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Ethical Leadership for Nigeria's Development: An Ibibio Virtue Ethics Approach

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims to show the application of Ibibio (African) ethics in solving major moral problems in Nigeria's leadership crisis inimical to development in Nigeria. It attempts to explore the philosophical missing link between leadership and development in Nigeria. In Ibibio traditional society, the shared norms are what define the culture of the Ibibio people. Prohibitions concerning issues like stealing, embezzlement of public funds, and corruption, among others attract societal disapproval and punishment, serving as a deterrent to others and thus engendering positive values through abstention. What held the nation back and has continued to do so is rooted in the lack of ethical leadership. The greatest issue in leadership in Africa, particularly Nigeria, is that of moral bankruptcy - a complete lack of ethics and ethical principles among leaders. African ethics was employed to achieve the purpose of the paper. This work argues that the missing link between leadership and development in Nigeria is ethics in leadership. This paper concludes that sustainable development would be illusive unless there is a paradigm shift from the present self-centred leadership paradigm to African ethics and principles as exemplified in Ibibio ethical leadership.

KEYWORDS: *Ibibio Ethics, Leadership, Nigeria's Development, Corruption, Ethical leadership, Virtue-based Ethics*

I.   INTRODUCTION

Sadly, in recent times, we have witnessed too many moral leadership failures in Nigeria. National newspapers and news magazines are awash with stories of alleged and proven cases of unethical conduct of leaders in every sector of the country. It has become necessary to question how immoral practices by Nigerian leaders have affected development challenges across all sectors of the country and also exposing the damaging and injurious consequences of these practices on human and infrastructural developments. The proliferation of scandal concerning unethical behaviour of leaders in every sector of society - educational, governmental, business, political, institutional, and even religious bodies makes it seem like we are in a state of leadership crisis. The ethical problems of leaders often stem from the abuse of power, greed, and selfishness. There is no doubt that one of the major challenges confronting Nigeria's development is corrupt and unethical leadership.

One of the major hindrances to development in Nigeria is corruption by leaders. Among other things, corruption and other unethical practices understate democratic governance and stability and scare away the needed foreign investment that would have conduced in reducing the rate of unemployment. For instance, within a span of twenty years, the country earned a total of USD 300 billion or NGN 46.5 trillion from the sale of crude oil in the international market. Yet, there are no corresponding human and infrastructural developments to show for it due to the embezzlement of public funds by government officials (World Bank 38). One wonders how this monster called corruption made its way into our public life as a people in this country. The questions that are begging for answers are: How did we get here as a people? How can we get out?

This study is an attempt to answer these questions of importance; the study illustrates how ethical (Ibibio ethics) leadership can bring about the desired development in Nigeria. To achieve these purposes, we employ African ethics as a paradigm for ethical leadership. African ethics is defined by Kwesi Wiredu "as the observance of rules for the harmonious adjustment of the interest of the individual to those of others in society" (210). To avoid the accusation of over-generalization and to better place African ethics within a socio-cultural context, the Ibibio cultural paradigm is our focus in this study. The Ibibio community is found in Akwa Ibom State, in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Although the paper is not based on historical accounts, a study of the historical background is necessary to trace the time of departure and neglect of the traditional cherished ethical values of the Ibibio society and Nigeria as a whole. But before that, it is imperative we start with the conceptual clarification of the three major terms: leadership, ethics, and development.

Conceptual Clarification of Terms

For conceptual clarification and to reduce the level of vagueness, which as a rule is the characteristic of academic research, it is vital to examine some of the concepts and terms that are used in this work: Leadership, ethics, development.

Leadership

The notion "leadership" is derived from the word "lead" which has its root from the Old English word *laedan,* meaning "cause to go with oneself; march at the head of, go before as a guide, accompany and show the way; carry on; sprout forth, bring forth; pass (one's life)" (www.etymonline.com). Etymologically, leadership means the ability to guide, direct, or influence people. Oates and Dalmau maintain that leadership is "the act of helping, guiding and influencing people to act toward achieving a common goal" (20). Munroe (19) sees leadership as "the exercise of power and authority in mobilizing resources and influencing the behaviours of the followers to move towards a chosen direction and achieve the objectives and goals of the organization". Similarly, Yukl defines leadership as:

> the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives(8).

From the above definitions, one common theme that integrates these leadership definitions is influence. It then can be surmised that the essence of leadership is to influence and direct people towards achieving a commonly shared goal or objective. Hence, anyone that can influence and direct people to achieve a collective or common purpose is a leader. Moreover, these definitions of leadership emphasize the role of leadership in the continued existence and development of any group, organization, or society as a whole. The level of development achieved by any organization or society is determined by the quality of its leadership.

It is useful to state that leadership in the context of this paper refers not only to the political or governmental leadership, but embraces the totality of persons that can exert influence on others, both in public Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), and private organizations, to achieve the purpose of an organization, group or nation. In other words, no matter the way a leader emerges, through an election, appointment, promotion, selection, or any other means, his or her job is to lead. There are different aspects of leadership. Leadership goes beyond political leadership to organizational, religious, traditional, institutional, and even minor groups such as family, club, and association.

Ethics

Ethics is derived from the Greek word *ethos* and is synonymous with "moral" because the Latin word *mores*, from which moral is derived, represents the Greek word *ethos*. They both connote "custom or way of life". Ethics refers to the study of morals and relates to moral principles, values, and rules of conduct governing the individual or a community, whereas moral concerns the distinction between good and bad or right and wrong. Given this, the terms "ethical" and "moral" are used interchangeably in this paper.

The meaning of ethics can be understood after its definition is clearly stated. Omoregbe defines ethics as "the branch of philosophy which deals with the morality of human actions; or as the branch of philosophy which studies the norm of human behaviour" (3-4). Lillie sees ethics as the "normative science of the conduct of human beings living in societies" (1-2). According to Lacey, ethics can be defined as "an inquiry into how men ought to act in general, not as a means to a given end but as an end in itself" (60). These definitions imply that ethics deals with how we ought to live. It is a social activity that concerns itself with the morality of human conduct and human actions and conduct form its core and subject matter. In other words, ethics is the study of standards for determining what behaviour is good and bad or right and wrong.

Development

The concept 'development' has its root in the French word *veloper* meaning to wrap. To "de-velop" therefore means to "un-wrap" or to change and become larger, stronger or more impressive, successful or advanced. In general terms, 'development' means an "event constituting a new stage in a changing situation" (www.oxforddictionaries.com). Development is a broad concept that involves socio-cultural, economic, political, and human development. This had led to an array of definitions from different scholars. From the liberal perspective, Meier sees development as "the maximization of the growth of GNP through capital accumulation and industrialization" (6). Similarly, Todaro defines development as "the capacity of a national economy, whose initial economic condition has been more or less static to generate and sustain an annual increase in its Gross National Product (GNP) at rates of perhaps 5 to 7 percent or more" (87). The conception of a country's development in terms of Gross National Product is a one-sided and defective assessment of a country's development. Development is not entirely an economic phenomenon but rather a many-sided process of improvement in the entire economic and social system. Hence, the notion of development that fails to address poverty, unemployment, and social inequality can hardly be considered as development.

Human development is the foundation on which other notions of development are based. Human beings are the agents of change in any society. From a human–centred development perspective, Korten (57) defines development as:

> a process by which the members of a society increase their personal and institutional capacities to mobilise and manage resources to produce sustainable and justly distributed improvements in their quality of life consistent with their aspirations.

This presupposes the fact that the essence of development is to create an enabling environment for the members of society, to increase their potential capabilities to improve the quality of human lives for both the present and future generations. Development is also associated with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with emphasis on the elimination of poverty, hunger, child mortality, good health and well-being, quality education, clean water, and sanitation, among other factors that impede human development.

Ibibio Virtue Ethics and Ethical Principles

It is pertinent for us at this juncture, to mention that this paper is the second paper derived from a study conducted in 2017 with a grant from the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), Nigeria. The research grant topic is "Rethinking Leadership for Nigeria's Development: An Ibibio Ethics as Paradigm to Ethical Leadership". The first paper derived from the aforementioned research work is titled "Leadership Ethics: An African Virtue Ethics Approach to Leadership Ethics" (Okpo 29) which explores an African philosophical-normative approach to leadership ethics. It offers new insight into the ethics of leaders and leadership literature from an Ibibio ethics perspective. In the field of leadership ethics, most of the literature comes from management and social sciences while this present paper seeks to explore the philosophical missing link between leadership and development in Nigeria. It should be noted that some parts of this section contain excerpts from the Ibibio virtue ethics segment of the first paper (Okpo 32-34). Our aim in this section is to examine some basic tenets of Ibibio virtue ethics.

Within the philosophical lens of normative ethics, there are three major ethical theories: teleological (consequence-based theory), deontological (duty-based theory), and virtue-based theories. The teleological theory emphasizes the utilitarian outcomes or results of actions, that is, actions are considered ethical if the outcome or result is viewed as beneficial. It focuses on the consequences of individual action, their moral goodness, and badness; whereas, the deontological theories focus mainly on the principles of action, on their universality and justification. Although teleological and deontological theories differ in many respects, they have one thing in common: they are concerned with principles and standards for evaluating moral behaviour. They focus on what humans should do, not on the kind of person humans ought to be. Rather than seeing the concern of ethics to be in actions or duties, virtue-based ethical theories focus on the moral agent, the character, and dispositions of persons. Moore contends that "virtue ethics emphasizes the character of a moral agent as a driving force for ethical behaviour" (659). The import of this is that ethical actions of an individual applying virtue ethics should be a reflection of the moral character of the individual.

Our focus in this paper is virtue-based theories. The classic Greek philosophers were the first in Western history to discuss virtue ethics. Although Socrates and his student Plato wrote on the topic, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is widely viewed as the most prominent early work on virtue ethics. Ibibio ethics belongs to the class of virtue-based ethics. Virtue-based ethics is sometimes called *aretaic* from the Greek *arête* translated as 'excellence or virtue' in which morality is internal and the key to good conduct lies not in rules or rights, but the traditional notion of moral character. Hence, virtue-based ethics strives to produce excellent individuals who both act well out of unprompted virtuousness, and serve as an example to inspire others.

What then is virtue? The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* defines virtue "as moral goodness of character and behaviour; a particular good quality in someone's character" (1597). Oakley and Cooking assert that "virtues are character traits which we need to live humanly flourishingly lives" (18). Williams describes virtue as "a disposition of character to choose or reject actions because they are of a certain ethically relevant kind" (8-9). The import of these definitions is that virtue has to do with conducts and behaviours that show high moral norms and standards in an individual that is essential for a good life. The questions that come to mind are: How is virtue defined, conceived, and explained in Ibibio culture? What are virtuous acts?

Societies everywhere in the world have expectations of all their citizens. The Ibibio traditional society saw certain values and virtues as being imperative for the sustenance and maintenance of peace and harmony in the society. To this end, the Ibibio believe that the citizens as rational human beings will always allow reason to guide their actions and conducts, to keep society from falling apart, and to promote human flourishing against human suffering. These virtues shaped behaviour and fostered togetherness among the citizens. The Ibibio has an intuitive knowledge of goodness; s/he knows the difference between a good thing and a bad one. A good thing is *eti nkpÖ* while a bad one is *idiok nkpÖ*. S/he knows when his/her conscience pricks him/her hence, the saying: *ama asin nkpÖ* ke *abek ifia, ame adunyene* (when you carry a bundle of firewood containing an unlawful thing, you must be afraid to put it down).

Consequently, Ibibio virtue-based ethics stresses both positive and negative virtues. Ukpong (95) presents a list of both the positive and negative virtues of the Ibibio. The positive virtues include chastity, hospitality especially to strangers, truthfulness, capacity to refrain from theft, respect for elders, humility, community fellow-feeling, live-and-let-live, altruism, fairness in judgement, moderation, and so on. While the negative virtues are "do not defame", "do not gossip", "do not laugh at a cripple, hunchback" and so on. Hence, for the Ibibio, virtue is the accomplishment of any good behaviour or moral conduct and the act of refraining from immoral conduct.

Going by the positive and negative virtues, we can determine what vices are for the Ibibio. They are the act of refraining from moral behaviour or conduct. Vices will include but are not limited to the following: selfishness, lying, falsehood, greed, avarice, theft, stealing, adultery, character assassination, dishonesty, witchcraft, fornication, pride, individualism, and gossip. Virtues are values to be desired, encouraged, and enforced, while vices are to be avoided for the good of every member of society as a whole. A virtuous act benefits not just the individual, but the society; it engenders the spirit of oneness, solidarity, and peaceful communal coexistence. A vicious act, on the other hand, is toxic to both the individual and society. Hence, moral life is a life commitment to the development of both the positive and negative virtues for the good of the individual and society as a whole.

Deviance on the part of a member is very much discouraged among the Ibibio. The Ibibio traditional society, like every other human society, develops a set of norms and values against which behaviour within the society is judged. Social values and norms are therefore the primary sources of order in society (Ekong 129). It is pertinent to examine how the Ibibio culture regards one or two of the vices mentioned above and how bad deeds were discouraged.

The Ibibio regard stealing as one of the worst vicious acts. No Ibibio person likes to be called a thief or be associated with a thief. Punishment for stealing was immediate, severe, and public. The traditional Ibibio society did these to discourage stealing at all levels. With the ushering in of the values of the West, this custom has died away and thieves multiply in numbers and triumph in Ibibio land today (Udo 190). Another vicious act that was always condemned and seriously discouraged by the Ibibio is falsehood or lie. Lie in the traditional Ibibio society was frowned at, and serious measures were taken to punish liars. The early Ibibio society devised means of detecting liars: these included *Ukang or Afia* (Ordeal). However, in extreme cases where the culprit refuses to admit that s/he is guilty, the community results to *mbiam* (oath-taking). *Mbiam*, according to Ekong, was "the greatest instrument of justice and social control in the traditional Ibibio society…. By it people swear to proclaim their innocence and by it, people are enjoined against deviant behaviours" (123). The Ibibio believed that a person could not tell a lie and get away with it.

Narrating the history and usefulness of *mbiam*, Abasiattai reveals that:

> the use of *Mbiam* as oath was briefly adopted in the native Court's procedure and both the judge and the litigant were required to swear by it – the one for the impartial dispensation of justice and the other for telling the truth. However, this practice was substituted by the Bible thereby restricting the fear of reprisal for either untrue evidence or unfair judgement, to Christians (101).

Mbiam was a very useful instrument of social control and it is believed to be capable of discerning between the innocent and the offender, even in judicial cases. Hence, bribing of judges and miscarriage of justice were uncommon and strongly discouraged.

It is quite obvious from our discussion of the two vices examined above that there is always a corresponding punishment for any wrongdoing or action in the Ibibio traditional society. It is assumed by the Ibibio that punishment for wrongdoing is necessary for the continued existence of the society, to correct the culprits, and to deter would-be ones. In other words, proscriptions regarding issues like stealing, telling a lie or falsehood, greed, and other vicious acts, and disregarding the norms regulating relationships with *Iman* (kinsman), *Ukot* (in-laws), *Esen owo* (one's visitors), and Eyeyin (grandchild) attracts communal condemnation and punishment which serves as a deterrent to others and consequently bring about positive values through abstaining.

There is no culture or civilization that has no set of "dos and don'ts". The *ku* or *kunam* "do not..." principle in Ibibio culture serves as the vital regulator in inculcating commendable moral traits in individuals (Esema 103). And these moral traits are the result of individual obedience and conformity to the *Kunam* principle and *Mbet iduñ* (laws of the community). This is what determines a person's character. Ibibio morality is summed up by the word *Edu* (character). *Edu* is the overriding trait of a person's life. It is that which distinguishes a virtuous individual from a vicious one in the Ibibio society. Hence, a person with good moral character acts, behaves, and conducts him/herself in accordance with the positive and negative virtues or one that demonstrates virtuous acts.

Ibibio virtue-based ethics provides a workable foundation for developing appropriate moral principles and standards to judge morally right and morally wrong actions of leaders. Leaders need to act with conviction founded on moral principles. These moral principles provide a foundation for the development of sound ethical

leadership. These ethical principles include: integrity, honesty, service to others, justice, courage, respect for others, and established norms, values, and laws (Okpo 35-36). Let us at this juncture examine the issue of development and the leadership question in Nigeria.

Development and the Leadership Question in Nigeria

Leadership, as we saw in the introductory remarks, is the problem with Nigeria. Unethical leadership describes major Nigerian schemes, plans, and institutions, and it is the chief reason for the continuous underdevelopment of the nation. Development, as explained earlier, is all-inclusive and multidimensional in nature. In other words, it should be an encouraging change in all spheres of human endeavours. There is no doubt that leadership plays an important role in practically all spheres of human endeavours. Hence, no society or nation can develop, in the true sense of the word, without good leadership. The question that readily comes to mind is: why is there no positive change or development in Nigeria despite the huge natural and human resources available to it? Or what is the problem with Nigeria?

The renowned novelist, Chinua Achebe, attributes the root cause of the country's problem to bad leadership. In his book entitled *The Problem with Nigeria*, he submits:

> the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership (1).

On similar lines, El-Rufai (71) opines that:

> corruption is really only a symptom of Nigeria's problems. The true culprit behind our country's lacklustre progress is much deeper and even more difficult to identify… I refer to it as disastrous political leadership and bad decision-making leading to a culture of impunity.

These assertions imply that Nigeria's developmental challenges and the present situation is traceable to poor leadership. Leadership failure on a large scale is one of the fundamental setbacks of the Nigerian state. The emphasis here is political leadership, but if leadership is tied only to political office holders, that will be wrong. It is a fact that at the heart of any development sits leadership. Similarly, political leadership alone cannot bring about the desired development in Nigeria. Therefore, this paper does not confine the concept of leadership needed for Nigeria's development to only 'political leadership'.

Other scholars are also of the opinion that the factors responsible for the underdevelopment of Nigeria are bad leadership and corruption (Ebun 1; Ijewereme and Dunmade 25; Ekwonwa 165; Agbiboa 474; Tom 92; Iyayi 4). Corruption is unethical behaviour that has crippled development in Nigeria. One cannot deny the claim that Nigeria is a victim of poor leadership and complicated systemic corruption which has become persistent and cancerous in the country's national life (Imhonopi and Ugochukwu 78). Bad leadership and corruption can be said to be the two leading factors that are responsible for the poor state of the Nigerian social infrastructures: power and water supplies, public hospitals, transportation, road and rail networks, and schools among others. Both factors have led to an increased in the poverty rate and unemployment rate. This is simply because money meant for creating job opportunities for the teeming unemployed people is being diverted to private bank accounts of corrupt leaders.

Moreover, bad leadership and corruption dissuade creativity, hard work, and a spirit of patriotism in the country. Accordingly, Oluwasanmi (100) submits that:

> accumulation of illegal wealth by stealing from the people commonwealth discourages hard and patriotic labour by others and put resources needed for community or national development into private hands where it is often just stashed away in foreign banks or lavished senselessly and unproductively.

The annual budgetary allocations for infrastructural development such as well-equipped hospitals, roads, electricity supply, and water supply among others are often diverted to meet the need of corrupt leaders, their cronies, and their political parties. Indeed, where road contracts are awarded they are most of the time overestimated, and sometimes the roads are not constructed leading to underdevelopment, poverty, and increased unemployment (Adawo 46). The present state of poor infrastructure decay, rate of poverty, and unemployment in the country are directly linked to bad leadership and corruption.

This unfortunate situation is well underscored by President Muhammadu Buhari in his inaugural speech:

> no single cause can be identified to explain Nigerians poor economic performance over the years than the power situation. It is a national shame that an economy of 180 million generates only 4,000 MW, and distributes even less. Continuous tinkering with the structures of power supply and distribution and close to $20b expanded since 1999 have only brought darkness, frustration, misery, and resignation among Nigerians (www.vanguardngr.com).

Many companies have left the country to neighbouring countries like Ghana, owing to the unreasonably high cost of doing business in Nigeria occasioned by a lack of electricity supply. By folding up, many jobs were lost and poverty and unemployment rates increased.

Poverty in Nigeria is often tied to corruption because resources earmarked for social development and job creation programmes are frequently diverted to private bank accounts of corrupt leaders. Little wonder, inadequate social services such as well-equipped hospitals, well-equipped schools, good roads, adequate electricity, and water supply, none of these have ever been on the ground in the past and at present in the country. Buttressing this fact, Ogbeidi (6) narrates how

> available records on the history of political development of Nigeria since independence have shown that the reins of government have always fallen into the hands of a political leadership class that showed more interest in private, group, or ethnic gains than in the general wellbeing of the Nigerian state.

Elucidating further he contends that:

> the political leadership class has succeeded in entrenching corruption by providing a fertile ground and an environment conducive for the phenomenon to thrive incurably at the expense of national socio-economic, cultural, and political development (6).

On this note, leadership is rather characterized by avarice, greedy and self-interested leaders who care little about the common good or plight of the led. For this set of leaders, leadership is never a desire to serve but a desire to be served; it is a desire to have a chunk of the 'national cake'. Because of a lack of understanding of the concept of leadership, many Nigerian 'leaders' see leadership as an opportunity to enrich themselves at the expense of the people. These 'leaders' fail to see that leadership is a call to service.

The magnitude of unethical behaviours and actions of leaders over the years is manifested in different periodic rankings of Transparency International (TI) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). These unethical behaviours and conducts by leaders have contributed to making Nigeria one of the poorest countries in the world, even though the country is the eighth largest oil producer in the world. Nigeria is still grappling with the high unemployment rate at 5.8, low life expectancy at 53 years, with over seventy percent of its citizens living below the poverty line, together with its worst economic indices of human development. In the Human Development Report of 2016, Nigeria remained one of the least developed countries in the world. Nigeria's Human Development Index (HDI) value of 2015 is 0.527 - which puts the country in the low human development category – positioning it at 152 out of 188 countries and territories (www.undp.org).

In terms of perception and image in the international community, the nation has not fared better either. The annual Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) report for the year 2017 of Transparency International (TI), ranked Nigeria as the 148 most corrupt country in the world of 188 countries polled. The country, according to the CPI, scored 27 out of 100, a figure lower than the average in the Sub-Saharan region. The CPI uses a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean) (www.transparency.org). In previous rankings, Nigeria scored 27, 25, 27, 26, and 26 as the most corrupt country in 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016 respectively. The nation was ranked the most corrupt country in the world in 2000 and 2003. In 2001 and 2002, it was ranked the second most corrupt country in the world. This is evidence that corruption is deeply rooted in Nigeria. It should be noted that corruption is not unique and inimitable to Nigeria. It is a common and universal phenomenon. However, the state of corruption and unethical conduct of leaders and followers in the country is disturbing.

From our discussion so far, it is obvious that the major impediment to Nigeria's quest for development is the extreme immorality of leaders. Many leaders are involved in unethical behaviours that are inimical to the development of the country. There is no doubt that the leaders in the country are aware of the implications of these unethical behaviours to its development and some concerted efforts have been made to reduce the menace of extreme immorality in Nigeria.

Since 1979, every administration in Nigeria has recognized the menace of extreme immorality and corruption, the devastating effects it has on the country in all ramifications of national life, and has made attempts to curb it but has been unsuccessful. For instance, the Shehu Shagari administration introduced Ethical Reorientation as a way of changing public attitudes toward unethical conduct. While the Buhari/Idiagbon launched War Against Indiscipline (WAI). The Babangida Administration introduced Mass Mobilisation for Self Reliance, Social Justice, and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) and Sanni Abacha launched War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAI-C). These are indicators of the fact that there exists an extreme level of indiscipline and corruption in the country.

Moreover, successive administration has established some institutions with enabling Act by the National Assembly as anti-corruption agencies and policies. These include the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB), the Code of Conduct Tribunal, the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and the Treasury Single Account (TSA) policy was proposed by Goodluck Jonathan Administration, but fully implemented by Muhammadu Buhari Administration. The civilian government of Olusegun Obasanjo established ICPC and EFCC to confront the phenomenon of corruption in the public and

private lives of both the leaders and the followers. It is however regrettable to know that these leaders that openly declared to be fighting corruption and unethical practices ended up being more corrupt than their predecessors. In all the administrations, both civilian and military, evidence reveals that leadership and corruption are progressively connected.

While examining the activities and failures of these anti-corruption agencies, Akanbi (126) notes that:

> all these measures were ostensibly and apparently designed to infuse discipline in the subject and instill probity and transparency in the system. The sad irony of it all is that corruption continued to escalate geometrically.

This implies that these leaders lack virtues and ethical principles needed to influence followers and themselves to do the right thing. There seems to be a missing link. It is a truism that both the preachment and legal prosecution approaches of leaders to curb corruption and unethical behaviour in the country are not yielding desirable results. All these approaches failed to achieve the desired objective of eradicating indiscipline and corruption in the country due to the unethical conduct of the leaders. Unethical conducts by both leaders and followers keep increasing daily. No one will doubt the fact that there is a missing link between leadership and development in Nigeria. What could that missing link be?

Ibibio Virtue Ethics: Missing Link between Leadership and Development in Nigeria
It is obvious from our discussion in the preceding section that there exists a missing link between leadership and development in Nigeria. The missing link is ethics in leadership. There is no doubt that at the core of Nigeria's underdevelopment status is unethical leadership in every sector of the nation. What has held Nigeria back and continues to do so has its roots in the lack of ethical leadership. Moral leadership failure on a large scale in the country is one of the fundamental setbacks to Nigeria's development.

Studies have attributed different factors that promote moral depravity among leaders in the country (Tom 94; Maduagwu 1). For Tom (94), the factors responsible for the continuous increase of corruption by leaders are society's attitude of accepting and approving wealth acquired illegitimately, and the arrival of foreign religions in Africa. Maduagwu, on his part, blames the increasing rate of corruption on the existing culture that condones and even encourages corruption. He contends that:

> corruption thrives in Nigeria because society sanctions it. No Nigerian official would be ashamed, let alone condemned by his people because he or she is accused of being corrupt. The same applies to outright stealing of government or public money or property. On the contrary, the official will be hailed as being smart. He would be adored as having 'made it'; he is a 'successful man'. And any government official or politician who is in a position to enrich himself corruptly but failed to do so will be ostracized by his people upon leaving office. He would be regarded as a fool, or selfish, or both (1).

The implication of this is that many Nigerians have accepted depravity as a standard pattern of behaviour in society. They condone, celebrate and endorse the corrupt behaviour of leaders. For them, a leader is a failure if he or she fails to steal and embezzle while in the position of leadership. A leader is expected to divert funds meant for development and the common good to his or her private accounts. This faulty cultural norm shows a complete departure from the traditional Ibibio societal norms and culture. The traditional Ibibio society abhors corruption, selfishness, embezzlement, or stealing of public property and had a strong penalty against it. So, how did we get here as a people? We are where we are today because we abandoned the home-grown ethics bequeathed to us by our ancestors, due to the coming of western civilization and religions such as Christianity and Islam.

The traditional Ibibio culture has been severely interrupted by western culture that came through colonialization and modernisation. The western culture ushers individualism into our system and kicks out the virtues of honesty, integrity, capacity to refrain from theft, and community fellow feeling among Nigerians. Subsequently, individualism sows the seed of selfishness, self-interest, and excessive materialism that brought forth extreme immorality. Unfortunately, the Ibibio positive and negative virtues are eroding from the present day Nigerian society, while vices such as materialism, nepotism, greed, avarice, impunity, stealing, lying and graft are the order of the day. A society that accepts these vices continues to decrease in all leadership challenges because leaders are creations of the society they live in. The consequential effects of faulty societal norms and values in Nigeria are the emergence of extreme immorality of leaders that is responsible for the underdevelopment of the country.

Arguably, one of the major impediments to development in Nigeria is corrupt practices by leaders. For instance, it was reported in a news report by Nwabufo, on June 03, 2017, that within the span of fifteen years the country earned a total of USD 592 billion from the oil sector alone. According to him, this was revealed by Waziri Adio, Executive Secretary of the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), at a workshop organized by "Publish What You Pay", a civil society organization in the extractive sector. "NEITI's presentation at the workshop disclosed that Nigeria earned a total of $ 592.34 billion from the oil and gas sector from 1999 to 2014", the statement read (www.thecable.ng). It is a shame that these earnings fail to either

translate to human and infrastructural developments or reduce the rate of poverty and unemployment in the country due to the monumental embezzlement of public funds by leaders.

There is no doubt that many leaders seek leadership position mainly to enrich themselves, families, friends, and their cronies. Some of the cases of moral leadership failure discussed above give credence to the fact that many seek leadership positions for selfish reasons. The leadership position is seen as an opportunity for self-aggrandizement as against the privilege to serve others, promote the public interest, and sustain the public trust. This explains the reason why leaders abuse the trust of their offices. The reason they seek leadership positions is not to achieve a shared common goal but a selfish goal and interest. One wonders if there can be any meaningful human and infrastructural developments in a country that her leaders and citizens are not only condoning but are also swimming and neck-deep in the 'waters' of corruption, greed, and nepotism. The question that readily comes to mind is: what is the essence of leadership?

The essence of leadership is to influence and direct people towards achieving a commonly shared goal or objective either for a nation or an organization. Hence, leadership is relational in that there cannot be influence without relationships. Leadership relationships have to do with attributes such as influence, obligation, vision, responsibility, obligation, commitment, and duty. Ethics, as earlier mentioned, is the study of standards for determining what behaviour is good and bad or right and wrong. These standards are determined in our relationships with others. Morality is essentially concerned with the effect(s) of our actions on other people. It entails a choice to influence oneself and others in doing the right thing over the wrong one.

Any society that lacks leaders with moral character and strong ethical principles pays dearly for it. For instance, Nigerian society is paying dearly for the actions and inactions of unethical leaders in every sector of society. There is no doubt that the country's development challenge is traceable to moral bankruptcy in society. Nigeria is not experiencing development due to corrupt and immoral practices by leaders. One problem Ibibio virtue ethics can deal with effectively and decisively is the problem of depravity in both the public and private lives of Nigerians. The pertinent area where Ibibio virtue ethics and ethical leadership principles need immediate use in Nigeria is in the area of the moral bankruptcy of leaders. What accounts for the great and profound difference in our moral attitudes especially in public life, as against developed nations of the world, is the Nigerian awareness and understanding that our malevolent acts seldom come under inquiry and when they do, there is hardly any appropriate or suitable social sanction that follows (Oluwole 23).

The major difference between Nigeria and other developed nations that are perceived to be less corrupt, such as New Zealand, Denmark, Finland, Switzerland, and United Kingdom among others, is the social consequence of being publicly castigated or chastised that scares the citizens of these nations from corrupt practices. There are suitable social sanctions in place to discourage moral offences in these nations. This was also the case in the traditional Ibibio society. Violation of moral norms attracted societal disapproval and punishment which serves as a deterrent to others and hence produces positive values through refraining. There was a social consequence for bad behaviour. One can hardly doubt the fact that "a moral system that fails to account for an effective method of social sanction cannot expect to be useful in creating social cohesion" (Oluwole 23). The Ibibio traditional society was sustained by such moral values and principles as integrity, honesty, justice, service to others, community fellow-feeling, moral courage, respect for others, and established norms. Consequently, there is an urgent need for Nigerians and their leaders to go back to Ibibio virtue ethics and the Ibibio ethical leadership principles if Nigeria must surmount the leadership crisis and some other clogs bedeviling her human and infrastructural developments.

Nigeria is in this sorry state of underdevelopment notwithstanding its huge human and natural resources mainly because of the lack of morally principled leaders that their conducts and actions are guided by moral principles such as integrity, honesty, service to others, moral courage, and respect for others. The present approach to the war against corruption and its vices in the country is not yielding positive results because we abandoned our traditional moral values. To have a corruption-free society, we must as a matter of necessity conquer lack of integrity, greed, avarice, selfishness, and nepotism by imbibing the positive and negative virtues of Ibibio ethics and ethical leadership principles. The Ibibio virtue-based ethics seeks to engender excellent persons who both act well and serve as an example to inspire others. Nigerian leaders can stop and prevent corrupt practices by promoting ethical leadership and becoming ethical leaders based on Ibibio ethics and the introduction of *Mbiam* in the administration of the oath.

Mbiam should replace the Holy Books in the administration of oaths of allegiance and oath of office for all political leaders and institutional leaders in MDAs. It should be re-introduced into our judiciary systems. This is one major way corrupt practices by leaders can be dealt with in Nigeria. Using the Holy books - Bible and Qu'ran for the administration of oath is an abuse of the Holy books. For instance, the Bible is against Christians swearing in Matthew 5:34 and James 5:12, Christians are admonished not to swear an oath. But, most of the leaders that claimed to be Christian are not Christians in the first place because a Christian cannot steal or loot the public funds. So, administrating oath with the Holy books is an exercise in futility; it would not stop or deter people from corrupt practices. The Christian and Islamic religions are not rooted in our culture. They have failed to raise the moral standard of the Nigerian people. In other words, they have failed to inculcate a high

sense of morality in their members. Thus, the proliferation of churches and mosques notwithstanding, there is still a high rate of moral degeneration in the country.

II. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From our discussion so far, it has been exposed that lack of ethics in leadership has become a major hindrance to sustainable development in Nigeria because much of the earnings from the natural resources that would have been committed to human and infrastructural developments purposes are being looted with impunity by unethical leaders in every sector of the society. Nigeria's moral leadership bankruptcy worsens its moral bankruptcy problem and its moral bankruptcy problem worsens its human, infrastructural and sustainable developments. The position of this paper is that sustainable development would be illusive unless there is a paradigm shift from the present self-centered leadership paradigm to African ethics and principles based on Ibibio ethical leadership. Ibibio ethical leadership is geared towards the creation of a sense of community among citizens. Ibibio ethical leadership is centered on influencing followers to do the right thing against doing the wrong one. Consequently, Nigeria's development is in the hands of Nigerians both leaders and followers.

To reduce, discourage and eliminate unethical practices among leaders in Nigeria, we wish to propose the following suggestions:

1. Establishment of the Institute for Ethical Leadership based on home-grown ethics for the grooming of every category of leaders in the country.
2. The creation of the Ethics and Compliance Department in all organizations including the MDAs of both States and Federal Governments.
3. There is an urgent need for a radical paradigm shift that will involve a return to those moral values and principles that held and sustained the traditional Ibibio society and apply them accordingly in all ramifications of leadership in Nigeria.
4. The introduction of *Mbiam* (and other traditional oaths in Nigeria such as Yoruba's *Ayelala)* as an instrument of administering the oath of allegiance and oath of office for all political leaders, public officials, and institutional leaders in MDAs of both States and Federal Governments. It should also be re-introduced into our judiciary systems.
5. Both leaders and followers should act, think and behave in line with the Ibibio virtue-based ethics and ethical principles.

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