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The Influences of Religious Ethics on Preventing and Combating Corruption in Tanzania: The Christianity and Islamic Obligation

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Abstract:

There are many roads to the goal of preventing and combating corruption. One of these roads is to prevent and combat corruption through religious obligations. This paper presents a proposition that religious ethics have great influence in the process of combating corruption. Various literatures were consulted including religious books and previous studies. Although Tanzania is a non-secular country but its population is predominantly Muslims and Christians. The Muslims are 35%, Christians are 30% and other religions are 35%. With these statistics it is unlikely to discuss dynamics and cross cutting issues such as corruption with exclusion of religious obligations.

Keywords: religion, ethics, corruption, Tanzania

1. Introduction

The study on religious ethics influences on Combating corruption is essential as it contributes in the management of both public and private sectors. Previous studies confirm that religions ethics have strong influence on people's moral life and value system in Tanzania (Liviga, 2006 and Bakari and Ndumbaro, 2006; Mallya, 2001). However, extensive study on religions and corruption in the context of Tanzania could be unintentionally caused by the nature of the state-religion. The United Republic of Tanzania constitution stipulates religion and faith matters as private affairs and not part of the state authority (URT, 2008). Such premise makes few scholars to labour on the influences of religions on public leadership and management in the Tanzanian context.

Corruption can be explained in many ways including a 'conduct or practice by a public official or private individual done in flagrant violation of existing rules, and procedures for realization of personal or group gains' (Ruzindana, et al., 1998:18). Corruption is a particularly insidious form of poor governance for development (Kelly et al, 2016) Corruption is recognized as a significant problem. It involves 'grand' corruption which diverges of public funds meant for development and impacts on welfare, political and economic reform. It also involves 'petty' corruption that place greater burdens on the most vulnerable in societies (Richmond and Alpin, 2013).

The government of Tanzania has been fighting corruption ever since its independence with various measures at different times and situations. However, corruption remains one of the impediments to Tanzania's development (CMI, 2009). Corruption erodes and defeats efforts made by developing world towards sustainable development, promotion and strengthening of democratic institutions and values (Hoseah, 2014). The Prevention and Combating Corruption Bureau (PCCB) and other agencies are reported not to be effective (Lindner, 2014). The law enforcers, including PCCB personnel were also noted to be corrupt (Hoseah, 2009).

There is no rule of the thumb available to prescribe which strategy any given country should take to curb unethical behaviour, corruption, and the culture of impunity (Hoseah, 2014). This article proposes contribution of religious institutions as one of the ways of preventing and combating corruption. Nyerere (1974) contended that religious institutions and its followers can participate fully in the process of eradicating awful systems of life. Similarly, Krznaric (2007) revealed how religious actors played a key role in spearheading social change. Paradoxically, most Tanzanians are religious yet corruption is high in the society. It is estimated that Muslims are 35 percent, Christians are 30 percent and African traditional religious and other denominations are 35 percent in Tanzania (Mukandara et al, 2006).

Lambsdorff (2002) reported that some religions, especially those that are less hierarchical, might impede corruption. Similarly, Pellegrini and Gerlagh (2008) reported that compared to other religions such as Orthodox Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism and Islam, Protestant religion is less prone to tolerance toward corruption. One possible explanation is that while religion provides a basis for morality and ethical behaviour, it creates a hierarchical socio-cultural structure promoting the elites' discretionary power that ultimately endorses corruption (Yeganeh and Sauers, 2013).

This article tests the influence of religious ethics in prevention and combating corruption in Tanzania. Fernando, (2005) revealed that religion influenced greatly in major decision-making of leaders in Sir Lanka. Whenever confronted with critical decision making, leaders had to pray for solace, guidance and inspiration. The religions involved included Buddhism, Christianity, Hindu, and Islam (Fernando, 2005). In this article, we shall focus on Islam and Christianity, which are major religion denominations in Tanzania.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Corruption

Corruption can be viewed as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon (Montiel, et al. 2012). According to USAID (2005) corruption is the misuse or abuse of public office for private gain. Corruption comes in various forms and a wide range of unlawful behaviour such as bribery, fraud, nepotism, graft, embezzlement, falsification of records, kickbacks, and campaign contributions. Corruption has also defined as the abuse of public position for private benefit. In this study corruption will be defined as abuse of public authority and power for private benefit.

2.2. Religion

Religion is a relationship predetermined by God (the supernatural) for man to exercise for his good and community. Most religions observe elements, such as, worship, right beliefs, values and morals. This implies that religion is one of the fundamentals in human life and has great potential to shape any given societies. The quest for the existence and nature of God has been a human historical problem (Frost, 1989). McCauley & Whitehouse (2005:3) noted '... as with so many contemporary intellectuals, cognitive scientists, until quite recently, have mostly found topics like religion to be an embarrassment.' Wieseltier (2006) went further by insisting that religion isn't a fit topic for science at all, to study it is to commit the sins of 'scientism' and 'reductionism'. Similarly, Liviga (2006) cautioned that defining religion is complex, and its essence cannot be deduced from psychological, defensive, nor sociological or political factors. Haught (1976) also highlighted that religious phenomenon can only be understood when studied in its level or its religious context due to its unique element, the sacred. In this study we shall define religion as faith in God, a monotheistic position represented by Christianity and Islam.

2.3. Religious Ethics

Most literatures define ethics as 'the study of that human good in its most general terms and how we human beings pursue it' (Lovin, 2000:9). Lovin went on to argue that, 'Trying to do good is something that nearly everybody does. What they disagree about is what makes a life good' (Lovin, 2000:10) similarly Ciulla (2004) pointed out that ethics is how people differentiate right from wrong, or good from evil in relation to their actions, volition and character in their everyday relationship. Something is simply ethical if it is right in God's sight, and in line with God's intent. 'If it is wrong in God's sight or out of line with God's intent, we will call it unethical' (Kraft, 2000:415). This article will use the word ethics to simply mean doing good or right actions out of good or right motive. In the same way, religious ethics will mean ethics that is influenced by the individual's religious beliefs. The influences of religious ethics on preventing and combating corruption are explained by a simple model modified from Paldam (1999). Figure 1 is a model of likely relationship of the two variables. The boxes are connected by arrows indicating (possible) causal links. However, there are considerable residuals, mainly the culture of the community regardless of alignment to a particular religion denomination. Paldam (1999) suggested two claims, 'religion is a key determinant of culture' and 'corruption has strong cultural factor' (Paldam, 1999:1). The two claims are likely to have a reverse causality.

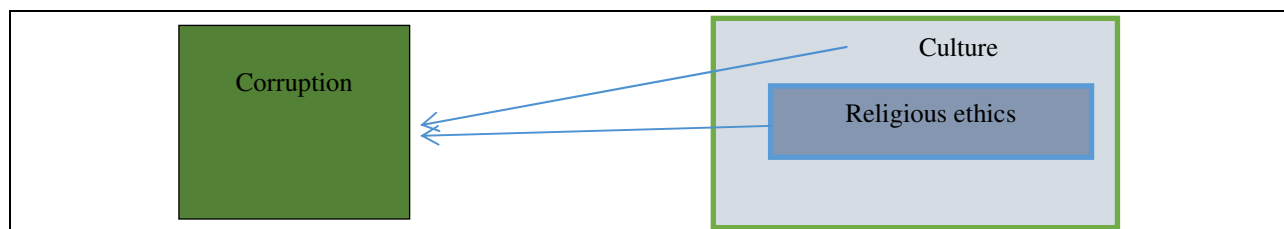


Figure 1: Framework of analysis
Source: Modified from Paldam (1999)

2.4. Magnitude of Corruption in Tanzania

Transparency International's surveys and its Corruption Perception Index for years 2011 showed that Tanzania scored 30% and ranked 100 out of 183 countries. It scored 35% and ranked 102 out of 176 countries in year 2012. While in the year 2013 Tanzania scored 33% and ranked 111 out of 177 countries, it scored 31% and ranked 119 out of 175 countries in the year 2014. Furthermore, in the year 2015 Tanzania scored 30% while in the year 2016 it scored 32% and ranked 116 out of 176 countries. The score which is less than 50% indicating serious corruption (Transparency International, 2011 – 2016).

The UNCAC Self-Assessment Report Check 2016 corruption revealed ineffective implementation of the Tanzania Prevention and Combating of Corruption Act (2007). The second phase of Tanzania's National Anti-Corruption Strategy and Action Plan (NACSAP II 2008-2011) mentioned that fighting against corruption is a national task. The strategy proposed involvement of private sector, civil associations, media and religious institutions.

2.5. Religion Understanding of Corruption

The importance of religion in the society should not be underrated. Malony (1991) advocated that psychologists and citizens alike appreciate religious dynamics at a level higher without being biased. Religion can have an effect by emphasizing certain aspects of morality. Religion might turn the dials of compassion. Religious belief and practice might increase one's empathy and caring and love

(Cohen and Rozin (2001). Mallya (2001) observed that religion has contributed greatly on political and policy affairs. Wald and Wilcox (2006) showed the need for specialists to tie religious to broader theories of political behaviour and change.

Indeed, more studies on religious related matters in relation to the welfare of our society are needed. There is evidence from studies of charitable giving that religious people within the United States devote more time and resources to helping others than the nonreligious. Such studies rely on self-report, but they are backed by laboratory demonstrations that religious primes increase moral behaviours such as generosity to strangers and reduce immoral behaviours such as cheating. All of this makes sense in light of the universality and enlightened moral notions encoded in all of the major religions (Waldron 2010, Wright 2009).

2.6. Religion and State

Dillon (2003) revealed how religion is an important factor for understanding contemporary social life. He pointed out those religious influences all life spectrums from the individual level to societal and international levels. It affects such dynamics as politics, socioeconomic issues, gender as well as cultural issues (Dillon, 2003). He argued that religious institutions have influence in social movements. They also put forth the fact that all social cleavage is always expressed in political conflict at four levels, namely: social structure, group identity, political organization, as well as public policy outcomes. They further argue that, religion, for example, can become a determinant for social stratification and inequality depending on factors like religious differences, group identity, and dominance of the adherents in a given context.

Mallya (2001) argued that religious institutions ought to keep in balance their universal mission of a better society. Sound religious ethics should shape more persons' character than political aspirations. Demerath (2003) clearly observed that religion and state are mutually dependent in bringing about change. There is a positive contributions of religion in most vital societal spheres such as politics, education, health, and social welfare In the same way, Liviga (2006) said that, 'Religion and politics in general and governance in particular have always been interconnected' (Liviga, 2006:325).

Despite these tendencies of the modernization theorists viewing religion as an obstacle to development, 'Human history has fewer examples where religions have been used to challenge the state than where they have been used to support it' (Bakari and Ndumbaro, 2006, 334). All major religions have an impact on governance structure of the state. There is a relationship between religion and state governance, namely, value system, rule of law and justice, citizen participation, accountability and transparency.

2.7. Religion and State in Tanzania

Religion and the state of Tanzania are constitutionally separated. The Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania states the rights of the individual's freedom to religion and makes it clear that religion will not be a state affair. It states that, 'every person has the right to the freedom of conscience, faith and choice in matters of religion, including the freedom to change his religion or faith' (URT, 2008:24). In the same way, it mentions that 'the profession of religion, worship and propagation shall be free and a private affair of an individual; and the affairs and management of religious bodies shall not be part of the activities of the state authority' (URT, 2008, 24). The Constitution further clarifies the modality of individual freedom provision by stating, 'every person has a freedom, to freely and peaceably assemble, associate and cooperate with other persons, and for that purpose, express views publicly and to form and join with associations or organizations formed for purposes of preserving or furthering his beliefs or interests or any other interests' (URT, 2008, 25).

Bakari and Ndumbaro (2006) observed that, Tanzania, like most third world countries, chose to take such a neutral perspective in order to free the state from religious bias and provide equal opportunities for adherents of all religions to support, represent, and participate in public affairs. In most Third World countries, however, the actual practice has proved contrary. The trend has been lack of democratic governance in such areas as economic, political and civil rights as well as freedom of expression and worship. 'Thus, the absence of political and civil liberties, and economic allurements, create a fertile ground for the breeding of protest groups forged along class, regional, ethnic, and religious cleavages' (Bakari and Ndumbaro, 2006, 340). They also cautioned that in the Third World religious group identity is likely to be more powerful than any other world views such as socialism, capitalism and any developmental ideologies. Such a caution, nevertheless, should not inhibit the good relationship between the state and religious institutions. The objectives of this article, is to find out ways by which religion and religious ethics can contribute in preventing and combating corruption.

The worldwide resurgence of religious militancy and activism in the 1980's; 'revivalism in Islam and Christianity in Tanzania became more pronounced as it provided alternative views or solutions to emerging socio-economic and political problems' (Bakari and Ndumbaro, 2006, 343). Likewise state-religion relationship in Tanzania is also affected by external influence through donor nations (Bakari and Ndumbaro, 2006). The presence of tension between state and religion is an indicator that objective ways have to be sought to enhance productive relationship. Religions and state are supposed to cohabit harmoniously.

2.8. Christianity Ethics Basis on Corruption

Christianity ethics are based on the Biblical teachings. The holy bible is expected to be the basis for faith and practices of Christians. In the Old Testament, God instructed his people to love him and their fellow human beings in order to maintain a harmonious and prosperous society. He also gave them specific Ten Commandments to guide their ethical standards. These included: to worship only the Lord God, not to worship idols, not to misuse the name of the Lord God, and to keep holy the Sabbath day. These four were directly toward God. The other six were toward fellow human beings in daily life interactions. They included: to honor parents, not to murder, not to commit adultery, not to steal, not to lie, and not to covet other people's belongings (Deuteronomy 5).

The Old Testament also spoke against leaders' corruption and injustice and the due punishment (Isaiah 1:23-25). The Bible condemns bribery: 'Do not accept bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the righteous' (Exodus 23:8). It is also emphatically stated about what God requires from his people. 'He has shown you, o man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with God' (Micah 6:8).

Similarly, in the New Testament Jesus instructed his followers to keep higher ethical standards. For instance He said, "Love your enemies..." (Matthew 5:44); and 'So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets' (Matthew 7:12). The New Testament also condemns injustice and self-indulgence of rich people (James 5:1-6). Indeed, Christians, through centuries got the basis of their ethical conducts from the Bible, the word of God. Christians who are in public leadership are not exempt from embracing these facts. Corruption in all its forms is against these biblical ethical standards. Consequently, Christians are supposed to be fighting corruption and demonstrating ethical life.

Christian focuses on the human person, especially the promotion of morals, attitudes, virtues and good actions. This is to ensure that justice is done and human dignity is respected, hence helped to receive salvific gifts of love and justice brought by Christ. In his encyclical letter 'Redemptoris Mission' Pope John Paul II (ibid. Pg. 544) puts emphasis on formation of conscience. Benedict XVI emphasized this in encyclical Caritas in Veritate (2009) when everyone is treated fairly Justice dominates the social, economic and political sphere. The Caritas in Veritate (2009) stresses that many people today would claim that they owe nothing to anyone, except to themselves. They are concerned only with their rights, and they often have great difficulty in taking responsibility for their own and other people's integral development.

The Holy Scriptures in the Bible condemns corruption and there are many verses against corruption from various angles. Proverbs 17:23 says: "A wicked man accepts a bribe behind the back to pervert the ways of justice." Hosea 7:1 writes: "When I would heal Israel, the corruption of Ephraim is revealed, and the wicked deeds of Samaria; for they deal falsely, the thief breaks in, and the bandits raid without." A few of the other Old Testament texts are Deut. 10:17; 27:25; 2 Chronicle 19:7; Ex 23:8; Proverb 15:27; 17:8, 23; Ecc 7:7; Ez 22:12, 22; Job 15:34; and Mic 7:3. From the New Testament, we have 2 Peter 1:4; 2:19. Peter writes: "Through these, he (Jesus Christ) has bestowed on us the precious and very great promises, so that through them you may come to share in the divine nature, after escaping from the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire."

2.9. Islamic Ethics Basis on Corruption

The basic source of Islam faith and practices is the Holy Quran. Next to it in authority are the Hadiths, collections of deeds and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (Morin, 2007). The Qur'an speaks a lot about ethical issues. It taught charity: 'And be steady in prayer and regular in charity: And whatever good you send forth for your souls before you, you shall find it with Allah: for Allah sees well all that you do' (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:110). It also commands obedience to authorities: 'O you who believe, obey Allah, and obey the Apostle, and those charged with authority among you' (Surah An-Nisaa 4:59).

Trust and justice are also important ethical aspects in the Qur'an: 'Allah does command you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due; and when you judge between man and man, that you judge with justice...' (Surah An-Nisaa 4:58). Moreover, the Qur'an condemns all evil: "But you who have earned evil will have a reward of like evil; ignominy will cover their faces. No defender will they have from (the wrath of) Allah..." (Surah Unus 10:27).

Similarly, the Hadiths provide ample moral teachings to Muslims that are practical to the general society. Fadhi (2014) presented fifteen Hadiths that are anti-corruption in nature. He gave an example of the moral responsibility for those who hold public leadership offices: 'Abu Dharr, you are weak and authority is a trust. And on the Day of Judgment it is a cause of humiliation and regret except for one who fulfills its obligations and (properly) discharges the duties' (Muslim)' (Fadhi, 2014). He also pointed out the Hadith that condemned bribery: 'The curse of Allah is upon the one who offers a bribe and the one who takes it.' (Ahmad, Ibn Majah and authenticated by Al-Alban)' (Fadhi, 2014). Islam, therefore, teaches morals that uplift ethical standards of its followers, even those in public leadership. Based on this fact, a Muslim public leader is expected to lead ethically and fight corruption as his obligation both to his religion and to his respective society.

Islamic Relief Worldwide (2011) asserts that fighting corruption is the duty of all genuine Muslims. Islamic teaching encourages moral framework and call for believers to act justly and in ethical manner. In the Quran corruption (fasaad) is condemned because it undermines the principles of justice like fair and equitable distribution of wealth, provision of basic necessities and protection of the weak from economic exploitation. Justice, as expounded by the Quran, is one of the most fundamental virtues in Islam. The Quran says:

'O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.' Ali, Abdullah Yusuf 2007, The Holy Quran, 4:135.

3. Conclusion

Religion has power to influence value systems of any given societies. Religious ethics plays a part in influencing public in many ways, particularly, through lifestyle of its believers. Both Christians and Muslims in Tanzania have the right to participate fully in all national development affairs. Despite the fact that the country is non-secular, its citizens apply religious ethics to enhance working ethics and fight all sorts of unethical attitudes and practices including corruption.

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