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Corruption in Zimbabwe, the Causes

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Abstract:

The purpose of this research was to establish the factors that cause corruption in Zimbabwe. The research employed both qualitative and quantitative research designs (mixed methodology). Data was solicited from the ordinary members of the through in-depth interviews and questionnaires. The research revealed that poverty, greed, socio-economic status, human rights and politics are some of the main factors that contribute towards corrupt practices in Zimbabwe. The research recommended that the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) should be given more powers to deal with corrupt since high ranking officials were using loopholes in the available corruption instruments to avert arrest. It was also recommended that workshops for all government officials be continuously held especially on the forms and indicators (Early Warning Systems) of corruption. Improving the quality of life for all workers through awarding good remuneration was also found to be one of the ways to curb corruption. More importantly there is need for the country's legislature to enact and enforce laws and policies on zero tolerance to corruption and subsequently putting in place very stiff penalties.

Keywords: Corruption; Democracy; Development; Governance; Grand corruption; Independent Media; Media; Petty corruption; Public corruption

1. Introduction

A lot has been said about corruption the world over. According to Transparency International (online) "Corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. It hurts everyone who depends on the integrity of people in a position of authority." Scholars also note that corruption can be classified into two broad categories, state capture and administrative corruption. State capture takes place when a framework of laws and rules has been distorted. This form of corruption is characterised by enactment of laws and rules, policies and regulations that are influenced through illegal and non-transparent ways, as well as serving private interests. Administration corruption is about distortion of the implementation of these laws and policies. It refers to the "intentional imposition of distortion in the prescribed implementation of existing laws, rules and regulations to provide advantage to either state or non-state actors as a result of illegal transfer or concentration of private gains to public officials".

Cameron et al (2008) posits that corruption is a violation of the norms of duty and welfare, accompanied by secrecy, betrayal, deception and callous disregard for any consequence suffered by the public. It is a misuse of public authority. Wadyewata (2000:16) also concurs that "we can probably create a semantic dichotomy between the two types of corruption." The one type is the corruption of a moral kind. This category includes terms like pervasion, depravity, degradation, pollution and dissolution. The single most important element in this type of corruption is that, it is rooted in the fabric of the person as an individual. The second type of corruption is a calculated Machiavellian type. It is deliberate, premeditated dishonesty. It can be characterized by the second set of terms such as vice and abandon.

In recent years Zimbabwe has witnessed cases of corruption involving big business and highly placed individuals in society. Cases of petty corruption have also been reported. Petty corruption is characterized by small bribes in exchange for favours either by public officials by small to medium level business people. Since the year 2000, Zimbabwe has been experiencing serious economic decline as a result of the economic sanctions imposed by the United States and its allies such as Britain and Australia. The country is greatly endowed with natural resources and technocrats. These and other factors helped the country to solidify on. After the harmonised elections held on 31 July 2013 the government came up with a very good blueprint code named the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET). As a result of this blueprint some economic gains have been made. However, the gains seem very difficult to be consolidated as a result of the threat posed by corruption. The president Cde Robert Mugabe has made serious resolutions to deal with the vice but there seem to be so many factors militating against his call to curb corruption and these are the ones that the study sought to highlight.

2. Literature Survey

Corruption has been reported in both the private and public media in Zimbabwe for a long time but it appears it is on the rise with each year. Even renowned music guru Thomas Mapfumo coined a song "Corruption" in the mid 1980s but no solution appears to be in sight.

Both former and present top Zimbabwe government officials have been accused of being involved in corrupt activities. Corruption cases that have been reported by the media include the war victims' compensation fund scandal in which top government officials were allegedly accused of looting the fund, the Willowvale scandal in which government ministers were accused of using their positions, authority and power to cheaply procure scarce motor vehicles from Willowvale Motors Assembly Plant and sold them at a profit. According to *The Standard*, (25/03/12), the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) was reported to have been looted by Cabinet ministers and Members of Parliament (MPs). There have been reports of multiple farm ownership by some high ranking government officials under the Land Reform Programme, criminal abuse of office by public prosecutors and police officials and ghost workers in the civil service (*Daily News* 10/07/11).

Corruption is not only confined to Zimbabwe. It has become an increasingly observable phenomenon in the world over. Reports of corruption have been recorded in United States (US), Europe, Asia and Australia. Corruption is also reported to be at the centre stage in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Indonesia. Corruption retards development.

Corruption is a disease as the whole world is prone to it. Greed is usually the most universal of this deadly sin. Selby (1995) argues that, first all, corruption stems from poverty, that is, when poor people who have never had anything suddenly accede to power, with its perks and comforts and above all, its access to public funds, the temptations are often too great to resist. Ankomar (2010) posits that greed in particular has been the mainstay of political activity across the political divide in Africa.

Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole continues to be either off-track or making slow progress toward the goals due to socio-economic status corruption. Six of the top ten countries on the 2006 Failed States Index published by foreign Policy are in Africa: Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Cote d'Ivoire, Zimbabwe, Chad and Somalia. Aderinwale (1995) also adds that in seeking to prevent corruption, donor governments more and more have to engage with the internal governance and politics of these states. Poverty is one of the biggest obstacles to economic development. Blair et al (2005) argue that there is no point in helping poor countries with corrupt leaders because they will do a "Mobutu" and waste the money. World Bank's anti-corruption drive, under the leadership of Paul Wolfowitz, declared: "The fight against corruption is a part of the fight against poverty, not just because corruption is wrong and bad but because it really retards economic development." (Chang, 2008). As a result, the World Bank suspended loan disbursements to several developing countries, including Zimbabwe, on grounds of socio-economic status corruption.

Corruption is a big problem in many developing countries and is a violation of the trust vested by its stakeholders in the holders of offices in a government. At the other extreme, we have countries like Finland, Sweden and Singapore, which are known for their cleanliness and have also done very well economically. According to Rodney (1989), some other countries like Italy, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and China have done even better despite ingrained corruption on a widespread and often massive scale.

Most of today's rich countries successfully industrialized despite the fact that their public life was spectacularly corrupt as Nield (2002) argues. Turner (2007) further argues that, in Britain and France, the open sale of public offices was a common practice. In Britain, until the early 19th century, it was considered perfectly normal for ministers to borrow their departmental funds for personal profit. Appointments of high ranking civil servants were made on the basis of patronage, rather than merit. In the USA, public offices were allocated to the loyalists of the ruling party regardless of their professional qualifications.

It does not necessarily mean that corruption has negative effects on economic efficiency and growth as Nield (2002) argues. For example, if a minister or some other public official, take bribes from a capitalist investing that money in another project that is at least as productive as that which the capitalist would have otherwise invested in, the venality involved may have no effect on the economy in terms of efficiency and growth, that is, it is a question of income distribution.

A critical issue in this regard is whether the dirty money stays in the country. If the bribe is deposited in a Swiss bank, it cannot contribute to creating further income and jobs through investment. Indeed, this is one of the main reasons for the difference between Zimbabwe and Indonesia. In Indonesia, the money from corruption mostly stayed inside the country, creating jobs and incomes. In Zimbabwe, much of the corrupt money was shipped out of the country. The argument here is that, if you must have corrupt leaders, you at least want them to keep their loot at home.

According to Aderinwale (1995), corruption may also distort government decisions by hampering regulation. If a water company supplying sub-standard water can continue the practice by bribing the relevant officials, there will be negative economic consequences, that is, a higher incidence of water-borne diseases that will increase healthcare costs and in turn reduce labour productivity. Barber (2008) argues that if the regulation was an unnecessary one, corruption may increase economic efficiency. For example, before the legal reform in 2000, opening a factory in Vietnam required the submission of dozens of documents including 20 or so issued by the government. It is said to have taken between six and twelve months to prepare all the paperwork and get all the necessary approvals.

In such a situation, it may be better if the potential investor bribes the relevant government officials and gets the licence quickly. The investor wins by earning more money, it may be argued, the consumer gains by having his or her demand satisfied more quickly and the government officials gain by getting richer, though there is a breach of confidence and the government loses legitimate revenue. For this reason, it has often been argued that bribery may enhance the economic efficiency of an over-regulated economy by re-introducing market forces, if through illegal means.

The main purpose of this research was to establish the causes of corruption which has been on the increase since independence in 1980 in Zimbabwe.

3. Methodology

The research employed both qualitative and quantitative research designs (mixed methodology). To get as much information as possible, ordinary members of the public were involved in this research and data was collected through in-depth interviews and questionnaires. In this study, questionnaires were used on a large scale to collect information relating to the causes of corruption in Zimbabwe. Pre-testing of the questionnaires was done prior distribution to check on their workability such as to test whether the questions actually asked what the researcher intended. It gave the researcher the last chance to make amendments before the main distribution was done. Thus the questionnaire allowed anonymity because no respondent was asked to write his or her name on the questionnaire during its use. Hence the respondents could respond to the questionnaires without fear of victimization thereby ensuring validity and reliability of data. The open-ended form off the questionnaires enabled the respondents to state their answers freely. In addition, it allowed respondents time to consider the necessary answers to items in the questionnaire. Newspapers, texts, magazines, journals, documents and relevant sources from various authors on the subject of corruption were consulted.

4. Findings

From the research, poverty, greed, politics, human rights violation and finally socio-economic status were the main causes of corruption in Zimbabwe. Most of the participants highlighted that poverty among the poorly remunerated civil servants was the main cause of corruption. Poorly remunerated civil servants engaged in corrupt activities in order to complement their meagre salaries to make ends meet. Out of mere greediness, those in power and in charge of resources had to a large extent enriched themselves and in the process this left the ordinary citizens poor. Violation of human rights was also cited as one of the causes of corruption in Zimbabwe. The research participants highlighted that political instability in Zimbabwe encouraged corruption in government ministries. Socio-economic status was also cited as encouraging tendencies of corruption in government circles. The abuse of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) by Cabinet Ministers and Members of Parliament, in which there was a call to arrest legislators only was seen as being corrupt by members of the public. In summary, factors such as poverty, greed, politics, socio-economic status and human right violations contributed to corruption in Zimbabwean government ministries.

5. Discussion and Analysis

From the research, it was revealed that corruption which has been on the rise in Zimbabwe since independence in 1980 has been detrimental to both development and social harmony. Results from the research highlighted that corruption in Zimbabwe is as a result of poverty, greed, politics, human right violations and socio-economic status. There was the existence of a vicious cycle that linked poverty and corruption. Poverty frequently caused corruption or made its effects worse, by virtue of factors such as malnutrition, inadequate housing, and dangerous work in hazardous conditions, poor quality medical treatment, and inadequate access to services. Poor people were likely to face barriers to their inclusion in educational opportunities and to their access to health care, and employment, which in turn perpetuated their poverty in Zimbabwe. Poverty had disproportionate impact on males and females.

In rural Zimbabwe, most of the caring as well as much of the production was done by women. Girls were frequently withdrawn from school to fend for their families. Poor people in terms of money, power, and rights were often invisible to the providers of health care, education, basic goods and are often frequent victims of sexual abuse. According to O'Donnell (1992:171) woman suffer discrimination because of their sex." The Marxist Theory attempted to explain how the legal status of a woman had evolved into that of the private property of her husband. The fight for liberation of women must be directed to all these corrupt practices by men upon women. Independent media such as the News Day (2011) revealed that opposition members are among the poorest of the poor, the most disempowered and the most in need. Corruption was damaging for the reason that important decisions were determined by ulterior motives, with no concern for the consequences to the wider poverty-stricken community. Due to corruption, the cost of goods and services were raised and consequently, the debt of the country increased. In addition, corruption led to the lowering of standards, for example, sub-standard goods were provided and inappropriate or unnecessary technology was acquired thus threatening the viability of democratic institutions and market economies. In a corrupt environment, resources are directed towards non-productive areas as Barber (2008) argued. Some argued that corruption can have other beneficial effects such as non-violent access to government affairs and administration, when political channels are clogged or as a means of lessening the potentially crippling tension between the civil servants and the politician by linking them in an easily discerned network of self-interest. However, counter arguments here are that, corruption led to economic inefficiency and waste because of its effects on the allocation of funds, on production and on consumption. Gains obtained through corruption are unlikely to be transferred to the investment sector, for example, ill-gotten money is either used in conspicuous consumption or is transferred to foreign bank accounts, representing a capital leakage to the domestic economy as Aderinwale (1995) posits.

Some research participants highlighted that some public officials abused political power to make their ends meet. Some government officials employed dirty tricks to enrich themselves. Political corruption was the use of legislated powers by government officials for illegitimate private gain. The impact of this was phenomenally ruinous. The Daily News (2012) reported on politicians who publicly recruited people from their home areas for employment in both the public and private sectors. There was an element of public endorsement for corrupt exclusion of other people from benefits that are meant to be for all citizens. Corruption in the judiciary compromised the role of law in Zimbabwe as reported by The Financial Gazette (13 March 2012). There are numerous allegations of selective application of the law, altering of charges and in some cases public officials from the judiciary had been prosecuted while others had been convicted. A Bulawayo High Court said that there should be zero tolerance to corruption in the country's courts as some officials were routinely accepting bribes to throw away cases. Some prosecutors, magistrates, clerks and other court officials engaged in corrupt practices boasting that they never get jailed because they had money. This meant that it was the poor who had no money who only ended up doing jail time. In public administration, corruption

had often resulted in insufficient provision of services and in Zimbabwe; the urban local governments had of late become notorious for poor service delivery and hyper-corruption. According to the Daily News (2012) corruption was seen as a cancer to be fought with relentless determination. The Zimbabwean government appeared content not only to live with the disease, but to allow it to flourish unchecked among close political associates.

Corruption has had drastic effects on humanitarian aid in Zimbabwe. This ranged from diversion of food aid, selling of food aid, exclusion of others, to soliciting for bribes, sexual and other forms of favours. According to the Daily News of 21 September 2011, some Grain Marketing Board (GMB) officials were reportedly working with syndicates buying maize from villagers and promptly paying their proxies at the expense of poor farmers. The maize was then sold to GMB at exorbitant prices.

As reported by the independent media Zimbabwe was caught up in an economic recession never seen before. There was no doubting that Zimbabwe had collapsed because of unprecedented corruption in all facets of the society. Corruption had taken an ugly face primarily because it was being fuelled by the current macro-economic environment which was characterized by scarcity of most basic commodities. Zimbabwe made international headlines for the wrong reasons. The Financial Gazette (1989) reported that once envied and revered for being the breadbasket of Africa, she was now a laughing stock for being an empty basket. Once the best educated in Africa, Zimbabwe was hit by the worst brain drain. Media perceptions revealed that Zimbabwe experienced one of the worst political and economic crises because of mainly corruption by public officials. Corruption became the ocean we swim in and the air we breathe destroying the aspirations for a decent life and a hopeful future.

Corruption was also linked to violations of human rights. There were widespread reports and perceptions from independent media in Zimbabwe of systematic and escalating violations of human rights especially before the signing of the GPA. According to Human Rights Organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, the government of Zimbabwe violated the rights to shelter, food, freedom of movement, freedom of expression, freedom of residence, freedom of association or assembly and the protection of the law. These were assaults on the media, the political opposition, civil society activists and human rights defenders. Opposition gatherings were frequently the subject of brutal attacks by the police force, such as the crackdown on a March 11 2007 MDC rally. The Financial Gazette (2010) reported that in the events, party leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, and other opposition activists were arrested and severely beaten by the police. The police action was strongly condemned by the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, the EU and United States.

According to The Financial Gazette, in May 2005, the government embarked on Operation Murambatsvina, a programme of mass forced evictions and demolition of homes and informal businesses in poor urban areas. Examining the result of the operation, Anna Tibaijuka, the UN Special Envoy on Human Settlement Issues in Zimbabwe, reported that some 700 000 people had lost their homes, their livelihoods or both, and that a further 2,4 million people had been affected in varying degrees. The Special Envoy also reported that the operation was carried out in an indiscriminate and unjustified manner, with indifference to human suffering and in repeated cases, with disregard to several provisions of national and international legal frameworks. The operation was said to have violated several key human rights, including the right to life, property and freedom of movement (Aderinwale, 1995).

The research participants noted that Social Status contributed to corruption. The independent media of Zimbabwe was awash with reports of corruption by local authorities through their upper echelons of the Zimbabwe's inclusive government. The GNU was founded, among other things, to deal with corruption and strengthen accountability mechanisms and ensured there was transparency in the allocation and use of public resources. The recent reports of high level corruption ministers had not been investigated by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) or the police. For example, the Finance Minister Biti said that treasury was not receiving funds from the diamond mining. (The Financial Gazette 2010).

According to the News Day of 15 March 2012, the ACC should remain steadfast for example, Attorney General Tomana's order to stop the arrest of MPs over the abuse of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) "...converting US\$50 000 CDF allocations for personal use." The paper argued that the ACC should investigate all cases thoroughly without fear, favour or prejudice. Instead of being part of the cure to fight corruption, the AG was proving to be part of the problem. According to the Marxist Theory, rookies are taught the corrupt behaviour and the acceptance of such behaviour by veterans who learnt the behaviour from yet others, and if not stopped, the rookies will pass the behaviour on to an entirely new crop of public officers as Delattre (2006) posited.

From the research, greed had a bearing on the attitudes of public officials towards corruption. Blair et al (Ed) (2005) suggested that lack of special training was one of the major reasons for government officials feeling insecure about their offices after elections. Maphai (Ed) (2001) agreed that the issue of corruption added insult to injury as the public officials were not concerned about the welfare of the masses at large. This point, in line with the Marxist theory, stated that what made people behave one way or another were the leaders. (Cameron et al 2008). Therefore, corruption not only cushioned the effects of corruption, but also an instrument of that corruption. Greed in particular had been the mainstay of political activity across the political divide in Zimbabwe. Those with access and power to control resources had, to a large extent, enriched themselves and bled the country out of its last vestiges of survival and this worsened rural and urban poverty as Ankomar (2011) argued. This sad scenario was directly linked to the high levels of corruption and greed in the country. The advent of the land reform programme could not have come at any better time for these greed public officials. The Financial Gazette (2009) reported that what started as a genuine policy of social justice in Zimbabwe degenerated into a national disaster primarily because of the opportunistic and greedy politicians. It was saddening to note that some of these greed opportunists were ironically people who were respected and tasked with the responsibility to oversee the land distribution programme itself. News in the Daily News (2010), an independent media in Zimbabwe, recently pointed that certain ruling party and government bigwigs continued to invade farms and were chasing away the remaining productive white commercial farmers. These greed opportunists made life in Zimbabwe very difficult. The country was running excluded from benefiting from debt forgiveness by the world's wealthiest nations because of political greed. Any

further isolation of Zimbabwe largely influenced by greed and opportunism increased the suffering of the already impoverished and disenfranchised Zimbabweans.

The News Day (2010) reported that the sanctions regimes imposed by the West on Zimbabwe were actually hurting the poor more than the intended targets. The unbridled greediness continues to relentlessly bleed the economy further with no signs of abating. Given the calibre of public officials in Zimbabwe today, rebuilding the country was an uphill struggle unless greed and opportunism were eliminated. It was unfortunate that greed in particular had increased the levels of corruption and economic decay in Zimbabwe.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

From the research, it was revealed that there was a hindrance on to how effectively handle corrupt public officials. The study also concluded that there was need for in-service training or workshops for public officials for them to effectively deal with the menace of corruption. It was also noted that most public officials turned a blind eye or a deaf ear on the general consequences of corruption to the population as a whole. For example, this conclusion is related to the powers of the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) in dealing with political corruption. The ACC is legal framework governing all the corruption cases of Zimbabwe including those in government circles. However, the ACC does not have adequate powers to deal with cases especially those that have something to do with political corruption. The study also established that there are many factors that influence corruption in Zimbabwean government ministries chief among which are poverty, politics, human rights violations, greed and socio-economic status. A conclusion can be drawn that political greed and opportunism had become fashionable in Zimbabwean government ministries. Nothing seemed to satiate greed and public officials were practicing corruption in perpetuity. It was also saddening to note that some public officers were ironically using their socio-economic status to access valuable resources illegally. What started as a genuine land reform policy in Zimbabwe degenerated into a near national disaster primarily because of the corrupt government official who owned multiple farms using their socio-economic status. It was also concluded that the vicious circle of poverty in Zimbabwe was hardly broken due to corruption in government circles. The corrupt public officials got richer and the poor lived below the poverty datum line because of these corrupt officers who are respected and tasked with the responsibility to oversee the welfare of the poverty stricken. For example, the looting of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) money by Members of Parliaments in 2012 and no arrests were done.

The recommendations are based on the findings. There is need for the government to prioritize effective in-service or workshops on corruption for all public officials time and again. Lack of training especially on political corruption is the reason for public officials to feel insecure about executing their duties. There is need for the introduction of fair and effective poverty alleviation programmes especially in the rural areas of Zimbabwe. Currently, there exists a vicious cycle that links poverty and corruption. There is need to make regular follow ups in, for example, drought relief and food aid programmes as this would assist in reducing corruption among public officials and consequently ensure effective service delivery. Thirdly, there is need by the law enforcement to avoid the selective application of the law due to the socio-economic status of some respectable public officials. Currently, there are many media reported cases of impunity, especially during the land reform programme and the abuse of the CDF by some greed ministers or MPs. The ACC should have more powers to take stern measures against corrupt people. This may also help allay fears about political corruption by civil servants. There is need to create human rights awareness by all people as a strategy that can be employed to reduce corruption in Zimbabwean government ministries. The government may effectively embark on outreach programmes to teach people about corrupt practices, especially by government officials. This would assist in the alleviation of corruption as the populous will be aware of corrupt practices. Finally, service delivery in Zimbabwe is slowly improving with the introduction of the ACC. There is need to continue coming up with more corruption control measures so as to create an at least corruption free government which is responsive to the needs of the population as a whole.

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