REDUCING ETHNOCENTRISM AND CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA: THE PSYCHOSOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

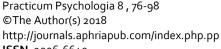
Ethnocentrism and corruption have become seemingly intractable vices that plague the Country. It is hardly possible to differentiate between ethnocentrism and corruption as crime and as official conduct in Nigeria. This paper attempts to show path ways to the reduction of ethnocentrism and corruption in Nigeria from psychosocial perspective. It suggested that change in policy must change with regards to inter-ethnic relations. That new policy should reflect "accommodation" rather than restriction. It should afford every ethnic group a chance to express and actualize its full potentials. Since corruption and ethnocentrismis a learned behaviour, it can be unlearnt through some forms of behavioural conditioning.

Keywords: *Psychosocial Perspective, Ethnocentrism, and Corruption*

Introduction

Ethnocentrism and corruption have always been big problems in Nigeria, because of the historical operations of ethnic groups in Nigeria, and institutionalization of corruption, greed, oligarchy, indiscipline and violence. Interestingly, this has contributed to high level of unemployment, poor government policies and implementation thereby leading to crimes and criminalities across Nigeria. Ethnocentrism and corruption are believed to be the root causes of injustice, economic inequality and poor leadership, hence frustration among the youths and consequent crime cases such as bomb explosions, mindless killings, kidnapping, assassinations, robbery and other political and social vices (Trust 2011). Moreover, Hyginus (2011) concluded that "most Nigerians live in abject poverty due to injustices meted out on them by their fellow countrymen and women who stole or wasted their opportunities through corruption, ethnocentrism and leadership inefficiency.

According to Peter (2011), some government policies are believed to be responsible for triggering insurgency. On the other hand, Achebe (1985), pointed that the problem of Nigerian corruption and ethnocentrism is simply and







squarely a failure of leadership, he concluded that these problems were created as a result of widening gaps that has existed between ideals and reality in the realm of social injustice and has created a permanent scar of social, economic and political injustice between the rich and the poor and between the led and the leaders in the Country.

Ethnocentrism is a mental and psychological state, which revolves around the belief that one's ethnic group is much more important than/superior to the ethnic groups of others. This means that, an ethnocentric person judges others from other ethnic groups according to the tenets and belief-system of his or her own ethnic group. This judgement regards spoken-language, behaviouralsystem, religion, and custom affiliation. Ethnocentrism, as an "evil menace", within a multi-ethnic society, has made the people within different ethnic groups, and within a given society, to cause distrust among themselves. Most Nigerians (especially from southern Nigeria), believe that, the Hausa-Fulani's of Nigeria are power drunk, and always believe that, they own Nigeria, as far as political power is concerned, and that due to their religion (Islam) they are violent. Hence they are viewed as intellectually deficient.

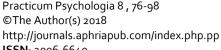
On their part the Northerners view Southern Nigerians as less godly and not fit to rule Nigeria. These stereotypes have over the years, led to breakdown of communication and non cultivation of necessary friendships across the regions. It has also acted as a blockade to meaningful national discourse and collective identity.

Ethnocentrism in its broadest context includes racism, ethnicity, regionalism, segregation, tribalism, cultural diversity and other areas that involve surreptitious deals among people. It might not be too much to regard it as being related to cultism and club affiliations. Ethnocentrism also is simply a symptom of a multi-ethnic society, always struggling to build-up a perfect system of hardwork, where citizens of the nation, and from all ethnic groups, would have confidence that their nation would be able to deal with them fairly and transparently, and according to their academic and mental standard, for a continuous development, and advancement of the nation. However, we must take into cognizance, that, no society is completely perfect, and so therefore, ethnocentrism abound or exists in all societies that are multi-ethnic in nature, but though, in various aspects. Ethnocentrism is often caused by people from a particular ethnic group, and who feel insecure among, or within other ethnic groups. And these insecurities among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria, has for long been exploited by the politicians, to mobilize support for themselves, towards electoral victory during elections. Among most politicians, and within

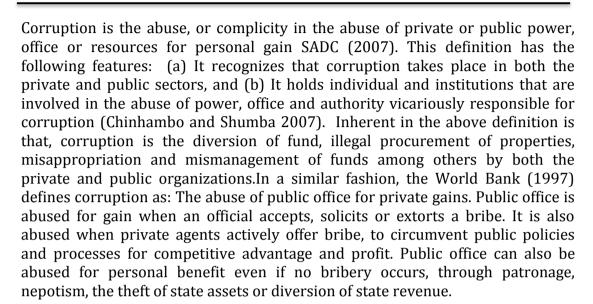
most ethnic groups in Nigeria, it is natural, to find politicians building followers around ethnic identities. Most of these politicians see or view ethnic identity as a "winning tool" for mobilizing the gullible people towards electoral victory, even when it seems that, what they (the politicians) are engaged in is destructive.

The behaviours associated with ethnocentrism are cooperative relations with the in-group and absence of cooperative relations with the out-group (LeVine and Campbell, 2002). Membership in an ethnic group is typically evaluated in terms of one or more observable characteristics (such as language, accent, physical features, or religion) that are regarded as indicating common descent (Hirshfeld 1996, Kurzban, Tooby, and Cosmides 2001). Ethnocentrism has been implicated not only in ethnic conflict (Chirot and Seligman 2001, Brewer 1979b) and war (van der Dennen 1995), but also consumer choice (Klein and Ettenson 1999) and voting (Kinder, 1998). In short, ethnocentrism can be in-group favoritism or outgroup hostility. Both in-group favoritism and out-group hostility tend to be stronger in competitive situations or the in the presence of external threats (Sherif1996). However, in-group favoritism is likely to evolve only when affiliation with the in-group generates valuable resources or scarce social goods or allows more effective response to external threats (Sanders 2002).

Corruption has been broadly defined as a perversion or a change from good to bad. Corruption or corrupt practices have been said to involve the violation of established rules for personal gain and profit (Sen. 1999). Nye (1967) defined corruption as behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role, because of private gains regarding personal, close family, private clique, pecuniary or status gains. It is a behaviour which violates rules against the exercise of certain types of duties for private gains regarding influence. Corrupt behaviours include bribery, misappropriation, nepotism, fraud, embezzlement, extortion, favouritism, rigging of elections, and falsification of voters register, over-invoicing, money laundering, examination malpractices and even the present day cultism; (most especially among college students). Corruption is a cankerworm that introduces arbitrariness and discrimination in decision makings so that rules, regulations and procedure are circumvented within a course of action for selfish gains. Most of the fraudulent activities that occur in ministries and agencies are with the collaboration of the leaders. Similarly, the widening gap between the ruled and the rulers has resulted into perpetual poverty, diseases, unemployment and underdevelopment in the region. The classes have widened and the condition of the exploited workers alike have deteriorated so badly that almost all the social structures in the country have collapsed.







Furthermore, the political Bureau (1987) identified corruption characteristics to include, the inflation of government contracts in return for kickbacks; frauds and fabrication of accounts in the public service, examination malpractices in our educational institutions including universities; the taking of bribes and pervasion of justice among the police, the judiciary and other organs for administering justice, and the various heinous crimes against the state in the Business and industrial sectors of our economy: collusion with multinational companies such as over invoicing of goods and foreign exchange swindling, hoarding and smuggling. In Nigeria corrupt acts are called such names as kickbacks, to shake hands, to understand, to be wise, returns breakfast, drinks, kola, brown envelopes etc. However, in whatever way corruption is defined, it involves acts which are perceived to be against public interest or to violate certain legal and moral laws and principles and some of these acts are directly or indirectly harmful to the society. It is often considered evil as it affects efficiency and economic system. It also affects the success of policy implementation, which is crucial for development in Nigeria.

Shah (2007) proposed four-fold classification of corruption as follows:

- 1. **Petty corruption** involving individual public officials who abuse their offices by demanding bribes and kickbacks, diverting public funds or doling out favours in return for personal gratification;
- 2. **Grand corruption** which refers to the theft or misuse of vast amounts of resources by state officials, including politicians and government bureaucrats:

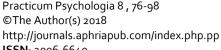
- 3. **State or regulatory capture and influence peddling** a situation where private individuals collude with public officials or politicians for their individual and mutual benefits;
- 4. **Patronage, paternalism, clientilism and being a 'team player'**, which is a situation where public officials use their official position to provide assistance to clients or colleagues from the same geographic, ethnic, or cultural origin in order to enable them to receive preferential treatment from the public sector.

Also Adekunle (1991) classified corruption in Nigeria into the following types:

- 1. **Political corruption** to gain or retain political power or to victimise, the main perpetrators being chief executives and other political office holders:
- 2. **Economic and Commercial corruption -** carried out by businessmen, contractors and consultants to make more profits and money;
- 3. **Administrative and professional corruption -** engaged in by highly-placed civil servants and executives of parastatals for material wealth and the cultivation of political and social connections;
- 4. **Organised corruption -** perpetrated by political, economic, social and bureaucratic elites, and by the high echelons of control agencies, for money and material wealth: and
- 5. **Working class corruption -** done by artisans, junior and intermediate staff, market women and men, also for money and material wealth.

Psychosocial Perspectives

The psychosocial perspective is the combined influence that psychological and social factors have on the individual physical and mental wellness,in relation to their ability to function. People may not be fully aware of the relationship between their mental and emotional wellbeing and the environment. Problems that occur in one's psychosocial functioning can be referred to as "psychosocial dysfunction" or "psychosocial morbidity." This refers to the lack of development or diverse atrophy of the psychosocial self, often occurring alongside other dysfunctions that may be physical, emotional, or cognitive in nature.



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Theoretical evidence suggest that either a psychological or a social underlying mechanism account for ethnocentric and corrupt behaviour, the true essence is derived only by understanding the additive influence of these factors on an individual. For instance, Walters (2009), proposes that corruption and ethnocentrism are choices conditioned by the interaction of individual traits and environmental circumstances. The choices that an individual makes are made within the boundaries of one's environmental and biological conditions which eventually lead to the development of cognitions. And that corruption and ethnocentrismare characterized by irresponsibility, impulsiveness, indulgence, negative interpersonal relationships, and the chronic willingness to violate society's rules.

Psychological perspective encompass processes that take place at the individuallevel as well as the meanings that one attributes to a particular situation which in turn affects our mental state (Upton, 2013). Corruption and ethnocentrismare viewed as a product of abnormal psychological traitsEysenck (1993). Eysenck, in his view of corruption and ethnocentrism, proposed that personality factors like extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism are the prime causes of corruption and are the only "systematic method" available for the investigation of such behaviours. Hence, personality traits contribute to one's tendency to engage in ethnocentric and corrupt behaviours. He proposed that high neuroticism leads to higher persistence in people which makes corruption and ethnocentrism a matter of routine that is continuously reinforced. The combined effect of high extraversion and high neuroticism interferes with learning social rules and conditioning, increasing the likelihood of corruption and ethnocentrism (Levine & Jackson, 2004). Psychoticism is believed to increase the rigidity of thought in a person and reduce sensitivity to guilt. The traits that correlate to form this super-ordinate trait include aggressive, egocentric, impulsive, antisocial, creative and tough minded. These determine the chances of an individual to indulge in corrupt and ethnocentric behaviour (Clarbour, Roger, Miles, & Monaghan, 2009; Koolhof, Loeber, Wei, Pardini, &D'Escury, 2007).

Social perspectives encompass those that are present in the society and influence the individual by their structure and course (Upton, 2013). The social frames of reference forstudying corruption are individual, familial, peer factors, socio economic status and schools (Leonard, 2013). Research evidence has suggested that corruption and ethnocentrismis an outcome of interactions of various social factors, and is related to various ongoing social processes (Leonard, 2013; Johnson, Smailes, Cohen, Kasen, & Brook, 2004; Harris-McKoy & Cui, 2013; Sousa, et al., 2011). Social factors also have effects on potential corrupt activities of individuals. The social effects of racial heterogeneity, age and gender have

contributed to the relationship between ethnocentrism and corruption. Racial difference is an extremely sensitive issue in reference to the corruption and ethnocentrism. In addition, income inequality, unemployment rates, education, neighbourhood disorganization and family disruption are closely tied to race, all of which strongly impact crime and delinquency. Most of the impact on the legacy of racism, discrimination on personality and behaviour, sub-cultural adaptations and social disorganization influence corruption and ethnocentrism (Siegel, 2001).

Studies have shown the impact of family structure on corruption and ethnocentrism, noting that there is a strong tie between family disruption, ethnocentrism and rates of corruption (Lersch, 2004). For example, someone growing up in a poor and broken family, thus possibly being undereducated, may find it difficult to get a decent job. The resulting level of frustration over this individual's future, in this case, could drive the possibility of gaining social prosperity through illegal activities. Economic factors, such as those in lower level of socio-economic status, appear to play an important role in shaping trends in ethnocentrism and corruption. People who are poor or suffering economic stress have the most motivation to engage ethnocentric and corrupt practise in order to get what they need or desire through stealing, robbing and other illegal activities. They also assumed that engaging ethnocentric and corrupt practises is a way of expressing their anger and frustration against the society. On the contrary, corruption drops when the poor are provided with economic opportunities via welfare and public assistance (Hannon & Defronzo, 1998).

Relevant Theories Need theory

Abraham Maslow is one of the prominent needtheorists who propounded the hierarchy of needs theory in 1954. The main tenet of the theory is that humans are motivated to behave in certain ways that are instrumental, or could lead, to the gratification of their needs. Maslow argued that human needs are in hierarchy starting from physiological needs at the base of the hierarchy through safety needs, love and belongings needs, esteem needs, and up to self-actualization needs. Maslow went further to argue that the satisfaction of a lower order need propels movement to efforts at satisfying the next higher need in the hierarchy. Hence, that it is only when an individual's physiological needs (clothing, shelter, hunger, thirst and even sex) have been satisfactorily met that one aspires to satisfy safety needs.

Several analysts and Nigerian scholars have reasoned that Nigerians are influenced by the search to satisfy physiological needs (Orji, 2003; Igbuzor



2002). This, they reasoned, is largely responsible for the Nation's loss of social values. Ikubaje (2002), reported that the fear of job and future insecurity made so many Nigerians to see corruption as the best way to safeguard against future economic insecurity; since Nigeria economy seem to be nose-diving. Extrapolating from above therefore, it seems potent to argue that corruption and ethnocentrism in Nigeria, is propelled by Nigerian's desire to gratify their varied needs.

Cognitive Social Learning Theory

According to the theory, the majority of the habits we form during our lifetimes are acquired by observing and imitating other people (Bandura, 1977). According to Bandura, much complex behaviour could never be learned unless people are exposed to some other humans who modelled them. Thus, observational learning permits human to acquire many new responses in settings where their 'models' are simply pursuing their own interests and are not trying to teach anyone anything. In Bandura's attempt to explain the dynamics of imitative learning where a 'model' is no longer present and yet component responses involved in an act are acquired, he contend that the acquisition of modelled behaviour is governed by four interrelated processes of: attention, retention, motoric reproduction and motivation.

Bandura explained that a child, for example, attends carefully to a model to learn by observation and the child also commit the model's behaviour to memory; if the child must have to reproduce the responses later, when the model is no longer present to serve as a guide, reproducing such responses, apparently, requires some symbolic coding activities of either verbalizations or images, so that, translation of symbolized images and verbal codes into action can become less cumbersome. Thus, a child who is able to effectively translate symbolic representations or a modelled sequence into action is said to have imitated the model's behaviour. Now, the question that arises is: how does Bandura's observational learning theory explain the prevalence of corruption and ethnocentrism in Nigeria? The answer to the question is very simple. There is no gain saying that many Nigerians, even on a daily basis, witness cases of corruption and ethnocentrism everywhere. In both public and private organization, employees are daily stared in the face with the realities of 'kick backs' from contracts awarded. We often see public servants who, by every standard, live above their salaries and cruise around town in sleekly and expensive cars, live in exortic mansions of their own, and send their wards to highly expensive schools. These individuals are revered and 'worshipped' as the high and mighty, as such and importantly, because humans are essentially hedonistic, people tend to learn and internalize behaviours of people who live in affluence and opulence and they, invariably, serve as models'. This phenomenon is most apparent where, even, persons that have been indicted of corrupt practices are celebrated rather than punished. For example, many of the second republic politicians who were found guilty of corrupt practices, and even a host of the past military leaders who were accused of corruption, are today in the corridors of power in Nigeria.

Psychological Ways of Reducing Ethnocentrism and Corruption

On the part of leadership, political will is paramount. Then the issues of economic backwardness, social disintegration, decayed infrastructures, deplorable and inaccessible roads, poor electricity supply, lack of essential amenities such as good healthcare and (quality) education and political unrest in the Country will be addressed. Steps could include:

- Removal of key barriers: Ethnocentrism from its very definition denotes key barriers like oligarchy, intimidation, marginalization, tribalism, nepotism, and injustice that people from minority group face in their daily activities. Removal of such barriers therefore requires a high profile intervention both at the local and national level. The government has under this consideration strongly come in to create a platform for removal of such barriers.
- **Empowerment:** To further facilitate effective acquisition of critical skills in the society, Mark (2000) argues that the minority groups should be aided through legislation in checking possible resistance of the dominant culture while economic empowerment would give them the needed force to push for such skills.
- Open-door Policy: Subsidies, tax exemptions, public procurement of goods and services, soft credits, extra-budgetary funds under the control of politicians—all are elements of the various ways in which governments manage public resources. However, the more open and transparent the processes, the less opportunity it will provide for malfeasance and abuse. Collier (2007) provides persuasive evidence on the negative impact of ineffective systems of budget control. Countries where citizens are able to scrutinize government activities and debate the merits of various public policies also make a difference. In this respect, press freedoms and levels of literacy will, likewise, shape in important ways the context for reforms. Whether the country has an active civil society, with a culture of participation could be an important ingredient supporting various strategies aimed at reducing corruption and ethnocentrism.



- Workers Motivation and compensation: Whether civil servants are appropriately compensated or grossly underpaid will clearly affect motivation and incentives. If public sector wages are too low, employees may find themselves under pressure to supplement their incomes in "unofficial" ways. Van Rijckeghem and Weder (2001) did some empirical work showing that in a sample of less developed countries, there is an inverse relationship between the level of public sector wages and the incidence of corruption and ethnocentric behaviour.
- **Role Modelling:** Leaders and elders in the community should shun negative life style by demonstrating exemplary life styles worthy of emulation before the younger ones which if they imitate corruption and ethnocentrism will abate. Worthy of not is that very complex behaviour could never be learned unless people are exposed to some other humans who modelled them (Bandura, 1977).

Recommendations

The press should engage in public enlightenment campaign against ethnocentrism and corruption in Nigeria because this strategy can help to raise the citizens' awareness of the problem and motivate fight against it.

Nigeria has to be a true federation in every sense so that issues of ethnicity, domination, resource control will be addressed permanently.

Local level accountability should be strengthened; citizens should be at the centre of demanding for transparency and accountability in the conduct of public and corporate affairs. The corruption and ethnocentrism fighting institutions should be streamlined, reformed and strengthened in order to avoid administrative conflicts from similar agencies; be cost effective; free it from executive and other forms of control; and facilitate optimum performance.

Finally, a re-orientation is imperative so that citizens attitudes with regards to inter-ethnic relations should reflect "accommodation" rather than being restriction, as well as engender respect for the "other' in the realization that our diversity is the key to our strength as a Nation.

Conclusion

Ethnocentrism and corruption is more likely to impede economic prosperity, as deviant behaviour always causes costs, the misallocation of goods and services and eventually leads to a downfall of market principles. Thus, ethnocentrism no doubt is a complex socio-political phenomenon, therefore socio-political and economic exclusion is not only ethically dangerous to socio-political

development but also economically unproductive. It deprives groups and individuals of the opportunity of necessary development that can benefit the society. Also those in power should exhibit a superlative sense of equity, fairness and justice to all irrespective of tribe. This is one way to earn the people's loyalty and transform the primordial instincts into patriotism. However, implementation of suggestions made above will aid in reduction of ethnocentrism and corruption in Nigeria.

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