender Based Corruption

With the Millennium Development Goals placing the need to observe gender equality, equity and women empowerment in its third of its eight international developmental benchmarks (Ibrahim and Alkire 2007; World Health Organisation (WHO) 2008), many countries have increasingly been conscientised to seriously look into ways of uplifting the state of women and the girl children. Perhaps there is a consensual agreement among many countries especially of Africa that women and the girl children have been subjected to untold miseries, due to the patriarchal nature of the societies (Kang'ethe 2009, 2014a, b).

The issue of gender corruption is an explosive one, raising debates, arguments and dialogues in this current political dispensation in African countries (UNDP 2008). While societies are still not clear why the issue of women empowerment appears to be given undue mileage and advocacy, many have to come to terms with the fact that gender based corruption is very rampant in both private and public spheres. This usually manifests when women are considered and taken to be a weaker sex to be underrated, condescended, or even be disregarded in many fronts such as appointments to various tasks. Unfortunately today, still many senior govern-

ment positions are given to men, not considering the capacities and the capabilities of their women counterparts. On this, the country of Botswana needs to be emulated for its spirited campaign on women empowerment generally. The country prides in having more than fifty percent (50%) of its middle level managers being women (United Nations (UN) 2010; Patrick and Laschinger 2006). To the contrary, in Zimbabwe, there are more males than females occupying ministerial positions, with females occupying less influential positions, for instance, Gender, Culture or Education domains (Kambarami 2006 cited in Kang'ethe and Chikono 2014).

White Collar Corruption

This is a kind of corruption in which those who hold public or private offices use them to advance fraudulence activities to benefit themselves or their cronies (Powell 2005). This means that resource allocation and distribution do not pursue the desirable economic path but usually get diverted as long as the desires and interests of those directing them are taken care of. This could mean for example a company failing to give a tender to a well-known and efficient tenderer, but instead give it to another company that is not efficient tested. This would happen if the winner of such a tender is well connected to those in power. This is a serious form of crime that is making organizations to go on their financial knees unabatedly especially in many African countries. Lack of ethical and moral credence is the real cause of this. According to Powell (2005), white-collar corruption crime is becoming an increasing scourge in organizations around South Africa with more and more employees involved in fraudulent schemes and activities (Powell 2005). According to a report from KPMG forensic report, white collar corruption in South Africa has reached unfathomable levels with no good signs of abating (South African Institute of Tax Professionals 2008). Although no country is immune to white collar corruption, but South Africa leads the pack with more than four out of five South African companies falling victim to fraud during the past two years (Coopers 2005). A bitter pill to swallow for half of the companies was that the perpetrators of the fraud were their own staff members (Coopers 2005: 3 cited in Naiker 2006: 7). According

to Wells (2004: 1), “Most accountants and auditors think that internal control is the answer to frauds, yet organizations with control still have frauds so we therefore need to de-programme ourselves and look for a different, more effective, approach to fight fraud.”

Corruption Pertaining to Tax Evasion

Perhaps, a more pronounced form of corruption is the phenomenon in which well-connected personalities do import things but refuse to pay the requisite taxes, or just pay a few clerks some little money to misconstrue the figures of the good imported. Largely, corruption in revenue audit may have a huge negative impact on collections of revenue (Dos Santos 1995 cited in Imam and Jacobs 2007). Usually tax evasion manifests when a taxpayer manipulates his/her audited accounts by cutting or reducing his/her expenditures. This is usually motivated by the environment in which the tax officers agree to be accomplices in the fray by accepting the reduced figures. This means that the business person may only present a very small percentage of the figures he may have used. A taxpayer not fearing the consequences of being caught will, in many countries where tax evasion corruption is a huge norm, decide to evade taxes in the belief that even if tax officials detect the evasion, the tax auditor can be bribed and payment of the proper tax liability avoided.

Possible Interventions to Address Corruption in African Countries

Instituting and Strengthening Public Watch-dog

Unashamedly, most of the officers in government and private organizations’ in many African countries have grossly immersed themselves in various kinds and levels of corruption (Brogden and Nijhar 1998; Etzioni 2004). They have embraced the culture of dishonesty and professional impropriety. This goes against any code of conduct in any professional career (Segal et al. 2007; Sheafor and Horejsi 2008). While many government documents towards extinguishing malpractices in the government exists in many countries, on the ground the efforts to effectuate proper and effective accountability is not there. The civil servants generally do not want to embrace the culture of transparency and

honesty in the process of discharging their due responsibility (Wamukoya 2000; Ejere 2013; Kakabadse et al. 2003). Therefore, to pin down states of corruption and accountability, the government must be keen to monitor and check how most of the organizations operate. This is to ensure accountability and proper respect of the office that one holds. For example in Nigeria, there is National Food and Drug Enforcement Agencies (NFDEA), whose responsibility is to monitor all companies producing drugs and food, as well as checking if they are adhering to the government laid policies and procedures guiding their organisational operations. This apparently could be a path to face corruption head-on. Such bodies are called “watch dogs”. Unfortunately, many leaders do not want these watch dogs because of the potential to expose the shady deals that the top government officials engage in (Lachman 2008). The public should be at the forefront in demanding the institutions of such public watchdogs. Importantly, there should be a governmental goodwill to protect those who blow the whistle. This is because in countries such as Kenya, such personalities that would expose wealthier politicians and businessmen can disappear with nobody knowing where they have gone. The scenario, therefore, can make people fear exposing some forms of corruption. This is because of fear of death (Lachman 2008).

Instituting and Strengthening Corruption Awareness Sessions

Perhaps many citizens may not know their role in eradicating corruption tendencies in their countries. Education on how everybody needs to be part and parcel of reporting cases and episodes of corruption is central. Citizens should be made aware that corruption “takes their food from their mouth.” This is because those involved in it steals or abuses public coffers in which all the taxpayers have contributed (Song and Yarbrough 1978). If for example there were some job vacancies and the director favored those he liked or related to him/her, the public has the right to make such activities be known, or exposed. Therefore holding community awareness sessions usually through grassroots leadership structures could have an impact in raising the public awareness on its right to jealously guard against episodes of corruption or any other malpractice (Berger 1990). Hence, it is high

time that every "Dick and Harry" be made aware of these perfidious, treachery and deceitful acts that those in higher positions engage in to the detriment of their countries development.

Enforcing Public Accountability in Service Delivery

Optimistically, the government should institute a process of accountability of those who hold higher offices. There should be a time when the Ministers and other higher ranking officers should appear in the press and face accountability questions from the public. Such a process, these researchers believe, could make those in the responsible positions to be careful and do everything according to the laid down guidelines and regulations. The process could also raise public satisfaction that the government is indeed committed to seeing that its high ranking officers are ready to face public scrutiny.

Instituting the Office of Ombudsman

An ombudsman means an organization set up by the government for the purpose of redressing complaints among the citizens of a country, especially the workers. Ombudsmen listen to the public servants' complaints, especially if they have been cheated or mal-treated by their employers. They also deal with several kinds of correctional practices among different government officials and dealt with them accordingly (Dawes et al. 2009). The institution of the office of ombudsman is critical if the public is going to have an opportunity to channel various complaints and report possible forms of malpractices committed in different offices. But such offices should be both autonomous and the public should be made aware of the office and how it operates.

Training of Law Enforcement Officers

Evidently, many law enforcement officers in African countries are half-literate. This means that the majority of them have merely acquired primary school certificates which limit their levels of understanding pertaining to the constitutional laws governing their countries (Kakar 1998). Therefore, adequate strategies should be implemented by the government to ensure that the law enforcement officers are adequately ed-

ucated. They should also be well trained upon taking their offices (Kakar 1998). The government can achieve this through holding workshops and seminars at regular intervals for the purpose of updating them about any changes in the government policies, and how they should address and adhere to the policies.

CONCLUSION

Corruption is a cankerworm that needs to be annihilated if ever African countries are going to address their state of poverty. The government needs to show goodwill through the top leadership embracing the culture of propriety, honesty and accountability. Indubitably, corruption has a huge role in dragging the countries' state of economic and social development. Importantly, even the public should be participants in ensuring they report episodes of corruption and any malpractice. Having all the countries have autonomous offices of the ombudsman would be critical in enhancing public participation in the continuum of extinguishing or annihilating corruption.

Suggested Strategies to Address Corruption in Selected African Countries

Government Goodwill to Annihilate Corruption

- African governments should be endeavor to use all the constitutional power confer onto him to judicially and authoritatively conquer corruption in order to maintain her dignity and reputation within her country and internally recognized as good and honest president.

Government Machinery to Ensure Compulsory Auditing of Institutions

- The government should within her power be able to establish some monitoring team that would possibly visit all the government parastatals probably once in a month to access and keep all the duplicate copies of the various governmental financial transactions for the purpose ensuring proper auditing in order to maintain effective and efficient accountability.

People to Uphold Moral and Ethical Standards to Uproot Corruption

- The government should work very hard and diligently as well as collaborate effectively and efficiently with her policy maker to make sure that all the public or government employees are law abiding and strictly adhering to their organization ethical code of conduct. The government as well as her policy-makers should ensure that all the government employees exhibit good moral behaviors within and out their organization and in fact, strictly default themselves from all immoral act or behavior that can tarnished the name of the government of their country, perhaps, if they don't care about their own. There should be a clear and stated or established policy that the government should made known to all her employees that any employees founding corrupt will be dismissed without any pension or gratuity.

Communities to View Corruption as a Cankerworm that Needs to be Annihilated

- The communities as well should within their capacities always ready to support the government at any particular point in time and in fact expose and report any government officials found engaging in corruption which could be in form of bribery around or within their communities. They should desist by collaborating with the entire government official who would in one way or other willing to bribe them in order to take advantages of some opportunities from them most especially bribing them to vote for them for a certain political post.

Imposing Stricter Penalties for those Caught in Corruption Deals

- Special tribunal that investigate all government officials as well the government of the country by herself should be enacted and empowered by the government to charge any government official corrupt an immediate dismissal penalty. In order to avoid bias in this special tribunals decisions, they should not be under the control of any parties to the government, they should be given absolute opportunity operate without any treat from external bodies.

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