

THE PROBLEMS OF CORRUPTION AND INJUSTICE IN NIGERIA, THEIR SOLUTIONS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIAN NOVELS

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Abstract

Literature, which comprises prose, drama, poetry and public discourse, is a veritable tool in the war against corruption and injustice, the major causes of Nigeria's underdevelopment. As a tool for social change, reformation and development, literature influences the society positively. The image of the country has been so battered due to the alarming rate of corruption that Nigeria is now rated as one of the most corrupt countries of the world. Corruption and injustice are prevalent in government, the judiciary, health sector, arm forces, economic sector, the parastatals, oil industry and so on. The problems of corruption and injustice have resulted in more serious problems of poverty, unemployment, lack of adequate medical care for the citizens, hardship, kidnapping and boko haram, a phenomenon that has posed serious threat to lives in the nation in resent times. As impediments to the sustainable development of any nation, there is an urgent need for concerted efforts and priority attention by the government and all Nigerians to tackle the nagging problems of injustice and corruption in Nigeria, in order to promote sustainable development. Sustainable development is the development which meets the needs of the present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The Nigerian literary artists are still in the forefront in the war against societal ills. They attack the government and the corrupt perpetrators of the ills in the Nigerian society with their literary works. Therefore, the relevance of literature to the society goes beyond entertainment, as the literary artists impart positively on the lives of the people and the society. This paper examines the mood system as a syntactic parameter deployed by the writers under study to convey the themes of corruption and injustice and advance the measures to eradicate them in their novel.

Keywords: *Corruption, Injustice, Health sector, Government and Nigeria*

Introduction

Literature, which comprises prose, drama, poetry and public discourse, is a veritable tool in the war against corruption and injustice, the major causes of Nigeria's underdevelopment. As a tool for social change, reformation and development, literature influences the society positively. The image of Nigeria has been so battered due to the alarming rate of corruption that Nigeria is now rated as one of the most corrupt countries of the world. Corruption and injustice are prevalent in every area of life, in government, the judiciary, health sector, arm forces, economic sector, the parastatals, oil industry and so on. The problems of corruption and injustice have resulted in more serious problems of poverty, unemployment, lack of adequate medical care for the citizens, hardship, kidnapping and boko haram, a phenomenon that has posed serious threat to lives in the

nation in resent times . As impediments to the sustainable development of any nation, there is an urgent need for concerted efforts and priority attention by the government and all Nigerians to tackle the nagging problems of injustice and corruption in Nigeria, in order to promote sustainable development. Sustainable development is the development which meets the needs of the generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Temitope, 2003:21). Temitope emphasizes that sustainable development seeks to promote the principle of "sustainable" environment, economy and social equality" (22).

The Nigerian Novelists, the Novels and their Themes

The Nigerian literary artists such as Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Buchi Emecheta, Joseph Edoki, Chimamanda Adichie, Festus Iyayi, Wale Okediran, Kaine Agary and some others have been, and are still in the forefront in the war against societal vices such as bribery and corruption, injustice, misrule, embezzlement of public funds, unemployment, killings, social inequality, oppression and so on, from the post colonial era till date . They attack the government and the corrupt perpetrators of the ills in the Nigerian society in their literary works. They do not only create awareness on the problems and the danger they pose to the society in general and sustainable development in particular, but they also denounce the vices and sensitize the general public on the need to arrest the ugly situation. Moreover, the writers do not fail to warn against the fact that corruption and injustice could plunge the nation into calamity if urgent and drastic measures are not taken to eradicate them from the society. Therefore, the relevance of literature to the society goes beyond entertainment, as the literary artists impart positively on the lives of the people and the society.

This paper examines the mood system as a syntactic parameter deployed by the writers under study to convey the themes of corruption and injustice in their novels. The novelists under study such as Chinua Achebe, Buchi Emecheta, Joseph Edoki, Kaine Agary, Chimamanda Adichie, Festus Iyayi, Sefi Atta and others are preoccupied with the problems of corruption and injustice in their novels. For instance, in Achebe's *A Man of the People*, he strongly attacks the new Nigerian political leaders who take over power from the imperialists. The novel is preoccupied with the theme of disillusionment, oppression of the poor by the ruling class and corruption that plague the African countries soon after their independence. Joseph Edoki's *The African Dream*, a satirical novel is preoccupied with the theme of the socio-political problems of African nations. In the same vein, Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Things around Your Neck* have Nigeria's socio-political problems as their major theme. Isidore Okpewho's *Violence* is also about the injustice, oppression, exploitation and sufferings in the society.

Each of the writers denounces the corrupt practices and acts of injustice that are prevalent in every area of life in Nigeria, which are the bane of sustainable development of the nation in strong terms. The Nigerian Observer of Tuesday, August 20, 2013 reports that " the United State Bureau of Democracy, Human Right and Labour, an arm of State department decried the endemic nature of corruption in contemporary Nigeria in its annual country report, saying that "corruption undermines the growth and development of Nigeria." (16)

The Mood System

The mood system reveals the various functions of speeches in discourses. It is that aspect of interpersonal function of language indicating the speech roles that characters adopt in their desire to communicate (Halliday, 1973). The role may be that of declaring, commanding, interrogating or exclaiming as the case may be. It is for this reason that there are declarative, imperative, interrogative and exclamatory structures as we explicate below. The authors apply various moods in giving texture to their stories. The moods in a text are generally significant in the realization of the writer's style of narration as we exemplify below.

Declarative Sentences

Declarative sentences are sentences which state facts, make statements or assertions that cannot be doubted. (Heffernan and Lincoln, 1986). A declarative sentence or statement is a sentence with a compulsory subject preceding a verb. There are, however, exceptional cases of this pattern as there are declaratives with ellipsis of subject alone or subject plus operator. For instance, in the sentence "Beg your pardon", there is an ellipsis of subject. No matter the form a declarative sentence may take, its discourse function is to convey information. The user selects for himself the role of informant and for the reader the role of informed. In this way, the addresser's observations/viewpoints, feeling and thoughts, etcetera find meaningful expressions in the declarative form. Declarative sentences are also referred to as statements. We examine the following sentences from the novels under study:

- I. I did not come to the Senate to reduce myself to the status of a pauper. I came to make money. (252) *Dream*
- II. I agree that the matter is political but I am about to set up a tribunal to try all suspected cases of corrupt enrichment... (344) *Dream*
- III. Auntie Ifeoma took Papa Nnukwu to the University Medical Centre in the morning and came back shortly afterwards... The lab staff was on strike, too, so Papa Nnukwu could not have the tests done... (155) *Purple Hibiscus*
- IV. We have not had fuel for three months in Nsukka. I spent the night in the petrol station last week waiting for fuel. (76) *Purple Hibiscus*
- V. They will discuss how the Ijaws and the other ethnic groups were suffering and even dying while the wealth of the oil fed others. They will proffer ideas about what the oil companies and the government had to do. (9) *Yellow - Yellow*
- VI. It had been three and a half years ago. He had been home, away from the town, frustrated and angry, because there had been no job, no matter how hard he had looked for one. (4) *Violence*
- VII. He had even sold his blood so that he and Adisa would not starve, so that they would survive. (153) *Violence*
- VIII. Since she was a disappointment to her parents, to her immediate family, to her tribe, nobody thought of recording her birth. (7) *Second Class Citizen*

- IX. Boys were usually given preference...Soon, Adah's younger brother, boy, started school. (9) Second Class Citizens
- X. Tuesday morning, they shaved my hair and said I must stay in a room. Naked...I can't touch my children. (252) Every Good Will Come
- XI. ...They gave me the water they used to bath my husband's corpse to drink to prove that I did not put a hex on him...They said I killed him. (252) Every Good Will Come

With the use of a declarative sentence in sample 1 above, the author identifies corruption, materialism, rivalry and greed as features of the Savannese politics just as the Nigerian politics. Soon after Fernando assumes position as the Savannese president, members of the opposition party in the house of senate meet to deliberate on how to starve him of funds, in order to frustrate his plans of executing his proposed people-oriented programmes. During the meeting, Senator Walter Dojumu confesses that his aim of going to the house of Senate is to make money. The senators, therefore, map out several strategies to siphon the nation's money and share it among themselves through various illegal allowances. With the above example, Joseph Edoki paints a clear picture of the Nigerian society, giving a vivid account of the degree of corruption in Nigerian politics.

In Nigeria, people do not participate in politics with the intention of serving the people who voted them into positions, but for the selfish interest of amassing wealth and acquiring properties for themselves and their generations yet unborn as revealed in extract 1 above. These types of corrupt practices by politicians are responsible for the problems of underdevelopment, unemployment, poverty, insecurity among others that Nigerians are encountering today. The corrupt politicians cart away public funds that ought to be utilized for the well-being of the citizens, thereby subjecting them to abject poverty, hunger, diseases and untold hardship in the midst of plenty. Since sustainable development is all about the total welfare of the citizenry, all efforts should be made to fight corruption and injustice at all cost. This is Edoki's submission in sample 2 above, where the author calls on the Nigerian government to subject all suspected cases of corrupt enrichment, which have been swept under the carpet in Nigeria to the anti-graft agencies for investigations.

In extracts 3 and 4, Adichie, another Nigerian novelist, attacks the corrupt Nigerian leaders for their acts of injustice against Nigerian citizens. As a nation, Nigeria is richly blessed with human, material and natural resources, enough for all the citizens to live comfortably. But reverse is the case. The citizens are suffering, to the extent that some Nigerians feed from dustbins, and beggars are all over the streets of the nation. Moreover, Nigeria is the sixth largest oil producing country in the world, yet petroleum products are imported and sold to Nigerians at very exorbitant rates. Sometimes fuel becomes so scarce that some people sleep in petrol stations in search of fuel. These are all cases of injustice to Nigerians. For the government to tackle the problems associated with petroleum products, more refineries should be built the ones that are broken down should be repaired and regular maintenance should be carried out on all of them to make them functional.

Nigeria cannot achieve sustainable development without quality education, adequate health care and other essential services for the citizens. But unfortunately, the different sectors in the country are suffering a lot of setback. For instance, the situation of the educational system has become worrisome. It is, therefore, a burning issue which calls for urgent attention to save the educational system from total collapse. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adicie denounces the incessant strikes in Nigeria that have crumbled the nation socio-economically. Cases of strike actions due to bad governance, poor management of the nation's resources, injustice and corruption abound in the judiciary, educational system, and health sector, among oil and gas workers, road transport workers among others. The country is losing a lot through these incessant strikes actions financially, socially and otherwise.

The universities and all teaching hospitals have been on strike for months now. Many patients discharged from the various teaching hospitals all over the country have lost their lives for lack of medical care. Millions of students at home as a result of the strike are roaming the streets. These have plunged Nigerians into more problems. To avoid the eminent calamity that could result from the present ugly situation, the government should be alive to its responsibilities to the citizens.

The most disturbing aspect of the whole issue is the stand of the Federal on the strike actions. The Government's slogan has always been "No money". How will there be money when the country is losing so much to oil theft from the country's production system? The Nigerian Observer of Thursday, October, 17, 2013 reports the Federal Government's claim that 43% of the crude oil produced in the country are stolen by thieves, and that the seriousness of the situation has forced some oil companies to shut down. The oil theft has dealt a serious blow to the economy, especially as Nigeria depends solely on oil. The government should set machineries on motion to arrest the ugly trend urgently and with all seriousness. The same report states that "reports are rife that those involved in oil theft are those powerfully connected to government, including some unscrupulous security agents" (12). It, therefore, emphasizes the need for President Jonathan to put the security operatives on their toes to move swiftly, and burst the powerful cartels involved in the economic crime and punish all offenders (12).

Kaine Agary, other literary artists lends her voice on the crises on oil production system in country, deploying the declarative sentence construction in extracts 6 and 7. She bluntly condemns the injustice meted out to the people of the Niger Delta region, who bear the brunt of oil and land pollutions, and are subjected to poverty, unemployment, hunger, sicknesses and diseases. Their deplorable condition caused by environmental pollution and neglect by the government and the oil companies operating in the area is most painful and regrettable because petroleum, the main source of the nation's wealth is obtained in the region. This is a case of injustice and it is responsible for all the crises in the Niger Delta, involving militancy and youth restiveness that have adversely affected the development of the area and the national economy immensely.

Agary advances useful measures to tackle the nagging problems of the Niger Delta in sample 9 above. These subsume the development of the region by the provision of basic amenities and infrastructures, creation of job opportunities, and the establishment of industries, programmes and projects to uplift the lives of the people. With the gainful employment of the youths and eradication of poverty, the nagging problems of militancy and youth restiveness will be solved, thereby creating an enabling environment for peaceful co-existence, which will promote sustainable development in Nigeria. If the government can solve the problems of corruption and crises in the Niger Delta for permanent peace to reign in the area, and also find a permanent solution to oil theft in the country, poverty, the greatest problem of the nation will be automatically solved. This is by virtue of the fact that the solution of the problems of the oil production system will lead to more production, and, therefore, more money accruing to the treasury. With enough money to meet all the needs of the citizens, sustainable development will be achieved.

With the use of declarative sentences in excerpts 6 and 7, Festus Iyayi, another Nigerian novelist denounces the injustice done to Nigerian youths by the government which neither protects their interest nor provides them jobs in his text, *Violence*. Majority of Nigerian youths are roaming the streets as a result of unemployment, most many years after graduation. The successive governments have failed in this area. In the novel, Iyayi presents the plights of the characters such as Idemudia, Adisa, Osaroomoifo and many others as representatives of the masses who are subjected to abject poverty, hunger, unemployment, accommodation problems, oppression and all forms of hardship. Like the others in his class, Idemudia, one of the major characters in *Violence* has been jobless for many years despite all the efforts he has made to secure employment in the city. He cannot cater for his family, and while sick, he cannot afford his hospital bills. In order to get money for his hospital bill, Adisa, his wife falls prey to the corrupt and wealthy Obofun out of her will.

Due to joblessness and poverty, Idemudia and his friends resort to selling their blood in order to feed. They engage in odd and difficult jobs only to be poorly paid at the end of a whole day's tasking by labour, Obofun's wife, Queen. Iyayi presents obofun and Queen as corrupt, oppressive and fraudulent characters. Queen builds their hotel with government mobilization fee through Mr. Iriso of the Government Food Production Department for which she pays in kind. The author presents acts of inhumanity of man to man in the text, portraying the injustice meted out to the masses and, the extent to which the poor are oppressed by the rich in the society. To alleviate the suffering of the masses of the society, the government should provide jobs for the jobless to make life meaningful to them. The gap between the rich and the poor in the society should be bridged.

Some female Nigerian novelists among whom are Buchi Emecheta and Sefi Atta whose main preoccupations in Nigerian novel are the oppression and injustice done to the females in African societies. The females are regarded as inferior beings, treated as second class citizens and denied their rights and opportunities. Emecheta and Atta expose and ridicule the acts of injustice against women, as well as their perpetrators. Emecheta's protests in most of her novels have been directed

against societal inequalities. For instance, in *Second Class Citizens*, Emecheta discloses the disappointment over the birth of Adah, a female child, when everybody has expected a male as exemplified in excerpt 16 above. Because of the preference for male children, Adah's brother, Boy is sent to school, while she is denied the right to education. But with determination, Adah acquires education, and being empowered, she becomes the bread winner of her family contrary to the belief that women are inferior to men. The message inherent in this sample is the need to give the female child the right to education. This is because as depicted by Emecheta, a female can do even better, to contribute to the growth and development of the society than her male counterpart, in different areas of life endeavor.

In sample 17, Atta also conveys the idea of inequality between the male and female sexes. Sheri expresses her hope of becoming the president of Nigeria in future. But her friend, Enitan reminds her that women cannot be presidents in Nigeria, because men will never give them the opportunity. Here, Atta depicts inequality between both sexes, discrimination against the female sex and the denial of the females their right and opportunities in Nigeria. If according to Temitope (2003), the concept of sustainable development seeks to promote social equality, women should be given equal rights as their male counterparts in every area of life.

Sample 17 conveys some of deceitful acts and injustice to which women are subjected in marriage. In the extract, Atta gives a vivid account of the experiences of most women in Nigeria on the demise of their husbands. Such women are subjected to torture by the families' of their late husbands. In some cases, the widows are accused of killing their husbands and chased out of their homes with their children, and their properties usually are confiscated by some covetous relatives, Some of the widows have their hair shaved and are forced to drink the water with which the bodies of their late husbands are washed. The government should promulgate some laws to protect women, especially the widows in the society. The members of any family found maltreating any widow should be charged to court. Such a step will help to check the excesses of some families.

Interrogative Functional Sentences

Interrogative sentences are the sentences employed for making inquiries. The authors under study make extensive use of this functional type of sentences in their texts under study to convey their visions in their texts. Below are few examples:

12. What about farmers, traders, mechanics, vulcanizers and palm wine tappers? What about the common people?(246)
13. "You mean for me to go and see him?" (136)
14. "Who will teach Amaka and Obiora in the university?
The educated ones leave, the ones with the potentials to right the wrongs (244).
15. Is that what Oga asked us to do?(133)
16. President eh? (32)
17. By the way,do you like a private jet,your Excellency?

The question in sample 12 is the president, Fernando's response to an act of sabotage by his protocol officer. As an honest, upright and patriotic leader, Fernando runs an open door policy, with the desire to alleviate the sufferings of the masses who have been subjected to hardship for so long. Informed by his protocol officer that the criterion for drawing up the list of visitors to see the president is based on the visitors' position or social class in the society, the president is provoked. He asks the officer about the common men such as the farmers, traders, mechanics and others. He becomes more furious with the protocol's response and emphasis on the reasons why protocol does not allow the president to see the common men. The order the immediate deployment and replacement of the protocol officer. In this extract, Edoki gives the good and exemplary qualities expected of a democratic leader, emphasizing the type of leaders Nigeria needs to achieve sustainable development.

Excerpt 13 is a question by a magistrate to the D.P.O. of Gom police station during his discussion with his two police accomplices over a case of murder involving Inspector Chike. Inspector Chike is responsible for the pregnancy being aborted when the deceased died. After all efforts to get the doctor who wrote and signed the death certificate to falsify it, so as to declare the quack who killed the deceased innocent, the D.P.O. asks the magistrate handling the case if it would be possible for him to put pressure on the doctor to help them falsify the death certificate. In response, the magistrate asks the D.P.O. the question in sample 13. Wale Okediran exposes and condemns corruption and injustice and their perpetrators in both the Nigerian Police Force and the judiciary in the example. The duties of the police and magistrates in the society are the protection of the lives and rights of the citizens respectively. But in Nigeria, reverse is the case because of corruption. The unscrupulous policemen take bribes from the accused in their custodies and set them free. Similarly, the magistrates and judges pervert justice in courts, discharging and acquitting the accused who would have been convicted.

In *Strange Encounters*, Okediran exposes the corrupt practices in the medical sector. Some dubious medical staff steal medical equipment and drugs, converting them to their personal uses in their private medical centers as depicted in the novel. The author also condemns the quacks in the society who have killed many of their patients and maimed others. To prevent these types of practices, offenders should be severely punished to discourage such corrupt practices.

Adichie reveals and denounces the acts of injustices that the law enforcement agents met out to innocent Nigerians in sample 14 deploying an interrogative construction. The question is directed to a soldier who kills an innocent child of a journalist whom the Head of State ask them to arrest for publishing an article against him in a newspaper. The journalist and his wife have suffered many years of childlessness and agony before having the innocent child whom the soldier murdered out of wickedness. The writer paints a clear picture of the Nigerian society where acts of injustice abound everywhere in this example. There are reports of incessant killings of innocent people all over the country, and in most cases the culprits are never apprehended. Sometimes when such killers are arrested, the highly connected members of the society for whom they work set them free.

This is the height of injustice. All hands should be on deck to fight corruption and injustice in Nigeria. Strident punishments should be meted out to offenders, especially killers, to act as deterrents to others.

Adichie also uses an interrogative sentence to communicate her concern over the mass exodus of Nigerians to Europe due to unemployment in Purple Hibiscus. This is attributed to corruption and mismanagement of the nation's resources by the leaders, whose interest is to amass wealth at the expense of the citizens. She emphasizes the fact that most intelligent Nigerians that would have contributed greatly to the development of the nation have left the country out of frustration. The writer regrets that despite the rigorous processes they go through obtaining visas, Nigerians who leave for greener pasture overseas end up with menial jobs over there. What a frustrating experience? The three tiers of government should provide jobs for the jobless in the society, and good working conditions of service for the workers to discourage mass exodus of Nigerians.

Sample 16 conveys the idea of inequality between the male and female sexes. Sheri expresses her hope of becoming the president of Nigeria in future. But her friend, Enitan reminds her that women cannot be presidents in Nigeria, because men will never give them the opportunity. Here, Atta depicts inequality between both sexes, discrimination against the female sex and the denial of the females their rights and opportunities in Nigeria. If according to Temitope (2003), the concept of sustainable development seeks to promote social equality, women should be given equal rights as their male counterparts in every area of life. Edoki ridicules the rich and corrupt contractors who try to entice presidents, governors and local government chairmen with expensive gifts soon after they assume positions. With these, they commit such leaders, thereby securing their chances of getting government contracts. For example, in sample 17, Chief Isa Megadu tries to bribe the president after all his efforts to convince the president to award him a contract for which he is not qualified failed. Poised to achieve his aim, he asks Fernando whether he likes a private jet. Disappointed by the president rejection of his offer of a jet, Chief Megadu leaves the president's office humiliated. In this extract, Edoki presents Fernando as an exemplary character that should be emulated by Nigerian leaders in the war against corruption.

Conclusion

We have established that literature comprising prose, drama and poetry is a veritable tool for society reformation and development. The artists under study employ the resources of language in the war against corruption and injustice in Nigeria.

Corruption and injustice are the major causes of Nigeria's under development. There is, therefore, the need for all Nigerians to fight to eradicate them in order to promote sustainable development in the country.

It was stated in this study that declarative sentences assert or state ideas based on facts, and that the discourse function of declarative sentences is to register information. If the Nigerian government and Nigerians in general implement the recommendations advanced in this paper, the problems of injustice and corruption will be eradicated and sustainable development will be achieved in Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. All efforts should be made to fight corruption and injustice in Nigeria at all cost.
2. The government should subject all suspected cases of corrupt enrichment to the anti-graft agencies for investigations, and offenders should be punished. All money looted should be refunded to the government coffers.
3. More refineries should be built, the ones that are broken down should be repaired and regular maintenance should be carried out on all of them to make them functional.
4. President Jonathan should put the security operatives on their toes to move swiftly and burst the powerful cartels involved in economic crimes and punish all offenders.
5. The government should develop the Niger Delta region by the provision of the basic social amenities and infrastructures, provide jobs, establish industries, programmes and projects to uplift the lives of the people.
6. The government should proffer a permanent solution to oil theft in Nigeria.
7. The government should create Jobs for the Jobless in the society to alleviate their suffering and make life meaningful to them. This will discourage the mass exodus of Nigerians to Europe.
8. The gap between the rich and the poor in the society should be bridged by the government.
9. The female children should be given equal rights as their male counter parts. They should be given opportunities in every to area of human endeavour, to enable them contribute to the development of the society.
10. The government should promulgate some laws to protect women, especially the widows in the society.
11. Hired assassins and kidnappers should be sentenced to death to put an end to incessant killings of innocent citizens.
12. Any health worker who pilfer government hospital equipment and drugs or found engaging in quackery should be sacked.
13. The law enforcement agents and the judiciary should protect, defend the citizens and desist from dubious activities.
14. Nigerian leaders should run open door policies in order to get acquainted with their poor conditions of the masses. This is the only way he can proffer solutions to their problems.

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