

A Cognitive Study of Political Corruption in Emeka Nwabueze's *A Parliament of Vultures* and the Nigerian Development

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Keywords:

Cognitive study,
Political corruption,
Nigerian
development

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Abstract

The study aims at interrogating political corruption in Nigeria and its effects on the socio-economic strata of the country in the recent time as portrayed in Emeka Nwabueze's *A Parliament of Vultures*. This menace envisaged by corrupt politicians through acts of bribery, looting, fraud, embezzlement of public funds, misuse of public offices, awarding of contracts to unqualified candidates, issuing of appointment through political frivolity has resulted to an increase in the level of hardship, suffering, poverty, and death of the people and underdevelopment to the country. The resultant effect of this cankerworm is seen in the manifestation of terrorism ranging from politically motivated assassinations, kidnapping, incessant killings, lethal car bombing, and total breakdown of law and order. This issue has pragmatically created lack of national identity and lack of cultural integrity, thus, has positioned the country as poverty capital of the world. Ironically, the fight by crime agencies such as EFCC and ICPC against political corruption is minimal compared to other corruption related cases in the country. This issue has therefore created impetus for creative portraiture in dramatic and argumentative representations by dramatist and critics. Thus, with content analytical methodology, this study investigates how Emeka Nwabueze attempts to establish the effect of political corruption on the Nigerian space using the instrument of drama. The effect of it will create positive change amongst Nigerians, thus, create change in their society. The study therefore recommends that maximum attention be made against corrupt politicians as that would define the hallmark of nation building.

Background to the Study

Corruption is as aged as the existence of man, thus has been the bane of legitimacy, democracy stability, and socio-economic cum political development in Nigeria. Indeed, any attempt to understand the tragedy of development and the challenges to democracy in Africa and other continents in the world, must come to grips with the problem of corruption and stupendous wastage of scarce resources which meticulously defines its backwardness. Corruption which is a universal bane - ranging within the region of the world and at all levels of the society, but the impact is greatest in developing countries, usually in the public and private sectors, profit and non-profit institutions, as well as charitable organization (Rotimi & Obasanju, 2013; Ilufoye, 2017). It is behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role (office) because of a private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence (Nye, 1967).

It is against this backdrop that Oladipupo (2016) avers that “the general provided opinion from participants is that corruption is any conscious action or inaction, process or procedure, perpetuated by an individual or group that unfairly and unduly appropriates rewards, resources, or advantage to some individuals or groups at the expense of other”. The issue of corruption and its debilitating ancillaries, including bribery, graft, fraud, manipulations, indiscipline, and nepotism has become so deep-seated that it has stunted growth in all sectors and has been the primary cause for Nigerian socio-economic backwardness (EFCC, 2009). On the same note, EFCC noted, quoting Seteolu (2004) that “this bequeathed an abnormal legacy of prebendal and precarious politics on the nation, gravitating and manifesting in different ways at one time or the other, from “contract to curacy” (1960's-1980's), “settlement to cracy” (mid 1980 to mid 1990s) to “kleptocracy” (1990s to date). It is against this backdrop that corruption is the name given to the certain types of corruption mainly bribery, embezzlement, and favouratism which has political characteristic. To this, one can vehemently aver that political corruption has a wider meaning than corruption. No wonder Coskun (2015) writes that “political corruption is an umbrella concept which also includes corruption”.

Furthermore, Inge (2006) plainly notes that “political corruption can be defined both with reference to the main factors involved, namely persons at the highest levels of political system, and the purpose of the corrupt behaviour, namely to sustain the hold on power”. Hence, political corruption according to him can be for private and group enrichment, and for power preservation purposes. Inge went on averring that “some of the larger and more serious political corruption scandals include both processes – accumulation on the one hand and the misuse of extracted public money for political purposes on the other. The later according to him is somewhat under researched and underestimated, since much of the focus in the literature has been on accumulation”.

Extensively, political corruption in one form of accumulation or extraction occurs when government officials use and abuse their hold on power to extract from the private sector, government revenue, and from the economy at large (Inge, 2006; Olasehinde, et al, 2018).

These processes of accumulation have been called extraction, embezzlement, rent-seeking, plunder, and even kleptocracy (“rule by thieves”), depending on the context and content of which it is perpetrated. On a more lucid note, Oladayo, (2014) notes that “political corruption has been blamed for the continued underdevelopment of Nigeria”. He insisted that “despite the creation of two important agencies such as the EFCC (2002) and ICPC (2008), corruption still thrives in Nigeria”. He concludes by insisting that “there are many unresolved problems in Nigeria, but the issue of the upsurge of corruption is troubling, manifesting in different forms”.

The effects of this cankerworm are visible as issues of poverty, suffering, hardship, pain, and death is apex and excruciating in the Nigerian society. Despite the benevolent endowment of the crude oil that has positioned Nigeria as the richest and fast growing black nation on the planet earth in the year 2014, Nigeria as a state, is, according to Linus (2018) rated as one of the poorest countries in the world; as majority of its people live below the poverty line of less than US\$1 per day, with some in absolute poverty. Gross Domestic Product (GDP), per capital income stands at \$1300, for a population of well over 200 million people”. Linus summed this assertion by stating that this is caused as a result of an increase in corruption. This menace is masterminded by the greedy and sleazy corrupt minority political elites, who daily repress, depress; fraud, embezzles, and loot the national treasure meant for the development of the state.

Conclusively, Linus, (2018) observes that “the depth of the crisis in the issue of corruption in Nigeria Space is evident in the massive unemployment and a general lack of opportunities for economic ventures, low living standards, devalued currency, and a failure to meet the health, food, habitat, and security needs of the majority of its people”. Linus also affirms that “the economic situation in Nigerian space is such that most parents are unable to care for and properly feed their families”. This nuance has unequivocally increased the issues of armed robbery, kidnapping, prostitution, drug abuse, politically motivated assassinations and other terrorism related issues. Hence, the practices and effects of the menace being explained in Emeka Nwabueze's *A Parliament of Vultures* Poses as the main thrust of the study.

Political Elite Theory

In its broadest sense, elite theory is the idea that modern societies are governed by group that can be referred to as elites (Jason, 2014). Such groups according to Jason form a minority in society and the majority is excluded from political decision making. It is based on this vehement and impetuous assumption that elite's behaviour has a causal relationship with general patterns of state-society relation. To this, Elite theory is based on the notion that every society holds a ruling minority, a group that controls and disputes the most important power source. Just as summed by Oladayo (2014), elite theory “is a theory of the state that described the power relations in a contemporary society”. Oladayo support Jason (2014) by quoting Vergara (2013) that “the elite are a small powerful group that controls large amount of power”. They make decisions that determine the nature of a state, either positively or to damnation.

On this note, the basic characteristics of this theory are that power is concentrated, the elites are unified, the non-elites interests are diverse and powerless, elites' interests are unified due to common backgrounds and positions, and the defining characteristic of power is institutionally positioned (Wikipedia, 2018). Against this backdrop, Oladayo (2014) avers, quoting Vergara (2013) that the elite are political cabinet of people that controls the reign government. On the Nigerian strata, the elites as ascribed are any ruling parties in power. These people control the judicial system, electoral system, security sector, economic sector, and any other fronts that define the existence of a good society. They make laws that guide their policies, thus, are also used against their political rivals. To buttress these statements, Oladayo (2014) writes that "in the Nigerian context, the political elites are group of people you see in government institutions such as the Presidency, National Assembly and the National executive Council that controls government's apparatus". Thus, regime types, regime change, liberalization, staleness, secularization and many other political phenomena fit within the scope of elite theory (Cammack, 1990).

Cammack also avers that "governors and members of the state house of assemblies are also in the league. Oladayo (2014) concludes by asserting that Professor Sagay has berated the political elites in Nigeria for the countries underdevelopment. Sagay according to Oladayo accuses members of National Assembly for consuming large amount of the country's wealth as salaries at the expense of Nigerian development. This has unequivocally created suffering, death, pain to the people and underdevelopment to the country. It is to this that the study basis its thrust towards identifying the pragmatic effects of political corruption on the Nigerian development and the people, such as it is portrayed in Emeka Nwabueze's *A Parliament of Vultures*.

Methodology

This research work employs the case study and content analysis research approaches of the qualitative research method. It involves explaining the issue, describing, analyzing and interpreting data on the bases of political corruption as portrayed in Emeka Nwabueze's *A Parliament of Vultures*. It is qualitative because it deals with the analysis by a notable Nigerian playwright, and descriptive because it involves the use of ideas to describe and analyze the practices and effects of youth restiveness within the play contexts. To achieve this, the study employs the primary and secondary sources. The primary source is the play text and the researchers' ideas concerning the practices and effects of political corruption on the Nigerian development, while the secondary source includes materials from the institutional publications, articles, journals, text books, internets, research materials, amongst others.

Political Corruption Trail and Nature in Nigeria Space

The genesis of corruption in Nigeria might not really be associated with a particular period; rather, corruption in Nigeria according to Rotimi, et al (2013) quoting Benjamin (2007) "can be traced back to the colonial era when Nigerians were bribed with different foreign goods in exchange for local products in exchange for slaves". In a more lucid note,

one can vehemently state that corruption is as old as independent Nigeria, which is why all military takeovers of government since the January 15, 1966 coup had always been justified on the basis of ridding the country of corruption (Ojukwu & Shopeju, 2010; Goodluck, 2018). Justifying this statement, Gbenga (2007) writes that the history of corruption in Nigeria is strongly rooted in the over 29 years of the military rule, out of 46 years of her statehood since 1960.

Goodluck clarifies this statement by quoting Mathew (2015) that "...the question we should be asking ourselves now is how and why is it that every coup plotter in Nigeria hung his colours on the mast of fighting corruption? How come that all successive governments have come in, accusing their predecessors of massive corruption only to turn around and do even worse or leave a similar legacy of rut?". To this, Ribadu (2006) avers that "successful military regimes subdued the rule of law, facilitated the wanton looting of the public treasury, decapitated public institutions and free speech and instituted a secret and opaque culture in the running of government business".

On a general note, Goodluck (2018) writes quoting Major Kaduna Nzeogwu (1966) that "Our problem are the political profiteers, the swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribes and demand 10 percent; those that seek to keep the country divided permanently so that they can remain in offices as ministers or VIP's at least, the tribalists, the nepotists; those that make the country look big for nothing before international circles; those that have corrupted our society and put the Nigerian political calendar back by their words and deeds".

Similarly, Goodluck also avers, quoting General Sani Abacha (1995) that "...our leaders revel in squander mania, corruption, indiscipline, and continue to pro liberate public appointments in complete disregard of our stark economic realities..." In like manner, Goodluck posits quoting General Muhammadu Buhari (1983), that "while corruption and indiscipline have been associated with our state of un-development; these two evils in our body politics have attained unprecedented height in the past few years". Muhammadu Buhari according to Goodluck went on asserting that "the corrupt, inept and insensitive leadership in the last four years have been the source of immorality in our society; since what happens in any society is largely a reflection of the leadership of that society, we explore corruption in all its facets". It is noteworthy that corruption has negatively affected the Nigerian development. It has ridiculed all efforts aim at advancing the nation in recent years. This is so because the issue of bribe has pragmatically become a generally acceptable religion practiced amongst Nigerian.

It is to this that Jide (2013) writes quoting Malgwi (2010) that "it is painful to learn that the country was identified among the top nations in the over \$1 trillion annually paid globally in bribe". Furthermore, Jide avers that "various reports in the media (print, broadcast, and social media) attest to the fact that corruption has attained a mega status in Nigeria with high level sophistication in its modus operandi, especially during this democratic dispensation". Jide went on to clarify this assertion by stating that "virtually

all the corruption cases of politically exposed persons (PEPs) handled under this democratic experiment including the latest (Maina's) show that the judiciary has demonstrated within its self-inflicted affliction to be a dubious ally in the corruption conundrum, especially through carefully orchestrated plea bargaining and procured judgments".

Jide concludes by noting that "for as long as the leadership of the country plays with corruption, the consequences are bound to be grave and these includes: weakening of the public bureaucracy; diversion of scarce resources from public purposes to private ends; perversion of political and administrative decisions through lobbying and clandestine manipulations; deceleration in economic progress/development; lack of commitment to national values and civic responsibilities".

Extensively, Reno (2018) also avers that "if nothing else justifies the Transparency International Corruption Perception index rating which reveals that corruption in Nigeria has worsened under President Buhari, this latest Presidential does". He further explained by way of comparison, that "the Peoples Democratic Party government of President Goodluck Jonathan dismissed Abdurashed Maina, the biggest alleged thief in Nigeria's civil history, and declared him wanted, but the incumbent APC government of President Muhammadu Buhari brought him back, reinstated him and gave him double promotion". He went on stating that "the President, through his Attorney General of the Federation, went on to court to block the senate's attempt to unravel how Abdurashed Maina was smuggled back to Nigeria and given armed guards, we already know the truth about that as revealed in the leaked memo from the Head of the Civil Service, Mrs. Winifred Eyo-Ita". Reno vehemently noted that "Nigeria under Dr. Jonathan was not heading to collapse, as the APC led government is instigating, rather, the nation was projected by CNN Money to be the third fastest growing economy in the world after China and Qatar in 2015, and the British Government projected us to be the fourth fastest growing economy in the world". He clarified this statement by quoting the then British Prime Minister, David Cameron, that "we have been hearing about China and India for years but it's hard to believe what's happening in Brazil, in Indonesia, in Nigeria too".

On the effect of corruption in Nigeria, Goodluck (2018) quoted Tribune (a newspaper founded by Obafemi Awolowo) that "...Nineteen years on, not only is the polity still afflicted by worsening cases of poverty and corruption, the country's democratic credentials are virtually in tatters. Indeed, it is doubtful that democracy is being practiced in the country, let alone being entrenched..."

This menace in the Nigerian society is also fathomed in all governmental strata – from the federal down to the state. Politicians in these fronts are engaged one way or the other in fervent corruption.

Synopsis of *A Parliament of Vultures*

The play *A Parliament of Vultures* revolves around Dr Parkers, a respected university lecturer who painstakingly decides to agitate against his fellow parliamentarians that

callously loot, embezzle, and defraud the nation of her treasures, thus increasing the level of poverty, suffering, pain and death of the people and indistinctly creating underdevelopment to the nation. Initially, Dr Parkers was cajoled into forfeiting his educational career as a University lecturer in the United States by Chief Habamero, Mr. Brown and Madam Omeaku, so as to become a parliamentarian with the intention of using his international connections to gain asses of storing their financial loots in foreign banks.

When their malicious and unscrupulous plans was halted due to Dr. Parkers refusal of succumbing to their ridiculous, unpatriotic, and egocentric dexterity, Dr Parkers was hated by all, mostly, Madam Omeaku, who is considered adulterous, fraudster, diabolic, and troublesome. Madam Omeaku often uses her daughter Nkechi as an instrument of seduction against her male colleagues whenever she craves for power. She always rebels against Dr Parkers each time he tries to correct her inadequacy mostly when she as the newly appointed parliamentary secretary mispronounces words in the minutes of previous meetings to the members of the parliaments.

To further buttress their plan on having control over the financial decisions of the parliament, thus, creating avenues for looting, they meticulously decides to employ the services of a factory worker in London, whom they automatically made a professor, with the aim of promoting their political party, academically. To crown these ridiculous and unholy ambition, they also decides to turn Mr. Jossy to a Reverend, thus assisted him into becoming a parliamentarian with an intention of making the populace believing that their party and intensions are for transparency and accountability.

Dr Parkers on understanding the nexus of their dubious amalgamation and resultant, albeit, negative effects of the misuse of the national fund on the masses whom they owe allegiance to, decides to form a radical prism with Mr. Otobo that would often oppose Chief Habamero and his fellow profiteers, each time they decides to take drastic decisions that pinpoints at mismanaging public funds. To solidify this objective, he decides to indicate interest towards becoming the Chairman of the Purchasing Committee of Parliament, so as to protect the national treasures of the people from the hands of corrupt parliamentarians whom he considers enemies of the state. Chief Habamero and his fellow looters on understanding this, decides to make Mr. Brown the Chairman of Purchasing Committee of Parliament through whom they believed their malicious ambition of accumulation would be ascertained. They also observed that this obligation could only be actualized if they remove Mr. Otobo as the current Secretary, thereby making Madam Omeaku, a stark illiterate, the newly appointed Parliamentary Secretary.

To achieve this, they quickly sent Nkechi, whose duty is to seduce and retrieve the Parliamentary Secretary file from Mr. Otobo. They further backdated the time for the Parliamentary meeting and change the meeting venue so that they could achieve their plan of voting out Mr. Otobo and also have free asses to nominate their fellow compatriots in corruption as Chairmen of Board of Trustees. Dr Parkers been perplexed that his list of qualified candidates whom he believed have the zeal and ability of

providing adequate services for the enhancement of the nation is ironically replaced with unqualified and corrupt candidates by Chief Habamero, Madam Omeaku Mr. Brown and Tossy, whom they believed assisted their party during the last election decide to agitate, demanding that the decision of the corrupt majority parliamentarians be reversed which was abated. With the fear of how the country is being managed by the president, Chief Habamero, Madam Omeaku, Mr. Brown and Mr. Tossy, Dr Parkers takes the risk of exposing the ordeals in the parliament and the nation to the press despite the fact that they were earlier forced into taking an oath of effigy so as to protect the malicious and extravagant looting in detriment of the masses who they serve. As a result of this, the parliamentarians decided to invite members of the State Police to arrest Dr Parkers and Mr. Otobo whom they believed had been opposing their dubious plans. To further reminisce the character exposure which Dr Parkers had already instigated to the public, Chief Habamero decided to invite Mr. President to address the press men in the parliament.

To curb these nefarious and iniquitous dexterity masterminded by the corrupt parliamentarians against the masses, the University students, made up of well-meaning and socially conscious individuals, led by Chief of Protocol's cousin and a group of militant youths, agitates, captured, and executed Chief Habamero, Madam Omeaku, Mr. Brown and Tossy in the parliamentary mansion after setting the presidential mansion on fire. The play comes to conclusion when the University students started calling for a better nation with good leaders who would patriotically cradle the nation to the sphere of massive development and making the country poverty free for the people.

Character Analysis

The play *A Parliament of Vultures* has a total number of nine characters and other minor characters that help to support the action of the central character. The main characters are listed below:

1. Dr Parkers: He is the central character of the play. He is educated, fearful, straight-forward, daring, lively, and peaceful. Because of the nature of political and economic degradation in the country that has brought poverty, hunger, suffering, death and pain on the people and underdevelopment to the country, he decided to forfeit his educational service as University Lecturer in the United States just to take part in the National Parliament where he believes major laws and decisions that affect the country are made. To further actualize his aim, he also decided to seek for the Chairmanship position of Purchasing Committee of Parliament, so he could see to the day to day expenditures in the parliament. When the position was ironically given to Mr. Brown, he drafted a list of qualified candidates for the position of Chairmen of Board of Trustees, which unequivocally was taunted and given to unqualified candidates.

His major misfortune began when he started opposing the decisions of the corrupt parliamentarians whom assisted him during the previous election. He further aggravated them when he reported their escapades to the members of the press despite

being forced earlier into taken an oath, so he would not reveal their activities to the public. Because of this, he was later arrested and detained by members of the State Police. His arrest miraculously brought about the revolution by the University students and some Militant youths that lead to the tying, and if possible, execution of Chief Habamero, Madam Omeaku, Mr. Brown, and Tossy. Dr Parkers represents human rights activists in Nigeria who are presently agitating for the rehabilitation of the nation for the development of the nation.

2. Chief Habamero: He is corrupt, egocentric, selfless, wicked, ambitious, deceitful, deadly, composed, and corrupt parliamentarian. He joined forces with Madam Omeaku, Mr. Brown, and Tossy to loot and defraud the nation. He hated Dr Parkers when their plan of keeping their loots into foreign banks through Dr Parker's international connections failed. Due to this fact, he rejected the list of qualified candidates presented to the parliament for the Board of Trustees Chairmanship positions by Dr Parkers. He later invited members of the police force to arrest and detain Dr Parkers and Mr. Otobo when he discovered that their excesses in the parliament had been revealed to the members of the press and to the general public. Just like other corrupt parliamentarians, he was captured and tied by the University students and the militant youths of the country. Chief Habamero represents most corrupt politicians in the presidency, federal and state house of assemblies, ministers, governors, and their likes in the Nigerian space that daily loot and defraud the nation.

3. Madam Omeaku: She is wayward, stubborn, provocative, strong, fearless, adulterous, fraudster, diabolic, troublesome, and a stark illiterate. She uses her daughter Nkechi as an instrument of seduction against her male colleagues whenever she craves for power. She decides to forfeit her hotel business built with her husband's pensioner fund for politics just to join other corrupt parliamentarians into defrauding and embezzling the fund of the nation. Because of her political dispositions, she decided to cheat and abuse her husband Omeaku. She always quarrels Dr Parkers because she believes that he is always opposing their malicious plans. After observing that their activities in the parliament have been revealed to the press, she connived with Chief Habamero to invite members of the state police to arrest and detain Dr Parkers and Mr. Otobo. Madam Omeaku represents those corrupt women politicians in Nigeria who connives with corrupt politicians to embezzle public fund for their selfish aim.

4. Mr. Brown: He is corrupt, greedy, sleazy, fearful, adulterous, overzealous and a chronic womanizer. He assisted tremendously in making sure that the other parliamentarians won in the previous election. Unlike Chief Habamero, Mr. Brown is always accused by Mr. Omeaku of having extra marital activities with his wife. Dr Parker's admiration and anticipation of becoming Chairman of Purchasing Committee of Parliament was halted because Mr. Brown developed deep interest by which the position was given to him. He planned with the other parliamentarian to defraud, embezzle, and loot public fund for their selfish gain.

He questioned the verisimilitude of the true companionship he had with Chief Habamero, Madam Omeaku, and Mr. Tossy when the billions of naira which they had earlier accumulated during their flamboyant parliamentary party was not shared equally amongst them, instead, a little fraction of ten million naira which he had earlier used to offset their bills in their recent get-together was thus considered to be his share. He also connived with Chief Habamero to invite members of the state police to arrest Dr Parkers. He met his doom when some University students in conjunction with some militant group invaded the Parliamentary building and tied him, Chief Habamero, Madam Omeaku, and Tossy. Just like Chief Habamero, Mr. Brown represent those Nigerian politicians that are usually found in the federal, state and local house of representatives whose sole aim is to make laws that would better the lives of the people and create massive development in the country, rather, it was ridiculously replaced with greed, corruption, nepotism, favouratism, and divide and rule. Like Chief Habamero, Mr. Brown was captured and tied along side with the other corrupt parliamentarians by members of University students and some militant youths.

5. Mr. Tossy: He is hypocritical, corrupt, greedy, and deceitful. He agreed with the other corrupt parliamentarians to take the title of a reverend so that their deceitful acts would be considered holy. He hated Dr Parkers because he believed that Dr. Parkers is always standing in their way. He further hated him when he discovered that their top secret regarding their financial embezzlement and their other malicious activities have been revealed to the press. To this, he planned with the other parliamentarians to invite members of the state police to arrest Dr Parkers. Like the other parliamentarians, Mr. Tossy was captured and tied by members of University students and some militant youths.

6. Mr. Otobo: He is kind, straightforward, understanding, patriotic, educated, and peaceful. He was the secretary of the parliament. Mr. Otobo decided to form an alliance with Dr Parkers in order to oppose Chief Habamero and the other corrupt parliamentarians whenever they intends to take decisions that leads to excessive spending, looting, and embezzlement of public fund. He was later arrested along side Dr Parkers by members of the state police. Mr. Otobo represents those patriotic senators and federal and state house of assembly members who continually agitates each time wrong decisions that negatively affects the nation is taken. He also represents other human right activists who are daily fighting for transparency and accountability.

7. Chief Protocol: He is corrupt, strong, hypocritical, head strong, greedy, overzealous, and diabolical. He represents the corrupt military and other arm agencies who due to their personal gain would accept to choose the part of evil in detriment of the masses. Through him, Chief Habamero and other corrupt parliamentarians were able to calm tensions in the parliament each time Dr Parker's and Mr. Otobo agitates against their malicious proclamation on the misuse of public funds.

8. **Mr. President:** He is corrupt, diabolical, and greedy. He strives to make the state diabolical believing that through such, sanity and sanctity will be established. He decided to address the nation when Dr Parkers revealed the negative activities going on in the parliament and the nation at large.

9. **Nkechi:** She is Madam Omeaku's daughter. She is gentle, brilliant, beautiful, full of life, and attractive. She was misled by her mother Madam Omeaku into forfeiting the idea of continuing her education just to follow top politicians of which Mr. President was a victim as such. It was through her that Madam Omeaku was able to get hold of the parliamentary file which was in possession of Mr. Otobo.

A Parliament of Vultures and the Nigerian Development

The play, *A Parliament of Vultures* interrogates the issues of political pauperization, economic sabotage and un-dexterity; and mismanagement of public funds by political frivols and profiteers, the select elites who meticulously ravage the economy of the nation through acts of bribery, fraudulent, looting, embezzlement for their egocentric satisfaction without prior submission for transparency and accountability which unequivocally help in the advancement and development of the state. The play ridicules the continuous butchering of the economic strata by corrupt politicians, who thereafter enriches themselves with the nation's treasury. This nuance has pragmatically destroyed the fabric of the nation towards attesting for international equality and transparency. It presents corruption, divide and rule, nepotism and favouritism as the hallmark for the collapse of the Nigerian state and degradation of her national integrity and identity.

Nonetheless, the play exposes the negative activities of top politicians in the federal, state and local strata's of the country, such as it has catapulted the nation in state of anarchy and stagnated her development. It reveals how the national fund of the nation is mismanaged by the three tiers of the government – executive, legislature, and the judiciary. It was also revealed in the play that these political profiteers loots and embezzles national fund through increment of their salaries, setting of meaningless avenues such as parliamentary parties, where they continuously frolic with university undergraduate students, meaningless tours, endless vacations abroad, and other senseless activities that does not aim at promoting the country, but for their egocentric enrichment. The cost of all these are inflated in a way that each of the corrupt politicians would have funds to embezzle.

Extensively, the play also reveals that the corrupt politicians also galvanized public funds through the awarding of contracts. This is fathomed through their continuous demand for ten percent of every projects awarded. To this, they quickly award contracts to contractors whom agrees to their demands, thereby neglecting professionalism. Evidence of this is seen in the play when Chief Habamero, Madam Omeaku, Mr. Brown, and Mr. Tossy agreed to stop all contractors that were awarded road construction contracts by the past administration and thereafter planed to re-award the same contract to other contractors who are willing to adhere to their plight.

Through the play, it is also observed that the Nigerian politicians also benefit through giving of ministerial and other executive positions, either by way of compensation or by way of galvanizing public funds. They go as far as choosing unqualified candidates for such positions in order to satisfy their malicious and unpatriotic objectives. For instance, the corrupt parliamentarians in the play decided to give the position of Chairmen of Board of Trustees to unqualified candidates, discarding the list of qualified candidates presented to them by Dr Parkers. This notion is also prevalent in Nigeria where unqualified candidates are politically given ministerial and ambassadorial positions. Due to their inadequacy of managing such positions, the ministries are today not effective as there is unprofessionalism in discharge of duties. The qualified candidates are there in the tertiary institutions, wallowing with miniature salaries and their arrears, allowances, and peculiars owed for years are yet to be remitted while the unqualified candidates are mismanaging the national funds.

This, therefore, has increased the level of underdevelopment in the Nigerian state. The qualified ones are scared of contesting for political positions due to the fear of losing their recent job, in case they lose in elections. The corrupt elites in the country have propounded laws that before civil service worker would contest for any political position in the country; they must first resign from their recent duty. This has made it very difficult for tertiary institution teachers including other educated civil servants in the country to abandon politics and faith of the nation to unqualified and greedy gladiators. Evidence of this is seen in the play when Mr. Ootobo plainly stated that:

Mr. Ootobo: The demand on public officers is harsh. The fear of the unknown is the problem of our officers, and the bane of political development in the nation. They are required to resign from their jobs before engaging in politics. They are afraid to do it. And prefer the devil they know (pp.21-22).

As a result of this nefarious and heinous reason, they have abandoned their nation to nonentities who are daily piloting the affairs of the nation to damnation, thus have created issues of lack of national integrity and have ironically made the nation a poverty capital of the world. On the same note, the playwright avers that the educated elites should be given the opportunity of continuing with their job, if they failed in any election. Dr Parker's statement clarifies this notion when he avers:

Dr Parkers: They could have been allowed to go back to their jobs if they fail in the elections, as obtained in advanced countries. In that way, decent people would have the opportunity to contest (p. 22).

Against this backdrop, it is pragmatically fathomed that the faith of this great but crumbling nation, Nigeria is in two spheres. One and most importantly is on the educated elites in the country who have unscrupulously abandoned the affairs of the nation in the hand of nonentities. Rather, they are pleased being either the vice, deputy or even a miniature cleaner to the corrupt political actors. The second is on the youths. It is observed in the play that it was the University Students and some militant youths that

spearheaded the revolution which halted the pauperization and un-dexterity in the play. The educated elites and the Nigerian youth according to Emeka are expected to seat up and fight against the corrupted politicians as that would determine the development of the country. A total revolution by these two parties is the antidote to the financial frivolity in the country. In the play, Otobo avers that:

Revolution is not an exercise in simplicity. Revolutions are carried out by men, not robots. Revolution is the handwork of a progressive generation, not the making of selfish, hypocritical, and materialistic vultures in human attires.

Finally, Emeka fervently characterizes Chief Habamero, madam Omeaku, Mr. Brown, Mr. Tossy, and Mr. President as classic epitome of corruption, greed, covetousness, insensitivity, and callousness that has continued to pervade politics in Nigeria. Also, he indicated that in the midst of this cabal are a few well-meaning politicians, likes of Dr. Parkers and Mr. Otobowho are most times maimed, threatened, frightened, arm-twisted, side-lined, brutalized, and often times killed in the course of ridding corruption from the country.

Conclusion/Recommendation

From the study, it is established that political corruption masterminded by political zealous is the major menace plaguing the Nigerian state in the recent time. It is envisaged in every front of its political administration both at the federal, state, and the local level. It is also observed that this nuance is mostly visible in the legislative arm of government where laws that define the fate of the nation are made. This is plausible because it is through the laws that they make that define the power of the executive and the judicial arm. To this, the legislative arm has the power to shape and reshape any nation. It is due to this fact that Emeka Nwabueze interrogates the issue of corruption using the legislative arm as his case study. He envisaged that if the legislative arm is void of corruption, nepotism, favouratism, and divide and rule, then transparency and accountability are can defined. This is plausible because the legislatures are entitled to interrogate every bill from the executives before it passes into law.

It is also established that if the issue of political corruption is persistent in any state such as it is practiced in Nigeria society, development will be farfetched. It will therefore create poverty, hunger, strive, pain, suffering, and sickness to the people. The resultant effect will be the manifestation of acts of terrorism such as militancy, kidnapping, politically motivated assassination, lethal car bombing, and other means of lawlessness that affects the society. For this to be curtailed, maximum attention should be made against corrupt politicians as that would define the hallmark of nation building. The issue of voting people into political positions because of how much they can offer should be abolished by Nigerians as that would blindfold them into electing culpable candidates that would proffer the kind of development they crave for. On the same note, the law that postulate that civil servants who wishes to contest for a political position should first resign from his/her job be abolished as that would only benefit the corrupt and overzealous politicians that would cradle the country to damnation.

Finally, the educated elites and the Nigerian youths should take to themselves the revolution of the political strata as that would enhance sanctity and sanity in the political sphere.

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