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Followership and Corruption in Nigeria: The Role of Religion

Joseph Moyinoluwa Talabi Ph.D & James Olusola Odedeji Ph.D

Abstract

Religion serves several functions for society; these include giving meaning and purpose to life, reinforcing social unity and stability, serving as an agent of social control of behaviour, promoting physical and psychological well-being, and motivating people to work for positive social change. The paper discussed followership and corruption in Nigeria from the macro level. If the follower is not corrupt, the leader too will not be corrupted. The paper also examines the role of religion in combating followership corruption in Nigeria. It adopted a secondary source for data collection, and used analytic method to interrogate the data, descriptive method was used in writing the report. The paper believes that religion is a veritable tool for combating corruption depending on how religion is seen and practiced by its faithful. Religion can be a veritable instrument for combating corruption if the religious affiliates are the hearers of the word and the doers of the word. Conclusively, the importance of followership in any society or organization is essential if such society and operation succeed in achieving its set vision, goals, and objectives. It is the responsibility of the different religious groups to assist their members in making their different religious doctrines their way of life. This paper recommends that existing anti-corruption laws and instruments be carefully scrutinized and synchronized with the religious laws and doctrines to eliminate and close up possible loopholes through which corruption can leak into society.

Keywords: *Corruption, Followership, Leadership, Morality, Religion.*

Introduction

LEADERS MATTER GREATLY. BUT IN SEARCHING SO ZEALOUSLY FOR BETTER leaders we tend to lose sight of the people these leaders lead. Why followership is overlooked is an intriguing concept. Without followers, would there be leaders? Who would they lead? Who would become the leaders if they were not first the followers? Leadership and followership is a supportive bond; Leaders depend on followers and vice versa. Without his armies, after all, Napoleon was just a man with bold ambitions. Organizations and projects succeed or fail partly on the basis of how well their leaders lead, but partly also on how well their followers follow (Suda, 2013, p. 1).

Leadership and followership are closely intertwined. Effective followers can shape productive leadership behaviour just as effective leaders develop employees into good followers. In this paper, the researcher examined the important role of effective followership, including the nature of the followers' role, different styles of followership that individuals express, how effective followers behave and the role of religion. Followership is important in the discussion of leadership for several reasons. Without followers there are no leaders. For any religion to succeed there must be people who willingly and effectively follow, just as there must be those who willingly and effectively lead. Leadership and followership are fundamental roles that individuals shift into and out of under various conditions. Everyone, leaders included is a follower at one time or another. Indeed, most individuals, even those in positions of authority, have some kind of boss or supervisor. Individuals are more often followers than leaders (Suda, 2013, p. 1).

Followership in Nigeria has not generated much debate. But there have been cases of resistance movements that followers have spearheaded. These resistance cases are protesting against poor governance and the ineptitude of Nigerian leaders (Russell, 2007, p. 189). Nigerian followers are very loyal and supportive of leadership and have participated actively in achieving the nation's goals. Though people are overwhelmed by poverty, it will weaken their ability to rise to the challenges of checkmating the excesses of their leaders. This obedience will have a tremendous negative impact on leader- followership relationship. Leaders whose followers' checkmate will limit their excesses and realign themselves to public opinion (Smythe, 2002, p. 67). But amid obedience and sycophancy, leaders will be getting away with their misappropriations and

ineptitude. But competition among elites seeking leadership status can be a significant source of conflict and check leadership (Smythe, 2002, p. 67).

Corruption is found everywhere in Nigeria. This social cancer has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigerian society. Corruption is high among politicians, bureaucrats, academics; judiciary, police, army, customs, and even religious institution are also part of this social malady (*The Nations Newspaper*, 2016, p. 6). Corruption manifests in different dimensions in both the private and public lives of follower Nigerians. It ranges from electoral malpractices, poor service delivery, contract inflation, bribery, money laundering and ghost workers' syndrome to an evil character such as raping, stealing, and out-right looting of the public treasury. Corruption in Nigeria has become systemic and endemic (Tom, 2014, pp. 84 - 94). The most problematic is that most of those perpetrating corruption are religious affiliates whose doctrines abhor corruption. Corruption is a global malaise that has not spared any country of the world; there is no country in the universe that is free of this malady (Talabi&Oyewusi,2022, p. 77).However, its alarming pervasiveness in Nigeria and public service, in particular, have affected the country's quest for accelerated socio-economic and political development, thus becoming a matter of grave concern. It is evident that many Nigerians are ardent religious adherents, thus, the question is, what is the role of religion in combating corruption in Nigeria?

Followership can be conceived both from the macro and micro levels. The macro-level refers to societal governance, while micro refers to the group or organizational governance. This paper will be discussing leadership at the macro level, which encapsulates the latter. The paper aims to enlighten followers of their responsibilities in promoting good governance and assess the impact of religion in curbing corruption in Nigeria. The other sections of the paper include conceptual framework, followership in Nigeria, the qualities of good followership, functions of followership, the problem of followership in Nigeria, evolution of corruption in Nigeria, factors that promote corruption, impact of corruption and religion and corruption in Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

Followership is an adherence to a leader. But in this exposition, followership is the virtue of supporting leaders and helping them lead well. For followers to help their leaders do well, they have a responsibility to actively participate in achieving a nation's goal. John and Bezrukova (2003) contended that followership is a

people-oriented behavior (pp. 703 - 729). This character builds relationships between leaders and followers, providing an environment that promotes all organizational members to focus on a common goal.

Wedin (2003) contended that good followership relationships must build on motivation rather than control and that instilling values into followers is essential to developing a culture of trust and good relationships. He asserted that leaders must maintain the balance of power between them and followers to provide a culture of openness that promotes self-engagement (p. 111).

Corruption, according to Umoh (2001), has no standard definition. This work, therefore, does not intend to proffer any. However, the need to have a precise point of departure and a properly delimited conceptual framework to contain the discussion constrains this academic piece to gather a working conceptual or ideational model to ease the discussion (p. 23). The World Bank (2007) defined corruption as "the abuse of public power for private benefit," (n.p). Transparency International (T.I.) defined it as "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain." Khan (2004) viewed corruption as the "behaviour that deviates from the formal rules of conduct governing the action of someone in position of public authority because of private motives such as wealth, power or status," (p. 164). The Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) Act 2000 defined corrupt acts as "bribery, fraud and other related offences." The Vision 2010 Committee defined corruption as "all those improper actions or transactions aimed at changing the normal course of events, judgments and position of trust." Arnold (2007) opined that corruption means "the receiving or offering of money or other clear advantages in return for contracts, not being obliged to discharge an obligation; obtaining a job for which one is not qualified, sidestepping justice; leaping ahead of a queue, and so on," (p. 34). Deducing from that definition, it could say that corruption is anything done abnormally or taken undue advantages of certain situations.

The work relies on Riggs' theory of prismatic society. The choice of this theory is because Riggs conceptualised the prismatic society as a midpoint or intermediate form of transitional society between the two ideal types: fused society and diffracted society. A fused society is one in which a single structure performs all functions while a diffracted society is where every function has a corresponding structure that specialises in its performance (Riggs, 1973, n.p). In administration in developing countries, Riggs presented the concept of "prismatic society" to explain the unique conditions and the dynamics of politics and

administration in a developing country, Nigeria in particular as in the context of this work. In explaining the nature of administration in these transitional societies, Riggs systematically used an ecological approach to explore their non-administrative domains of society, politics, economy, and culture. In general, such prismatic societies are characterized by formalism (theory-practice gap), heterogeneity (co-existence of the traditional and the modern), and functional overlaps (similar functions are performed by different institutions), (Talabi and Okusanya, 2022, p. 232).

Formalism is one of the characteristics of such a society. Formalism essentially means the amount of discrepancy or incongruence between the norms and practices. The prevalence of formalism is a distinguishing mark of the chromatic system. In other words, the laws on the statute book are one thing; the actual behaviour of the office is another (Arnold, 2007, p. 34). Not that the law is irrelevant to behaviour. Indeed, the official may insist on the literal performance of the law or disregard it utterly. What permits formalism is the lack of pressure toward programs objectives, the weakness of social power as a guide to bureaucratic performance, and hence great permissiveness for arbitrary administration. Whether an official chooses to enforce a law to the letter or permit its total violation depends, presumably, upon his inclinations and advantage (Arnold, 2007, p. 38).

It is easy to see that administrative direction based on formalism opens the door to corruption. The client may have to pay the official to carry out the law - as in the issuance of permits, licenses, quota allocations or to overlook violations - as in the payment of taxes. In a society like Nigeria, with a high level of formalism, it is prevalent to note discrepancies between what the laws say and practice (Arnold, 2007, p. 39). Such attitude is in all aspects of lives among the follower. Nigerians whose majority are very religious, which is evident in more than ninety percent belonging to Christianity, Islam or African Traditional religion (Omolawal, 2014, p. 24). There is incongruence between what they preach and what they do, which explains why religion cannot reduce or curb corruption in Nigeria.

Religion expresses man's belief in and reverence for a superhuman power recognized as the creator and governor of the universe. It involves devotion to some principle, strict fidelity or faithfulness, conscientiousness, pious affection, or attachment. Adenugba and Omolawal (2014) conceived religious faith in a divinely created order; the agreement is the means of salvation for a community

and thus for each individual who has a role in that community (p. 77). In this sense, the author claimed, the term applies principally to such systems as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, which involves faith in a creed, obedience to a moral code set down in sacred Scriptures, and participation in everyday practices. Strictly speaking, the term religion refers to the way of life (Richardson, 2006, p. 161). More than ninety percent of the population in Nigeria is either Christians or Muslims, while the remaining ones believe in various traditional religions or are atheists.

Followership in Nigeria

Followership is characterized by active participation in pursuit of a set of goals. This means working independently, being accountable for your actions and taking ownership of necessary task. Followership requires a person to choose to align and commit themselves with another's ideas and thoughts, which they believe is for the greater good. It is the virtue of supporting leaders and helping them to lead well. Jehn and Bezrukova (2003) defined followership as a people oriented behaviour which builds relationships between leaders and followers, providing an environment that promotes all organizational members to focus on a common goal (p. 703). Good followers may be a catalyst for change in an organization as followership inspires others to follow towards a common goal; creates enthusiasm and desire to excel; fully engages others, build confidence, and moves the organization ahead as one entity rather than separate parts. Everyone likes to talk about leadership (Jehn and Bezrukova, 2003, p. 703). Human beings are culturally conditioned to view success as a progression through leadership positions but there is fearless attention paid to being a good follower. When most people think of themselves as followers, it often accompanied with negative feelings like being judged as meek or submissive. As if being a follower comes at the expense of being a leader, but in reality, every leader in an organization is following someone and so it serves us well to remember to live up to those responsibilities.

Nigerian followership mind set has been configured for dogmatism, indoctrination and sheet acceptances of things without deep analysis (Kuforiji, 2020, n.p). Little wonder, Nigeria have the best of brains in almost all industry yet the worse of roads. It is a shame that in 2020, African communities are still struggling with portable water while the rulers of the world economy have moved to developing electric cars and SGs technologies (Kuforiji, 2020, n.p). There is the

need for Nigerian leadership to be sensitive to the needs and opinion of followers. Followership also needs to have a strong public opinion pool of the activities of her leaders so as to avoid dictatorial type of leadership. A strong public opinion pool will serve as a check on leadership. Nigerians should equally live up to their civic responsibilities so as to create good and sustainable leadership and followership relationship.

Every society needs to be led by its leaders. Ever since the social contract between man and government, the man surrendered some of his rights to the government center. There was a social contract that resulted from the surrender of these rights; the government should be able to use law to regulate the society and ensure the security and welfare of the people (Omolawal, 2014, p. 24). This situation gave rise to leadership and followership in any human society. The relationship of leadership and followership is anchored on leadership because he is the driver of the relationship. It is incumbent on a leader to give direction and for the followers to comply. In Nigeria, ever since her independence, she has been facing leadership crises; hence, she has moved from a Parliamentary system of government to a Presidential form; Nigeria has wobbled from one civilian regime to another military regime yet. Leadership in Nigeria has not been able to deliver the needed dividend of our God-given resources to her people, social welfare services, and even social amenities; yet her followers have been very faithful (Osinbajo, 2017, p. 18).

There is a great need to sustain the relationship between the leadership and her followers. A clarion call for new generational leaders is essential to take Nigeria to another excellent level of self-sufficiency and effective leadership. The traits of a leader like intelligence, integrity, charisma, dynamism, dominance, extroversion, and level headed could project leadership in a better light in the eyes of his followers. These qualities will endear him to the followership. Newman (2007) listed ten essential qualities he referred to as Laws that effective leadership should possess to enhance followership (p. 19). A leader should have vision, discipline, wisdom, courage, and humility. A Leader should be a decision-maker, have executive ability, be tactful and diplomatic, develop friendships, and exude enthusiasm. Leadership is in place in order for her to achieve a specific goal. To do this, Rikana and Orisa (2007) affirmed the leader must be efficient, skillful, insightful, courageous, and motivated members to work towards the goal (p. 111).

The followers' perception of their leadership can distance or endear them to leadership. In a very corrupt environment like Nigeria, it takes a leader of high

integrity to command genuine followership(Talabi and Exradallenum, 2021, p. 11).Integrity is the quality of honesty and trustworthiness, and leaders who adhere to a robust set of principles and take responsibility for their actions exhibit integrity(Northouse, 2001, p. 45).Nigeria needs a paradigm shift - a positive change in attitudes and value system for her to achieve her goal of national unity and economic growth, including warding off poverty and further military incursion into governance. Followership needs to have a solid public opinion pool of the activities of her leaders, or else leadership can unconsciously turn to be dictatorial. A robust public opinion pool will serve as a check on leadership. Where followership tends to be docile in the activities and actions of leadership, she has contributed to the detriment of her welfare and growth. People should stop sitting at the fence believing that change will actualize through miracles; change happens through human effort. Hence, Nigerians should leave it as their civic responsibilities to create a sound and sustainable leadership and followership relationship.

Qualities of Good Followership

Rikanaand Orisa (2007) listed the qualities of good followership as:

1. Total obedience to the laws of the land or constituted authorities;
2. Unalloyed loyalty or allegiance to the leadership that be;
3. Eschew indiscipline in any form or shapes;
4. Explore channels of grievance resolution;
5. Commitment to goals and aspirations of the country;
6. Demonstrate appreciable virtues and values;
7. Avoid sycophancy but tell the leadership the truth;
8. Show true patriotism and participation;
9. To be well enlightened and responsive;
10. Imbibe the principle of self-reliance;
11. Offering constructive criticism and providing solutions;
12. Be prepared at all times to respond to calls for national services;
13. Be willing to accept responsibility for his actions; and
14. Develop the attitude of co-operation with his leader to accomplish group goals(p. 111).

Functions of Followership

1. Followers must be willing to obey the land's laws and be directed and guided by a constituted authority.
2. Followers should be loyal to leadership.
3. The follower must checkmate the activities or excesses of leadership; for this to be, followership needs to be articulate, vibrant, and vocal; this will act as a check on the leadership, which will assist in reducing the excesses of leadership to the barest minimum (Rikana and Orisa, 2007, p. 111).

The Problem of Followership in Nigeria

1. Followership in Nigeria has some problems that prevent her from playing the roles that can check leadership's excesses. Poverty is one major factor that impairs the role of followership in Nigeria. In Nigeria, rich people are wealthy; the poor are poor; the middle class wobbles between self-sufficiency and poverty. Poor followers are afraid to criticize or checkmate the excesses of their leadership because of fear of oppression from the leadership. A poor followership is a weak and fearful crowd constrained to be docile over her leadership activities.
2. The second problem that confronts followership in Nigeria is ethnicity. Followers pledge loyalty to their tribe first before the more extensive society in Nigeria. Nigerians protect corrupt leaders without integrity and shield them from criticism and prosecution. Even the way we vote or choose leaders is by ethnicity. It is a consensus that he will empower his tribe members first before others. And program some projects to his tribe to empower his people with robust government and corporate contracts. Nigerian followership should free themselves from tribalism and put the interest of Nigeria before their tribal interest, or else the country will continue to wallow poverty and insecurity.
3. Nigerian followers are fond of not telling their leaders the truth. They praise them for telling them lies; as soon as they leave their office that is when followers turn against their leader to criticize his lapses.
4. In this situation, followers remain adamant and aloof of the excesses of leadership activities.
5. Followers sometimes ally with leaders to create trouble in the society so that; they can divert the people's attention to executing their interests.

6. It is a significant problem for followers in Nigeria. Elections in Nigeria are highly manipulating. Leaders do not come to power through the peoples' vote, and they manipulate election results to the extent that the vote cast does not make any meaning. Since people's votes do not count, their opinion undermines. The case of fuel subsidy is a vivid example; despite people's protests, the government stood its ground.
7. Corruption and abuse of office will have reduced tremendously in Nigeria if followers have been bold enough to come out to criticize or challenge the excesses of their leaders (Aluko, 2008, p. 68).

Evolution of Corruption in Nigeria

In Nigeria, corruption is ubiquitous. For this reason, people often wonder how corruption made its way to all aspects of public and private lives. Aluko (2008) identified different types of corruption to include but not limited to disobedience to laws and constituted authority, electoral corruption, moral corruption, and financial corruption (p. 68). However, he maintained that though the corruption of any form is detrimental to national development, today, the worldwide emphasis on corruption centers on financial corruption and its ascribed debilitating effects on the economic development of the world's developing nations. He averred that the essence of financial corruption is bribery, illegal and greedy acquisition of public funds into private pockets, which otherwise would have been an excellent investment for the public good. It is in government circles among the legislators and the executives. Even the judiciary and the bureaucracy are plagues with corruption to the extent that many people have lost confidence.

According to Otite (2006), although the ubiquity of corruption is acknowledged, its magnitude and character are defined by different social and cultural contexts and time dimensions (p. 123). Everybody believes he knows what corruption is and what it is all about; this false claim makes those involved in corrupt practices boldly and openly condemns others who involve in other forms of corruption. Accordingly, Umoh (2001) remarked, "Part of this confusion arises from the fact that opinions differ about the concept of corruption just as the attitudes of people also do towards the practice of corruption itself. What some people regard as corrupt practices are considered acceptable and fair dealings by others," (p. 41). Many authors who traced the origin of corruption in Nigeria's public life unanimously agree that the colonial administration planted this social cancer in Nigerian public life. For example, Lacville (2001) declared,

"African countries have received the benefits of French and British education systems along with their disadvantages," (p. 7). He cited over-invoicing as one corrupt practice introduced into West Africa by Lebanese descendants.

Lacville (2001) added that it is no exaggeration that most government purchases today in the region are subject to over-invoicing (p. 7). Lacville (2001) observed that big kickbacks are in the building and public works and military supply sectors dominated by firms from France, Britain, Italy, Germany, and elsewhere. Both kickbacks and over-invoicing are imports. They import other forms of corrupt practices to Africa by foreigners who colonized Africa (p. 8). Thus, like any other African country, Nigeria also got its ration of corruption. Incidentally, most of these foreigners were religions' affiliates. It was because of corruption by foreigners who colonized Africa that prompted Nkrumah (2002) to declare and urge that "bribery and corruption which had been part and parcel of the colonial set-up must stamp out," (p. 69). Not only did the pilgrim instill corruption into public life, but they also taught traditional rulers how to perpetuate corruption for their advantage.

Apart from introducing corruption into Nigeria directly, the colonial administration also created and stimulated corruption indirectly through its influence. Most people employed in the civil and public services were not faithful to the government because the impression is to create that the government is not of the people (Ehusani, 2004, p. 54). As a result, according to Wraith and Simpkins (2003), it was a habit of Africans irresponsibility towards those in power carried over into the days when the power came to Africans themselves (p. 171). The government was seen as a legitimate ground for plunder. They saw government friends up to a point and as an enemy commanding respect and esteem at the deepest level. The government never won the loyalty or affection of the people. Africans were indifferent to the government (David-West, 2006, p. 16). They are compound by an utmost absence of senior African civil servants trained in honest and responsible attitudes to public business. It was because those who could have trained them were corrupt and misguided foreigners. The desire for big money comes from the West. It is satisfied in the West with taxpayers' money (David-West, 2006, p. 24). Hence, Lacville (2001)) expressed that when the West left Africa at the latter's attainment of independence, the nationalists who took over power from them also took the desire for big money and corruption as a means for achieving it(p. 9).

Factors that promote Corruption in Nigeria

The social habit of several wives and children is another factor that promotes corruption. Akin-George (2005) asserted that the demand for a large family and the pressures from extended family drive the weak-hearted to commit corruption (p. 17). He opined that since our culture imposes the responsibility for extended family and immediate families, some people tend to find unorthodox means of discharging such responsibilities. The white culture introduced to the Africans recognizes only the rich no matter how an individual becomes rich. It also ignores the means to the end even if the rich occupy a position of public trust. It is this kind of person that society sings praise, hails when donating big money at social gatherings, or lavishes ill-gotten money at functions and public places. In contrast, in African tradition, such people were outcasts.

Concurring, as it were, with Umoh (2001), Akin-George (2005) added that it is not uncommon to see corrupt individuals for a string of chieftaincy titles (p. 17). Important streets, schools, hospitals, and public institutions are on their names.

On the other hand, the innocent but poor workers deride their rights. Society's attitude of accepting and approving wealth acquired illegitimately encourages corruption. It makes corruption spread like wildfire and permeates the ranks and files of society. The attitude of looking at those that do not involve in fraudulent and corrupt practices as fools and pretenders and subsequently: scorning and shunning them even on public occasions and in government appointments is a stimulant to corruption (Akin-George, 2005, p. 17). Nigerian society ignores the implications of corruption, and corrupt practices are also looked upon kindly. These circumstances help to increase the rate of corruption in the country. Those that have tried to live as moral men in a corrupt society have generally given way sooner or later under severe pressures. What further compounded the situation is that so little seems to be derived or gained from living a moral life (Akin-George, 2005, p. 17).

Impact of Corruption

Corruption has penetrated every level of Nigerian society. It is in government, science, sports, religion, and business. Ehusani (2004) observed that many Nigerians often fraudulently procure medical fitness certificates from hospitals when they have not undergone any medical tests (p. 54). They also obtain sick leave permits from doctors when they are hale and hearty. According to the same

source, they sometimes falsify the age of their children and obtain fake birth certificates to get them into nursery or primary schools earlier than the law stipulates. Some Nigerians also swear to false affidavits to obtain citizenship certificates and make false age declarations when seeking employment or admission into learning institutions.

The cost of corruption in Nigeria is high. Both high-level and small-scale corruption increased the cost of living, diminished the quality of products, and resulted in fewer jobs and lower wages (Watch Tower, 2005, p. 10). Again as Ehusani (2004) claimed, corruption has bred inefficiency and diminished productivity in both the public and private sectors of the economy (p. 54). The same source concluded that corruption had discouraged investment, fuelled capital flight, increased unemployment, and inflation. Also, creating an acute degree of poverty brought about a severe decline in the quality of life and life expectancy in Nigeria and gave Nigeria and Nigerians a bad image in the international community's eyes. Corruption is an affront to human dignity and an assault on the human conscience. Corruption has undermined good governance, harmed economic efficiency and development, distorted trade, and penalized citizens in the country. Corruption in the country has aborted the nation's potency and productive capacity (Watch Tower, 2005, p. 10). As Watch Tower (2005) opined, the worst part of the entire corruption episode is that, unlike ordinary criminals, corrupt executives and politicians rarely go to jail or make restitution for their ill-gotten gain (p. 9). It is often difficult to expose high-level corruption because of the secret nature of bribes, kickbacks, and payoffs.

Religion and Corruption in Nigeria

In Nigeria, there are many religions; however, according to Pew Research Center (2022), 98.1% of Nigerian populations belong to three of them. These are African Traditional Religion, Islam, and Christianity (n.p). Incidentally, all three religions condemn corruption. As earlier mentioned, more than ninety percent of the Nigerian population belongs to one of these three religions. In the indigenous culture of Africa and traditional religions, wealth acquired illegitimately or by corrupt means was never appreciated by society (Aluko, 2008, p. 68). The individual who acquired wealth by such unapproved means should be working freely in his community. He was neither given any trust or authority in that society nor could he join the company or association of honest and respectable

people. In Nigeria of today, it is the end that justifies the means (Watch Tower, 2005, p. 11).³⁵

Another religion, Christianity, does not condone corruption. Christians rely on the Bible as their guide and constitution. Bible admonishes Christians to abhor corruption. For example, Deuteronomy 10:17, Proverbs 17: 23, and Exodus 23: 8 warn Christians against being partial and taking bribes. ICorinthians 5:9 - 11 urges Christians to quit mixing in company with the following: fornicator, greedy person, extortioner, an idolater, reviler, or a drunkard, all of which are corrupt practices. In Isaiah 33:15, God describes the one who will find his commendation to be "the one who walks in continual righteousness, who speaks what is upright, who rejects dishonest, fraudulent gain whose hands refuse a bribe rather than grabbing it, who closes his ear to talk of bloodshed, and who shuts his eyes to avoid seeing what is bad." At Ephesians 4:28, the Bible admonishes the thief to steal no more. Again in Roman 13:1 - 7 and I Peter 2: 13 - 15, Christians are commanded to be subject to the superior authority and pay tax, fear, and honour superior authority. All these commandments are in the two greatest commandments, the love of God and the nearest. Love of God and love of nearest would not allow any Christian to involve any form of corruption (Matthew 22:37). In other words, all forms of corruption are forbidden in the Bible, as could be seen in the cited scriptures.

Other provisions in the Islamic religion forbid Muslims from engaging in corruption. Holy Qur'an in Chapter 11 Verse 85, which says, "O my people give full measure and Full weight with equity and defraud not people of their things and commit not inequity in the earth causing disorder," (Shehu, 2012, p. 32). Also, Prophet (PBUH) enjoins Muslims to desist from illegal enrichment of themselves, as shown in the Hadith: "The flesh that grows out of unlawful income has no place in the hereafter but hell."

Since most Nigerians are either Christians or Muslims or affiliates of Traditional religions, all of which forbid corruption and show religiosity or outward display of piety. Ehusani (2004) observed that one would have expected to see a very high degree of social morality in Nigeria since their religions do not condone corruption (p. 56). In Nigeria, however, the reverse is the case. There is an embarrassing contradiction between the high ethical demands of the three religions, which most Nigerians profess, and the phenomenon of corruption that has made the country one of the most corrupt countries in the world. It is incredible to observe that when the etiquette and attitude of the faithful religious

ranges against the position of their religions on corruption, they are found wanting. Most government officials accused and convicted of bribery, misappropriation of public funds, and embezzlement are religious adherents. Include former inspector general of police, former governors, former ministers, bank officials, civil servants, and businessmen (Tom, 2013, pp. 88 - 107).

It is evident that many religious leaders extort money from their ignorant followers, violate traffic rules, examine malpractice, sleep with people's wives and keep concubines. They make a showy display of their ill-gotten wealth, lie against the Lord when they say "the Lord says" when the Lord did not say, engage in fraud of all types both in their places of worship and elsewhere, and cheat those who work for them. When they do these things, they know they are involved in one form of corruption or the other. While as a result of their corrupt practices, they are counting their real estate in all parts of the country, flying in private jets, rolling around inexpensive, flashy cars, building private universities with followers' money. And turning around to charge their children exorbitantly and parade themselves as significant persons (very important person - VIP) on public occasions, it is disheartening and appalling to see their followers wallowing in abject poverty because of their corrupt practices (Tom, 2013, p.91).

These days, religious leaders' adherents are worse than those of Jesus days whom he described as corrupt, hypocrites, and greedy. They violate government rules with impunity and throw morally to the dogs. Some religious affiliates in Nigeria are very corrupt and have made Nigeria sick socially, economically, and politically. For example, while most legislators in Nigeria are religious affiliates, it is not uncommon for legislators to be involved in budget padding and requiring presidential or governor's handshake before passing an appropriation bill into law (*The Nations Newspaper*, 2016, p.14).

Similarly, there are reports of school principals who initiate and fully engage in examination misconduct, just as bank executives who are stunt members of religious groups have defrauded the banks and rendered them distressed or tapped from accounts of dormant customers. Government officials give contracts to individuals at inflated rates and get funds for parties in return. Individuals and companies give funds to parties and get contracts from the government that controls such parties in return. In many offices, government clerks collect money before attending to their clients. The party men thumb printed a booklet of 50 ballots and fought at the polling station, just as electoral

officials collected money to change election results (*The Nations Newspaper*, 2016, p. 14).

Thugs shot and maimed people and made away with ballot boxes, and the same way census officials alter census figures in exchange for money. All of them profess one religion or the other. In a similar vein, there are reports and cases of the police officers who collected money at checkpoints and shot those who refused to pay and a police officer who rapped at gunpoint while some abetted crime (Osinbajo, 2017, p. 13). Other known corrupt practices include an elder of a church who slept with his follower's wife and got stuck in (*Global Concord Newspaper*, 2016, p. 8), and a pastor who slept with both the mother and daughter and is standing trial (*Vanguard Newspaper*, 2016, p. 11). In the same vein, there are many cases of Alhaji who defrauded banks and embezzled public funds, herders who destroyed other peoples' farms, maimed helpless children, rapped married women, and killed their husbands (Osinbajo, 2017, p. 13); militants who blow pipelines and bring economic hardship (*The Nations Newspaper*, 2016, p.15). Sadly, those who engaged in all these forms of corruption incidentally are religious affiliates (Osinbajo, 2017, p. 13).

It is also true that terrorists who detonated bombs and killed innocent souls are all religious affiliates and are aware that their actions are against their beliefs. There are also many cases of lecturers who harassed students sexually and engaged in corrupt and unwholesome academic activities or students who are eager and willing to do everything illegal to pass examinations (Udofia, 2010, pp. 9 - 10). The majority of them belong to various religious bodies. In Nigeria, some judges collected bribes and perverted justice, or members of anti-corruption institutions who collected bribes and became accomplices to those they were to fight (*Vanguard Newspaper* 11). Other forms of corruption rampant by the adherent the religious affiliates in Nigeria include cheating, raping, assassination, kidnapping, robbery, thievery, and armed robbery (*The Nations Newspaper*, 2016, p. 15). They have all failed to live by what they claim. That is the reason Nigeria is an affiliate of corruption. Upon all these, there is hardly any instance where religions are seen or heard sanctioning or calling to order their erring members that have engaged in numerous acts of corruption.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The importance of followership in any society or organization is essential if such society and operation succeed in achieving its set vision, goals, and objectives.

Over the years, Nigerian followers have not been able to satisfy their desires. The integrity and skills of leadership will go a long way to rebuild confidence in leadership and followership relationship, rather than oratory and charisma. Their determination to fight corruption in the paradigm shift should be unwavering. Followership has some responsibilities to accomplish in other to sustain a harmonious leadership and followership relationship. They should cultivate an excellent public opinion pool to check leadership since submission will plunder them into dictatorship and underdevelopment.

As proposed at the beginning of this work, religion can be a veritable instrument for combating corruption if the religious affiliates are the hearers of the word and the doers. They should not continue to lead a double life or remain hypocrites. They should allow their religions to mold them and transform them. Nigerians who belong to different religions must allow their faith to thrive by work. They must allow what they learn from their religious doctrines to transform them into biblical Matthew, Paul, and Zacchaeus in the New Testament. This study observed that religious adherents paid only lip services to their religious doctrines, which forbid corruption. It is evident in the high prevalence of all forms of corruption in Nigeria, ranging from embezzlement of public funds to immoral behavior in Nigerians' public and private lives.

This paper recommends that leadership and followership relationships be harmonious to enable the society or group to achieve its vision and set goals. Followership should adopt a new paradigm shift where values leadership traits, integrity, and other discussed qualities will serve as the basis for consideration or conceding leadership. To eliminate and close possible loopholes through which corrupt society, existing anti-corruption laws and instruments should be scrutinized and synchronized with the religious laws and doctrines. New and adequate anti-corruption laws that can cope with the present level of technology applied in the practice of corruption ought to be faithfully in force. Above all, it is the responsibility of the different religious groups to assist their members in making their different religious doctrines their way of life.

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