

A Thematic Review of Societal Values for Social Transformation and Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

A key issue in societal values for social transformation, such as good behaviour, dignity, education, honesty, humanity etc., stress that Nigeria faces various forms of social issues and societal issues that need urgent attention from the government and its citizen. The growth and development of any nation across the globe depend on the degree of incorruptible governance and good leadership, as stated in the functionalist theory of social change, which sees the society as a whole and that all parts of a society must be harmonious for it to function properly stating that each part is like an organ and individual parts can't survive on their own without the other. Therefore, it is essential to know that collective effort in the fight to eradicate social vices is fundamental for society's survival. The magnitude of corruption led to the birth of crimes of various forms and a high degree of insecurity in the nation. This paper examines concepts like corruption, societal issues, development and value orientation, national development problems, and social vices' impact on society. The paper proffers various ways of eradicating corruption in Nigeria. Some of the recommendations include the eradication of money politics and godfatherism for political office seekers, affordable fees for applications to political offices at elections should be ensured, and the strengthening of anti-corruption institutions such as the EFCC and ICPC to deepen the fight against corruption amidst public office holders that are found wanting. The paper further noted that the war against social vices must be a collective responsibility involving every member of society for societal transformation and value change.

Article History

Received: May, 2022

Review processes

June – Septemeber, 2022

Received in revised form:

November 2022

Accepted: November 2022

Published online:

December 2022

KEYWORDS

- Values
- Transformation
- Social Vices
- National development

The socio-economic condition of our society today is faced with numerous problems that range from tribalism, nepotism, corruption, favouritism, cultism and a host of others. These problems have led to various issues affecting the country's economy as most citizens are engaged in sharp corrupt practices that have retarded the growth and development of the country. Social vices have hindered Nigeria's

development, ravaged the country, and destroyed most of what is cherished as national values and heritage. Social vices have retarded economic growth and slow down economic efficiency and development, irrespective of the abundant resources bestowed upon the country.

Corruption in Nigeria wears many kinds of unattractive and dirty clothes. The Problem of corruption has made so many people feel much pain as the money

which would have been used to reduce poverty in the country is being channelled into the pockets of some selected individuals (Abubakar, 2019). In the fight against social vices, the government of President Olusegun Aremu Obasanjo saw the need. It inaugurated the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and ICPC to wage war against these augury menaces. Corruption is deeply rooted among Nigerian citizens to the point that government functionaries do not perform their functions legitimately. Rather believe in bribing for files and other essential services to be effectively carried out (Abubakar, 2019). Based on the position of Abubakar (2019) regarding anti-corruption agencies and their roles in tackling Corruption in Nigeria, the commissioning of the EFCC is a laudable initiative by the former President, Olusegun Obasanjo. The effort is a major step in eradicating corruption from the country's political system. As such, the anti-graft agencies can do more to fight corruption in Nigeria.

Abubakar (2019) asserted that Nigeria's image as the giant of Africa had suffered many setbacks due to anti-social and criminal acts, such as high corruption, terrorism and other criminal acts. Regrettably, the system of education is getting worse daily; the education that is supposed to be used to correct the wrongdoings in society and as an agent of transformation, empowerment and a tool of clearing the minds of young ones to become useful members of the society is a sideline and not properly funded by the government. It is important to evaluate the value system of Nigerian society and the prevailing social situation, particularly regarding the transformation and development in Nigeria. In all aspects of

human endeavour, value dictates the choices man makes. Therefore, evaluation and orientation through the education system are important, especially as values affect human behaviour, conduct, and actions. This can be inculcated into the youths through education.

Different people see value as a pivot of human behaviour in different ways. The different opinions concerning what values are and what should be valued depends on various individuals/society. To an average citizen, values are those basic beliefs that society cherish, such as attitude, honesty, morals, integrity etc. Transformation entails the general change in the appearance or character of a society in terms of restructuring; from culture to social relations; from politics to economy; from the way we think to the way we live. This transformation can be achievable through societal values, including; value orientation, moral values, and attitudes; all these are expected to transform the society, though other anti-social vices could hinder social transformation in Nigeria, such as corruption, crime, electoral violence, financial misappropriation, examination malpractice, cultism, drug abuse among others.

According to Dams (2009), development is a process rather than an outcome; it is dynamic in that it involves a change from one state or condition to another. It brings about social change that allows people to achieve their human potential. Society will work well when the sectors carry out their functions as expected, just like ICPC and EFCC are doing a good job tackling financial crime.

Theoretical framework

Functional Theory of Social Change: The functionalist theory teaches that society is like a human body. Each part is like an organ. Individual parts can't survive on their own. Emile (1956), a major leader in the social sciences, believed that all parts of a society must be harmonious. If they aren't unified, society is "no more than a pile of sand" vulnerable to collapse. When one part suffers, all the other parts must adjust. Why? The functionalist theory believes that society always works toward stabilisation. Problems are temporary but need attention from the other parts when problems occur. This means social change.

Society is seen as an organised network of cooperating groups that operate fairly orderly according to rules or values shared by most members. This theory aims to balance the operating system by allowing functional and sustainable development in society, especially when all institutions fulfil certain functions continually for the good well-being and function of the society.

Political leadership is functional because of the value system that every society operates at one time or place to remain functional and dysfunctional. Therefore, change in political ideology and manifestos aimed at shortchanging the political will are non-functional. At the same time, acts of corruption, bombing, nepotism, terrorism, kidnapping, and assassination, among others, are dysfunctional.

Value System

Value connotes importance, something that is qualitatively cherished:

something that provides satisfaction or sense of accomplishment". Moral value is a matter of conscience. The conscience makes an individual consider the effects of what she is planning to do on other people. In other words, conscience makes you think yourself into the position of other people affected by what you are doing and, further, to think whether they would likely agree with what you are doing (Okoh, 2003). Conscience differs from one person to the other. While some people's conscience is sound and functional, others have a dead conscience when things are not done right. Moral values, therefore, operate in our conscience. This inevitably affects our value system.

The value situation in Nigeria is subjective and relative. It creates a situation in which everyone acts according to their conviction, often without reference to any active natural and universal principles. This calls for total moral and ethical orientation. Objectivity in Nigeria is dead.

The moral condition in all aspects of the nation's life is dominated by indiscipline, lack of respect for law and order, greed, cheating, stealing, fraud and corruption, including electoral malpractice. There is no surprise because Transparency International Continues to rate Nigeria high in terms of corruption in the countries of the world (Osaat & Omordu, 2011). Hope is not lost, as part of the values associated with Nigerians is religious values, among others.

Okoh (2003) identifies the following types of values: Religious Values, Moral Values, Aesthetic Values, Social Values, Cultural Values, Intellectual Values, and Economic Values. Religious Values mainly deal with salvation, God, beliefs, the next world, sin, failure and success, etc. At the

same time, moral values are honesty, liberty, justice, brotherhood, neighbourliness, etc. These values guide man's conduct towards his fellow man.

Value Orientation

Value orientation means the principles of right or wrong that individuals or social groups accept (Word Net, 2012). It also means the change of the moral character for the better through the renewal of the innermost nature. Value orientation can also be seen as high moral intelligence and entrenchment of strong values for the development and prosperity of an organisation. It is a transformation of a fundamental shift in the deep orientation of a person, an organisation, or a society. The world is seen in new ways, new actions and results that become possible that were impossible before the transformation (Asobie, 2012).

Njoku (2011) sees value reorientation as inculcating good values that can help Nigeria out of her numerous predicaments and refocus the nation through greatness.

Needs for Value orientation and Social Transformation in Nigeria

In Africa, the larger the country, the more complicated problems in terms of governance. One of the difficult things that affect Nigeria today is restoring our national values and integrity, especially when past governments have formed a negative attitude.

The decline and fall of Nigerians in behaviour is a well-known fact worldwide (Denen, 2020). Reading through the highlights of newspapers and magazines and watching television, one reads and sees stories of the many crimes that Nigerians

indulge in. Fraudulent practices in Nigeria are too numerous, so much so that people need guidance on what to do.

This decline is rooted in the family and school set-up, where many parents and teachers must bring up children right. Once the right upbringing is not received at the initial stages of a child's development, many things will go wrong later in life.

So many things have gone wrong. There is a need to place a premium on a sound educational base targeted at societal transformation, such as honesty and good moral behaviour. Education is a crucial sector in any nation, especially as a major investment in human capital development. Education is critical in long-term productivity and growth at both micro and macro levels.

In agreement, Fafunwa (1974) sees education as 'what each generation gives to its younger ones who develop their attitudes, abilities, skills and other behaviours which are the positive values to the society in which they live. Education brings about good values which produce sound and good citizens, such as honesty, selflessness, tolerance, dedication, hard work, and personal integrity, all of which provide a good foundation for veritable leadership. The NPE (2004) also specifies value systems as acceptable in the country. This can be taught to the learners through the quality of educational instructions. In all of this, it can be conveniently argued that only a good educational approach can transform society. It is only individuals who have been positively transformed that can transform society.

Problems facing National Development in Nigeria

According to Nweze (2004), problems of national development were alleged to have been attributed to some factors, such as corruption, unemployment, poverty, poor government policies, weak judiciary system, poor leadership, ethno-religious crises, socio-economic inequalities, among others.

Greed and Corrupt Leadership: These are major problems of our society today, especially Nigeria since her independence; Nigeria has for decades been characterised by predatory and rapacious behaviour of the elites whose attitudes have been based on parochial mindedness. The buccaneer elites are scattered throughout its political landscape. They indulge in deception and falsehood to sabotage and plunder the economy with impunity, rendering it futile. To cover up, the same elite often manufactures spectacular sceneries of an anti-corruption campaign through programs and policies and is advertised to the international community, who are scared of investing in the country due to its cost of business. Yet, they create loopholes within the system to escape and undermine anti-corruption efforts (Yamah, 2013).

Ewatan (2013) works pointed out that Nigeria officials are by nature experts in the act of double-speaking about corruption in general but yet try to maintain a clean image. It seems the entire state machinery exists only to siphon off cash, and many government functions have been adopted mainly for personal gains. Vanda (2010) noted that seeking a political position is to get access to the state

to control rents from various means, including legal, semi-illegal, or outright illegal economies. From all intent and purpose, the main aim of governance is solely to seek opportunities for rent-seeking for personal aggrandisement.

Political Conundrum: Leadership recruitment system in Nigeria has been deliberately faulty. Throughout most of its political history, positions of authority were hardly occupied by disciplined, best qualified people who deliberately seek an elective post through the ballot box (popular acclamation). For example, the military has overtaken the political scene through coup d'état and counter-coups d'état and ruled the country for over 30 years. Political appointment has been through forceful candidate imposition by self-anointed power brokers. Take for example, the 1993 presidential election supposedly won by the late MKO Abiola through popular decision at a seemingly free and fair election was annulled and denied the opportunity (Alege, Adamu & Muhammed, 2014)

Poor reward system: This another systematic problem in Nigeria is the poor reward system in our national life. Take for example, there is no encouragement or appropriate reward system for dedicated and hardworking people both at government and community levels. Equally, there is no consequence for wrongdoing, especially those from the ruling class or the rich. Remunerations in the civil service are dismally low and lately paid, so benefits and allowance are also low or nonexistent. As a result of delays in payment of services rendered businesses yield low turnover because they depend on the workforce to patronise them. There

must be rewards towards services rendered to discourage sharp practice. The inability for a public servant to send a child to a good school, have access to healthcare, and own home after 35 years of service or at the age of retirement at 65 years can only encourage such officials to develop unethical means to achieve all these (Bello, 2016).

Family pressure: Nigeria as an African country practices an extended family system. The practice could bring pressure to bear on those who are opportune to be (gainfully) employed. In Nigeria, people's attachments and loyalty are geared more towards groups, social cleavages, and relatives. Those who become successful in the public sector or in the exchange economy are expected to share their benefits with their extended families and ethnic cleavage. To meet the needs of loved ones and relatives, civil servants go the extra – mile in their official capacity to advance their interest and accumulate more funds (Onalaja, 1997).

Poor leadership: This is another challenge that causes economic instability and insecurity in Nigeria. Since the coming of third and fourth republics in 1999 and 2009 respectively, which was just barely a decade ago after the military intervention. According to Charas, Mbaya and Liberty (2014), in previous times, leaders came in with a series of culture of violence such as thuggery and other anti-social vices.

Poverty: Poverty, which is a multidimensional phenomenon, the world development report 2000/2001 (World Bank, 2001) summarises the various dimensions as a lack of opportunity, lack of empowerment and lack of security. Other opportunity remains closed to the poor

masses, and this makes it practically inactive in society (Danladi, 2007).

Weak Security System: It also causes corruption and translated into economic problems in the country. Most often, judicial systems are weak and as a result, social vices like greed, disloyalty to constituted authority, disrespect to the laws of the land etc. manifest in the society.

Unemployment implies when people are not engaged in meaningful work and lacking the necessities of life. The activities resulting from unemployment have direct consequences on corruption. As a result of this, kidnapping and insecurity posed challenges to society. The cases of Boko-Haram and Niger Delta Avengers is luring the youths into crime. Many Nigerian youths have become prey to terrorists and are easily radicalised. In Niger Delta region for example, unemployed youths were the ones used as militant to frustrate the multinational oil companies in the Niger Delta (Uzochukwu, 2013). A political activist Odumakin (2012) asserted that Nigeria will have no peace with the rate of unemployed youths (Nobody is safe).

Impact of Social Vices on National Development

Concerning the above author, Oyinola, (2011) sees corruption as organised crime that destroys a nation, state, facilitates environmental degradation. Social vices are associated with erosion of talent in public institutions when it encourages employment based on nepotism, cronyism and patronage, not on merit thereby reducing the quality of public institutions. Corruption makes it

impossible for government agencies to enforce contracts laws and property rights, therefore, killing the country's start-ups, small businesses, and innovations (Pellegrini and Reyer, 2014).

Dike (2015), due to the fear of the unknown social vices, has created insecurity activities across Nigeria that necessitate agitation from different parts of the country for better welfare. As a result, most commercial activities have been paralysed to attract government attention. Due to corruption, government revenue remains unachievable as most revenue generated are diverted and not remitted for public use but personal purposes. According to Bayley, (2014) and Ajide, (2015) the negative consequences of corruption are many, and among the following are:

Poor Investment: The high rate of unemployment in Nigeria is as a result of low level of investment into the Nigeria economy by foreign investor due to bad policies of government that ought to have encouraged foreign investors but the reverse is the case as companies takes their investment to other country with favourable governmental policies.

In the submission of Bayley 2014 and Ajide (2015) they both agreed that poor investment create unemployment in Nigeria, looking at their submission critically, it will not be out of place hence the problems are still persisting, owing to the fact that the situation of insecurity in Nigeria is discouraging foreign investors from investing both capital and human resources in the country. For example, most of the capable hands are not gainfully employed due to bad policies or governance.

Poverty: When the heads of public service are busy laundering the money that is supposed to be used to create employment for the masses and reduce poverty, what happens is that there will be a rise in the country's poverty level. In recent statement released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022) highlight that statistically, 63% of persons living within Nigeria (133 million people) are multidimensionally poor. In line with the above statement by NBS, indicates that majority of Nigerians are poor.

Poverty as an indicator that bring about social vices in our society today as it was suggested by Bayley and Ajide 2014 and 2015) respectively that poverty is eating deep into our society today, owing to the fact that the resources meant for the public is being diverted to private purses within the government circle. For example, National Bureau of Statistics (2022) confirmed what Ajide and Bayley (2014 & 2015) argued and the poverty level is still ravaging our society today. From NBS submission in November, 17th 2022 putting Zamfara as the poorest state across Nigeria and if care is not taken social vices will continue and all hands must be on deck to put reduce the poverty level in Nigeria.

Poor National Development: Most countries that engaged in corrupt practices are likely to experience developmental bankruptcy. Where most Chief Executive Officers of government agencies engage fraudulent practices to make their fortune, this implies that the economic activities of such nation will suffer and dampen.

In the same submission of Ajide and Bayley (2014 & 2015) pointed out that

poor national development is eroding most African countries and Nigeria where most chief executive officers of government agencies are engaging in corrupt practices and as a result endangering national development and growth. In a case of the immediate past Accountant General of the Federation who siphoned public funds to the tune of N900billion, this constitutes a great danger to national development

National Crises: The insecurity and crisis experienced in Nigeria today result from injustice and bad governance which bring backwardness into our national unity and stability. The insurgency perpetrated by Boko Haram sect, bandits and herdsmen/farmers clashes has seriously affected the country's economic growth.

It will be agreed that as a result of national crises which can be linked to poor governance by political gladiators in Nigeria has brought about inter-communal clashes between settlers/herdsmen and indigenes in almost every part of the country, the unknown gunmen taking lives and destroying national assets in the eastern part of Nigeria, agitations for sovereignty in the western and eastern parts of Nigeria. This shows that every part of the country is not at peace which has negative impact on the socio-economic development of the nation, this is in line with Ajide and Bayley (2014 & 2015) respectively. To bring an end to all sorts of agitations here and there, the political gladiators, government officials at all levels must put national interest above self interest; hence national unity is paramount for development

Measures towards Eradicating Social Vices in Nigeria

In this paper and in Oyinola (2011) works, it's believed that if the following measures are carefully considered, social vices will be eradicated or reduced to the barest minimum.

Self-Satisfaction: Self-Satisfaction in this context implies being contented with whatever one has. Meaning that Nigeria leaders and citizens should be satisfied with whatever they earn at the end of the services they render and as such it will put an end to all the negative social vices highlighted earlier in this paper, this will bring an end to the issue of embezzlement and money laundering.

Institution of Strong Anti-Corruption Groups: The various anti-corruption agencies created by the government is gear towards eradicating the issues of money laundry, internet fraud, and embezzlement and to check the activities of government officials where necessary and the agencies should be allowed to carry out their legitimate functions independently without any interference of the government that established them. And if anyone or any government official is involved in corrupt practices, they should face the consequences as required by law irrespective of who is involved in such act.

Employment Generation: Every reasonable government should be concern about the employment of the citizens by creating more job opportunities and empowerment schemes for the unemployed to bring an end to any act of social vices in the society. When citizens are jobless and unemployed, they end up engaging in criminal activities and the

country will suffer the consequences of it, if adequate attention is not paid for job creation. Hence the saying “An idle mind is the devil’s workshop”.

Funding of Education: Hence education is a tool for national development. Therefore, government should provide adequate funding and budgetary allocation for education in the country. When government provide enough funds and pays attention to every level of education in the country from basic to tertiary institutions, it will help produces graduates with high level of intellectual capacity and skill who will be active and able in contributing their own quota in all sectors of the economy for the development of the country.

Equality among Citizens: Every citizen of the country is expected to be treated equally irrespective of tribe, religion, ethnicity, political view, or social background to reduce social vices. Hence, nobody is above the law, and anyone who acts contrary, should be punished accordingly. The law should not be applicable alone to son or daughter of nobody rather should be applicable to all, irrespective of one’s class or status in the society.

Measures towards Transforming Society

Cultural factor: For any society to be developed the culture and values of such society must be respected accordingly, as all members of the society culturally accept what is right as right and frown at whatever is wrong as wrong. With this, things are done exactly how they should be done without any interference from any section. The decline in cultural values has led to

many societal problems like corruption, nepotism, tribalism loss of merit with gradually eroding the smooth operating system of the society forcing it to change. As a result of the change of morality and values system, the negative impact is on the increase.

Technological factors: Technology changes the environment, and this change usually affects man’s surroundings as an adjustment made to change often modifies the social institutions. Modern societies are undergoing very rapid change of development in transportation, commerce industrialisation, which has great impact, and industrialisation, which greatly impacts the nation’s economy as is the benchmark for transformation and national development.

Institutional factor: The component of society must as matter of urgency to work together such as the family, economic, political, religious, educational and mass media among others. Society must change its strata of operation promote the positive value that will enhance national development and discourage anti-social behavior that will hinder societal development. All sectors of our society should lay great emphasis on our values as bases of our moral life. Let our values be instilled in our young ones to get a better result not sentiments.

Conclusion

No society can achieve an expected target if its values are left at the mercy of select individuals, circumstance, and time. Nigerian youths are seen to be generally active and creative, there is a need for assisting them at whatever level towards engaging them meaningfully.

Importantly, there is a need to reorientate the minds of Nigerians for a total turnaround so as to bring total transformation and development. With this, Nigeria will improve how things are perceived and the environment created. Values reorientation process has to be given priority by the present government at all levels. Every Nigerian is equally expected to be part of this exercise for a better tomorrow. Therefore, the right ethics is that which is based on the common good of the society; such should be the case in Nigeria as a society. Common morality for all to protect the interests of all.

Recommendations

For corruption to be drastically reduced, it must be viewed from the national security perspective and given the needed attention it deserves. To this end, the paper suggests introducing and strengthening preventive, punitive and cooperative measures. Below are some useful ways of tackling Corruption in Nigeria:

- i. The government should establish standing frameworks for training youths to acquire practical skills that bring physical and mental development.
- ii. The federal government and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) should embark upon massive youth development programs on creative skills as this may be a viable intervention for employment.
- iii. Reorientation of the youths should form part of the school curriculum to instill discipline in them. Students should be taught not to give and

receive bribes no matter what, our national values must not be taken for granted for that is our backbone.

- iv. The strengthening of anti-corruption institutions and other initiatives (such as the EFCC, ICPC, Due Process, NEITI; to deepen the fight against corruption; members of the different regions should be made to be part and parcel of these bodies to ensure fairness.

Job creation should be uppermost in the government's policies and programs to address the root causes of insecurity in Nigeria.

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