

## ***Tackling the Menace of Corruption in Nigeria: The Role of Muslim Women Organisations***

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### ***Abstract***

*The high level of corruption in Nigeria is a matter of concern to all well-meaning Nigerians. Corruption has a lot of negative consequences on every sphere of societal development whether social, economic or political. Over the years, past governments have made efforts to fight corruption but it has remained widespread. President Muhammadu Buhari made the fight against corruption one of his cardinal programmes along with security and the economy. However, eradication of corruption is so important that it should not be left solely in the hands of government alone. It should be the responsibility of all and sundry. Islam, being a comprehensive system of life, provides preventive measures to curb corruption in human society. This paper, therefore, examined the responsibility of the Muslim women organisations in curbing corruption in Nigeria. The paper observed that the causes of corruption in Nigeria include; erosion of values and virtues, lack of Allah's consciousness, greed, slow judicial process, low wages in civil service, nepotism etc. Sources such as the Qur'an, Hadith and other literatures were utilized. The paper recommended that the various Muslim women organisations should network together and build partnership for information sharing, and campaign on corruption eradication in Nigeria. They should also organise seminars, workshops etc. to educate the people on the Islamic position on corruption, its implication on the development of their own personal integrity and the overall development of their country. It concluded that if these measures are implemented, they will go a long way in arresting this quagmire of corruption in the society.*

***Keywords:*** Nigeria, Menace, Corruption, Muslim women organisations.

### **Introduction**

Corruption is a global phenomenon. It is an age-old menace which can cause tremendous harm to the society. It is regarded as a cankerworm, which has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian society. It has established itself in all spheres of the socio economic and political

realms of the nation. The reality and painful effects of corruption are visible in every aspect of life in Nigeria, hence, the need to do more in the fight against it. Stories of managers and top politicians who embezzle and squander the money entrusted to them and are subsequently dismissed have become a daily story in the media. Additionally, there are accounts of falsified documents, misuse of funds, bribery and corruption, forgery and counterfeiting, corrupt governments brought about by dishonourable politicians and office holders.

Recently, Nigeria has been listed among, and in fact ranked the second most corrupt country in the world, according to Transparency International's Corruption Index (CPI), as cited in *Daily Times* (February, 2004:16). Corruption is the easiest way of accumulating wealth for private or individual consumption, hence a lucrative business for those who are practising it for diverting and siphoning public resources at the expense of the majority that are wallowing in poverty. Corruption has made many government institutions' performance far below expectation, if not, incapacitated in terms of satisfying and meeting the basic needs, wishes and aspirations of the governed, as many public hospitals and health institutions, for example, are virtually in a state of decadence; socio-economic infrastructural facilities such as electricity, water, good and accessible roads are in the state of backwardness and historic decay (Fabayo and Abiola, 2004:38).

Adegbola (2014) citing Ehusan's, in the paper delivered at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Lagos on August 5, 2004, observed that many pious Nigerians (Muslims and Christians) who go to churches on Sunday and fill the mosques on Friday are at one time or the other involved in such fraudulent activities as evading tax, issuing and obtaining of fake receipts, over-invoicing and under-invoicing, importation of fake drugs, petty and large-scale bribery, fake audit reports, "creative book-keeping," "round-tripping," advance fee fraud among others. According to him, these practices are so rampant that many young Nigerians are today unable to distinguish between good and evil or between right and wrong (michael-leaders-adgbola. blogspot...). He (Adegbola) also cited Falana who noted that Corruption in Nigeria, no doubt, has assumed a dangerous dimension, which permeate all the strata of the society. The civil society is not spared in this menace. According to him, corruption has so much eaten deep into the fabrics of the Nigerian society and that the civil society has become a tool in the hands of corrupt people. He said:

*Our NGOs have become corruption vessels and the effect is what we see today – a society without conscience. Foreign aids meant for specific roles have been converted to personal use. Gone were the days when NGOs stood and spoke for the oppressed masses; now, they are agents of retrogressive, oppressive and corrupt personnel. The situation is even made worse due to the proliferation of NGOs where people just register organizations whimsically (michael-leaders-adgbola.blogspot...).*

According to Wada (2012:64), corruption and mismanagement of both human and monetary resources occur for a variety of reasons. She observed that, people usually do not give such actions deep thought, but consequently, it is such actions that combine to make societies stagnant, un-resourceful, chaotic, and corrupt. Thus, it is not just the simple giving and taking of money that amounts to or else feeds corruption. Various activities that are inconsistent to progress also aid corrupt practices.

It is worthy of note, however, that in Nigeria, some steps have been taken and are being taken by government to check the menace of this obnoxious practice. These included the 1979 Ethical Revolution, the War against Indiscipline (WAI), the MAMSER, the War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC), and of recent, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). However, it is not only the government that should be concerned with corruption, but the whole society should be wary about it so that we could create a clean and honest society, free from corruption.

### **Islam on Corruption**

Corruption (*Fasad*) from the view point of Islam literally connotes mischief, abuse, rottenness, depravity, wickedness, viciousness, dishonesty, and perverseness. Technically, it refers to a broad range of behavioural digressions that threaten social, economic, ecological balance of the society. Its root is traced to abuse of judicial or administrative power or of political authority, trust, or financial prowess (Dogarawa, 2016:5). Corruption is one of the socio-political and economic behaviour of man that undermines or prevents achievement of ultimate goals of development. Islamic principles have clearly explained the position of

corruption in Islam and its implications to human development. Islam also calls for the fight against corruption in view of its damaging effect on every aspect of humanity. Allah says:

*“And when they are told, “Do not spread corruption on earth” they answer, We are improving things! Oh! Verily, it is they who are spreading corruption-but they perceive it not. And when they are told, Believe as other people believe, they answer, “shall we believe as the weak-minded believe? Oh, verily, it is they who are weak-minded but they know it not! And when meet those who believe, they assert, We believe (as you believe), But when they find themselves alone with their evil (ones), they say verily, we are with you, we were only mocking (Q. 2:11-14)”.*

In another place, Allah says:

*“And of mankind there is he whose speech on the life of this world may please you greatly (O Muhammad!) and he calls Allah to witness as to that which is in his heart, and is moreover exceedingly skillful in argument. And when he turns away from you (O Muhammad!) he goes about the earth spreading corruption and destroying crops and livestock, And Allah does not like corruption(Q. 2:204-205)”.*

These verses condemned any form of corruption, be it misappropriation, or extortion of public money or whatever form. The same is the case for bribe of any form. Islam also prohibits corruption that arises from dishonest or immoral human behaviour. This was the reason that the concept of ‘adl’ (justice and fairness) is highly encouraged in Islam. It encompasses being just and fair with all people, be they one’s parent, brothers, wives, sons, friends or enemies. Islam condemns discrimination and nepotism. The above Islamic precepts shade light on the position of Islam on corruption. Since Islam is a religion that comes with the ideals in all aspects of human development, its instructions and guiding principles are beyond space and time. It has provided solutions to any problem that would prevent the progress of the development. This was why the concept of corruption is totally condemned by Islam.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

Corruption – The word “Corruption” is a noun which originates from Latin – Com; meaning “with”, “together” and rumpere meaning “to break” (corruption...). The literal meaning of the

term, therefore, refers to breaking the laws. It also alludes that engaging in corruption can destroy someone's trustworthiness and good reputation before others (Maishanu, 2016:3) Specifically, corruption or corrupt behaviour involves the violation of established rules for personal gain and profit (Sen 1999:275).

However, within the context of politics and governance, corruption is an "... abuse of power and public trust and misuse of official positions and responsibilities for self-serving objectives, whether for personal, private or group gain" (Jega, 2005:1). Corruption can also be seen as "perversion of integrity or state of affairs through bribery, favour or moral depravity" (Oтите, 1982:12).

Corruption engenders unquantifiable devastation and undermined the rule of law. Its widespread in Nigeria made it a mere culture of identity that cuts across gender and involves every existing ethnic groups that made up of the country. It obstructs the collective quest for democracy and the performance of many institutions of both private and public sectors, making them dull, sluggish, inefficient, and ineffective, if not completely incapacitated. Thus, it gives a lot of concern in performing their primary responsibilities and functions. A similar opinion has been expressed by Sunusi (2011:12) that corruption:

*...undermines moral values, weakens the rule of law and undermines equality between citizens, which leads to social instability and poor and inadequate institutions. It also has an impact on the political life, in general and democratic practices, in particular.*

### **Some Forms of Corruption**

Corruption takes many forms. There is hardly any sector in Nigeria today where one corrupt practice or the other is not found. Yusuf Ali San (2016) in his paper, "Corruption in Nigeria: Islamic perspectives" identified the following as forms of corruption in Nigeria:

#### **Political Corruption**

Political corruption is persistent in the Nigerian state. Since the creation of modern public administration in the country, there have been cases of official misuse of resources for personal enrichment. Election rigging is a common phenomenon which is an aspect of political corruption. During elections, the contestants hire thugs who go round the election polling stations to

highjack ballot boxes. Sometimes voter's cards are bought, manipulated and the cards are used for personal advantages.

### **Corruption in the Universities and Colleges**

Corruption has also manifested itself in Nigerian universities, polytechnics and colleges. Some lecturers use the opportunity they have to lure some ladies to sleep with them. They promise to reward them with good grades and threaten them with failure should they refuse. The same applies to the male students through extortions of various forms.

### **Corruption in the Police Force**

Many Nigerians have had negative experiences with policemen; as a result, even the good ones among them are generalised as being bad. Those police who mount checkpoints on the roads, most times, collect bribes from car owners and drivers. Their interest is to collect money from road users and not to secure the roads.

### **Corrupt Practices by Parents of Students**

A high JAMB score is critical for admission into the university in Nigeria, and this has led to cheating by some students and parents. There are expensive coaching centres that charge exorbitant fees to guarantee a minimum score of 300 in the JAMB score, which is being orchestrated by coaching centres through aiding and abetting cheating in the JAMB examination with the connivance of JAMB officials (Ayobami <http://unllib.unl.edu/LPP/>).

**Bribery:** The payment (in money or kind) that is taken or given in a corrupt relationship. These include kickbacks, pay-off, sweeteners, greasing palms, etc. (Bayart et.al 1997).

**Fraud:** It involves some kind of trickery, swindle and deceit, counterfeiting, racketing, smuggling and forgery (Bayart et.al 1997).

**Embezzlement:** This is theft of public resources by public officials. It is a situation in which a state official steals from the public institution in which he/she is employed. In Nigeria the embezzlement of funds is one of the most common ways of perceived economic accumulation, perhaps, due to lack of strict regulatory systems or abject truncation of the rule of law for status gains.

**Extortion:** This is the money and other resources extracted by the use of coercion, violence or threats to use force. [The police and custom officers are the main culprits in Nigeria] (Bayert et.al 1997).

**Favouritism:** This is a mechanism of power abuse implying a highly biased distribution of state resources. However, it is seen as a natural human proclivity to favour friends, family and anybody close and trusted.

### **Causes of Corruption in Nigeria**

Many researchers have exerted efforts to understand the cause of corruption among the people. The following causes have been highlighted by scholars and as cited by Maishanu(2016:6-7).

- Personal greed that leads to an unrestricted desire for money or power, with no regards whatsoever to moral boundaries.
- Decline of personal ethical sensitivity, either due to lack of education, or negative learning experiences, developed by downplaying perverse conduct in the past.
- Lack of sense of service and patriotism when working in public or private institutions. This is seen, for instance in those who use politics for their selfish interest instead of serving the common good and progress of the community.
- Absence of courage and strong will to denounce corrupt behaviour and avoid situations akin to corruption. Like the case of one who is aware of corruption being perpetuated but remain silent. Such people simply cover the corrupt individuals perhaps thinking that it is not their problem, or out of cowardice, so as not to put their lives in danger.
- Cultural environment that condones corruption such as defending or even admiring the corrupt and arguing falsely in their favour, with justifications like, “everyone does it”, “take advantage while you can”, “this is your time”, etc. These are just few examples of such devilish expressions encouraging corruption in Nigeria.
- Regulations with inefficient controls can give room for corruption. Increase regulations with adequate control mechanisms are definitely significant in the prevention of corruption.
- Inactive or slow judicial processes in the sense that sometimes the perpetrators are released without any punishment due to godfatherism and interference, or at the time of

the punishment, the sentence would be grossly incommensurate with the crime. As long as there are loopholes and non-compliance to the strict anti-corruption laws in the judiciary, corruption will continue to thrive.

- Corruption is prevalent in a situation when criteria for proven integrity, diligence and responsibility are absent in a work place or in the promotion process.
- Absence of decisive actions within Government institutions and organisations to penalize acts of corruption and by that set examples, create environment conducive for 'sustainable' corruption.
- Nepotism. This includes partiality, favouritism, preferential treatment, bias treatment, etc.
- When someone lacks God consciousness in him or her, he or she will indulge in corruption.
- Low wages in civil service. When public wages are low, public servants may be compelled to use their official positions to collect bribes as a way of making ends meet, particularly when the chances of being caught are low.

#### **Effects of Corruption:**

Corruption has an adverse effect on socio-economic development and also in building a nation. Akwashi (2013:135) stated the view of Mauro that, the effects of corruption on a nation's socio-political and economic development are myriad. The negative effects on economic growth, among others reduce public spending on education. Corrupt government officials would shift government expenditures to areas in which they can collect bribes easily. Large and hard-to-manage projects, such as airports or highways, give room for fraudulent practices.

Alkafawyy (2016) observed that the image of Nigeria and Nigerians have been severely soiled and dented abroad on account of corruption and other criminal behaviours. According to him, the quality of roads being constructed in Nigeria is grossly compromised resulting in loss of hundreds of thousands of lives and properties annually. He further stated that, the educational sector has degenerated at all levels. At tertiary levels, the only magic wand that keeps institutions afloat is the Tertiary Institutions Trust Fund (TETFUND), a creature of ASUU. At all the remaining levels, education is gasping for survival and it is better if something is done very fast before the system collapses completely. He said: "We are all living witnesses to the



scale of dilapidation and decay in our school buildings and other infrastructures.... All these are corruption hangovers".(Alkafawyy 2016:13)

### **Tackling the Menace of Corruption in Nigeria: The Role of Muslim Women Organisations**

Muslim women organisations such as Federation of Muslim Women's Association in Nigeria (FOMWAN), Jama'atu Da'wah (JADAFIA), (women's wing), Muslim Professionals in Da'wah (MPD) (women's wing), Women in Da'wah (WID), Nasru-Lahil-Fathi (NASFAT), (women's wing), Muslim Sisters Organisations (MSO), Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC) (women wing), Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) (women's wing), Jama'atu Nasril Islam (women's wing), Ansaru-Deen Society of Nigeria (women's wing), Anwarul-Islam Movement of Nigeria (women's wing), Nuru-Deen Society of Nigeria (women's wing), Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN), (sisters wing), Ansarul-Islam Society of Nigeria, (women's wing), Fityanul-Islam Organisation (women's wing) Izalatul-bid'a Waiqamatus-Sunnah (women's wing), Nawarud-deen Society of Nigeria, (women's wing), Islamic Movement of Nigeria (women's wing), Initiative for Muslim Sisters Advancement (IMSA), and several others have come up with concrete corruption prevention measures which include the following:

1. The various Muslim women organisations should collaborate and build alliance with and between grass root, national regional and international women group. Through this, they can build Partnership for information sharing, and campaign on corruption eradication in Nigeria.
2. They should utilize advocacy to reduce, as much as possible, corruption practices in the country, by paying visits to leaders in the government, district heads, community leaders, important stakeholders, and urging them to shun corruption in their day to day activities.
3. They should evolve better practices to curb poverty through skill acquisition, agriculture, business ventures and other ways too. In order to achieve better results in curbing corruption, there is need for women in various positions/organisations to sharpen their skills by embarking on relevant training which will improve their capacity in campaigning for Zero corruption.
4. Muslim women organizations can use the message of sacrifice learnt from the history of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) to promote a modest and an austere lifestyle that will contradict the

crass materialism and extreme economic liberalism of our age which is responsible for the worsening plight of the poor and supported the monumental pillars of corruption in Nigeria.

5. Muslim women organisations have a role to play in the fight against corruption on the level of theoretical teaching of moral principles. They should remind their followers that the fruit of corruption is only of temporary value and that the judgment of God catches up on everyone. They should continue to encourage their people to live an honest lives.
6. Muslim women organisations should join hands together to send out clear and joint messages condemning corruption in all its forms. They should also work together among the different religious bodies on concrete practical anti-corruption programmes.
7. Muslim women organisations should seek deliberate channels to collaborate with government agencies on corruption to fight against corruption in Nigeria.
8. They should also organise seminars, workshop etc, to educate the people on the Islamic position on corruption, its implication on the development of their own personal integrity and the overall development of their country.
9. Muslim women organisations should help governments and companies to implement international legally binding measures against corruption. Transparency and integrity should characterise citizens involved in the building up of an environment that is totally free of corruption.

### **Recommendations**

1. While we commend the Federal Government Constitutional effort in the fight against corruption through the regulatory and anti - corruption bodies such as Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), much more need to be done collectively by Muslim women organisations in government, business and academia.
2. Muslim women organisations should considerably deepen their understanding of the moral principles and ethical values as enshrined in Islam upon which a healthy society should be based.
3. They should sensitize citizens on the dangers of corruption, and educate them on the culture of transparency and accountability.
4. They should encourage the government to make strong legislation against corruption and ensure compliance through strict enforcement of law and corrective/punitive measures.

## Conclusion

Eradication of corruption is so important that it should not be left solely in the hands of government. It should be the responsibility of all and sundry. Islam being a comprehensive system of life provides preventive measures to curb corruption in the human society. The paper examined the responsibility of the Muslim women organisations in curbing corruption in Nigeria. The paper identified some forms of corruption such as political corruption, corruption in the universities and colleges, corruption in the police force, corrupt practices by parents of students etc. The paper revealed that the causes of corruption in Nigeria include; erosion of values and virtues, lack of Allah's consciousness, greed, slow judicial process, low wages in civil and so on. The paper also revealed that corruption has an adverse effect on social and economic development and also in nation building. The paper recommends that, the various Muslim women organisations should network together and build partnership for information sharing, and campaign on corruption eradication in Nigeria. They should also organise seminars, workshops etc, to educate people on the Islamic position on corruption, its implication on the development of their own personal integrity and the overall development of their country. Thus, if these measures are implemented, they would go a long way in arresting this quagmire of corruption in our society. Muslim women organisations therefore, have a crucial role to play in the fight against this obnoxious practice.

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