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**SPECIAL
EDITION**

What Has Religion got to do with it? Ethics and Attitudes towards Corruption in Nigeria

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Abstract

Based on the salience of religion in public life in Nigeria, alongside the pervasiveness of corruption in the country, it has become imperative to research into the relationship, if any, between religion and corruption and determine if the former has or can have any impact on stemming the later. This is based on a widely held assumption that religion is often positive. In looking at the influence of religion on attitudes to corruption in Nigeria and based on the contents of the research instrument employed for this study, the paper presents findings from the study according to analytical categories. Thus, it discusses respondents' perception of religion and morality (ethics); as well as examines the divide, if at all, between public and private morality; the definitions/explanations of corruption in the religions; religious beliefs and personal attitudes to corruption; the influence that tradition and modernity may or may not have on corruption; corruption, gender and youth and the role of FBOs and anti-corruption agencies in corruption abatement or promotion. It concludes that while the three main religions under study in Nigeria explicitly condemn corruption, they do not seem to impact or influence attitudes to corruption in any major way. Furthermore, the fact that religious people and religious houses often roundly denounce corruption has not brought about any moderation or diminution of corrupt tendencies in the public space. The paper then pulls together some suggestions for ways to use religion to mitigate the scourge of corruption.

Key Words: (Anti) Corruption, Faith Based Organisations, Christianity, Islam, African Traditional Religion.

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Introduction and Background

Religion plays a very critical role in social life in Nigeria. Indeed, it is salient in both public life and daily living. It is often, though not always viewed as positive. It is sensible then to expect, or at least many Nigerians do expect, that the pervasiveness of religion in the life of Nigerians should moderate tendencies to engage in corruption commonly defined as 'the abuse of public office for private gain' (World Bank, 1997: 8), which is also endemic in the country (Okoosi-Simbine, 2005:174-189; Williams, 2005: 17-29; Sangosanya et al, 2005: 70-77; Underkuffer, 2009: 38-39). The theory is that in a society such as Nigeria's where faith is an integral and inseparable part of people's lives, the ethical and moral templates that religion offers should dissuade public officers and in fact, everyone from predilections to corruption. Indeed, faith provides the language of ethics and, often, an actual 'list' of rules to live by, some of which can be interpreted as being of particular importance to fighting corruption. Unfortunately, Nigeria ranks as one of the most corrupt nations in the world according to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI), whose 2009 survey places her 130th of 180 countries in the world, 10th out of the 16 West African countries, 27th out of 47 nations in sub-Saharan Africa and 33rd of the 53 countries in Africa¹.

This rating comes *pari passu* with a high ranking in the religiosity index using indicators such as the Pew Research Centre's Forum on Religion and Public Life which indicates that 90% or more of respondents in most of their surveyed countries identify as and are deeply committed to Christianity or Islam and yet many continue to practice elements of traditional African religions². Furthermore, the 2007 global attitudes project found that in countries where people generally trust one another, there is also more confidence in the integrity of political leaders. Thus, in nations such as Nigeria where trust is found to be rare, concerns about political corruption are widespread. Indeed, a high percentage of Nigerians (over 80%), express more concern about political corruption as a very important problem than trust (less than 35%)³.

The above raises a set of interesting questions: do public servants separate public and private morality (Ekeh, 1975)? Are public servants' attitudes

¹ See Abimbola Akosile, *Africa: Corruption perception-Nigeria's Rating Worsens' in Thisday*, November 18, 2009; <http://allafrica.com/stories/200911180368.html>, assessed on 7th September, 2010.

² <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/799/global-social-trust-crime-corruption>, retrieved on 26/8/2010.

³ The 2007 Pew Global Attitudes survey was conducted April-May 2007 among representative national samples in all countries except Bolivia, Brazil, China, India, Ivory Coast, Pakistan, South Africa, and Venezuela, where the samples were disproportionately or exclusively urban. For more details see pewglobal.org.

towards corruption shaped by their religious beliefs and devotion? Do public servants see religious teachings on ethics as implementable or practicable at work or as utopian, difficult to implement or non-operable in practice? Do specific religious practices differ in terms of attitudes to corrupt behaviour? Do the dispositions of religious leaders to corruption by way of denunciation, tolerance or even overt involvement in corrupt activities influence the laity's attitudes towards corrupt behaviour? Clearly, a better understanding of the relationship between faith, ethics and corruption will be useful to anti-corruption actors and their partners, aside making significant contribution to the formation process of attitudes towards corruption. Additionally, this component of the RaD Programme contributes centrally to the religions and development research programme under the theme: religious values and development concepts and practices.

Research Issues and Justification for the Study

The aims of the project on *Religious values and attitudes to corruption* are thus two-fold. First, to assess how public servants' individual religious beliefs influence their attitudes towards corruption, which in turn could influence their disposition to engage in corrupt practices and their reactions to anti-corruption initiatives. Secondly, the project examines the role of religious organisations and particularly FBOs as actors impacting upon the discourse on corruption among their members. Although these can be seen as discrete aims, the logic is that a better understanding of the role played by religious leaders in articulating (or not articulating, as the case may be) a position on corruption provides essential contextualisation for the first aim. Thus the research questions and objectives include:

- 1) In the perception of respondents, what is religion and what is corruption?
- 2) How do religious beliefs influence public servants' attitudes towards corruption?
- 3) What differences exist, if any, between different religions in terms of influence on public servants' attitudes towards corruption?
- 4) What role does positionality play in attitudes towards corruption; in other words, does being closer to opportunities for corruption influence attitudes towards corruption more than religious belief?
- 5) Do religious organisations and FBOs themselves impact members' attitudes towards corruption?

Corruption is generally perceived as a formidable hindrance to good governance and economic development. Thus, more empirical research and

analysis on the phenomenon and its interaction with religion in a way that would inform anti-corruption practitioners and development agencies, as well as provide appropriate guidance to policy makers on strategies for tackling the malaise are useful. They provide justification for this research, as efforts to deal with the problem must, as a first step, characterise its determinants. Indeed, Transparency International (2007) has argued that with the rise in globalisation, there is an increasing demand for in-depth analyses of the causes and consequences of corruption. The organisation adds that there is also an increasing need to translate the results of such research into concrete advocacy programmes. In order to answer the above research questions and objectives therefore, the project employs a qualitative methodology.

Methodology and Data Analysis

While reflecting on the significant gaps in existing literature on corruption, this research which is conducted in Nigeria explores people's understanding of religion and of corrupt or incorrupt behaviour within society; what they conceive as the causes of corruption, and how their attitudes towards corruption are shaped or influenced by their religious beliefs or practices. The study is largely exploratory because there is scant literature on the relationship between religion, ethics and corruption. A qualitative approach is favoured involving personal interactions and dialogues between the researcher and the researched (Mason, 2002; Bryman, 2001; Morgan, 1998; 1988; Strauss, 1987). The approach facilitated a nuanced assessment of the respondents' views on religion and attitudes towards corruption. It allowed deeper insights into definitions of corruption, perceptions of corruption scenarios, modes of resistance to corruption and explorations of new opportunities for corruption in everyday lives (Robson, 1993).

The research employed a combination of semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions and case study scenarios. The respondents were carefully selected from people who are members (such as students, Pastors, Muslim clerics and ATR priests) of FBOs (such as Nasrul-Lahi-Il-Fathi Society of Nigeria (NASFAT), The Federation of Muslim Women Association in Nigeria (FOMWAN) and the Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC), or are employees or representatives of religious bodies/organisations such as Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA), Ansarudeen Society of Nigeria, officials of the Shari'ah Commission, Hisbah Commission, Directorate of Social Mobilisation (*A DAIDAITA SAHU*), Anti-corruption Directorate, and Shura Commission etc). Aside representatives of major and religious groups in the country such as Christians, Muslims and ATR practitioners (major), members of

minor religious groups such as Eckankar, all of whom have knowledge of religious scriptures, management of religious centres, and the philosophy and practice of religion where targeted. Others are people who occupy positions that expose them to everyday practices of corruption such as public servants, officials of anti-corruption agencies and the like.

Personal interactions through the use of an interview guide, in addition to texts of religious teachings and secondary data from media reports were also consulted. Texts of religious teachings were referred to by respondents and used to illustrate religious teachings about corruption; while secondary data from media reports in newspapers, libraries, periodicals and communiqués of religious groups or organisations' meetings help to conceptualise issues, discuss and analyse some of them, as well as expand, interpret or corroborate the views of respondents. The case study scenarios were applied as control or to check for consistency or contradictions in responses. Thus, the research instruments jointly developed by the research team⁴ and employed at the pilot stage⁵ were used for the main fieldwork (between July and August 2009), with minor modifications to add on more questions. All interviews were tape-recorded with the knowledge and permission of the interviewees.

The process of data analysis was going on simultaneously as data collection progressed. Indeed, the researchers kept moving back and forth from data collection to analysis. This helped the team to look out for more meaningful and in-depth information during the interviews/discussions that led to a better grasp of the existing situation on the topic under investigation. Some analytical categories or sub-categories emerged during the coding process that incorporated responses to the themes/questions addressed during the interviews, focus group discussions and scenarios presented to respondents. These sub-categories have been collapsed to create six broad analytical categories and the data was also segregated on the basis mostly of region and religion and at times, gender within the analytical categories. Broadly, the categories include:

1) Respondents' perception of religion and morality (ethics)

- What is the perception of respondents about religion; what is their perception of morality (seen here also as ethics)?

⁴ The research team comprised a team leader and senior researcher-Antonia Simbine, another senior researcher- Emmanuel Aiyede; two junior researchers-Rasheed Olaniyi and Mohammed Fagge and four field workers/researchers, at one each per research location. They are: Akachi Odoemene (Owerri), Mutiat Kareem-Ojo (Ibadan), Maikano Madaki (Kano), and Phillip Dahida (Abuja).

⁵ A pilot study was initially conducted in Ibadan in April 2009 to test the research instrument.

- What, if any is the (positive) association between religion and morality?
- What do religion and morality have to do with corruption?
- Secular/Professional versus Religious/Personal values: do people separate public and private morality?
- How does one's position influence public servants' and elected government officials' attitudes towards corruption?
- Is there any distinction between secular and religious values?

2) **What is Corruption in the religions?**

- In the view of respondents, what is corruption?
- What is/are the general cause(s) of corruption; types of corruption; where does it occur; what reasons are adduced for the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society (also reasons for persistence); what are the effects of corruption?
- On the whole, what is the explanation for the phenomenon of corruption?

3) **Religious beliefs and personal attitudes to corruption**

What, if any is the relationship between religious beliefs and personal attitudes to corruption?

- Are Nigerians more religious than corrupt or vice versa?
- What is the role of FBOS in promoting or discouraging corruption?
- What is the relationship between religion and politics?

4) **Tradition, Modernity and Attitudes to Corruption**

- What is the relationship between tradition, modernity and attitudes to corruption?
- How has modernity affected respondents' ethics and moral codes?

5) **Corruption and Gender and Youth**

- Who is more corrupt between men and women?
- What are the basis for respondents' views about men being more corrupt than women and vice-versa?
- What type of corruption is prevalent among youths and why?

6) **(Role of) Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) in Anti-corruption**

- What role does religion have to play in curbing or fighting corruption in the society?
- What measures are taken against corruption within FBOs?
- What are the principal weapons for this endeavour?
- What are those factors that may undermine this role?

- How can religion be used to mitigate corruption? How is religion being used and in what other ways can religion be used to mitigate corruption?

Study Sites and Respondents

Islam, Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR) are three major religions in Nigeria⁶ and their adherents constitute the subjects in this research. It is important to observe that these religions are not in any way homogenous since they have many groups that have some major cords that bind them together, but which still differ in other respects such as their mode of worship, practices, rituals, dressing and festivals, etc. Thus, among Christians can be found Catholics, Protestants, Apostolics, Pentecostals and the like. Also, among Muslims can be found *Tijanniyyah* and *Qadiriyyah*- the two largest Sufi Islamic sects in a place like Kano as well as the neo-orthodox sect of *Izalah*. Despite belonging to one major religion, some of these religious groups/sects can be bitterly in opposition to one another as the avant-garde *Izalah* are to the older and conservative *Tijanniyyah* and *Qadiriyyah* sects among Muslims.

In order to capture the three main religions in the country, four locations where they are predominantly concentrated and/or active, in tandem with other religions which are in the minority were selected for the research as follows: Kano in the North West (for Muslims); Abuja, the Federal Capital, in the North Central (for all religions); Owerri in the South East (for African Traditional Religion (ATR) practitioners and Christians) and Ibadan in the South West (for Christians and Muslims). The interviews also covered certain categories of people within these religions and within governance and society. Through theoretical and purposive sampling, respondents were identified. Through the process of snowballing, initial contacts and/or interviewees helped to identify other possible respondents who met certain thematic issues/characteristics that required further elaboration or that were considered by the researchers as important enough to be captured. These were targeted in order to understand the positions that the religions take on corruption, ethical conduct and morality. In all, 120 (one hundred and twenty) interviews and 12 FGDs were planned.

⁶ As the Pew-Templeton 2010 Survey of 25, 000 people in face-to-face interviews and conducted in more than 60 languages or dialects in 19 African Nations including Nigeria has found, "while 90% or more of the respondents in most of the countries surveyed identify as Christian or Muslim, many people retain beliefs that are characteristic of traditional African religions, such as belief in the protective powers of sacrifices to spirits and ancestors. Many keep sacred objects such as animal skins and skulls in their homes and consult traditional religious healers when someone in their household is sick" See, pewforum.org Press Room Press Releases Retrieved on 26/8/2010.

However, only 108 (one hundred and eight) interviews and 12 (twelve) FGDs were conducted, constituting 90 percent of the targeted number of interviews. The interviews covered all the categories of respondents envisaged from the various sites and the responses provided sufficient information for the analysis to be carried out. Furthermore, this study, as a case study on the role of religion in influencing attitudes to corruption, is expected to point in certain directions but may not be generalised beyond Nigeria.

Literature Review

It was Diamond (1993) who described corruption as Nigeria's perennial struggle. This is very well so since corruption has become a feature of public life in spite of the repeated and diverse efforts to rout the menace right from the colonial days when the country emerged as one of the major outposts of the British Empire. Corruption has continued to increase even as the country experienced a revival in religious activities since the 1990s⁷. Therefore not few have wondered whether religion as a major source of ethics or morality has any influence on the attitude of Nigerians towards corruption.

As the country grapples with the problem of corruption, many of the efforts to fight the malaise have been defined by ideas arising from comparative and international experience in anti-corruption drives. These efforts have been largely informed by political and economic studies of the phenomenon characterised by a lack of consensus on the causes and consequences and thereby on the status of the various remedies prescribed. Given the complexity of the problem, anti-corruption policy measures need to benefit from more nuanced investigation of the cultural, religious and ethical dimensions. Such an effort should include studies of the national experience with corruption and the implementation of anti-corruption measures, the relationship between religion, politics and public life, notions of modernity and tradition which affect the content and context of corruption, and the role of faith based organisations and religious doctrines in attitudes towards corruption.

Towards this end, we carried out a fairly robust review of available literature in this area. For the Christian religion, Awe (1997:23-24); Hager (2002:74); Vatican II (1988: 930); The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), (2002:6); McBride (1994:921-922); Ojo (2004); (Kukah 2007: 37-38); Akinola (2009:58); Oyakhilome, (2006); (Ilesanmi 2001:264) were examined. The literatures indicate that Christian teachings and practices abhor corruption but need to be

⁷ As a result among others, of the introduction of Shari'ah and its implementation in many Northern Nigerian States and the violent religious confrontations between Muslims and Christian in major cities in the northern part of the country, including Kaduna, Kano, Bauchi and Jos.

further investigated vis-a-vis developments in Islam and African Traditional Religion (ATR) in the attempt to explore the role of faith-based groups in corruption in Nigeria. Literatures examined for the Islamic religion include Izutsu (1966); Shehu, (2007); Gellner (1983:1); Harnischfeger (2008:89, 170); Adegbite (2006:146); Islam Forbids Corruption (Undated); Kane (2006); Imam (2005) and these indicate that the road to a corruption free society is the adoption of Shari'ah, the Islamic code of law. In this sense, dissatisfaction with corruption in public life has often fuelled radical and fundamentalist movements for the adoption of Shari'ah in the northern parts of Nigeria that are predominantly Muslim as well as the emergence of new sects and movements like the Izala led by Sheik Abubakar Gumi and Shi'ite-inspired Muslim Brothers.

In the discourse on values and development failures, most practitioners and supporters of ATR such as Isizoh (2000); Mesaki (2010: 4); Egberongbe (1988:123); Komolafe (1988: 207); Ejizu (1988); Ajayi (1988:292) and Ellis and ter Haar (2008:182), generally attribute the pervasiveness of corruption to the influence of Christianity and Islam which has led to the breakdown of African traditional values but they fail to chart a way out of this crisis except to ask for a return to traditional religion and values. They therefore fail to deal with the reality of cultural dynamism, the question of adaptiveness to modernity (not Westernisation) as well as the possibilities of universal values. Also, the assumption that if traditional religion dominates the public domain, corruption will be reduced, is not borne out by experience in pre-colonial African societies as such societies were not devoid of corruption in any sense of the word. It is also debatable to claim that such societies were more stable and humane than post-colonial societies. Furthermore, the practitioners of ATR hardly engage in a systematic manner with the question of modernity and the ways in which the transition affects morality. Modernity is often construed as an opposing force that erodes positive traditional attitudes and values in ways that generate crisis. Yet, the possibilities and capacity of ATR to deal with such challenges in ways that retain positive traditional values are rarely addressed. Flowing from the above review of literature on the three main religions in Nigeria, we, in the subsequent sections below, present empirical findings from the field research on various aspects of the issue of religion, ethics and attitudes towards corruption in Nigeria.

Peoples' Perception of Religion and Morality (Ethics)

In this section, the study examines the views of respondents about religion and morality, including whether there is any (positive) association between the two. In addition, it examines the relationship between religion, morality and corruption. Among respondents of all faiths, there is convergence of views on the

positive association between religion and morality. The basic line is that religion guides everyday living and shapes moral decisions along the way. In the first place, there is a broad perception of a natural inclination to religious worship or devotion: "Human beings have been created solely to worship God; so basically the role of religion cannot be overemphasised, "Whatever you do, its foundation comes from the religious point of view" (IDI, Hisbah, Male, Kano). This derives from the acclaimed religiosity of the average Nigerian and a widespread belief system which has God at its very heart as evident from the following quote by a Muslim:

Well, perhaps religion is expected to guide morality, both social and economic. From the day you were born the teachings of religion and morality started. If you go out of it you may have different morality...Yes, the religious teachings and rites help a lot in shaping somebody's morality. And the best way is to get the knowledge before practicing it. So the best way to practice religion is by knowing the basic knowledge (of religious rules and injunctions) (IDI, A DAIDAITA SAHU, Muslim, Male, Kano).

In general, religiosity involves two key elements: faith and practice. Muslims profess faith (Imam) and practices or rituals (Ibadah-acts of worship). Hisbah respondents contend that religiosity can be deduced from well-grounded practices. In their view, religion comes with a repertoire of rules of conduct or injunctions admonishing "right" living. Thus, many religions lay out fundamental attitudes and behaviours that are considered good and desirable and others that are ruled immoral and to be avoided. In a nutshell therefore, a religious person should be a morally upright person. As indicated earlier, this position finds support across our sample of respondents - Christians, Muslims and ATR practitioners alike. In terms of religious practice, the predominant opinion is that religious observance does not equate to morality. Thus, for instance, for Muslims, praying five times daily, fasting, holy pilgrimage and other religious practices⁸ will not automatically translate to enforcing or entrenching moral uprightness. Rather, it is the process of constantly being exposed to the religious message, embracing and internalising it and as a result, building up a credible

⁸ See Noibi, D. O. S. (1988) *Islamic Perspectives, A Comprehensive Message*, Shebiotimo Publishers, Ijebu-Ode, pp9-20.

knowledge base of the religion and ultimately living out those teachings in all deeds and transactions that produce positive changes in moral character.

For the Christian respondents, the centrality of religious injunctions in daily life leads to humility and fear of God, which enforces good behaviour and avoidance of certain vices. The anchor for the association between religion and morality goes back to the biblical account of creation. In Genesis 1:56, the Bible says, "Let us make man in our own image and in our likeness to have dominion over the fishes in the sea." This, according to respondents implies that God's inscrutable plan was for man to be an expression of His existence. The basic logic is that since God is free from all vices, He expects his creations to follow suit. For the Christian, God is a perfect being, as he created man in his image, therefore man should be upright and perfect just like God.

Yes, morality has to do with your way of life, while ethics has to do with the ethics of the Bible and your discipline. So I believe both morality and ethics go together. If you are religious you are supposed to be morally and ethically same" (IDI, Female National Assembly Worker, Abuja).

There are clearly shared grounds between Christian and Islamic beliefs about the impact religion should play in daily living. While asserting that religion provides a measuring rod or barometer for individual scrutiny or personal examination of moral strength or failings, Christian informants affirm as well that religion is total and complete and should thus guide lives, teach etiquette, provide knowledge about the society and the environment and offer a sense of security, protection and sustenance.

The position of African Traditional religion (ATR) practitioners on morality is broadly in tandem with those of the other two faiths discussed above. Their main thesis is that truth is sacred and must underlie all dealings among mankind. The ATR practitioners say their code is essentially based on trust, truth and integrity which qualify as moral teachings. Caution is also very important and a symbolic element of *Ifa*⁹ religion for instance. Human beings are warned to be careful and cautious in their life pursuits. As an ATR female respondent in Ibadan suggests, religion takes away corruption once one can be totally submissive. From the above, it is clear that there is a close association between religion, morality and corruption. Religion is belief in the immortal and doing his

⁹ *Ifa* is a Yoruba divination system, See Olupona J.K. (2007) "Communities of Believers: Exploring African Immigrant Religion in the U.S." in J.K. Olupona and Regina Gemignani eds., "African Immigrant Religions in America" NY and London, New York University Press.

will, and which sets guidelines for morality, part of which does not accommodate corruption.

Secular/Professional versus Religious/Personal values: do people separate public and private morality?

In this sub-section, we determine how, if at all, positionality influences respondents' attitudes towards corruption. It also looks at distinctions, if any, between secular and religious values. 'Positionality' is believed to influence public servants and elected government officials' attitudes towards corruption. In general, politicians are wont to steal from the civic public realm for personal benefit¹⁰. Osaghae (1994) described the political arena as amoral and permissive to behaviours that are considered morally reprehensible in other contexts as politics and government are perceived in extractive or instrumentalist terms meaning that few people become politicians or seek office for altruistic reasons¹¹.

Duality propensities are believed to dominate the attitude of public servants whereby religious devotion or practices are strikingly at variance with the level of morality displayed in public life. This line of argument was widely bought by informants who observed a divergence between the life that public servants live in the office and the life they live in their religious spaces as exemplified by the following responses:

Well, as a matter of fact we are supposed to use religion in all our endeavors. With this we will succeed; but now in Nigeria we don't normally use them" (IDI, Muslim Hisbah Male, Kano).

The majority use their religious sentiment if they want to be voted in, but the moment they are in office they simply forget about all the religious teachings. Businessmen are just into politics; they simply put religion aside and cheat, just like the politicians" (IDI, Muslim Izala, Male, Kano).

One manifestation of this duality syndrome is said to occur when politicians and public office holders take oaths of offices clutching religious paraphernalia such as the Holy Bible and the Quran and pledging to serve the people in honesty and truth only for them to grossly neglect these principles in the course of their public service. Indeed, widespread religious devotion does not

¹⁰ See *Corruption Component Literature Review*, p. 10.

¹¹ See *Corruption Component Literature Review*, p. 11.

find full expression in public conduct among agents of the state. It is not unusual to observe extreme lack of consideration for the plight of the people, outright disrespect for the rule of law, unconscionable display of arrogance, flamboyance and impunity among political elites. In the private sector, employers take advantage of the acute unemployment in the land and the desperation of the people to keep their jobs, to underpay their workers or subject them to indignities or literally keep them in servitude.

Yes people are fully aware it is unacceptable but they engage in it for simple reasons of selfishness and illiteracy. Well, there is a little change; people now are suffering much compared to some years back while for others it is normal. This makes people to engage in corruption sometimes, and morality is going low. In business we don't have good attitudes today; we want to maximise profit at all cost and all means regardless of the situation (IDI, Muslim Tijanniyyah Male, Kano).

Religious teachings, sermons and prayers have clearly taken a back seat, as public offices and official conducts are personalised within the context of corruption. Informants are agreed that positionality influences attitudes towards corruption and the popular media including radio, television and newspapers are inundated with reports of corruption of mind boggling proportions by people who are in government or who occupy positions of public trust. *"There are few transparent people in government. Because of half-hearted religious worship, Nigerians are more corrupt than religious"*¹². This is because people lack the moral character to resist certain negative influences prevalent in the society they find themselves. Furthermore,

We are in a materialistic world where people are getting desperate by the day; they want to make it by becoming rich so the moment they are given a position, what first comes to their minds is what they can make out of it (Male Muslim Qadiriyyah Informant).

In essence, the distinction between secular and religious values appears vague from the revelations of informants. Indeed, many people who portray or parade themselves as religious are often lacking in ethics and morals. Similarly,

¹² IDI, President, Muslim Students Society (MSS), University of Ibadan.

when it comes to the issue of private versus public morality, it appears that the moral of religious teachings are professed in private life whereas utterly different considerations affect the way they are applied in public life. One informant asserts that,

We are more religious in terms of belief, but we are more corrupt in terms of practice. Nigerians believe that religion is playing ceremonial role in their lives today. We go to worship God but we practice what we like... (IDI, Male, Ibadan).

Thus, there seems to be a clear disconnect between morality as expressed in the private space vis-à-vis public space. This is because while on the one hand religious faithfuls generally observe strict moral codes in private, this tends to give way to more permissive moral standards in public. On the other hand, as there is no evidence of morality in private life, and there cannot be said to be a clear line between the private and public life of people who are corrupt, it can be inferred that their private lives are as corrupt. To a large extent, this can be explained by the fact that many religious groups emphasise only the rules that regulate the outward performance of acts of worship and adherents in turn do not really understand the spiritual/moral values in and significance of acts of worship¹³. For instance, the significance of and how the five daily prayers in Islam have effect or make a difference in a Muslim's life is minimally comprehended by many a faithful, to the extent of deterring them from acts such as corruption. In the next section, we investigate not just the general cause of corruption, but explanations for the phenomenon of corruption among the faithful.

Corruption in the Religions (Definitions, Causes, Extent, Where it Occurs)

Respondents' definition and perception of corruption is conceptualised in the sense of honesty and integrity that coincides with a Eurocentric view of the state, its institutions, and the appropriate boundary between public and private life (Martin, 1986). A Male informant explains:

Based on my understanding corruption is when somebody gives something in cash or kind to get something that he/she does not deserve or is not supposed to have. Both the giver and collector are considered to be corrupt in their dealings; but if it is under duress and you cannot do

¹³ See Noibi, pp 94-112.

otherwise you may be exempted from the corruption charges (IDI, Muslim, A Daidaita Sahu, Kano).

Furthermore, there is broad agreement that corruption is both pervasive and endemic in the Nigerian society despite widespread proliferation of religious practices and activities. This is obvious from respondents' characterisation of corruption as wide-ranging and eclectic. It includes embezzlement of public funds, taking of bribes, purchasing stolen goods at half the normal price, accumulating wealth through dubious means, cheating in examinations or abetting criminal activities. Other manifestations of corruption are said to include police extortion on the road; NEPA¹⁴ officials collecting bribes from those in dire need of electric power supply in their area; collection of illegal tenement rates by local government workers; escaping punishment by giving bribe; on campus it is said to include examination malpractices and luring lecturers/students with sexual favours, greed, selling/trading products where you receive a salary as a civil servant; extortion from members of the public; cheating in the market place and coercion; and diversion of public funds. Some of these are apparent from the following quotes:

Many activities are involved, such as 10%, over-invoicing of contracts, fake contracts, undue promotions, even coming late to the office, favoritism, meritocracy, etc., are all instances of corrupt acts (IDI, Male, Civil servant, Kano).

Nepotism is what I see as corruption; election rigging (selection of officers), mismanagement of public funds by public officers thereby spending the money anyhow... It is an indiscriminate deviation from standard ways, looting of public funds by a state governor, chairmen, councilors etc., (in position) using their relatives as against those that are competent. Denial of rights, etc. ...Breach of trust, misappropriation of public funds, mismanagement, etc. (FGD, Male Students, Kano).

¹⁴ National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) has been renamed Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN).

Social bribe is also corruption, e.g. Sallah gift and others can be seen as corruption because certainly they need something in return, maybe a contract or something. It will never go free; something must be done in return, e.g. police commissioners and their D.P.Os during Sallah festivals. So it is corruption because they will never give it to junior ones (FGD, Male Students, Kano).

Also some of the actions considered corrupt according to an Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) official include *inflating budget figures, stealing, cheating, too much profit, etc.*¹⁵. The EFCC is one of the Nigerian government's anti-corruption agencies. This explanation is thus useful as an official definition¹⁶. For certain respondents, a distinction needs to be drawn between two categories of corruption: corruption of the body which has to do with fornication, adultery and all other immoralities; and corruption in human relations which has to do with fraudulent acquisition of property, lack of transparency and accountability; bribery, examination malpractices, hoarding, aiding and abetting crime, gossiping, negligence, nepotism, electoral fraud and so on. In the view of a Christian cleric, corruption suffices as, "doing anything that is contrary to the word of God." Moreover, according to respondents, the common explanation for corruption is the paucity of the fear of God: "*Honestly, lack of fear of God is the causative agent of corruption. We only say it (fear of God) but we don't act on it*" (IDI, Muslim, Hisbah Male, Kano). The second factor is the employment of religion as convenient instrument for furthering personal political or economic ends. For instance, in Kano, there is the emergence of the phenomenon of *Yanjagaliya* (political thugs) as a public servant in the state indicated. According to him, in the past they were not part of the political scene, "*but of recent they have become a menace to the society because of the nature of their activities. The politicians in Kano have employed religion to achieve private benefits, but they merely use it as a camouflage*". A male Christian informant introduces and has concluded that the driving force behind corrupt practices is an interesting societal dimension and the dread of poverty:

¹⁵ Public Servant (EFCC official), IDI, Abuja,

¹⁶ More on this can be seen in EFCC (Establishment) Act, 2004, Abuja, EFCC; Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act, 2004, Abuja, EFCC; and Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), (2000) *The Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act 2000*, Abuja, ICPC.

Some of the reasons why people are engaged in corruption are i) the society itself:- the society recognises, respects, give titles, honour to just anybody with money, no matter the source. That is why a lot of people do many bad things to have money in order to be recognised by the society. ii) Poverty:- more than 80% of people are adversely affected by poverty (IDI, Muslim, Abuja).

Another reason adduced for the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society is greed in its worst form – a fierce desire and desperation to acquire and accumulate wealth. This tendency finds full expression in public and business life in the country where people think only of what they can make of a situation. The corollary of the greed thesis is preoccupation with the self or self-centeredness. In the view of an Islamic scholar, corruption amounts to a perpetuation of injustice since the person is paid to work, and does not ordinarily need to take bribes or gifts for carrying out his duties. An example of the self-aggrandisement theory evident in corrupt public officials is painted by a female Izala follower thus:

For example, if you want promotion though you are due for it, you may not get it on time because somebody will hide your file. He wants to be gratified before he pushes it forward. From other people he will demand money. And if she is a woman they would want to have sex with her before she is promoted or she pays an exorbitant price (IDI, Female, Muslim, Kano).

Another informant endorses this view when he states that, “The central problem nowadays is selfishness. This is the downright condescending view of corruption that sees it as a hedge against poverty. In a society where deprivation is pervasive with many struggling to eke out a living and poverty is raw and dispiriting, corrupt accumulation of wealth insulates the corrupt against slipping below critical poverty thresholds. Inevitably, there is a struggle to acquire wealth and a ferocious race to the top or to acquire even more. In the opinion of one respondent:

All this makes people go the extra mile to enrich themselves illegally or unjustly... lust and insecurity in the attempt to secure their future, fuel stealing. Because people are terribly scared

of poverty, they do things they should not normally do. People today compromise their religious standards... a factor that leads them to commit corrupt acts, due to fear of uncertainty ... All this leads to false steps and living beyond one's means. In higher institutions, it leads to standards being compromised (IDI, Male, ATR, Ibadan).

There is also a rather queer but religion-based view that blames corruption on the influence of the devil. As a Reverend elaborates:

Corruption really is a cankerworm. It is one of the things the devil has sown into the world.... But as Christians we see corruption as something emanating from the "Adamic" nature. The development happened in Genesis Chapter 3 when Adam fell by the reason of (their) sin against God, disobedience is the beginning of corruption... (IDI, Male, Christian Leader, Ibadan).

Elaborating further, he identifies the sources of corruption as:

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. The lust of the flesh relates to self-aggrandisement, the desire to fulfill a particular urge at a particular time.... The lust of the eyes relates to the things we see, the beauty; we want to showcase what we have...

In traditional African religions, corruption is regarded as taboo. For example, it is forbidden for a person to cheat the other person. Traditionally, religion deals with *Ewo*-taboo. While in Western paradigm, corruption may well be an abstract construct, in traditional setting, it evokes fear and trepidation. According to an ATR practitioner:

Today, instead of using religion as a means of relating to God, it is now used as a machinery to perpetrate corruption. For instance, a pastor announces that people should bring their international passport to travel out of the country. Such pastor should be excommunicated. Again they tell people to bring their work instrument for prayer and blessing

when we know that a Radionic and Welder depend on electricity. So, once there is electricity supply, we don't need churches. (IDI, Male, Ibadan).

In other words, if the problems of the (Nigerian) society such as unemployment, which makes many young people want to leave the country for better opportunities/greener pasture and erratic electricity supply that slows down the productivity of informal sector workers are solved, these kinds of churches/prayers will not be relevant. In Islam as well, there is no room for profiteering as modest profit is prescribed on business dealings. In the Quran it is said that "*Woe to those people who sell with lesser measure*"¹⁷. Cheating is denounced as illicit gain and said to invite calamity. Thus, money must be clean for God to bless it. According to another respondent,

In Islam corruption is anything that is not put in the right place or order, i.e. anything that is not done in the proper way or manner is corruption¹⁸.

An opinion expressed by a civil servant in Abuja is extremely illuminating and exemplifies what has for a long time been known as the mentality of an average Nigerian government official:

Well, I can see corruption on some activities, but we civil servants see corruption as a gift...something that enjoins you to do what you know is not right (IDI, Male, Christian, Civil Servant).

This mindset justifies the tendency for mindless and unconscionable levels of corruption among Nigerian bureaucrats and business people. The logic is that corruption amounts to a natural or normal payment for rendering illegal or immoral services, but at times, even for doing one's duty. Also, it is opined that corruption is condoned in the Nigerian society because of the nature of the society today. One male Qadiriyyah informant cited the (in) famous saying: 'If you can't beat them, join them or they wipe you out' and attributes the corruption in society to this cliché. The Muslim Qadiriyyah informant also adds that,

If you are denied what you are supposed to have, then you have no alternative but go into something dubious" (IDI, Muslim, Hisbah, Male, Kano).

¹⁷ IDI, Male, Muslim, Ibadan.

¹⁸ IDI, Male, Muslim Leader, Abuja.

On other reasons why corruption persists, a female Christian responded by saying: "Corruption endures because God has given free-will to people to engage in any activity of their choice... In spite of biblical teachings, people's minds are not cleansed from performing corrupt acts. The flesh is weak, so the body overrides spirituality". Another reason adduced for persistence is the lack of sanctions as well as impunity. The laws prohibiting corruption are said not to be effective and corrupt officials often escape with impunity, thus making corruption to become the culture of the people. Being that sanctions are often absent, a prominent Muslim preacher is of the view that:

Enforcement of the law is important in Nigeria. For example, everybody has to obey traffic rules in Lagos. Even governors are not allowed to use their sirens (IDI, Male, Ibadan).

Hence, sanctions need to be applied effectively in order to deter people from committing acts of corruption. For respondents, there is need to apply the sanctions that are in religious books and which also come from God, through Shari'ah as well as those that will come in life hereafter for example. Overall, various conceptions of corruption arrive at similar end, i.e. engaging in unlawful, unacceptable procedures and unethical practices in both public and private organisations. The reasons for this range from greed, lack of commitment to official duty to the absence of fear of God. Thus, it is clear that in general, the three major religions under study agree that corruption represents a violation of rules, norms or any values of society that are not to be condoned. Corruption is seen as behavior or attitude that goes against the norms and laws of the society as received from God.

Religious Beliefs and Personal Attitudes to Corruption

We examine the relationship between religious beliefs and personal attitudes to corruption here. Some of the issues raised include: Are Nigerians more religious than corrupt or vice versa; what is the role of FBOS (since they promote religious beliefs) in promoting or discouraging corruption and what is the relationship between religion and politics? In Nigeria, religion and corruption are intertwined to the extent that the predominant position among informants is that festering corruption is a manifestation of the degree of the people's disconnection from God and religious teachings/doctrines. One oft-heard refrain is that one will be brought to account here and in the hereafter for every act and deed. This normally is expected to impose a moral consciousness for people to remain mindful of how life is led in view of the inevitability of God's judgment. In Islam, any act that contradicts the tenets and teachings of religion is corrupt.

These injunctions are stated in the Qur'an and Hadith of the Prophet. In A DAIDAITA SAHU, one informant confirms this:

I think there is no religion that allows for corruption, so based on my religion, my attitude towards corruption is not to accept it totally¹⁹.

Christian informants gave similar response when their views on religious teachings and attitudes to corrupt practices were sought. A female informant confirms that her religion is against all vices and "as a believer, I am supposed to live up to the tenets of the religion whether they suit my selfish ends or not: corruption is not godly". A Pastor of the ECWA church also gave a succinct description of attitude to corruption from the perspective of the Bible:

Corruption is a social evil; it is an evil that is culturally embedded in the minds of people. Genesis says, 'Man became a victim of every kind of evil in responding to sufferings'. I look at corruption as bad because my Bible specifies clearly that what does not belong to you does not belong to you (IDI, Male, Christian, Kano).

But strict observance of prayers and simultaneous perpetration of corrupt acts make religious worship an exercise in futility. According to an informant:

God said the righteous ones are those who fear Him. If one is knowledgeable once there is no fear of God, such a person can still perpetrate corruption. Those who have the fear of God will do exactly what God directs them to do. Some people believe that supplication can wipe away their bad deeds without thorough repentance. So they still engage in it. (IDI, Muslim, Ansarudeen, Ibadan).

Although Islamic and Christian faiths are dominated by preaching around contentment, many Nigerians live a dual life of expressive religious practices in tandem with rampant corruption. This is a logical extension of a culture of subjective and controversial interpretations of religious texts and teachings. As in the case of corruption, deeply divisive issues such as sexuality, dressing²⁰,

¹⁹ Male Muslim Informant.

²⁰ See for instance, Leo Micheal, 'Insanity and Dressing', and John Femi Ogunleye, 'Why Indecent Dressing', in *Nudity and Pornography: A Threat to Morality, In The Apostolate of Love, Issue No. 1, Vol. 3, A Publication of Human Life Protection League, Seminary of SS Peter & Paul, Ibadan Chapter, in Affiliation with Human Life International, April 2002-April 2003.*

marriage, polygamy, tithing and sin atonement are sometimes interpreted in a subjective manner for selfish reasons. For instance, in Islam, adherents who want to have more than one wife say up to four wives is allowed for one man, while those who do not support it qualify this with the fact that the man must treat the four wives equally, a fact that is impossible.

Usually people do things first the way they want as they are looking at (teachings) of the religion as a joke and some people think that the Day of Judgment will not even come (FGD, Hisbah/Izala, Kano).

The religious leader is not in the least absolved from culpability on this score. Indeed, many respondents consider donations to Churches as deliberately or inadvertently instigating corruption by encouraging the faithful to pillage public funds. Moreover, the idea of running religious services or programmes during working hours or weekdays translates to corruption because it involves cheating work and sabotaging the economy and society. A female Christian suggests that, "*The several days night vigils that are usually prescribed for certain Christian adherents, especially of the Pentecostal hue, affect their concentration and alertness at work and ultimately their productivity*".²¹

Attitudes to corruption may well depend on the individual. People go to places of worship without really embracing the message or tenets of their religion while continuing in their evil and corrupt ways on stepping out of the place of worship. In the end, religion and corruption do not have a meeting point because what people hear at Church or Mosque or even preach themselves may be completely at variance to what they practice. Thus religion is a belief system that is associated with faith but many people use the cloak of Islam and Christianity to perpetrate evil. For instance, someone dressed in the Islamic way wearing a turban and clutching a rosary might be taken for being religious, whereas he may not be living out the canons or creeds of his religion.

Also, an ATR practitioner is of the view that the Biblical canon of "Being your brother's keeper" is impinging on attitude to corruption as people would not report their relatives engaged in illegalities, misdeeds or *criminal* conduct to the authorities. In many societies, it is taboo to take this line of action. In point of fact, many people charged to court for corrupt practices or in detention are besieged by well-wishers, relatives and loyalists who overtly back them.

²¹ IDI, Ibadan.

Tradition, Modernity and Attitudes to Corruption

Two main issues are raised here regarding the relationship between tradition, modernity and attitudes to corruption as well as the way or extent to which modernity has affected respondents' ethics and moral codes. Modernity is said to have brought a dramatic change in people's propensity to be corrupt and increased the general penchant for corruption. Respondents argue that in traditional Nigerian societies, corruption in whatever form was deeply resented and abhorred. In modern societies however, this noble disposition has given way to a more predatory instinctual acceptance and celebration of corruption and corrupt tendencies. For many respondents, civilisation and changes in lifestyle have provoked a redefinition of morality and dethronement of the erstwhile more dignified and righteous characterisation. It is not unusual these days to find family members and kinsmen of a public official openly encouraging him to 'make hay while the sun shines', a euphemism to plunder state resources while he holds public office; or for them to sponsor community programmes, make generous donations at events and give gifts and alms. These heighten pressure on them to reach for the public till and constitute ultimately the oxygen for corrupt enrichment. These beliefs imply a marked departure from tradition. It thus appears that values have departed or have been devalued.

Yes there are a lot of changes especially in backward sliding of morality into an abyss. What actually causes all this is the degeneration of morality and contact with western culture (IDI, Male, Muslim Tijanniyah, Kano).

Moral standard is lacking and this is not unconnected to the negation of our culture to the background and embracing of western culture (IDI, Male Christian, Kano).

For ATR practitioners as well, religion is a cultural issue in traditional African societies. In these societies, if someone steals, it is an invitation for the strike of thunder, but imported or foreign religions have provided a reprieve, as people can always ask for forgiveness when they transgress even if by design. Specifically, traditional society and religions frown at criminal cum corrupt tendencies by emphasising: "*Agbedo!*", "*Ewo ni, Akii se*", meaning, it is a taboo, it is forbidden, it is not done" (IDI, Male, ATR, Ibadan).

In the past, traders could display their goods and sell in absentia and trust that the keeper/buyer would be honest in holding brief for them. Also in this setting, every child belongs to the community which collectively contributes to

his/her upbringing and mentoring. Furthermore, in traditional societies, it is demeaning and disgraceful to be linked with corruption because of the associated consequences which may include banishment from the community. Today individualism and materialism straddle the landscape, as values have become inverted or distorted. There are cases of family members using themselves for rituals while cases of homosexuality, nudity, rape and incest, all in the name of modernity, are rampant everywhere. Some of the responses on the causes of corruption also suggest that modern living conditions have a major role to play in the tenacity of corruption by pushing civil servants into the 'corruption trap'. As cost of living escalates, the take home pay of civil servants is grossly inadequate. This is perhaps one of the *raison d'etre* of corrupt practices in the country. According to a civil servant, people are corrupt for two reasons: i) because people are pressed or forced to do it in order to survive, or ii) because of injustices perpetrated by those in power who misuse public funds, thereby creating hardships for the citizens. This shows that modernity has reshaped attitudes towards ethical codes. In the desire to maximise profit and power at all cost, Nigerians have changed their attitude toward morality.

Corruption, Gender and Youth

Here, the study sought to determine who was more corrupt between men and women; what were the bases for respondents' views about which gender is more corrupt and what type of corruption was prevalent among youths and why? The preponderance of respondents consider men more corrupt than women. The chief yardstick for drawing this conclusion is the domination of the public sphere by the men-folk and their associated greater access to or control over the treasury or public resources:

Men are more corrupt, but then women are now coming into it. However, men are more corrupt. This is because they are those that control most of the state affairs (IDI, Male, Muslim A Daidaita Sahu, Kano).

Corruption is of two types: in work place men are more corrupt than women because they are mainly in control; and morally women are most corrupt because they are evil if they desire something. They know how to get it and this can happen no matter how tough working or hard a

man is; a woman can get through to him in no time at all (IDI, Female, Muslim, Izala, Kano).

Well, one thing is basic; because of the structure of the Nigerian society and most other societies, men tend to be more corrupt because they occupy the most sensitive positions than women and the level of corruption in a person is dependent on his position and access to public fund so more men have access to public funds than women... I believe if women are given the same opportunity as men... (IDI, Male, University Lecturer, Owerri).

According to most Christian informants, men are more corrupt because they are greedier, more desperate and less compassionate. Men are believed to be more prone to corruption due to immoral desires and societal pressure. Some of these needs may be unethical such as having strings of girlfriends or extra marital affairs which places a heavier financial burden on them. Moreover, as one Christian informant explained, the extended family system in Africa implies that men have several dependants from their nuclear and extended families as well as in-laws. In her argument, since women may not carry such burden, they are fairly contented with what they earn at the end of the month and are therefore less aggressive or more controlled in their pursuit of money. A Muslim woman added that some children are not taught the ethics and African cultural practice of greeting and respect for elders. This lack of home training on moral values could in her opinion lead to corrupt acts. Agreeing, a female ATR member posits:

Are we not all human beings? Both men and women perpetrate corrupt acts. In Ifa religion, we believe women are more corrupt because it is women that give birth and take care of children... I am also a mother; we are expected to teach our children good values (IDI, Ibadan).

With regard to youths, when asked why people engage in corruption even when they know it is evil, a Reverend gentleman is of the view that *it is because of the circumstantial weakness of man...*

...If you are a youth in the Niger Delta who is educated and you work in Shell will you become a militant? Okada riders, who are they? They are the uneducated, unemployed youths around who

do not have jobs who are disadvantaged and are willing to join any group be it for task force, for politicians, etc., so the little money they get from military people and the 4-5 thousand that the politician will give them is a big attraction (Male, Academic (Rev. Fr.), Owerri).

As to extent and effects, corruption is believed to be rampant, affecting the prospects of the younger generation.

It (corruption) is everywhere from our leaders (to) we the followers. Look at the police, they collect money from passersby; there is exam malpractice among the youths (FGD, FOMWAN, Ibadan).

(Because of corruption) the youth of today have no future in this country (IDI, Male, Christian Youth Leader, Abuja).

Furthermore, among youths, respondents illustrate corruption as an increasingly perverse mode of dressing that has seen women wearing trousers and using caps and men adorning jewelries, earrings and plaiting their hair. The study thus concludes that although a majority of the respondents characterise men as more corrupt than women, some respondents identified various other forms of corruption for which women are more culpable.

Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) and Anti-corruption

This section sought to determine what role religion has to play in curbing or fighting corruption in the society; the measures that are taken against corruption within FBOs; what the principal weapons are for this endeavour; what factors may undermine such role and how religion can be used to mitigate corruption. The broad perception among respondents is that religion has a huge role to play in curbing or fighting corruption in the society as evident from the following quotes:

Yes, religions have impact on the available sanctions against corrupt acts. In the Holy Qur'an there are penalties to every offence committed, e.g. if you steal up to a certain amount you will be given a sanction of cutting off your hand, if you commit adultery you will be stoned to death, if you commit fornication

you will be given 100 lashes etc. (IDI Male Muslim, Abuja).

Yes, religions have available sanctions against corruption, because God says the wages of sin is death. In order to punish you if you are corrupt He will kill your soul. God also said Give to Caesar what is Caesar's; you must obey the law of the society (IDI, Male Christian, Abuja).

Chiefly, the principal weapons for this endeavour are the trite injunctions in religious books prescribing heavy penalties such as stoning, decapitation and death for stealing or covetousness. Some respondents however point to internal contradictions and morality crisis within religious houses that may undermine this role. These include condoning, tolerance or celebration of obvious corruption or dubious wealth among the laity and abandonment of responsibility to support the weak and vulnerable. The latter is the outcome of exclusive preoccupation with the soul plane to the neglect of kitchen-table or bread and butter concerns.

Religious organisations tend to fight against corruption but not to their best interest because I never heard any church or mosque sending a corrupt person away from its premises, instead, they are given front row. Religious organisation claim to fight corruption but we have seen instances where religious leaders were found engaging in some corrupt practices" (IDI, Male Muslim, Abuja).

...It was reported in the papers that a man stole in his place of work so that he could donate to the church so that his name could be mentioned in the Church. The religious leaders are preaching prosperity in such a way that people are tempted to indulge corrupt practices so that their names are mentioned in the Church bulletin. It is as if I am being harsh on Christianity, but it is the fact. (IDI, Male Christian, Ibadan).

If you are brother, good in the church, you know how to pray well, regularly attend church services, even clean church, if you don't bring money to the church your pastor will not recognise you. But when you are able to bring in money nobody will care to know where you got it from (IDI, Civil Servant, Abuja).

Some informants even suggest that money laundering thrives in religious organisations through donations and tithing with the leaders turning a blind eye. Others believe that religious organisations increasingly manifest the end time syndrome in various forms. For instance, disputation and litigations over posts, positions and authority are commonplace in religious organisations these days while rape cases have also been recorded²². For some, many religious leaders are downright dishonest and utterly fraudulent.

It is curious to note that some clergymen and women invested in the failed Wonder Banks, quick money making ventures, the pennywise, mega wealth and so on. The Pastors invested in these programmes to make quick money and returns. Religious people fell to such money-making scandals. They invested Church money and personal funds in expectation of huge returns within weeks/months of their deposits without ethical or moral consideration for the sources of the huge returns they were to make (IDI, Female Christian, Ibadan).

On the positive side, FBOs allude to promoting moral regeneration among religious organisations and their members. For example among Muslims, NASFAT members claim to have succeeded through preaching and sermonising based on Islamic injunctions, and in reducing night parties that was rampant and led to a waste of money and tended to promote immoral behaviour. According to some Muslim women, FOMWAN's activities, including songs, also teach moral values and ethics. FOMWAN claims to preach against moral laxity and teach Islamic values. Among youths, it organises annual outreach camps and women learn ethics and values from the Qur'an fortnightly. The organisation also counsels their members to embrace transparency in their financial dealings. Apart from religious preaching as an anti-corruption device, voluntary organisations

²² IDI, Male Pastor, Ibadan.

such as Boys' and Girls' Brigades provide moral and religious instructions to the youths. Churches also organise teenage clubs to engage children and youths during vacations and to steer them away from immorality. Some (Christian) organisations²³ carry out budget tracking periodically and send memorandum to government on anti-corruption issues.

Ifa worshippers and the few ATR observers, especially in Owerri are believed to warn their adherents and members of the public about vengeance and to take cognisance of oath taking²⁴ and to avoid embezzlement. ATR members are counseled on the virtues of altruism and generosity, i.e. to help people in need and not to exploit them and to be content with what they possess. An *Ifa* priest in Ibadan emphasises knowledge, ethics and values and preaches against acquiring wealth unjustly. He added that *Ifa* Priests also visit schools to teach cultural (moral) values to secondary school students. He concludes that *Ifa* priests encourage adherents and the general public to be transparent and accountable and to shun corrupt acts.

Using Religion to mitigate corruption

Religion can be used to mitigate corruption in several ways. According to respondents, the most widely employed method is through preaching.

Yes we have, e.g Da'awa section (Propagation) basically the state government is really trying on awareness, e.g. they go to markets and preach to them, as well as in prisons, hospitals and in every ministry; we have representatives who use to propagate the teachings of Islam, so also in many Juma'at mosques (IDI, Male, Hisbah, Kano).

We always contribute towards reducing it. Because every now and then, there is preaching in the church about what is 'pure' or what is 'holy' and how you should source for wealth and how to spend it. To preach and tell people

²³ Such as the JDPC and Centre for Leadership Development Research & Training (CELDAD), in Ibadan.

²⁴ Such as the types referred to in Agbese, Dan (2008), Ajaero, Chris (2008); Human Rights Watch (2007) and Harnischfeger, J. (2006), all of which tell of instances where traditional powers were sought to carry out clearly immoral or corrupt political activities.

about the menace of corruption through proper propagation and sensitisation of our members in the Church” (IDI, Male Christian, Kano).

The expectation is that continual preaching of the word of God touches the conscience of listeners and in the process induces in them a transformation from what is bad to what is good. For preaching to produce significant behavioural modification, both preacher and listener must apply the content of the message to their everyday living. For Christians, the goal is to reproduce the quintessence of Christ’s model in the faithful. As one respondent puts it, *“You know the Bible tells us ‘Look onto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith’. When you look at Jesus, the teaching, the ministry and life, you don’t look at any human being.”*

A Christian cleric also confirms the role religion can play in combating corruption. For him, religion is everywhere: (1) we pray for good leaders (ii) we tell them what God requires about politics, and (iii) we always show them what to do.... *“This is what we are doing all the time; trying to tell people what is good and bad and this controls people’s behaviour sometimes”*(Male, ECWA Pastor, Kano). In the church they also have disciplinary procedure whereby if an individual is found wanting, it will be declared before the church members, and he or she will never be allowed to head any church committee or organise church activities. Some churches also say that they engage in training and capacity building to empower their followers to be independent and earn a living through honest means. Some faith-based organisations such as the Full Gospel Business Fellowship (FGBF), invite individuals to share their life experiences so as to encourage others to follow the path of moral and spiritual rectitude. Faith based organisations can also take the front seat in proclaiming the repercussions of engaging in corruption and sensitising the people to them. According to a respondent, this is crucial because *“The Bible says, how would they know if somebody has not told them?”* Furthermore, some respondents say participation in certain religious rituals can help improve morals and mitigate corruption. It is believed that *“some of these rites can (really) help you and draw you closer to God and make us to fear him, reverence him in all we speak, think or do”*²⁵. Religion can be used to teach morals in institutions of learning. Hence, some respondents suggested that religion should be reintroduced into school curricula. *“It should be taught very well and the children should be taught the Ten Commandments - We should not steal, we should not kill...”* Aside schools, seminars, conferences, and symposiums, displaying posters, and sponsoring

²⁵ IDI, Male Reverend, Ibadan.

advertises that condemn this societal malaise in all its forms and shades can also be organised.

Conclusion, Summary of Findings and Policy Recommendations

The study found that public servants and indeed most Nigerians usually separate public from private morality. Thus their attitudes to corruption are not informed by the religion they embrace or profess or religious teachings that they listen to or read about. By implication, most respondents do not feel bound to live out religious teachings relating to ethics in their jobs or callings and indeed deliberately ignore them in practice. While the three main religions examined explicitly condemn corruption, this does not seem to impact or influence attitudes to corruption in a positive way. Furthermore, the fact that corruption is often roundly denounced by religious people and religious houses, has not brought about any moderation or diminution of corrupt tendencies in the public space. Moreover, positionality has a role to play regarding attitudes towards corruption. The thesis here is that the closer a person is to opportunities for self-enrichment, the more the temptation to engage in graft. Thus, exposure to an environment for acquiring illicit wealth creates a stronger push factor to engage in corruption much more than the counteracting force of religion. On gender, the preponderant position is that men are more corrupt largely because they dominate public offices although there is substantial contention around the issue. By, for instance, not being critical of sudden surge in financial or material status of their followers or as in some cases, actually being caught in corrupt acts themselves, religious leaders appear complicit or compromised to the extent that they lack the moral authority to sermonise or check their followers' corrupt behavior. Thus, religious organisations and FBOs themselves minimally impact their members' attitudes towards corruption. Going forward, FBOs can help the fight against corruption by condemning in the strongest possible terms established cases of corrupt enrichment within their fold and the society at large while leading the campaign against corruption through role models and their proselytising activities.

Summary of Findings

The findings from this research can be summarised as follows:

- Religion is an important issue in Nigeria. It permeates human and social life in the country.
- All religions condemn corruption, and are dominated by preaching around contentment and what is considered to be evil, but it does not seem that they make a difference in terms of influence on and attitudes towards corrupt behavior. In other words, religions and

morality should in theory be organically connected but in practice, this association is not often the case. Indeed, the attitudes towards corruption are not effectively informed by the religious teachings that people profess, have knowledge about and adhere to.

- Corruption is admittedly morally repugnant, but it is literally the order of the day as it is widely acceptable in Nigeria. This is especially so when people find themselves on the one hand in positions of authority or in situations where they can dispense favours, and on the other hand, in positions where they have no choice but to give in to corruption.
- The simultaneous upsurge in religious activities and corruption in Nigeria raises the issue of extent to which religious messages contribute to stemming corruption in the public arena. It seems that religious adherents are yet to understand the relationship between their personal/social problems and their religious observances.
- The temptation is great to conclude that preaching (by religious groups, FBOs/NGOs) and awareness campaigns (by anti-corruption agencies) are probably not vigorous enough (or inappropriately targeted) or are merely token gestures to give impression that religious organisations or indeed the government, are on top of the problem.
- The alarming declines in levels of morality in Nigeria does not appear a major concern to politicians, businessmen and the clergy. The entire society seems hostage to an insatiable quest for primitive accumulation. In this connection, the meaning of public morality is being redefined in a way that the populace is swayed by the mantra, "If you can't beat them (by checking corruption) join them (by engaging in it)." Furthermore, when respondents' speak about attitudes to corruption, especially when they condemn it, it is with respect to the behaviour of others and not their own behavior.
- Western civilisation and modernity have provided additional impetus for corruption as people strive to live 'on the fast lane'.
- The question of which gender is more corrupt in Nigeria remains inconclusive.
- Religious organisations have a great role to play in curbing corruption, although religious houses themselves suffer credibility deficit since instances of corruption have also been found within them.

- The level of religiosity still makes people acknowledge that (though) religion does not always prevent corruption, “real” or “more” religion is needed or would help to reduce corruption.

Policy Recommendations

1. The multi-dimensional definitions, interpretation or characterisation of corruption highlights the need for policy efforts at addressing the malady to adopt a more coherent and systematised approach for better effect. As is often the case, anti-corruption efforts tend to be overly concentrated at fixing a narrow brand of the phenomenon, whereas other forms of corruption may be as (if not more) virulent and debilitating to society and may in fact countervail successes recorded in respect of the more restricted fight. It may prove useful therefore if anticorruption agencies begin their work by first cataloguing and organising the taxonomies and typologies of the corruption problem in the Nigerian society before proceeding to map appropriate strategies for tackling each of the forms or classifications. One aspect of this task would be to recognise the ‘cultural embeddedness’ of practices commonly referred to as corruption, i.e. what is acceptable within certain socio-cultural contexts vis-à-vis international norms. Meanwhile, these anti-corruption measures will need to be related to societal orientation programmes to change warped social and moral values. Furthermore, incentive and sanction are likely to sustain adherents’ consciousness about corruption. These need to be applied, and in the case of the latter, made stiffer to discourage and deter both old and new offenders.
2. The role that ‘*positionality*’ plays in the manifestation of corruption in Nigeria deserves close attention. What would transform an otherwise pious, sanctimonious humanist into a rapacious, avaricious individual when placed in position of public trust requires careful examination of the impulses driving this sort of transformation. This may require concerted enlightenment and infusion of patriotic sensibilities targeted at mindset change and dramatising the futility and negative effects of private accumulation as an end itself (especially on the part of leaders) in favour of a grander, altruistic and selfless pursuit of societal benefits.
3. The progression to modernity or wholesale, undiluted embrace of Western-type civilisation is irreversible since globalisation now constitutes the organising principle of societies across the world inclusive of Nigeria. What is required is the use of panoply of instruments from the policy tool-kit to moderate or check excesses and extremities from unbridled and unremitting forces of consumerism, rent seeking behavior, self-centred exploitation and greed. The policy ground-rules need to articulate the moral thresholds for

socio-economic interactions and human relations to avoid a denigration of religious values or degradation of the social order.

4. The anticorruption efforts of FBOs have had modest effect in taming the rampaging corruption in the country. This calls for a review of the current strategies, modalities and instruments which have been limited to sermonising and dissemination of literature denouncing the malaise and consequent clamour for its rejection by society. In order that the desired effects of various forms of worship can be reflected in the conducts of adherents in their daily lives, FBOs, schools, the media and parents need to be encouraged and supported to propagate religion not as mechanical processes, but as spiritual therapy. For instance, a secular approach to schooling and socialisation might leave out education on issues such as accountability to man and ultimately to God in the hereafter.
5. Moreover, as FBOs and religious houses at the forefront of anticorruption campaigns themselves suffer credibility deficits as the cancer has also been found to thrive in their fold, perhaps what will provoke greater acceptance of the anticorruption message is recourse to evidence-based approaches. This may include pursuing the struggle through the use of acclaimed role models within religious groups and divine messages within religious beliefs in particular and society in general. Conversely, sterner warnings to leaders of the recompense for evil deeds and propagating the multiplying effect of reward for honesty and good leadership are likely to impute a lack of corruption in religious adherents. Therefore, aside the need for coordination between anti-corruption agencies and FBOs/NGOs, the anticorruption message would also likely be more impactful if it is framed and led by a critical mass of people in the various strata of society including FBOs who are largely untainted by the corruption monster.

Based on all the above, identifiable areas of potentially more fruitful research relate to strategies that can be fashioned to ensure a fusion of and between public and private morality in Nigeria; the character and modes of corruption in religious organisations (since religion can be as corrupting as it is itself corrupted); the relationship between culture and corruption; gender and corruption; the role of youth groups in the anti-corruption crusade and nature and character of corruption in higher institutions of learning; as well as other ingenious ways (aside proselytising), through which faith-based organisations can reach their adherents towards mitigating the scourge of corruption.

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