

Leadership and corruption challenge for africa politics essay



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Corruption is a term scholars perceive in various ways. It is regarded as a worldwide phenomenon because it has long been with the every society of the world. The nature of corruption has subjected it to different views and approaches. Corruption is a bane of most political and economic problems in societies especially in Africa where it has stagnated development. The various vices that corruption carries along with it are considered an enemy of economic development; therefore, a country that condones corruption is besieged with numerous political, social, and economic vices. Cite..... defines the term corruption as an action which deviates from the formal rules of conduct that govern the actions of someone who is in a position of public or private authority. In such cases, the said person abuse wealth, power, or status. In other words, corruption is the perversion of state of affairs or integrity through moral depravity or favor. It usually occurs when two or more parties interact to change the structure of the society or functionaries behavior to produce dishonest and defiled situations. In a nutshell, it is a systematic vice in a society, nation or an individual that reflect nepotism, favoritism, tribalism, abuse of office, undue enrichment, amassing of wealth, and derivation of undue gains and benefits. Corruption being a wide concept includes money laundering, drug trafficking, fraud, illegal payments, forgery, false declaration, bribery, and aiding and abetting of any kind among other incidences.

Corruption is evident in all parts of the globe and becomes a norm if it is a mode of behavior tolerated and accepted or if the chances of being caught and subjected to severe punishment are minimal. This is evident in Africa where corruption has become a social issue impeding change, economic

growth, and reduction of poverty. In almost all African countries, corruption has become endemic since observance of rule of law is overlooked.

Corruption in these states mostly emanates from leaders personalizing power and, as a result, people rely on favors and connections instead of formal social, political, and economic rules. Public resources are swindled by government officials who large fortunes of wealth. Petty corruption also exist which later entrench into large scale. The worst scenario is when an official demands payment for a task they perform or a service provided which are part of their responsibilities. they Corruption is pronounced in Africa to an extent to which a child born sees it as an inevitable facet of life. The institutions of government lose its legitimacy, the legal system becomes ineffectual, and the public becomes dysfunctional over time creating a degraded situation. Such a situation makes informal administrative and economic activity thereby making wide the gap existing between the government and the people. In a nutshell, corruption is a conscious and deliberate diversion of resources from the satisfaction of general interest to that of personal interest. The effects of corruption are mainly felt by the ground of morality that is inflicted with all sorts of adverse effects.

Leadership.

Leaders who liberated the African continent were selfless, nationalistic, and visionary. These exemplary leaders put interests of the state above parochial considerations. The post -apartheid and other post-colonial leaders can attest to this. Kwame Nkrumah, Mwalimu Julius Kabirage Nyerere, Patrice Lumumba and Gamal Abdul Nasser are some of the post colonial leaders who exuded high sense of nationalism and patriotism in their leadership. <https://assignbuster.com/leadership-and-corruption-challenge-for-africa-politics-essay/>

These leaders were unlike succeeding generation of leadership who are after accumulation of material things. Nelson Mandela is another figure who belongs to the category of post-colonial leadership representing the moral conscience of the continent.

A decline in the quality of African leadership was ushered in by the exit of leaders of Nkrumah's caliber. This led to the coming in of a generation of leaders mostly comprising of military leaders with little or no vision at all. These leaders terrorized, dehumanized, and impoverished their population by looting from their public coffers. These rulers care little about food production, human capacity, or even shelter for the homeless, but instead they invest in military hardware, grandiose projects and lavish lifestyles which is of little relevance to the growth of the economy (Paulo, p. 89). This new generation leadership has brought disunity along ethnic and religious lines largely among the illiterate populace. Moreover, this leadership indulges in plundering people's resources and also minimizes education which is a vital element in the continent's growth and development. In short, we can argue that this leadership introduced a cycle of military overthrow, which culminated into violence. However, it was not until recently that Africa woke up and started taking a new path of governance and leadership that is committed to peace, democracy, and development.

Today's Africa is characterized by weak leadership that is evident in the society. The leadership has failed to steer the society to a common national identity and a sense of public good. It has also failed to lead a society behind objectives which are clear and achievable. Poor leadership, which results from poor leadership policies, contribute to Africa's slow pace in growth and <https://assignbuster.com/leadership-and-corruption-challenge-for-africa-politics-essay/>

development. Take for instance the business community. It has lost out on opportunities to be architects of the future due to poor leadership policies. This has led business to treat transformation as a burden to their business instead of looking at it as future investment. Africa's leadership display inherent weaknesses which have no sense of common good with a considerable number of leaders failing to provide a link between their programs and their actions. This particularly has dragged Africa behind in all sectors.

History of Leadership and Corruption Challenges.

One may start asking, as Chinua Achebe who is one of the towering giants in African literature asks, where the rain began to beat Africa (Achebe, p. 43). Researchers may want to gain from Africa's leadership and corruption history in order to construct a future Africa that is more hopeful and promising. It is, therefore, paramount to dig back to unearth the history of the ailing continent. In the wake, of 1960s, Africa's economy booming. Africa was characterized by a robust economy, good infrastructure, better education and improved health standards across the continent. Africa's populace was pregnant with expectations, unfortunately, the optimism ended when the continent suffered from external shocks. This included the rise of oil prices which brought calamitous deterioration of trade. Consequently, many countries turned to borrowing in order to offset the revenues that were declining. Africa which lived beyond its means is still settling the debt (Rodney, p. 53). Models such as statistic -economic development which characterized the world at that time influenced African governments to marginalize private sector and stultification of market-

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driven economy at all levels through nationalizations and government centered policies.

Furthermore, the state in taking on expanded roles was falling under considerable pressure. Constant conflicts, coups and the estrangement of the nation from its citizenry saw the fall of government as an institution and official rise in corruption. 1980s witnessed African economies suffer from contraction, stagnation and decline. In the debates that ensued later, many people regard the period as the lost decade.

During this period, people held divergent views on the problems facing Africa and took a different position in trying to provide solutions. There are those who felt that problems rocking Africa were externally driven and were caused by the global economy hostile environment and terms of trade that were deteriorating. In this light, they went ahead and argued that solutions laid in greater self reliance. This led to the adoption of policies that shut out Africa altogether from the global economy. On the other hand, those who held opposing views argued that while external factors contributed to the hardships of the continent, basic problems of Africa were internal. They further assert that Africa was living beyond its means and was affected mostly by poor policies, poor internal leadership, over-extended state, and poor or lack of ownership of local development programs. In the wake of this period, outsiders played an exaggerated role in the push for structural adjustments programs aimed at cutting down spending in order to achieve macroeconomic stability. National economies and market forces were also adopted.

Impacts of Corruption and Poor Leadership.

Corruption, which is a product of poor leadership, has been a cause of concern for Africa since post-colonial times. This owes to the fact that corrupt leaders divert the already limited resources, impedes changes in policies required for development, and undermines progress of the economy. These leaders make African Countries a case study since it represents countries of the world whose development has stagnated due to corrupt practices. Despite numerous reforms, which have been made to streamline Africa, the efforts have not registered results because of domineering hindrance of corruption.

There is no doubt that corruption has taken roots in Africa, and the rate at which it spreads is alarming. This act, which involves the violation of public duty or deviations from high moral standards in anticipation or exchange for personal, pecuniary gains characterize Africa's leadership.

Corruption impacts are felt in the political, economic, and social spheres. However, corruption is pronounced more when it comes to indirect costs incurred as a result of economic distortion, inefficiencies and waste that result from corrupt practices making it difficult to address it. It is worth noting that the direct costs of corruption are high in terms of funds diverted from the intended use and lost revenue.

The revenue that a state collects is hampered by poor leadership and corruption. This happens because poor leadership policies and mega corruption cases increase the cost of doing business as well as wasting resources. With this in mind, the investors shy away from doing business in <https://assignbuster.com/leadership-and-corruption-challenge-for-africa-politics-essay/>

the affected countries, and despite losing revenues; the country's populace also loses out on employment opportunities.

In addition, the obvious impact of corruption is deepening poverty among the citizens of a country. It makes it difficult for ordinary people to reap the benefits of their own efforts. Researches indicate that the social and economic cost of corruption not only deters the poor but also those who have no power to resist demands of corrupt officials from accessing efficient services from the government (Andrew and David p. 102). There is evidence of not only Africans falling into poverty, but inequality in income has opened a wide gap between ordinary Africans and African elites. In many African countries, elites are in control of machinery of the state and the falling economy which ensures that their political and economic privileges are protected. Such environments do not open up opportunities for the general populace since it has remarkably few powerful people supporting it.

Africa also lags behind in terms of other indicators of development. For instance, at a time when the world is globalizing and integrating the economy to contribute to growth, Africa has less or nothing to offer for the course.

There are three main perspectives in which to analyze the effects of corruption caused by ineffective leadership in Africa. They include economic, political, and socio cultural. Politically, corruption may engender political instability, breakdown of the law and order, inefficiency of public services and brain drain just to mention but a few examples. Corruption is undoubtedly an enemy of economic development in Africa and international scene. Corruption paints a poor image of the African continent to the

business world. Furthermore, a nation that condones corruption is a swamp of social and economic vices.

The economies deteriorate because leaders swindle public resources and vandalize facilities to create a room for unnecessary replacements, which in turn, are diverted to their own personal use (Ayttey, p. 45).

Investors will shy away hence trade and commerce cannot thrive in this part of the world. The effects of this phenomenon increase the rate of unemployment, inflation, decline in output, and lowering people's living standards. Socio-cultural context, on the other hand, has been greatly affected in that social life and values is affected by corruption. The social values dwindle reducing a progressive society to nothing but crazy pursuit of power, society recognition, and wealth affluences. Corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of African society to an extent to which people no longer appreciate admirable virtues such as conduct, morale, and practices. The worst scenario though is the prospect of corruption gaining permanency, therefore, hampering development and desired change.

Besides these, other factors have been advanced to explain the pervasiveness of corruption in Africa. These include personalization of public office, poverty, and failure of leaders to shed off the colonial mentality in respect to perception of public office.

Fighting Corruption (Lawal and Tobi, p. 32).

The leadership of Africa ought to institute measures to combat corruption. They should come up with strategies that are specific to a country which

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renders corruption a high- risk practice and low benefits that accrue to it. We cannot argue that there are no strategies for combating corruption in these countries. In fact, every country has institutions of fighting corruption.

However, there is a need to re-establish governmental legitimacy and rebuild institutions which will kill corrupt practices. The case of Liberia, for example, under the leadership of President Johnson provides a window into good and progressive leadership.

Curbing corruption is a hard task; nevertheless, it is achievable. This is informed by the fact that many countries including the developed ones have trod the path. The secret behind the success of the industrialized countries is the institutionalization and adherence to the rule of law (Christian et al, p. 87). Africa, however, experience widespread corruption because it has not embarked on a serious course to fight corruption. The series of efforts it has made have been met with strong opposition from perpetrators of corruption who are within the government.

Bearing in mind the magnitude of corruption, African countries have to develop new strategies on a constant basis to meet the ever changing challenges presented by corruption. This need to combat or prevent corruption needs a coherent, consistent, long term perspective and a broad-based approach. Moreover, political will, leadership, and public support are essential weapons in anti corruption campaigns. The political leadership ought to be exemplary in combating corruption by setting up stringent measures that sends strong messages to the public that corruption will not be tolerated.

Despite the legislations that prevent corrupt practices and stringent punishment for corrupt individuals, African countries have continued to swim in corruption. This is because of impunity, a scenario where prominent figures are exempted from facing the penalties. These penalties should cut across the board and ought to include mandatory dismissal from office, legal action, seizing of assets, and blacklisting among others.

The political will in this case is essential because it ensures that administrative and anti corruption legislations are administered. The governments which oversee the implementation of these measures ought to build public confidence by demonstrating seriousness and working towards achieving results.

According to Policy Forum - Document on corruption and Development in Africa, it is hard to fight corruption in isolation because its effects permeate societies. The civil society at large including private and public sector must join hands in combating the scourge. Society must also change its attitudes towards corruption. Although this might be seen as a slow process, it creates a normative environment in which corruption is not tolerated. The public should be made aware of the detrimental effects of corruption and doing so will cut down corruption cases. All stakeholders must be included and participate in drafting anti-corruption strategies. Political will, on the other hand, should strengthen governance in its effort to combat corruption (Maathai, p. 67).

Conclusion.

There is no better way of drawing a conclusion than borrowing from Liberia. This is a country that has been in conflict for over a decade leaving its people divided. The conflict stricken country was characterized by ethnic and religious strife, which surfaced constantly. However, it took the committed leadership less time in bringing the country back to its feet. The same case applies to Rwanda under President Paul Kagame. This committed leadership mediates, heal, and reconcile these differences. It also articulates and formulates a vision that is based upon equal opportunity, equity, and choice in pursuit of a growth and development that is balanced. The case of Liberia teaches the rest of African countries the value of leadership that is committed to providing inspiration and motivation for stakeholders to take part in the programs and policies that oversee the implementation of the national vision. The government of Liberia is committed towards giving an example of that translates into realization of its goals. Every African country should not hesitate in following in the footsteps of countries such as Liberia and Rwanda.