

# A Moral Appraisal of “The Doctrine of Gratification” and the Polemics of Corruption in Nigeria

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## **Abstract**

Corruption is an umbrella word for many social vices that exist in the society. It is perceived as a normalized practice in many African countries, especially Nigeria. In spite of its attendant negative consequences, the culture of corruption particularly, the gratification variant of the acts continue to wax stronger among Nigerian elites. Scholars have addressed the phenomenon of corruption holistically, some have also researched into some of the forms of corruption. This article examines the often neglected aspect, which is gratification. The act of gratification is an immoral act that deprives the giver, deplete the commonwealth required for national development but provides a platform for the happiness and personal satisfaction of the recipient. This article with the aid of the analytical method of philosophical inquiry attempt an appraisal of the ‘doctrine of gratification’ as well as the polemics of corruption in Nigeria. The paper, interrogates and juxtapose corrupt practices within the framework of Kant’s Categorical Imperative: a fundamental principle of morality which provides a criterion by which our actions could be assessed in terms of whether or not, they are motivated by good intentions. The article also takes into cognizance the argument by some beneficiary and benefactor of this social vice that corruption has a positive dimension. This presumed positive nature of corruption is considered misleading because it can only be sustained for a while hence, the paper concludes that corruption under any guise is averse to moral standard of living in the long run.

**Keywords:** Gratification, Corruption, Categorical imperative, Development

### **Introduction**

Corruption is a cankerworm that threatens humanity. The extent to which it has been embraced in Nigeria is worrisome. It seems as if it is no longer a vice to be corrupt as the art and act of corruption are now being celebrated with all manner of impunity. Human relations that ought to be predicated on the promotion of humanity devoid of sentiment or chauvinism of any particular kind is now built on the basis of patronage and nepotism. Nigeria does not only exemplify this, she is fast derailing morally and her developmental potentials are being mortgaged through corrupt practices that promote mediocrity in place of meritocracy.

How did Nigeria get here? Where did it go wrong? And what is responsible for the orchestration of corruption in the land? Are there practical steps that could aid the reversal of this contretemps? This paper raises these questions to highlight the possible causes and effects of corruption in Nigeria. This is because, activities in Nigeria and by Nigerians are suggestive of the country being "... one of the difficult and complex countries where corrupt people often adopt the language of reform to confuse decision makers, donors, development experts, and observers".<sup>1</sup> However, in doing this, the discourse tries to present the meaning of the 'doctrine of gratification' as adopted within the context of this paper, an understanding of what corruption is; vis-à-vis the polemics that shrouds its essentiality in Nigerian socio-political space. This is followed with an exposition of the 'categorical imperative'; an ethical theory that enjoins us to treat human beings as ends in themselves and, to constantly interrogate our action whether they are universalizable. This theory is then used to interrogate the essence of corruption and the 'doctrine of gratification' in Nigeria. Even if corruption has a positive dimension, a view that is highly contested, it is indisputable that it cannot stand the test of universalization, because the interests of most humans

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<sup>1</sup> Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. *Fighting Corruption is Dangerous: The Story Behind the Headlines*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2018) Pg. 97.

would be negatively affected. Utilitarianism as an ethical theory employed to justify corruption does not have the wherewithal to accommodate the interests of all. It is against this backdrop that an all- embracing ethical standpoint is needed to interrogate corruption. The categorical imperative provides a level playground devoid of partisanship, ethnicity, religious affiliation and social status.

### **Conceptualizing the 'Doctrine of Gratification'**

The doctrine of gratification is an instance of corrupt social practices embedded in socio-political and economic spheres of the people. It is an act directed at pleasing or satisfying the desire of an individual or group of individuals in appreciation of work done or favour rendered. This act, essentially involves the inducement of the giver by the recipient or his/ her agent to offer reward for work done. The reward could be in the form of donation, gift, sexual favours, or other promises made.

Gratification is associated with pleasure, especially when ones desire is met and satisfied. Superficially, to gratify is to make happy. In a technical sense, gratification could be conceived as the expression of pleasure, satisfaction and emotional reaction of happiness to the attainment of desired goal. One is therefore poised to contend the superficial understanding of gratification as an art worthy of acceptability and praiseworthiness. This practice is imbued in the psychic of some children right from the home, when the elderly promised reward in the form of gift, in return for the legitimate errand that would be carried out by the younger ones. Such child grows up with the mind-set that gratification is a norm for social living. Most times, it is erroneously interpreted as appreciation.

Suffice it to say at this juncture that, there is the misconception of the cultural standpoint of some ethnic groups in Africa concerning appreciation, so much so that appreciation is mischievously equated with gratification. Gratification carries corrupt moral burden because the motive that underlined the act is deprivation: the deprivation of some fraction of what ordinarily constitute the entitlement of another person or the

depletion of the society's commonwealth through inducement while, appreciation is simply the expression of a positive feeling. It does not impose any moral burden on the giver and the recipient. It is in this context that the famous expressions of the Yoruba of South Western Nigeria that;

(*Eni ti a se ni oore ti ko dupe bi olosa koni loru lo ni*). (The unappreciative being is akin to a robbery of the benefactor)

or

(*Yin ni, yin ni, ki a tun lese omiran*). (Appreciate so that more of good gesture will be done) are relevant.

In other words, appreciation, to the Yoruba and many other cultural groups in Africa is far from the endorsement of gratification as a rule of social relation because appreciation is devoid of appeal to force, inducement or compulsion of the potential giver like what is obtainable in act of gratification. Consequently, genuine appreciation cannot be used to justify the immoral acts of gratification.

The ideal and idea of appreciation have been perjured in Nigeria socio-political space. It has assumed a mild way of extorting and exploiting people to meet an end. As such, *Doctrine of gratification* as adopted in this discourse is a negative, immoral act or process, of obtaining satisfaction/happiness through the collection of gift usually from unwilling giver in disguised practice and euphemism. It is simply a return or benefits received for the perversion of justice. This act is exemplified in some coinage such as '*anything for the guys?*' '*Anything for us?*' '*Wetin we go get?*' '*Do something.*' '*Wetin you bring?*' '*Drop something*', '*Shake body*', '*Bring kola*' etc.

Gratification, just like happiness, when used in a broad sense, could be subsumed as sharing the essence of quality life or well-being. This, however, does not mean that gratification as a source of happiness translate to the good life because the idea and concept of 'good' itself is subjective. Hence, it is not all gratifications that could be the source of happiness. This is why gratification in Nigeria socio-political and educational lexicon involves two or more parties - The giver and the recipient. The

giver in most cases does so out of compulsion in order to get off a hook or to ensure that future efforts do not suffer jeopardy because of the refusal to appreciate present gesture. While, the receiver is happy meeting up with his/her desires the giver is often seen in unhappy mood. An example is the relations of extortion that usually take place between the security agent(s) on the Nigerian roads and borders, and commercial vehicle drivers or motorcyclists.

Evidence of such sharp practices abounds in other spheres of Nigeria society, so it is not exclusive of the security agents. Within the public and civil services in Nigeria, acts of gratification is pervasive; sex for grades is common in tertiary institutions among lecturers and students, sales and procurement of employment slots in some lucrative government establishments and agencies are regular occurrences, promotion and redeployment to duty posts considered lucrative are carried out in return for gratifications, the monetization of Nigeria's electioneering campaign are some of the few instances of the act of gratification in Nigerian public sectors. In most of these instances the givers leak their wounds while the recipients have feelings of satisfaction for the achievements of desired goals.

Factors responsible for this immoral behaviour have been attributed to economic factor that borders on the pervasive poverty caused by poor remuneration and condition of service of public and civil servants. The 'take home' pay of most public officials cannot take them home. Salaries and wages are not paid regularly thereby encouraging gratification for official work done as means to make ends meet.

Closely related to this, is the fears of the unknown orchestrated by survival instincts. Most public officials are concerned with the need for survival after retirement. The administrative bottlenecks that characterised the processing and payment of pensions and gratuities in most government establishments are frustrating; retirement benefits are usually not paid to deserving retirees as at when due, hence, act of gratification is seen as another means to prepare for the future

rather than wait in vain for gratuity that may not get paid during one's lifetime.

Greed and avarice of some government officials is also a factor that predisposes them to the acts of gratification. The lack of contentment with paid salaries and wages and the zeal for ostentatious living attract acts of gratification.

Gratification has its affective impact on the body politics of Nigeria as a whole. However, if gratification must be a source of happiness for stakeholders, it must make life liveable. This corroborates the view of Ruut Veenhoven that, "if happiness depends in the end on the gratification of human needs, we can advance happiness both by improving the liveability of the environment and by enhancing life ability"<sup>2</sup> Veenhoven seems to be pragmatic in his analysis of what happiness derivable from gratification should represent. He opined that, despite the desirability of happiness, it should not be a product of compulsion typical of the negative gratification where a party is used as mere means to achieving an end which is, the happiness of the recipient. When this occurs then moral burden is activated, such gratification raises question that borders on corruption.

The corrupt attendant of gratification as it were is more prominent in Nigeria's socio-economic, political, educational and other aspects of human relations because most of the time, it is being motivated by desire for misguided and/or underserved self-esteem and self-actualization. This, however does not rule out its positive nature, yet, several of what goes under the guise of gratification in Nigeria is corruptly inclined. For instance, a lecturer wanting sex or money in exchange for a pass grade, a policeman demanding money for bail even when such is assumed to be free, a judge demanding money so as to turn justice upside down, a public servant demanding money

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2 Ruut Veenhoven. "How do we Assess How Happy we are? Tenets, Implications and Tenability of Three Theories" in Dutt, A. K. & Radcliff, B. (eds.), *Happiness, Economics and Politics: Towards a Multi-Disciplinary Approach*, (Cheltenham UK: Edward Elgar Publishers, 2009). 12 ISBN 937 1 84844 093 7, Chapter 3: 45-69 retrieved from <http://www.researchgate.net/publication/228364106> on March 19, 2020.

before the release or processing of contract documents, a voter demanding money for his/her vote delivery, a clergy demanding money for 'blessings' when salvation ought to be free, a leader closing their eyes to corrupt and nepotistic acts, a parent offering money for ward's admission into school or paying for examination questions and lot more.

One of the onerous misuses of gratification in Nigerian political sphere is applying it as a way to curry favour or approval of immoral practices that culminates in corruption. Olusegun Obasanjo<sup>3</sup> reveals the antics of the national assembly in gratifying themselves at the expense of the nation's common good, such that they hardly pass any bill into law without gratification. This revelation is well captured in the narrative of his ordeal in the hand of the legislature who sent an emissary to him that he should learn from Babaginda that any bill sent is to be accomplished by the necessary funding to ease its passage. This possibility is made manifest in the scandal that rocks the Ministry of Education under the leadership of Prof. Fabian Osuji who was accused of bribing the leadership of the Senate and six other members of Parliament to smoothen the passage of his annual budget<sup>4</sup> In what seems to be a confirmation of this trend is the widely speculated reports of the National Assembly of Nigeria which frequently holds the nation to ransom, as they hardly perform their constitutional roles with respect to the passage of budgetary bill without exchange of that role for gratifications. For instance, the 2005 budget could not be passed not until a lump sum of ₦17billion was accommodated out of the ₦20billion they introduced to the budget<sup>5</sup>. Aside this, the 2016 budget processing witnessed some drama that revolved around padding culminating in the delay in Presidential assent.

### **Conceptualizing Corruption**

Central to the current disquiet that rattles Nigeria socio-political space is the cankerworm of corruption that continues to raise

3 Olusegun Obasanjo., *My Watch: Political and Public Affairs* Vol.2. (Yaba: Prestige Imprint, 2014.-), Pg. 430.

4 Okonjo-Iweala, *Fighting Corruption is Dangerous*, Pg. 73.

5 Okonjo-Iweala, *Fighting Corruption is Dangerous*, Pg. 80.

its ugly head in every strata of Nigerian body polity. It is endemic, distractive and destructive. It comes in different forms and shades ranging from the social, political, and economic, through the educational and most recently religious spheres. However, to properly put these forms of corruption in perspective, it is fundamental to unravel the meaning of corruption and how it is being conceived in this discourse. This is pertinent, as the practice has entered into the lexicography of many Nigerians and discursive fray of Nigerian socio-political and cultural milieu.

Corruption in the view of Obasanjo is "the greatest single bane of our society today... Corruption is incipient in all human societies and in most human activities."<sup>6</sup> The simple implication of this is the fact that corruption is ubiquitous. This nature of corruption is amplified by Afe Adogame when he asserts that corruption "is a form of dishonest or unethical conduct by a person or group entrusted with a position of authority and responsibility, often to acquire personal benefit, but also to defraud another."<sup>7</sup> In furtherance of this explanation, it is preponderance to argue that corruption is an aberration to development and positive emplacement of common good. Thus, corruption by its nature "is not a static phenomenon and occurrence; it is dynamic and ever-evolving, finding new ways of expression in different societies"<sup>8</sup>. Thereto, it is fundamental that corruption is multifaceted and has crept into all strata of humanity, especially Nigerian socio-political space. In fact, it is a common norm such that whoever is saddled with public and/or political assignment is expected to be corrupt or be treated as outcast. As such, Nigerians tend to care more for wealth and affluence gotten through illicit means, regardless of its long term ill effect on the nation as a whole.

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6 Obasanjo, *My Watch*, Pg. 428.

7 Adogame, Afe.. "Forward" in Benson O. Igboin (ed.) *Corruption: A New Thinking in the Reverse Order*, (Oyo: Ajayi Crowther University Press, 2018), Pg. ix.

8 Benson O. Igboin. "Introduction: Towards A New Thinking in the Reverse Order" in Benson O. Igboin (ed.) *Corruption: A New Thinking in the Reverse Order*, (Oyo: Ajayi Crowther University Press, 2018), Pg. 2.



For emphasis, corruption is a broad concept that harbours many moral vices. Everett, J. *et.al* identified political corruption, grand corruption, production corruption, petty corruption among others <sup>9</sup>. Beneath most of these forms of corruption is a particular vice which this article referred to as gratification. It is essentially the inducement of a potential giver to part away with some of his or her entitlement as a form of gratitude for the work done for him or her. It also refers to the outcome of the conspiracy between public officials and vendors to inflate contracts, denied execution or agreed to the poorly execution of a contract with the intention of sharing the proceeds. It also manifests when political leaders divert state resources to political godfathers in recognition of the roles played in their electoral victories.

This form of corruption is not peculiar to Nigeria's socio-political space, as its practices and negative effects are noticeable in the operations of other developing nations. But fundamentally, the geometric proportion at which it operates in Nigeria is alarming, compare with other African nations and the world at large. Records abound which show Nigeria as one of the most corrupt nations in various statistical analyses, gratification constitutes greater part of this act. Thus, as the adoption of democracy seems to have been taken as one of the acts of modernization, so is corruption which is believed to have been with man from ages is practiced in large scale through modernization.

Invariably, it may be an exercise in futility to argue for a holistic eradication of corruption given the fact that the current wave of modernization makes such an *Achilles' heel*. Nevertheless, the advancement of corruption in large scale is condemnable in spite of it being seemingly ingrained in humans. Conscious awareness of the people in the contemporary period, especially with the advent of democracy in Nigeria that enhances citizens understanding of their rights and freedom

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<sup>9</sup> J.Everett, J., D.Neu, A.Rahman "The Global Fight against Corruption: a Foucaultian Virtue Ethics Framing" in *Journal of Business Ethics* 65 (2006) Pg. 1-12.

to express themselves is of immense assistance in exposing the evil of corruption. Thus, one is humbled with the legitimacy of the belief that "It is true that corruption is found in every society but what makes people to pay particular attention to the corrupt practices of African leaders is lack of sensitivity to the general needs of their people".<sup>10</sup>

The understanding of the above craves a general need to examine the ills of corruption in any society where such is the order of the day. Reflecting on this, Dorotinsky and Pradhan<sup>11</sup> reveal that the diversion of scarce resources away from public purposes is a serious ill that could jeopardize the ability of government to attain and or achieve her set agenda in all strata. Thus, corruption would make development of the basic necessity of life such as; housing, health care services, education, water, electricity, job creation and welfare unavailable. In this guise, one may be wondering of the suggestive contention that corruption could be bifurcated into positive and negative sense. Segun Ogungbemi is an advocate of this possibility. He explained them with reference to utilitarianism which is one of the principal ethical theories that maintains that we should maximize the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. In a way, he argues that any corrupt act that meets up with the utilitarian principle that maximizes the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people, is positive while any one short of this principle is negative<sup>12</sup>.

Whatever, the arguments of Ogungbemi and the subsequent bifurcation of corruption into positive and negative senses leave much to be desired. The maxim of the action he cited to illustrate his argument is tantamount to saying, steal public wealth and distribute proceeds to researchers whose research findings would enhanced the well-being of greater number of people. It is important to say such act of depletion of public wealth is

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10 Segun Ogungbemi, *Philosophy and Development*. (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2007), Pg. 45.

11 William Dorotinsky and Shilpa Pradhan, "Exploring Corruption in Public Financial Management," in J. Edgardo Campos and Sanjay Pradhan (eds.), *The Many faces of Corruption: Tracking Vulnerabilities at the Sector Level*, (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2007), Pg. 267.

12 Ogungbemi, *Philosophy and Development*, Pg. 45-46.

immoral and the consequence of the act cannot be praiseworthy. The maxim of genuinely moral action should apply to everyone in relevantly similar circumstances, it should be impersonal and capable of being universalized. The authors of this article are of the opinion that it is not all rational beings that would agree to corruption as a solid foundation for the acceptance of a seemingly moral action. Whichever way, Ogunbemi might have wanted to justify his assumptive configuration of positive corruption it cannot obliterate the negative effects it has on the social equilibrium of humanity. It is against this backdrop that Ngale's opines that "corruption is a major obstacle to the promotion of effective governance, sustained economic growth and national development in the developing world, especially Africa."<sup>13</sup>

Given the reality that corruption is a major obstacle to the promotion of development, one wonders in which sense that an act of corruption could be genuinely positive.

Since corruption is one of the banes of development in the society, it suggests that such act undermines the common good and, the flourishing of the individuals who are at the receiving end. It also follows that the worth and dignity of the affected individuals are impinged upon by the act. This is considered as acts that are at variance with the humanity principle of the *Categorical Imperative* as espoused by Immanuel Kant. The humanity principle takes into cognizance the need to respect the dignity and the equality of all humans, these consequently provide a fair and equitable platform to access common wealth and guarantee effective social relations. Thus, a discursive analysis of Kant's *Categorical Imperative* is instructive.

### **Categorical Imperative and its Principle**

It is given that humans are rational agents and they are also creatures with desires. In this regard, some humans could have desires that others may not have and, others may have desires

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13 F. Ilongo Ngale. "Reverse Being, Knowing and Doing Triangle of Corruption in Africa: From the 'How to the Essentially 'Why' in Benson O. Igboin (ed.) *Corruption: A New Thinking in the Reverse Order*, (Oyo: Ajayi Crowther University Press. 2018), Pg. 38.

that are lacking in some humans. This implies that there is the tendency for some individuals to be motivated by the desire that not everyone could be disposed to. It also implies that, an action that is good to be performed must countenance what an individual want for himself or herself, as well as what other individuals want, and not solely what an individual want for self or what others want for themselves. This is the upshot of Immanuel Kant's position regarding morality in his work, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. In Kant's analysis, human beings occupy a special place in creation, and morality can be summed up in an imperative or ultimate commandment of reason, from which all duties and obligations are derivable. He argues that for an action to be considered morally acceptable by all, everyone must key into the rationale behind the action hence, it must be the case that such action is a product of duty. In other words, duty rather than individual desire provides solid foundation for unbiased acceptance or rejection of moral action. Therefore, "acting from a motive of duty is acting simply because you know that this is the right thing to do, not from any other motive."<sup>14</sup> To act in this respect is to act out of respect for the moral law. This moral law is determined by the categorical imperative. Unlike hypothetical imperative which is conditional, the categorical imperative is a moral command. It is "unconditional moral law that applies to all rational beings ...independent of any personal motive or desire"<sup>15</sup>

It is instructive to mention that the categorical imperative seems to be the most fair-minded ethical theory because of the level playground it provided for all moral agents by considering actions that are "objectively necessary, without regard to any other end"<sup>16</sup> as morally right actions. Hence, the imperative, "act only according to that maxim by which you can at the

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<sup>14</sup> Nigel Warburton *Philosophy: The Classics* 2nd ed (London: Routledge 2001), Pg. 140.

<sup>15</sup> Collins Harper. "Categorical Imperative" in <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/categorical+imperative> accessed on July 12, 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals and What is Enlightenment*, (trans. with intro) by Lewis White Beck, (Indianapolis: Bobbs – Merrill Educational Publishing. 1959), Pg. 31.

same time will that it should become a universal law"<sup>17</sup> is one of the fundamental formulations of the categorical imperative. By implication, for an action to be morally considerable, it must not be a subject that is attached to unfair conditionality, such as corruption under the guise of gratification. Gratification has motives that underlie it; the intent to manipulate due processes and to subvert rules as well as the intent to deprive the giver of gratification part of his or her rights.

Furthermore, the categorical imperative is all about goodwill. In this regard, it stipulates that the morality of any good action should be attributed to the will that motivates the moral agent. Thus, Kant posits that "there is nothing in or out of the world (i.e., nothing either human or divine) that is absolutely good except goodwill."<sup>18</sup> Gratification is motivated by self-interest, it is intended to satisfy some particular desires. If actions that promote and satisfy self-interest are pursued as we have in gratification human society would be chaotic and enduring social order that requires commonwealth would be threatened.

The imperative anticipates and provides a leeway for the resolution of conflicts between individuals, communities, nations and even between the rulers and the ruled in situation where there is conflict of interest. For instance, in an act of gratification that involves a political godfather and an elected public servant where the inducement to rip-off the state through illegal transfer of public funds is involved, questions regarding the universalisation of the act would guide appropriately. The imperative is an unbiased umpire in determining what is right to be done where the dignity of any human person is to be threatened in social relations. The fact that gratification satisfies the need of some at the detriment of others, it consequently use others as *mere* means in the achievement of some particular end. This is tantamount to the denigration and abuse of the dignity and the rights of others.

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<sup>17</sup> Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals and What is Enlightenment?*, Pg. 39.

<sup>18</sup> Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals and What is Enlightenment?*, Pg. viii.

It is on this account that gratification negates the humanity principle of imperative which states that: "act so as to treat others and yourself always as ends, never simply means to ends"<sup>19</sup>

When others are used to satisfy ones ends, it implies that the essential humanity of those used has been compromised. When the resources of the state is diverted to satisfy a political godfather for previous roles played in the emergence of an elected leader, the commonwealth of the general populace is therefore used as means to satisfy self-interest. When public official insists on gratification or s/he scuttles work already done, the giver's right and dignity is threatened, if the giver reluctantly compromised his dignity then, his or her worth as human is endangered.

In all ramifications, gratification is immoral because it promotes and protects the desire and satisfaction of the recipient but it undermines the right and dignity of the giver in addition to the fact that neither the giver nor the recipient would agree to the universalisation of such act. It is therefore act of corruption.

### **Interrogating *Gratification* and Corruption**

The analysis thus far points to the fact that the endemic posture of corruption in Nigeria cannot be unconnected with the unguided adoption of gratification as a way of life. Corruption in Nigerian, according to Onimhwo and Igboin<sup>20</sup> "has literally 'assumed' both legal and moral mien, the massive wealth acquired by the rulers is being used continuously to buy their way through." Indeed corruption in Nigeria has passed the alarming rate and entered the fatal stage and Nigeria will collapse if we keep pretending that she is only slightly indisposed as do our political leaders. Right from the inception of self-governance in Nigeria, corruption has eaten deep into

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<sup>19</sup> Warburton, *Philosophy*, Pg. 142.

<sup>20</sup> A.Onimahwo, John & Benson O Igboin. *Onanism: A Moral Evaluation of Political Retention in Nigeria*, (Edo State:Ever-Blessed Publishers, 2008), Pg. 5.

the fabric of the society. *The Weekly Star of May 15, 1983* has one of its lead story captioned "The Nigerian and Corruption" it runs a statement thus; "keeping an average Nigerian from being corrupt is like keeping a goat from eating yam." This statement, for long, has been criticized by Achebe who maintained that:

A goat needs yam because yam is food for goats. A Nigerian does not need corruption, neither is corruption necessary nourishment for Nigerians .... Nigerians are corrupt because the system under which they live today makes corruption easy and profitable; they will cease to be corrupt when corruption is made difficult and inconvenient.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, corruption has taken the place of accountability in Nigeria and the best that can happen to any leader that may want to be doing what the laws say will get nowhere. This is because of the strong belief that Nigeria is not Europe or America. In confirming this negative reality Onimahwo and Igboin assert that "the people call those who go to government and refuse to corruptly enrich themselves social misfits."<sup>22</sup>

The reluctant attitude of the power brokers to relinquish power is not unconnected with their corrupt nature. For instance, while some political and high profile Nigerians are accused of corruption, amidst protest, they often pretend as if nothing has happened. This attitude that bedeviled Nigeria socio-political space is well captured by Niebuhr in his book entitled *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, when he writes:

Dominant classes are always slowest to yield power because it is the source of privilege. As long as they hold it, they may dispense and share privilege, enjoying the moral pleasure of giving what does not belong to

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21 *The Weekly Star*, May 15, 1983. cf. Achebe, Chinua (1983). *The Trouble with Nigeria*, (London: Heinemann, 1983), Pg. 38.

22 John .A.Onimahwo and Benson O Igboin. *Onanism*, Pg. 5-6.

them and the practical advantage of withholding enough to reserve their eminence and superiority in society.<sup>23</sup>

This assertion of Niebuhr gives credence to the way Nigerian leaders in the name of democracy embezzled countless of billions of naira that is meant for development of the nation in the past twenty (20) years (1999-2019). This money that would have placed Nigeria in the middle-rank of developed nations and transformed the lives of its poor citizens, has been stolen and transferred into personal foreign accounts of the people in power and their acolytes, embezzled through inflated contracts to an increasing loyalists who have neither the desire nor the competence to execute their contracts. The result of corruption that overrides accountability in Nigeria has denied the nation the dividends of democracy and in its place is the promotion of the individuals pleasure encapsulated in gratification.

In Nigeria, it is common for elected leaders to bargain for poorly executed project or to insist on bribe in exchange for the sitting of project that can facilitate the development of their constituencies. It is also a common practice for political *godfathers* to insist on gratification through state resources, from elected political office holders in appreciation of the roles played by the godfathers during electioneering. Aptly put, the political elites derive pleasure in self -aggrandizements than the promotion of the common good. This act runs contra to the principles of categorical imperative that advocates 'good will' and the promotion of doing that which one would wish to be a universal law. Hence, the corrupt attitudes of Nigerians have turned those at the receiving ends to mere means rather than ends in themselves. This is reflective of Samuel P. Huntington submission that:

The use of political office as a way to wealth implies a subordination of political values and institutions to

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<sup>23</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr. *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), Pg. 121.



economic ones. The principal purpose of politics becomes not the achievement of political goals but the promotion of individual interest.<sup>24</sup>

In a nutshell the corrupt nature of Nigerian leaders can be explained in the inherent capitalist assumption of liberal democracy which was sold to us by colonial powers. The challenges confronting Nigeria includes greed, avarice, self-centeredness, kleptomania of Nigerian leaders, and betrayal of trust. In spite of the efforts of successive administrations in tackling this problem, it remains one of the most serious threats to Nigeria's development. A society or nation that is characterized by the above feature is bound to fail. It is this evil that Awolowo was trying to correct when he argues that:

It only remains for us now to emphasis and pin-point the obvious since greed, selfishness or naked self-interest is the essence and predominant motivation of capitalism, the system is bound to generate secular social disequilibrium in the society in which it is operative, and to diminish and degenerate through time until it suffers extinction, yielding place to another and better system which either approaches or appropriates to the ideal of love.<sup>25</sup>

Putting into consideration all that has been discussed herein, it is arguable that, the key social forces that have fostered democracy in stable democratic nations seem to be lacking in Nigeria. In order to remain democratic, therefore, the nation in her democratic culture must adopt selfless service, love, patriotism among others as her guiding principles and the leaders must be ready to adhere to them in exercising and implementing their political activities. This is especially correct as "political community cannot thrive without good leadership,

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24 P. Samuel Huntington. *Political Order in Changing Societies*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), Pg. 67.

25 Obafemi Awolowo. *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, (Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1966), Pg. 188-189.

and its leaders are by definition politicians - managers of political conflict".<sup>26</sup>

The implication, therefore, is that corruption cannot be fought successfully from the outside or by outsiders. It is within this perspective that Okonjo-Iweala's submission that "corruption must be fought by insiders and from the inside"<sup>27</sup> is considered very germane. This implies that corrupt practices cannot be subjugated by those that are in the corridor of power, who formulate and implement policies that are used for day-to-day running of a country's affairs. Thus, to combat corruption is laudable and desirable, but there is the need for the emplacement of strong institutions that can mitigate the excesses of existing institutions that are built on ethnic, cultural and religious sentiments that pervades the socio-political space of the present day Nigeria. Hence, "fighting corruption must be about having the courage and staying power to build those necessary institutions, processes, and systems that take a long time to implement"<sup>28</sup>. It is against this background that Kant's categorical imperative becomes instructive, for no society could meaningfully and effectively combat corruption without morals. Thus, the principle of categorical imperative that suggests 'good-will' as the ultimate good is relevant. When this is imbibed, doing what is right and just will be the foundation of human actions. The tendencies of public official who solicit favour either as a means to the sustenance of self-interest or the interest of immediate family or ethnic group members that encourages corrupt practices will be minimized.

Given this, it is apt to suggest that the place of sound education is to be encouraged beyond surface dressing. One is poised to believing that the unguided perception of gratification as a way of life that aid corruption in Nigeria can be meaningfully checked when all citizens possess sound education. It is believed that sound education will help both

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26 L. Joseph Allen. *Love & Conflict: A Covenantal Model of Christian Ethics*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1984), Pg. 279-282.

27 Okonjo-Iweala, *Fighting Corruption is Dangerous*, Pg.123.

28 Okonjo-Iweala, *Fighting Corruption is Dangerous*, Pg. 128.

leaders and followers to know what they ought to do and what they ought not to do. Such knowledge will enhance the making of good decisions. It will aid those who are to govern in understanding their political obligations and work toward attaining those obligations in order to ameliorate the suffering of the people, that is, the masses that cannot get to government power, but then they have the power to elect people. In view of this, Awolowo avers that "... it is of very great importance for practical politicians and constitution-makers to bear in mind that the more educated the people in a nation become, the more hardened and distinct are their language and culture".<sup>29</sup>

The necessity of sound education in enhancing a corrupt free society is inevitable. This hinges on the fact that sound education is one of the prerequisites that guide against uncouth chauvinism that is the bane of Nigeria. Chauvinism as adopted here cuts across ethnic, religion, and class chauvinism. Thus, when leaders and followers have the proper understanding of self and the essence of humanity, the nation will be good for it and livable for all. This is crisply captured in the thought of Awolowo that:

Men of affairs and wisdom everywhere are unanimous in the view that only 'those who are masters of themselves become masters of others'. Indeed Aristotle has said it, with the authority of one of the greatest and wisest men that ever lived; 'Let him that would move the world, first move himself.'<sup>30</sup>

This position of Awolowo is in consonance with what Plato recommended in his ideal state that a ruler should be vast in knowledge having acquired requisite information for proper leadership.<sup>31</sup> A leader who is adequately equipped with sound and good education is likely to be conscious and to behave in an orderly manner when managing state affairs. This is why

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<sup>29</sup> Obafemi Awolowo. *The People's Republic*, (Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1977), Pg. 92.

<sup>30</sup> Awolowo, *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, Pg. 158.

<sup>31</sup> Avrum Scroll & H. Richard Popkin. *Introduction to Philosophy*, (London: 1979), Pg. 195.

Plato posited that "until philosophers are kings or kings are philosophers there will be no peace in the world".<sup>32</sup>

Education has been identified for long as an essential tool for a good training and discipline of mind. But more importantly, the education and training of the minds of those who aspire to lead is absolutely essential, particularly the kind that is needed for the cultivation of mental magnitude. Thus, Awolowo suggested that "to make a success of governing the nation," Nigerian leaders should possess comprehension, mental magnitude, and spiritual depth."<sup>33</sup> The idea of sound and good education is to help in mental re-orientation, that is re-awakening the consciousness of every individual both the ruled and the ruler so that they will all have a sound rational capacity in doing the best that the nation and democracy demand of them. When this is done, it is sure that Nigerian democracy will be salvaged from the hand of demagogues that do not have full understanding of what governance is all about and consequently use it as a means to gratify their immediate needs and desires rather than deliver the dividends of good governance. Thus, "to be able to fight corruption successfully, it must start with the head. If the head is rotten, then the body will be rotten"<sup>34</sup>. The head here represents the leader while the body stands for the followers. It is therefore important to note that both the leaders and followers have roles to play in curbing corruption instead of codenaming such in positive parlance such as 'appreciation' or 'good gesture.'

The development of this mindset by Nigerians would activate common good. This common good will liberate Nigerians out of the contradictions in which people beg amidst of plenty. Development of common good will ameliorate and take good care of the people through the provision of basic existential needs such as water, telephone, health care service, good roads and all other necessities that will facilitate purposeful and

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32 Nickolas Pappas. *Routledge Philosophy Guide Book to Plato and the Republic*. (London: New Felter Lane, 1995), Pg. 110.

33 Awolowo. *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, Pg. 158.

34 Obasanjo, *My Watch*, Pg. 430.

meaningful existence , which are essentially humanistic. For better clarification of what common good connotes, Joseph Allen's perspective is considered apposite. He argues that, "the common good is common in the sense that it is something in which all the members partake and not merely a collection of the goods of its individual members"<sup>35</sup>Allen makes a further clarification when he writes:

What is common in the common good is more than justice. It includes all those conditions which not only are good for a society's individual citizens, but also enrich its common life, such as a high degree of mutual affirmation and communication amongst members, of educational and cultural development, and of public health, and sufficient economic development so that its people can rise above a subsistence level to appreciate some of life's higher potentialities.<sup>36</sup>

The common good as advocated in curbing the menace of corruption has to be corroborated with love. This principle of love is explained from the communalistic nature of a traditional African man. The absence of this kind of love makes our leaders to be self-centered and neglect their duties towards the citizens and the country at large. This love is to be buttressed by sincerity which will make accountability more visible as against its utopian nature in the Western democracy. If this is achieved, it is believed that, corruption and the evil of unguided gratification will be curbed. Those in power in view of this will see the need to alleviate the suffering of the people. The people here represent the masses that do not have access to government offices, but have the power of making those in government their representatives.

It follows, therefore, that for Nigerians to experience a corrupt free art of governance, the law of loving must not be kept simply by being preached. It must be seen as the law of

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<sup>35</sup> Allen, *Love & Conflict*, Pg. 267.

<sup>36</sup> Allen, *Love & Conflict*, Pg. 267.

life and must be preached and practiced<sup>37</sup>. It will therefore remain a dreadful omission to suggest that because our present democratic culture is bedeviled with contradictions, we have the right to accept it and practice it in this tradition. Rather, we must see love as one of the principles of authentic democracy that will enhance equal distribution of common good. It is when we love one another, that people would manifest the sense of belonging. This love, according to Niebuhr "must strive for something purer than justice if it would attain justice."<sup>38</sup> Love will motivate individuals to imbibe the spirit of oneness and when this is done there will be justice in the individuals and justice in the society as articulated by Plato. This might have informed Niebuhr's position that; "From the perspective of society the highest moral ideal is justice. From the perspective of the individual the highest ideal is unselfishness."<sup>39</sup> The need for a corrupt free society, therefore, calls for justice in the real sense of it. When this is done, the spirit of selfishness will be overcome by the spirit of patriotism.

It is suggestive, therefore that the ideal of the categorical imperative that is critical in making universal law out of our desire is fundamental in having a Nigeria that will be devoid of corrupt practices. For instance, before Obasanjo assumed power as a democratically elected president of Nigerian in 1999, Obasanjo has this to say according to Mohammed:

We must never be tired of demanding that any government should chasten itself and give us the foundation and the example to propel us forward. We must demand that any government should deal honestly with us and level with us. We must have the programme and time table to be able to assess its performance. We must have accountability and transparency that we are not

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37 Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, Pg. 215.

38 Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, Pg. 266.

39 Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, Pg. 257.

getting now. If any administration is turning evil we should spare no efforts and no sacrifice to remove it.<sup>40</sup>

When we juxtapose this statement with what transpired during Obasanjo' regime and his disposition during the 2019 general elections to the candidature of his erstwhile Vice President when he ruled as the civilian president, questions will be asked. Obasanjo was seen canvassing for the same person whom he had earlier labeled as a corrupt individual, whose integrity he could not vouch for. This is well chronicled in one of his memoirs *My Watch*. He states, "I realized that my vice president would not be a trusted and committed traveler with me on the journey to fight corruption"<sup>41</sup>. Therefore, one will not be mistaken if one concludes that, the situation and the aftermath is opposed to the statement. However, the statement is a reflection of what is needed to fight corruption in Nigeria. Meanwhile, Obasanjo can be conceived as "one who does not know that the intelligibility of polities' lies in the way it identifies its world and that, this identification is central to the activity itself"<sup>42</sup>. Against this attitude of Obasanjo rulers can and should continually seek a balance between the interests of their own citizens, to whom they have special responsibility and the interests of other citizens in the world, to whom they have obligation even though only their own citizens have the vote<sup>43</sup>.

It is important to mention that to fight corruption by any means in the society, the culture of such society must be taken into account. This is not unconnected with the preponderance fact that success of each society lies on her culture. It follows therefore, that while practicing democracy in Nigeria and in

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40 A. S. Muhammed. "The Danger of the Third Option" in *Don't Destroy our Unity with Third Term Agenda*, (N.P. NACATT, 2006), Pg. 34.

41 Obasanjo, *My Watch*, 429.

42 Obasanjo, *My Watch*, Pg. 429.

43 R.J. Parkes "Philosophy, Policy and Politics" in *Second Order: An African Journal of Philosophy*. (1982), Pg. 89.

fighting corruption and negative nuances of gratification, it is fundamental that such is to be pursued in relation to the cultural practices enviable in Nigeria. This is fundamental as the operation of democracy differs from one nation to the other. By implication, relativism cannot be ruled out from the art and practice of democracy, therefore, the mechanism to fighting corruption should also be construed within the socio-cultural milieu of the society where it is to be fought.

All that has been discussed here must follow with what had been earlier identified as sound education. This will serve as the head, knowing full well that whenever the head is sick all the body is also sick. It is also suggested that lack of quality and sound education will make ending corruption and unguided negative gratification impossible. As such, it is hoped that both the leaders and followers need a moral orientation in order to subdue the unguided corrupt tendencies that ebbed the nation. In line with this presumption, it is agreeable that to end corruption in Nigeria "the anti-corruption driver must enjoy legitimacy and be forthright, be above board, visionary and obstinately committed, determined and prepared, tough and ruthless against corruption".<sup>44</sup> However, when it becomes impossible to be gratified or to gratify an action caution must be taken such that such will not turn to a smokescreen for the giver or receiver involvement in corrupt practices. Nor should it be allowed to become a template for legitimizing immorality under the guise of its inevitability. This, in our view conforms to Kant's position that in "duty every other motive must give way, because duty is the condition of a will good in itself, whose worth transcends everything."<sup>45</sup> As such, the mind-set of both the giver and the receiver of gratification should focus mainly on what the sense of duty demands than using the act to curry or appreciate favour.

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44 Adegunle Olugbamila. "Prof's Urges Africa to Revisit Her Cultural Values", in *The Nation Newspaper*, August 21, 2008), Pg. 31.

45 Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals and What is Enlightenment?*, Pg. 20.



### **Conclusion**

This study centres on the doctrine of gratification and the polemics of corruption in Nigeria. It established a nexus between gratification and corruption as practiced in Nigeria. The discourse, observed that unguided gratification is corruption in disguise and argues that, though, gratification could serve as motivating factor at achieving one's goals and desires yet its usage has to be cautioned in every strata of human relation in Nigeria. This is done with avid reference to the principle of categorical imperative that suggests the needs to treat human beings as ends in themselves and not as means to ends. It is instructive to develop a positive mind-set with the orientation that what you are capable of doing but refused to do can be done by others without any iota of gratification or corrupt influence.

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