

Public Morality as a Fulcrum for Social Cohesion and Development in Nigeria: A Philosophical Approach

OYEKUNLE OLUWAYEMISI ADEGBOYEGA
National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja, Nigeria

Abstract. This paper adopts the analytical method of philosophy to evaluate the state of public morality in Nigeria. It espouse the idea that the neglect of public morality in any society is diametrically opposed to her development and growth. Such society experiences injustice, instability, public corruption, social-disorder and many other vices that are inimical to the existence of a political society. The contemporary Nigerian society is not faring differently from these negative indices. The Nigerian society is characterized by various economic depression, political instability, and constitutional crises. These crises have eroded the joy of independence, as the reality of the situation in the society shows hunger and deprivation. The negative socio-economic, political, and health impacts of these crises on the citizens have made many people to conclude that Nigeria is a failed state. While this paper identified the breakdown of public morality as the cause of these crises, it also attempts a solution on how public morality can be restored in Nigeria in order that stability, social order, good life for the citizens, growth and development may be attained.

Keywords: Public Morality, Politics, Nigerian Society, Social Order and Development.

1. Introduction

The various crises engulfing the contemporary Nigerian state is a manifestation of the breakdown of morality in almost all spheres of the country. The various political, religious and judicial attempts to resolve the crises have not yielded positive results. Politically, periodic elections since the commencement of the Fourth republic have not produced any positive effect towards ensuring good life for the citizens. In the same vein, judicial attempts, in terms of arresting and prosecuting criminal elements in the society have also not proved to be an adequate measure just as prayers and fasting

by religious organisations and individual citizens cannot be said to have been fruitful towards addressing the myriads of crises in Nigeria. In short, the questions that agitate the minds as Nigeria proceeds in the 21st century are: Is Nigeria not a failed state? Can Nigeria Survive? Generally speaking, these kinds of questions have been very popular in discussing the Nigerian situation in particular and the African situation in general. While the joy of independence has disappeared, the promises of independence have been forgotten by the reality of hunger and deprivation.

One may ask, why is Nigeria engulfed in these crises? What is responsible for the problems of political instability, economic depression and social disorder that have made many to conclude that the Nigerian state has failed? One fundamental reason for this, and the absence of a genuine will to halt this drift is the breakdown of public morality.

1.1 The idea of Public Morality

The idea of public morality is hinged on our understanding of the meaning of politics and morality. This is because public morality is a combination of the two concepts politics and morality. It is therefore imperative to first examine the meaning of these two concepts, morality and politics for us to have a clear understanding of the subject matter.

1.2 The Meaning of Morality

Morality is a familiar phenomenon to human existence. It consists of day- to-day assessment and judgments made on human actions and characters from our understanding of rightness or wrongness, goodness or badness and justice or injustice. Though, one might not be able to provide a direct answer to the question, ‘what is morality?’ however, we must

note that, we all possess standards of right and wrong from childhood when our parents or elderly ones told us what we ought to do and what we ought not to do; when they show their approval and disapproval, and when they reward and punish us for our actions. All these efforts were directed towards giving us moral guidance, that is, how human being should behave. However, a caution must be taken here not to classify every human behaviour and action under morality. Human behaviours or actions that constitute moral issues as noted by Emmett Barcallow (1994:3) are behaviours and characters that “arise when life presents people with such questions as ‘What should I do (or not do)?’ ‘How should I act?’ ‘What kind of person should I be?’” These questions intend not only to determine the goodness or otherwise about the behaviour of individual human being but, they are also other regarding questions in term of the moderation of individual behaviour towards others in the society. This is because there are some behaviours that affect the well-being of others by either increasing or decreasing it, causing either harm or benefit. Any action that are harmful to the well-being of the people or the state is regarded as immoral, while others that promotes or seek to promote the well-being of the people is regarded as a moral action (Barcallow, 1994). Thus, to say an action is immoral is to say such action is morally prohibited, that is, such action is bad, not allowed, or encouraged. Also, a moral action is one that is morally required, such action is good, allowed or morally permitted. Whether moral or immoral, all human actions are judged based on the moral evaluation of their actions and the kind of moral principle or rules that are embraced by the society.

Suffices to say here that what constitute moral issue is underscore by some other concepts such as: moral rules or principle, moral ideas and moral standard.

Moral Rules or Principle: these are rules that ought to govern human conducts.

Moral Ideas: These are conceptions of a perfect way of life. They are behaviour or actions that are considered good and acceptable.

Moral Standard: These are the standards by which we decide the rightness or wrongness, goodness or badness of a person’s character or actions (Adegboyega, 2018).

From the above understanding, we can define morality as the principle of standard of good behaviour. It can also be described as “an evaluation or means of evaluating human conduct” (Ali and Akintona, 2015:271). From this definition, a clear characteristic of morality is that it is a social

phenomenon. Another concept that is often confused with morality is ethics. However, the two does not connotes the same meaning. While morality is the principle relating the right and wrong, or good and bad behaviour, ethics on the other hand is the study of the fundamental principles of the moral laws. According to Omoregbe (1993:5), the relationships that exist between them can be likened to the relationship between logic and thinking or between theology and religion. In each of these cases, the latter is the basis of the former. While the term “ethics” denotes an academic discipline, the term “morality” has become a phenomenon, a subject matter, which ethics studies. Ethics, therefore, presupposes that we already have a sense of morality, and it is the systematic study of the fundamental principles underlying our morality as individual and as a society (Omoregbe, 1993).

The ethical nature of an individual member of a society shows how morally sound they are and it also determines the degree of public morality that persists in the society. An examination of this fact makes Omoregbe (1993: 1 5) to argue that

An immoral man is a sick man, i.e. man who is physically and spiritually sick, He may be physically healthy, but he is physically and spiritually sick and he experiences internal disharmony.

Omoregbe’s contention in the above quotation is that the only way by which human being can realize the best both for themselves and their environment is to live a moral life, their actions affect their society because they stand as the basic determinant of it. Thus, when members of a society live an unethical life, such people are morally sick and in the same vein, the society will also be morally ill. The moral sickness of a society is, therefore, the moral sickness of the individual members of the society. Since we can all agree that a sick man can hardly make any form of advancement or progress, the same will hold for a sick society. Therefore, for the society to grow, develop and progress, the sickness of the individual members that constitute the society must first of all be cured by developing their moral status. If we accept the meaning of ethics as the conduct or ways by which men relates in the public sphere, then ethics connotes public morality (Omoregbe, 1993).

1.3 Public Morality

Our understanding of the idea of morality shows that it is the bedrock upon which society rests. Every society is structured on moral principles. Also, to live in society implies an implicit undertaking of a social

contract to observe these moral principles. Public morality makes sense because people undertake an agreement to live together as members of the same public in society and because no one is self-sufficient. Little wonder then, that Thomas Hobbes (1909) describes public life in the state of nature as insecure and chaotic. It is a life characterized by continuous fear, danger, violence and death (Adegboyega 2015).

Public Morality is the principle of behaviour that is right and good, which must be exhibited and approved by society (Ali 2015). When practised, it places the state or society on a ground of peace, orderliness and in the end achieves ‘The good’ end, which is the ultimate goal for which the state is created. Public morality helps in the enhancement of the security of the fundamental rights of individuals to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness by individuals without impinging on other people’s rights. It is the prevalent opinions as to right and wrong in public conduct; that is primarily in the conduct of governments, whether in relation to the members of the state or by extension in its dealing with other states (Sidgwick, 1984:5).

We must, however, extend the notion, especially to include the conducts of private individuals, since they also exert some sorts of influence on the governance of the State. Or, we might say that in any State, every human being who possesses the franchise has a share in the functions and responsibilities of government. Therefore, Public Morality is an essential factor to all the parties in the State, that is, both the citizens and the body that is responsible for the administration of the State. This suggests to us that politics and morality ought not to be separated. This position is premised on the definition of morality as stated above and on politics, which can be described as the activities of individuals in so far as they impinge on the public realm made up of collective interests of the citizenry. (Ekeh, 1975). It is, therefore, not out of context to say that Public morality is a combination of the two concepts ‘politics’ and ‘morality’.

Public Morality remains the desire of politics to attain the norms of ethics. To this effect, Owolabi (1995:2) argues that public morality “is the set of normative rules guiding the interactions of man in the polity”. These norms of behaviour and social practices may have profound effects upon the lives of a number of people in the community and thereby affect their communal existence. The underlying assumption in the idea of public morality is that the conduct of human kind in relationship with others must conform to certain standards. The point is,

without any moral principles and regulations that guide the relationship among men in a given state, growth and social order, which are two necessary ingredients for the satisfaction of the good life, cannot be realised.

2. Public Morality in Nigeria

Contrary to the expectation that the Nigerian society should have advanced given the various judicial, political, economic restructuring as well as the level of the educational status and exposures, the country should be developed, the reverse has been the case. Though, we must state here that such expectations may not necessarily come out true and this might inform Rousseau’s argument as cited in Dukor, (2003: 380), when he was considering the benefit of education to humankind that: “since learned man began to appear among us, good man have disappeared.” Rousseau’s argument is a perfect description of the Nigerian situation. His argument was based on the situation in which virtuous men have disappeared from the society and have been replaced by corrupt and men of questionable character at the helm of affairs. The Nigerian society has over the years showed that, as the number of the elites increases so also the number of men with criminal tendencies increases. The result of this when empirically verified shows that the country has become plagued by moral degeneration, corruption, dissolution and self enslavement.

Caution must however; be taken so as not to make a fallacious statement in the above position. It should be understood that, the elites, whom we are examining in the line of Rousseau’s argument are people who have acquired “education” and “exposure” without morality. This set of people was described by Omoregbe (1989: 192) as “intellectual giants” but “moral dwarfs.” Omoregbe further asserts that, such men abound today at the helm of affairs everywhere in Nigeria.’ The result of the above situation is the deplorable political and socio-economic condition which has culminated into abject poverty, hunger, disease, social disorder, insecurity and so on. Thus, in Nigeria, lack of strict adherence to ethical public code of conduct has ruined the society. Leaders and individual are left to their discretion to the detriment of public morality. It is instructive to note that the phenomenon of public immorality is not peculiar to the Nigeria society alone. As a matter of fact, it is a general virus that has infested the continent of Africa. It is the problem created by those who are supposed to be custodians of public morality. This position is corroborated by Owolabi’s (1995: 8) assertion that; public immorality

in Africa is in fact a consequence of the failure of leaders to abide by the norms of political morality. Corroborating his position, Thulo Hoeane of Maseni, in Ayithey, (1992: XIV) also considered the moral problems confronting the African continent to have resulted from political leadership. He contends that:

The greatest malady of African politics is the unwillingness of the rulers to relinquish power. Entrenched in power by constitutions that have virtually made them kings, opposition to them is treason. Now it seems the only way a change of government can be effected in Africa is by beheading the head of state. It is a crude option, which regrettably seems so be the only workable one for Africa.

Hoeane's assertion describes one of the crimes of immorality that African leader do commit, which always lead to social disorder and some time to war. The example of Sierra Leone and Liberia suffice. Also, but for the timely resistance by the public, a former Nigerian president, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, was on to adopt a new style to perpetuate this kind of immoral act through the idea of "tenure elongation". However, where the leadership agenda to stay in power fail, they attempt to install or transfer power to their allies who of course remain their stooges. The moral decadence of leadership, which currently bedevils the Nigerian society underlies the various vices that permeates the society. According to Sunny Akpotor as cited in Dukor (2003:262)

The problem is that the government, which needed to defeat corruption, is the core of the problem in Nigeria. It is government that has contributed most lowering the moral tone of society in Nigeria. It is in government that corruption thrive most, wasting resources, defeating all prospects of patriotism and turning all of us to hardened cynic with no concern for public good, no faith in public morality or even in its possibility.

The attitude of the leaders has eventually led to the crisis of immorality in every social facet of lives in Nigeria, thereby creating a crisis of confidence. It is quite true that the trust and confidence that is necessary for the realization of the purpose for creating the Nigerian State have completely disappeared over the years. It suffice to say then, that the loss of trust and confidence underpins the moral sickness that ravages every section of the society to the extent that one may be forced to conclude that this deadly virus is a cultural trait of the Nigerian citizens.

Vine (1975: 12), writing specifically about the state of immorality in Ghana, asserts that "by the end of the 1960's Ghana had developed what we term a culture of political corruption." Vine's assertion can be adopted in describing the state of immorality in Nigeria, because, immorality now manifests not only in the leadership of the country but also in every individual with a very few exception. There is no denying the fact that the prevalent and persistent nature of the phenomenon of public immorality does give the impression that immoral practices in Nigeria have almost acquired the status of a system, that is, it has become a norm "the things to do", and that, when you do not do it, you are sometimes considered to be a fool or an uncivilized person. Given this level of public immorality in Nigeria, it might be tempting to conclude that immoralities have established itself into the culture of the people. This conclusion, however, may not be without difficulty. The difficulty arises from our understanding of the idea of culture in Nigeria.

Culture can be described as the belief system way of life, customs and traditions shared and accepted by a people in a particular society. It is consciously and purposively created to distinguish a people or particular society from another. Most, if not all, members of the society share and exhibit the cultural traits of their society. Also, a cultural trait has a positive meaning of the life of a people as a whole. If we, therefore, attempt to talk of public immorality as a cultural traits in Nigeria then it implies that it is a cultural product of a people to whose lives it has some positive meaning and value. This position will be absurd. That corruption appears to be a common public phenomenon among the various cultural groups in the nation does not prove it being defined as a part of the cultural trait of the Nigerian people. The culture of corruption has a different connotation of 'affected ignorance'

3. Public Morality in Nigeria: Reflecting on the Effects

The negative implication of the breakdown of public morality in the Nigerian society in particular and Africa in general makes it pertinent to ask the following questions: What is responsible for this moral crisis? Is there anything peculiar to the Nigerian people and African society that makes immorality thrive? Is it natural that Nigerians and African people are incapable of exhibiting moralism in their character? There are two ways to answer these questions, most especially the last two questions.

First, it may be in negative form in which case we contend the natural capability of Nigerians and Africans in general to behave morally. Also, we can also contend the idea that there are certain things in the Nigerian society and in Africa that compel people to behave immorally. But then, the fact remains that corruption has become a daily occurrence in the country even in daylight. The second way is to give a positive response to the two questions. If we do, our response will not only be unfair, but also, unreasonable to the people and their historical past. This is because it will appear as if the problem is part of their historical and cultural past. Such a position will be contrary to historical and anthropological evidence which has revealed the people as having an organized social order supported by a moral system and deep-sense of community as evident in many Scholars analysis (Adegboyega, 2016: 14-16).

On the question of the causes of the moral decadence in Nigeria and in Africa as a whole, the general belief of most scholars is that it is the consequence of the colonial experience, that is, moral decadence is the side effect of the social dislocation that colonialism effected on Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. Colonialism is a policy of acquiring colonies and keeping them dependent by their masters who had acquired the colonies. Perhaps, it should be mentioned here that colonialism goes beyond the political domination of a territory by foreign people in order to exploit the colony's resources. It also involves the total de-orientation of the culture of the people to make it serve the interest of the colonizers. Thus, colonization of the Nigerian state by the British led to the adjustment of the various cultural norms of the people to serve the British interest and purpose of colonizing Nigeria. It was at this point that the moral foundation of the society was destroyed. Arguing along this point of view, Ekeh (1980: 11) explains that "the moral and social order which formerly encased the pre-colonial indigenous institution was burst by the social forces of colonialism". What Ekeh's view suggests is that in the indigenous society, moral virtue characterized the activities of both the members and leaders of the society. In the same vein, social order and public interest were the predominant characteristics of the society. However, this was adversely affected by colonialism.

It is important to point out here that an understanding of the origin and basis of political society presents value as a key factor. As a matter of fact, it can be argued that the emergence of a political society was due to the social disorder that characterized society and this affects the members of the society who

possessed different desires, interest, goal and different means of achieving them. It was out of the feelings to forestall chaos and other vices that can ensue from the individual pursuance of their goals, that led to putting in place certain norms (to regulate individual actions towards the pursuance of their goals) and these were norms of political morality. If the above view on the reasons for the formation of a political society is granted, then it can be contended that the genesis of the breakdown of public morality is the direct consequence of the failure of the Nigerian leaders and the political elite to abide by the norms of political morality. This results from the conception of politics adopted by Nigerian leaders. It also suggests, that the foundation laid for political practice in Nigeria was faulty. There was the fear of domination by the minority, which could not be totally addressed, and up till 1964, tribal hostilities religious sentiments, political mistrust, and political vagrancy characterized Nigerian political arena. This truncated the arrangement to have democratically elected officers to occupy the seat of government. It was this that led to the first military intervention in the political administration of the nation. Ever since, the political practice has been on the contention for power for selfish end, rather than for common good or public interest.

Perhaps it should be noted here that given the traditional Western political philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, John Locke, Thomas Hobbes and J. J. Rousseau's conceptions, politics, which can simply be defined as the science of administration of a state or other political units, has as its historical function; providing a system of order through the administration of a given society. It is an instrument for the realization of peace (Adegboyega, 2016)(Adegboyega and Morrow 1998 Mukherjee and 2011; Morrow, 1998). In this regard, politics is supposed to be practised in the normative sense. In this sense of politics, power is pursued for common good and in the public interest, for the development and transformation of the society. The traditional conception of politics therefore emphasises the moderation of politics by the norms of ethics.

Aside the traditional philosophers, who have emphasised the relevance of public morality in political practice, it is pertinent to say that the belief of the Africans, with respect to virtue in development of the human society cannot be undermined. In traditional African political arrangements, politics is strictly moderated by the norms of ethics. Moral evaluation of political activities and institutions was encouraged and adhered to by political practitioners and the citizens in general. As a matter of fact, public

morality remains the pivot of the traditional political arrangements and practices.

Taking a cue from the above, that is, the traditional conception of politics which is underscored by the African political belief and practice, a political leader is, therefore, seen to be nothing else but only a public servant who ought to be accountable to the people. This kind of politics approves that, if a leader does any act that is deemed unethical by the public, the leader should by the standards of public decency, public comity, and public morality, resign, from office. The leader does not have to await public outcry, nor even violent demonstrations and so on before stepping down. This is the beauty of politics in the traditional sense. And, this idea of politics has as its goals, virtue and the satisfaction of public interest. Leaders are expected to be epitomes of public morality by living an exemplary moral life in all its ramifications. Their attitude towards leadership must be geared towards the promotion and achievement of the common good or the good life for the citizens. To enhance this, the pursuit of the values governing politics and the excessive use of power must be observed. This, however, has not been the case in Nigeria.

Politics in Nigeria has been understood and practised in another sense. Politics is practise for what it is, that is, selfish pursuit of power for personal and selfish interests of few individuals and groups and not a pursuit of power for the realization of the common good. It is seen as a business venture, where money is invested and profit must be made, where positions are acquired to oppress, suppress and show off. It has become a "must win affair" and an avenue for the pursuit of selfish interests. The idea that politics should be moderated by morality has been eroded in the country. In a way, the phenomenon of politics has nothing to do with public interest or common good in Nigeria.

The above position is informed by what politics has to offer the contemporary Nigerian society. It should be recalled; that the Nigerian political society was formed to pursue social virtues like; justice, peace, unity, freedom, brotherliness, truth and so on in order to build a virile state. However, various experiences have shown that rather than peace and unity among the citizens, the society experiences chaos and instability; rather than freedom and brotherhood, it is oppression and individualism which has led to ethnic rivalries and clashes, instead of truth and justice, falsehood and injustice have taken over the state and it is hatred instead of love. The leadership of the nation has engaged themselves in self-

aggrandizement of the nation's wealth and wanton looting of the nation's treasury. It has been dissrzvice rather than service to humanity. Most Nigerians suffer hunger, deprivation and wallop in abject poverty rather than living in happiness.

Given all the above conditions of the Nigerian society, it can be deduced that the leaders have failed in their political responsibility of providing the basic needs of life for every member. The strong, greedy and unscrupulous individuals have been allowed to exploit the weak and they have over-enriched themselves at the expense of the citizens. The political elites have defeated the genuine meaning of a State as the institution that exists "to promote social good on the largest scale; and that which embodies the rights of man, the justification of those rights and also the moral order underlying social relations" (Appadorai, 1975: 13).

A cursory look at the history of political thought, shows that the State is a great instrument of control and the centre point of public morality. When the state fails to ensure this, it has serious consequences for the whole society because every relationship and even the individual's sense of virtue will be affected. This is the present experience of the Nigerian state where vices are taken to be more real than virtue. All these have metamorphosed into the metamorphosed various disasters, be it economic, social, religious and political that are being experienced in the society. It has created series of social disorder, instability, lack of development and underdevelopment of the contemporary Nigerian society. It has also become a "hand me down phenomenon" (Nyong, 1987: 20). The illegitimacy of most, if not all the leaders, has in most cases not gained the moral obligations of the citizens. The nature of the society explains the immorality with which the citizens behave towards it by seeking to appropriate resources. Or, what do we expect, when the nation's executives scuttle the truth to which the public is entitled, what message is it sending to the public in terms of public morality, when the executives from the top to the lowest create a culture of lie, injustice, disregard to court order and official lawlessness; what happens to a perceived code of public conduct? It is logical only, that the citizens are left with nothing than to help themselves out in whatever way they can. This explains why the immoral behaviour towards the nation has attained its peak in recent time with most individual striving to steal from the state. The sloganeering is, "if you cannot beat them, join them" and looting the public treasury is regarded as "sharing out of the national cake." Everyone now serves his own interest and not the interest of all. The persistence of the above vices

has made growth and national development to remain elusive. How possible is it for the economy of a society to thrive when the members of such society lack the sense of moral obligation, and their guiding principle is self-interest and not the common good? The answer to this question is that the economy of such nation cannot thrive and the nation will remain underdeveloped. However, this question raises further questions on the hope and vision of creating a virile Nigerian State. One of such questions is; Can Nigeria be free from all forms of political immorality or political corruption?

Before attempting an answer to the above question, it is pertinent to say here that there have been war against immorality or corruption of any kind in the nation. The war against immorality dated back to time commercial. Every community in Nigeria has mechanisms for dealing with immorality or corruption. It would be recalled that the battle against public immorality came to the limelight in 1966 when the military identified corruption of the politicians as one of the reasons for taking over governance. However, it was discovered that the military was more probably corrupt than the politicians.

The military ruled Nigeria from 1966-1979 before power was handed over to President Shehu Shagari in 1979. Four years later, Aihaji Shehu Shagari's administration was overthrown by the Buhari-Idiagbon regime. The new regime of Buhari-Idiagbon, with the intention of fighting corruption, introduced War Against Indiscipline (WAI), through which many politicians were jailed and some corrupt public officials were dismissed. However, when President Ibrahim Babangida overthrew Buhari-Idiagbon's regime, many of the jailed politicians and other individuals were released while others have their sentences reduced. As a matter of fact, it has been argued that Babangida's regime was not concerned so much about corruption within its rank and among public servants generally, to the point that one might say that the regime existed so that immorality might thrive (Gboyega, 1996: 34). Ironically, the regime also has its own anti-corruption programme, called 'MAMSER' that is, Mass Mobilization for Social and Economic Reconstruction.

Corruption became a culture during the Late General Sanni Abacha's regime. The late general never gave any consideration to the phenomenon of corruption. By the time Chief Olusegun Obasanjo became a civilian president in 1999, corruption has reached

unprecedented height that it became a fundamental issue to be tackled by his administration.

Below are the highlights of some public corruption cases between 1985 and 2019.

Public immorality in Nigeria has manifested in the following forms: acceptance of gratification; succumbing to inducement and undue influence; embezzlement; conflict of interests, for example, the award of contracts by public office holders to cronies, family members, and personally held companies; bribery; fraud; nepotism and tribalism in recruitment/appointment, promotion; kickback on contract; rigging of elections; misappropriation and conversion of public funds for personal gains; procurement scam; leaking tender information to friends and relations; diversion and misappropriation of funds through manipulation or falsification of financial records; payment for favorable judicial decisions, and so on (Azelama, 2002; Ijewereme, 2013; Waziri, 2010). Of all the above, the most pronounced in Nigeria is diversion and misappropriation of public fund. Below are some of the recent celebrated cases of corrupt practices in the country between 1983 of to date.

a. The Babangida administration that ended the Buhari's administration through a coup d'état on August 27, 1985, have the following as some of the highlights of corrupt practices:

1. US\$2 billion Gulf war wind fall in 1991.
2. 30% of oil revenue diverted to frivolous uses throughout the time.
3. Huge extra-budgetary spending: 1989 = N15.3 billion, 1990 = N23.4 billion, 1991 = N35 billion, 1992 = N44.2 billion, 1993 (by August) = N59 billion.
4. US\$200 million siphoned from the Aluminum Smelter project.
5. N400 million wasted on the Better Life Project.
6. Colossal Corruption at the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), for example, US\$101 million for the purchase of strategic storage facilities

b. The Abacha administration was characterised by mass looting of public treasury as the total sum of N63.25billion was said to have been recovered from the Abacha family. In fact, parts of the Abacha legendary stolen wealth are still being recovered from his family till date (Ijewereme & Dunmade, 2014).

c. The General Abdusalam's administration is not an exception from the mass looting of the public treasury. The Christopher Kolade panel revealed that 4,072 contracts, 576 licenses, 807 appointments, 768 awards, and 111 approvals all made within 5 months of General Abdusalam's administration. The panel

submitted that the 4,072 contracts cost Nigeria N635.62 billion as against the N88 billion budgeted in 1998, this representing a deficit of N551 billion. The panel also revealed the depletion of the foreign reserve, which at the end of 1998 stood at US\$7.6 billion but shrank to US\$3.8 billion by May 1999.

d. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo's civilian regime that ruled the country for eight (8) years was accused of serious corrupt practices by some western diplomats who were of the opinion that Nigeria lost between US\$4 billion and US\$8 billion annually to corruption during the 8 years of his regime (Human Rights Watch, 2007). His deputy, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar was accused of fraudulent practices in the privatization exercise that saw many government properties sold to themselves and their cronies below the cost price (Aderonmu, 2009; Imhonopi & Ugochukwu, 2013). The most celebrated corrupt case of the regime that is still lingering are; the Halliburton, Kellogg Brown & Root and Siemens bribery scandal; the Transcorp shares scandal and the failed third term agenda

e. Yar' Adua's government indictment of using the Attorney-General of the Federation to frustrate the trials of Governors James Ibori, Igbinnedon and Peter Odili whose corrupt activities led to massive losses to their various states where they have served as governors. These corrupt governors were his supporters during his campaign for the presidential seat of the country (Aderonmu, 2009; Ijewereme, 2013).

f. Goodluck Jonathan's administration has been described as one that epitomized corruption at its highest level so far in the country. The following cases of corruption were recorded against his administration.

1. Diezani Alison Madueke: The former minister of petroleum was alleged to have looted over \$20b, which was part of the proceeds from Nigeria's main income generator, crude oil.

2. Patrick Akpobolokemi: The former boss of Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) also made his mark as one of the most reported former government officials who stole money. Akpobolokemi reportedly looted over N12b from NIMASA, using various companies to perfect his trade or practice if you like.

3. Sambo Dasuki: The former National Security Adviser (NSA) was said to have diverted and supervised the disbursement of over \$2.1b to various individuals and also sponsor GEJ's second term bid.

4. Olisa Metuh: The former Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) spokesman could not find his voice anymore, after it was revealed that he allegedly got N400m from the Dasuki loot.

5. Musiliu Obanikoro: Obanikoro reportedly got N4.7b which he claimed to have shared amongst some individuals notably, the Governor of Ekiti state, Ayo Fayose and serving Senator, Iyiola Omisore. The former minister has also returned over N100m to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) as part of his plea deal.

6. Alhaji Abdullahi Dikko: This civil servant reportedly 'dikkoed' N40b from the coffers of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS). The former NCS boss however returned N1b to the Federal Government and is on bail.

7. Alex Badeh: The former Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) bought a N320m house for his 28 year-old son and another N260m for his first son in the highbrow area of Wuse in Abuja. The houses are just part of the many properties Badeh used the over N800m which he siphoned from the military coffers, to purchase. He 'forfeited' \$1m to the Federal Government.

8. Femi Fani-Kayode: The former minister of aviation was arraigned in court by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) alongside a former minister of state for finance, Senator Nenadi Usman over an alleged N1.5b fraud. The anti-graft agency later filed a fresh charge against FFK bordering on another fraud amounting to N4.7b.

9. Patience Jonathan: On further investigation, it was also discovered that Mrs. Jonathan had several properties worth billions of Naira in choice locations across Nigeria.

10. Raymond Dokpesi: According to reports, N2.1b was paid to Dokpesi by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) on the orders of the former National Security Adviser (NSA).

11. Supreme Court Judges: Some of the senior judicial officers were accused of fraud and professional misconduct. Also, several sums of money in different foreign currencies were reportedly recovered from the homes of the judges.

12. Senator Joshua Dariye, the former Plateau State governor, was sentenced to 14 years imprisonment after he was found guilty of criminal breach of trust and diverting N1.162 billion state ecological funds while he was governor between 1999 and 2007.

13. Maihaja and (National Emergency Management) NEMA: The lower chamber of the National Assembly indicted the two parties for mismanaging N5.8 billion earmarked for the North East Intervention Fund.

14. NLNG scandal: Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) was discovered in October to have illegally diverted N378 billion sourced from the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) dividend funds to secretly fund subsidy payment on petroleum products. The fund in question was secretly diverted into payments on petrol supply and distribution when

it should have been shared between the federal, state and local governments.

15. The Police Service Commission misappropriation of over 150 million Naira.

16. Niger Delta Development corporation (NDDC) multifarious scams of 2.7 billion naira.

17. NIMASA fraud and accusation of funding Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) with over 13 billion Naira

g. The Muhamadu Buhari administration that claim to be fighting corruption is been accused of insincerity. Little wonder why the Abdulrasheed Maina pension reform case of about 5.6 million Dollars and 4,8 million Euros that started during the Goodluck Jonathan regime has not been concluded. There is also the Mr Babachir Lawal contract scandal of 200 million Naira that remained a stain on the anti-corruption campaign of the President Buhari's administration.

All the above are few of various cases of immorality that shows the level of public moral decadence in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, there are a number of institutional and constitutional efforts towards resolving the crisis of public immorality. Some of them includes: 'ER' that is, Ethical Revolution of Shehu Shagari's administration and 'WAIC' that is, War Against Indiscipline and Corruption of the Buhari-Idiagbon, 'MAMSER' Mass Mobilization for Social and Economic Reconstruction, of the Babangida's regime, as well as 'NOA' that is, National Orientation Agency and Moral Re-birth of the President Obasanjo's administration. The legislation includes the following:

- The Constitution of The Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- The Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal Act.
- The Bank and Other Financial Institutions Act No of 1991.
- Failed Bank Act No 1 of 1996.
- The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency Act.
- Money Laundering Act No 3 of 1995.
- The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act of 2000 (ICPC)
- The Economic and Financial Crimes Act of 2004 (EFCC)
- The Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit.
- The Nigeria Executive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI).
- Foreign Exchange Miscellaneous Provisions Act of 1995. (Olaide Bello: 2007, 100- 126)

These and various institutions and constitutional frame works were put in place over the years to tackle the problem of immorality without any success.

One fundamental reason for the failure of these programmes is that those who proposed these programmes are not sincere and they are also at the fore front of corruption in Nigeria. For instance, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo's Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) was criticized on the ground that he knows the corrupt officials in the three arms of government but rather than prosecute them, he was using the dossier collected on them to black mail them to support his government. Aside, it is obvious that all the campaign against public morality lacks seriousness. Certain questions can be raised in order to test the seriousness of any campaign against public morality. For instance, the questions can be asked, Is the campaign comprehensive? Is it systematic? Is it consistent? Does it have focus? Is it well publicized? Does it carry people along? An analysis of the various campaign against immorality in Nigeria reveals that the various crusades against public immorality have failed the tests in all the questions except in the area of publicity. Most, if not all the campaigns are merely public posturing, some fun of grandstanding.

To enable the success of any war against immorality certain conditions are essential. These include:

- There must be a legislative frame-work for transparent and accountable government and for fighting corruption including freedom of information Act. (FOI), Budget law, fiscal responsibility law etc.
- There must be a political will and commitment to fight corruption.
- A strategy that is systematic, comprehensive, consistent, focused, publicized, non- selective and not partisan must be in place.
- There must be a code of ethics for political office holder, and business people.
- Adequate remuneration for workers to reflect the responsibilities of their post and a living wage must be ensured.
- There must be an independent media.

The failure of all the policies on public immorality is due to the non-application of the above identified conditions. Aside this, for any crusade on public immorality to succeed, the leader of such crusade must match their actions with their words.

The challenge of public morality should be one that will transform society. It should be a challenge for humanity. It must be a fight that will challenge power relations, institutions, mechanisms and systems that promote corruption. It should be a challenge for empowerment of citizens to enlist them in the war against vices.

4. Recommendations

The important question that must be asked is how can public morality be restored? This is necessary because, without order and restoration of public trust and confidence, the social cohesion necessary for resolving the lingering problems of instability and disintegration cannot be realised. A fundamental truth is that the ideals of development will always be elusive if the moral decadence is not corrected and the political practices are restructured. The political arrangement has not reflected the kind of democracy that people are clamouring for. True democracy as commonly defined is the government that is people oriented. It is a system of government that promotes public morality and accountability of the rulers. It is a system of governance, where people rule directly or indirectly through their representatives. Democracy demands that sovereignty will always be with the people such that even the rulers who are elected by them will be responsible, accountable and responsive to them. This type of governance no doubt will room for transparency.

Thus, this type of Government must be organized, encouraged and practiced. It is a type of government that will give full reign to popular participation: The need for true democracy is expedient especially if we accept that the beginning of public immorality is the practice of authoritarianism in the clock of democracy. For there to be moral order and transparency of leadership, genuine democracy, which has the people at forefront, is what should be desired. The sincere empowerment of the people rather than the electoral maneuvering is highly necessary.

The democratic system of governance being practised in Nigeria must be with utmost seriousness and must be fundamental to truly enhance moral order, restore public confidence and create conscious feeling that there is a common interest or common good. To restore public morality, there is the need for the total transformation of the country: the country must be purged of its colonial and oppressive orientation that manifests in the political, economic and social arena.

Colonialism as observed has lumped up the diverse groups in the Nigerian State thereby leaving the Nigerian States searching for communities. Without a sense of community, a State as we know will remain a collection of diverse interest, groups without any common purpose or common good.

The point here about the need for the Nigerian State to operate as a community lies in the essence of the communitarian spirit that is exhibited in a community which places a community over and above a society. In a community, the members share some common goods. This submission is drawn from Owolabi's (1995) assertion that "the sense of family hood at the nerve centre of community makes civil strife and selfish motives to be minimal." Martin Luther King's idea as cited in Smith and Zepp (1986:176), capture better the king's idea of community when he asserts that

At the heart of all that civilization has meant and developed is community, the mutually cooperative and voluntary venture of man to assume a semblance of responsibility for his brother.

5. Conclusion

Since there is the breakdown of confidence and unhealthy conflicts in the society, realisation of the ideals of community has remained elusive in the Nigerian society. But then, events in the country today show the hope of its realisation. There are various social movements springing up across the country championing a common cause. These movements that are non-governmental cut across tribes and ethnicity and they have been standing against oppression and oppressive regimes. However, to sustain this struggle, people must be steadfast in resisting attempts by political leaders to divide them along socio-cultural lines. Aside the above, the very common people must seize the initiative from the elites by amplifying those feature that unite them and emphasizing those difference that have been used in the past to frustrate their efforts at unity.

Furthermore, it is observed that the absence of social cohesion and the abuse of power in Nigerian is as a result of the lack of social contract between the leaders and the led. Therefore, a revisit of the social contract is necessary for the new moral order to be effective in Nigeria. This social contract needs not to be a formal or written agreement between leaders and the led. It is to serve as the basis of legitimacy and moral obligation upon which those who occupy position of authority derived their right to rule and this commands obedient from the citizens. The

restoration of public morality therefore, demands that people must come together and by way of sincere and honest debate, critically examine their past, their present with a view to forming an agenda of unity and purpose through which common good will be achieved. When this is done, the various causes of the unfolding problems would be discussed and a new agenda guided by moral virtue will be formed. This we believe will put the nation on the path of growth and development in the 21st Century.

References

- Adegboyega O.O. (2015) *Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy*, Ibadan: Julisco Publishers
- _____ (2016) *Machiavellian Politics and the Crises of Public in Nigeria*, Ibadan: Julisco Publishers
- _____ (2018) "Altruism: An Ethical Principle in Nigerian Politics in *LASU Journal of philosophy (LAJOP)*, Vol 1, Nos, 1&2
- Aderonmu, J. A. (2009). Civil Society and Anti-Corruption Crusade in Nigeria's Fourth Republic *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 13.
- Ali, S.A and Akintona, E.O.A (2015) (Eds.) *Readings in Philosophy: Problems and Issues*, Lagos: Triumph House
- Ake. C. (1985"), "The Social Science in Africa: Trends, Tasks and Challenges", Paper Presented to CODESRIA for discussion at the seminar on Social Science in Africa.
- Ayiltey G. (1992) *African Betrayed*, New York: St Martins Press.
- Appadorai A. (1975), *The Substance of Politics* Madras: Oxford University Press.
- Azelama, J. U. (2002). *Public Enterprises Management in Nigeria*. Benin-City, Nigeria: Ambik Press.
- Chancellor, W. (1987), *The Destination of Black Civilization* Chicago: 3 World Press.
- Dukor M. (ed.) (2003), *Philosophy and Politics: Discourse on Values, Politics and Power in Africa* Lagos: Malthouse Press.
- Ekeh, P.P (1 980), Colonialism and the Social Structure An Inaugural Lecture delivered at the University of Ibadan, 5th June 1980.
- Gboyega A. (ed) (1996), *Corruption and Democratization in Nigeria* Ibadan: Friedrich Ebert Foundation and AgboAero.
- Hobbes T. (1909) *Leviathan*, Oxford : Clarendon Press.
- Human Rights Watch. (2011, August 25) Corruption is on trial? The Record of Nigeria's Economic and Financial Crimes Commission. Retrieved from <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2011/08/25/corruption-trial-0>
- Ijewereme, O. B. (2013). "An Examination of Anti-Corruption Crusades in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges". *The Quarterly Journal of Administration*, 33(1)
- Ijewereme, O. B., & Dunmade, E. O. (2014). "Leadership crisis and corruption in Nigerian Public Sector: Implications for Socioeconomic Development of Nigeria" *International Journal of Public Administration and Management Research*, 2(3)
- Imhonopi, D., & Ugochukwu, M. U. (2013). "Leadership crisis and corruption in the Nigeria Public Sector: An Albatross of National Development" *The African Symposium: An Online Journal of the African Educational Research Network*, 3(1)
- Lardners, T. (January 27, 1986) "The Gate Keepers" in *News watch Magazine*.
- Lawal, G., & Tobi, A. (2006). Bureaucratic corruption, good governance and development: The challenges and prospects of institution building in Nigeria. *Journal of Applied Sciences Research*, 2,
- Levine V.T (1975), *Political Corruption: The Ghana Case* Stanford, Calif: Hoover Institution Press.
- Morrow J. (1998), *History of Political Thought: A Thematic Introduction* London: Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Melaye, D. (2013, July 29). "Jonathan Administration most corrupt in history". Leadership. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/LeadershipNGA/posts/620659491301411>
- Nyong P.A (1987), *Introduction to Popular Struggles for Democracy in Africa*, London: Zed Books.
- Olajide Bello (2007), "Decision in the Anti-Corruption Case: Constitutional and Other Matters Arisen", in *Trends in Nigeria Law: Essays in Honor of Oba Olateru Olagbegi III*, Oluduro Ibrahim and Oke Samuel (eds.) African World Press.
- Omoregbe J.I (1993), *Ethics: A systematic and Historical Study* Lagos: Joja Educational Research Publisher Ltd.
- Osuji, C (July 10, 1988) "Approach to Practical Politics" was stated by Tam David West in his article, "On the Travail of Democracy" in *Sunday Tribune*

- Owolabi, Kolawole A (1995), "The Dearth of Public Morality in Africa: Towards Restoration and Restitution" in *Africa Quarterly*. 35 No 3.
- Patrick. U. (January 13, 1986) "The Promise Land" in *News Watch Magazine*,
- Sabine G. H & Thorson T.L (1973), *A History of Political Theory* Hinsdale Illinois: Dryden Press.
- Schweitzer, A. (1961), *Civilization and Ethics* London: C Books.
- Smith K.L and Zepp I.G. (1986), *The search for the beloved community, the thinking of Martin Luther King (Jr.)* Lanham: University Press of America.
- Waziri, F. (2010). "Corruption and Governance Challenges". Nigeria Conference Proceedings, Monograph Series, No. 7, CLEEN Foundation, Abuja, Nigeria.