

Leadership Ethics: An African Virtue Ethics Approach to Leadership Ethics

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore an African philosophical-normative approach to leadership ethics. This paper examines a not-very-well-known space in the field of normative ethics - Ibibio virtue ethics. In examining the relationship between ethics and leadership, much of the literature centres on an empirical – descriptive Western – based perspective of ethical leadership in organizations. Hence, the ideas about ethics are often not fully developed or discussed. To achieve the purpose of this paper, we employ African ethics as a paradigm for ethical leadership. This paper discusses the Ibibio virtue ethics, qualities of a good leader, and ethical principles for leaders. It also examines some cases of moral leadership failure in Nigeria, illustrating applicability of Ibibio virtue ethics and principles to leadership. It concludes that good leadership denotes not only the leader's competence and capacity, but also his or her moral character. Once ethics is taken away from leadership, we cease to have leadership. What we have without ethics in leadership are treasury looters, nepotistic and greedy individuals. Leaders without moral character use their position and privilege to embezzle public funds, instigate ethnic and religious crises to their advantage, encourage and also institute systemic corruption.

Keywords: African Virtue Ethics, Leadership Ethics, Moral Character, Ibibio Virtue Ethics, Ethical Leader, Ibibio Ethical Principle

INTRODUCTION

It is common to read lamentations about the moral failures of leaders in the contemporary world. The large number of scandals concerning unethical behaviour of leaders in many sectors of society including government - Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), business, and even religious organizations makes it seem like we are in a state of moral crisis. It is quite alarming that there exists slight normative scholarly work on leadership ethics compare to business ethics. In examining the relationship between ethics and leadership, much of the literature centres on an empirical – descriptive Western – based perspective of ethical leadership in organizations (Crews 29; Mendonca 266; Trevino, Hartman & Brown 128; Darcy 198). In these descriptive studies, the ideas about ethics are often not fully developed or discussed. While such works have a role to play in the literature, they do not treat the many ethical challenges and issues related to leaders and leadership. The ethical challenges of leadership include well-known philosophical issues such as questions about accountability, public and private morality, honesty and integrity, the legitimate

use of power, and the rights, obligations and responsibilities of leaders and followers among others.

The purpose of this paper is to explore an African philosophical-normative approach to leadership ethics and also to address the need for more philosophic literature on ethics and leadership from an African philosophical perspective. This paper examines a not-very-well-known space in the field of normative ethics - Ibibio virtue ethics. To achieve the purpose of this paper, we employ African ethics as a paradigm for ethical leadership. African ethics is defined by Wiredu "as the observance of rules for the harmonious adjustment of the interest of the individual to those of others in society" (210). In order 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 work. The Ibibio community is found in Akwa Ibom State, in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The questions that are begging for answers are: who is an ethical leader and what are his/her characteristics? How can a leader lead in an ethical manner? This paper is an attempt to

answer these questions of importance associated with ethical leadership/ leadership ethics from an Ibibio virtue ethics perspective.

METHODOLOGY

The data for this work were elicited through oral interview which constitutes the primary source and library research constitute secondary source. Primary sources include information from oral interviews with 92 leaders: family heads, village heads, clan heads, women leaders and paramount leaders. The Ibibio oral tradition, and particularly the Ibibio language, as presently spoken and written among the Ibibio of southern Nigeria, supplied the tools of analysis, while African ethical virtue theory provided the theoretical framework. The philosophical methods employed in this work include: analytical, speculative and critical methods.

WHAT IS LEADERSHIP, ETHICS AND LEADERSHIP ETHICS?

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". The implication of these definitions is that the essence of leadership is to influence and direct people towards achieving a commonly shared goal or objective. 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.

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). 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 concerns itself with the morality of human conduct; human actions and conduct form the core and subject matter of ethics. It helps human beings to decide what is right and good or wrong and bad in any given situation.

It is useful to state that ethics is not the only discipline concerned with human actions.

Social sciences like psychology, sociology and anthropology, are also interested in human actions and conduct. However, the sense in which they are is not the same with philosophical ethics. These social sciences tell us how men act and why men act as they do in the society. Philosophical ethics, on the other hand, is concerned not with the description and explanation but with the evaluation of human conduct (Randall and Buchler 257). This shows that philosophical ethics is both evaluative and prescriptive in nature. It prescribes whether an action is right or wrong, whether certain behaviour is justifiable or not. It deals with the way things ought to be, the way people ought to behave and what people ought to do. Moreover, it is concerned with the norms or accepted standards of human actions or conduct.

According to Udoidem (70) and Uduigwomen (3-4), ethics can be classified into three aspects, namely, normative ethics, descriptive ethics and meta-ethics. Normative ethics is that aspect of ethics which deals with norms, standards or principles of human behaviour. Put differently, normative ethics is concerned with principles by which human actions are to be judged good or bad, right or wrong. Descriptive ethics deals with the description of how men behave or act without actually making value judgement. Meta-ethics is concerned with the analysis or clarification and definition of ethical terms, such as "good", "obligation", "duty" and "moral" or "immoral" among others. While, the social scientists employ the descriptive ethics, philosophers are more inclined to normative ethics and meta-ethics. This paper is concerned with normative ethics.

From these definitions of leadership and ethics, a working definition of leadership ethics can be deduced as the branch of Applied Ethics which studies how leaders influence and direct people to act ethically towards achieving a common goal; it means a leader acting ethically and setting moral standard for others to do so as well. The task here is to employ the insights derived from meta-ethics and the general moral principles and rules of normative ethics in addressing ethical issues and cases in leadership. Put differently, leadership ethics is the application of ethical theories and principles to leadership real-life situations.

LITERATURE REVIEW: ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

Ethical leadership is a comparatively new field of study. The importance of the study of ethical leadership is increasing by the day, as many nations, societies and corporate organizations

are failing due to unethical behaviour of their leaders. This has kindled a gamut of research regarding ethical leadership: Who is an ethical leader and what are his/her characteristics? How can a leader lead in an ethical/ moral manner? What is ethical leadership?

We must gain a proper understanding of what the literature defines as ethical leadership, for us to answer these questions. Trevino and Brown observe that ethical leadership is “not only about doing what is right, but also about deciding what is right” (77). Fulmer sees ethical leaders as “people who maintain unequivocal commitment to honesty, truth and ethics in every facet of behaviour” (312). Similarly, Freeman and Stewart define ethical leadership as “simply a matter of leaders having good character and the right values or being a person of strong character” (2).

However, different researchers and scholars attempt to accurately recognize ethical leadership. Greenleaf (20) submits that “service to followers is the primary responsibility of leaders and the essence of ethical leadership”. In their empirical research of corporate ethics officers and senior executives, Trevino, Brown and Hartman (5) draw attention to the fact that “ethical leadership involves more than traits and values and includes a transactional component that involves using communication and the reward system to guide ethical behaviour”. These definitions might be slightly different from each other, but the authors are in agreement that ethical leadership is centred on influencing followers to do the right thing against doing the wrong thing.

Trevino, Hartman and Brown, in their article “Moral Person and Moral Manager: How Executives Develop a Reputation for Ethical Leadership”, identify two important dimensions of ethical leadership: “moral persons” and “moral managers” (128). The moral person dimension means “ethical leaders are characterized as honest, caring and principled individuals who make fair and balanced decisions” (Brown and Trevino 596). The moral manager, on the other hand, is characterized by individuals who clearly communicate ethical standards to followers and use rewards and punishments to ensure the standards are sustained.

From a social learning perspective, Brown, Trevino and Harrison define ethical leadership as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication,

reinforcement, and decision-making” (120). The first part of this definition implies the moral person, whereas the second part implies the moral manager aspect of ethical leadership. However, the definition appears to be imprecise and inexplicit in that it fails to show specific ethical norm or moral principle moral managers or leaders can apply and promote.

There is need for relevant ethical norms and moral principle(s) for ethical leadership. This paper intends to fill this gap. Notwithstanding the limitation of the definition proffered by Brown, Trevino and Harrison, it seems to be a working definition for many researchers of ethical leadership in the social and management sciences. This definition of ethical leadership was used by many social and management scientific descriptive researches on ethical leadership (Neubert *et al* 158; Cunha *et al* 190; Eisenbeiss 791; Lawton and Paez 641).

There are commonly correlated leadership theories to ethical leadership: transformational leadership (Burns 134; Bass and Steidlmeier 181), servant leadership (Smith *et al* 80), authentic leadership (Luthans and Avolio 241; Avolio, Luthans and Walumbwa 4), and spiritual leadership theory (Fry 693). For instance, by definition, “transforming leadership ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration on both leader and led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both” (Burns 134), authentic leaders are “those who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others’ values/ moral perspectives... and of high moral character” (Avolio, Luthans and Walumbwa 4), servant leadership emphasizes the need to serve followers and devote oneself to the ethical development of followers (Smith, Montagno and Kuzmenko 80-91), and spiritual leadership focuses on vision and leader’s values and attitudes that are broadly classified as altruistic love and hope/faith (Fry 693-727). Conversely, while all these leadership theories appear to incorporate a moral component into their theorization of leadership, they fail to state explicitly or explain what moral or ethical principle(s) leaders are expected to apply, uphold, encourage, and promote. Most of the literature, in leadership ethics, comes from social and management science researchers and is concerned with organizational leadership. These researches are descriptive approach in leadership ethics, but there is need for more normative (philosophic) literature on ethics and

leadership that specify relevant moral norms and principles for ethical leadership. To meet this need, the present paper develops a normative approach to ethical leadership for every aspect of leadership.

AFRICAN ETHICS

There is a dearth of existing literature on the philosophical aspect of Ibibio ethics as it concerns African ethics. Literature exists in Igbo ethics in Eastern Nigeria (Ilogu 118); Yoruba ethics in Western Nigeria (Oluwole 14; Oyeshile 90; Bewaji, 396; Balogun, 103; Oduwole 8); Esan ethics in Edo State of Nigeria (Azenabor 235); Akan ethics in Ghana, West Africa (Ackah 7; Appiah-Sekyene 28). Ozumba defines ethics as “a theory of morality which deals with principles of good conduct; it deals with judgement as to the rightness or wrongness, desirability or undesirability, approval or disapproval of our actions” (53). Deducible from Ozumba’s definition is that ethics concerns itself with the morality of human conduct; human actions and conduct form the core and subject matter of ethics. It helps us to decide what is right and good or wrong and bad in any given situation. Although it is true that there are as many ethical differences as there are peoples and cultures, such diversities are better understood in the context of “cultural relativity” and philosophically, it can be seen as the consequences of varied “intellectual cultures” (Ekei 9).

Igbo ethics, according to Ilogu, considers good life (*ezigbo ndu*) as the “summum bonum”; its primary concern is the community with the aim of establishing harmony, wellbeing, and effective co-existence of the members (Ilogu 118). For the *Esan* people, the guiding principle for moral judgement in which the Golden rule rests is empathy- what the *Esan* people call “arumere” (the judge has to place himself or herself in the position of those concerned); the principle has to do with initiative, cooperation, mutuality and mediation (Azenabor 235).

The foundation of morality must be linked with human interest. Yoruba morality is, perhaps, one of the most well-studied in Africa. An agreement seems to have been arrived at among scholars about the notion of *iwa* (character) being the most important moral concept among the Yoruba language speakers (Oke 96; Oyeshile 93 – 94; Abiodun 13; Oduwole 14). Among the Yoruba, the classification of actions as either morally right or wrong is largely influenced by considerations of their consequences (Balogun 119). This reveals the consequentialist

foundations of the Yoruba ethics. From the above, it is obvious that there are as many ethical differences as there are peoples and cultures. This paper is an attempt to develop a detailed account of the principles governing the ethical life of the Ibibio people.

IBIBIO VIRTUE ETHICS

In normative ethics there are certain ethical standards of moral judgement that have been recommended as essential yardsticks for determining the rightness or wrongness of human action. The attempt by moral philosophers to determine the parameter for the rightness or wrongness of an action has given rise to three general types of ethical theories, namely, teleological (consequence-based theory), deontological (duty-based theory) and virtue-based theories.

The teleological theories focus on the consequences of 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.

Ibibio ethics belongs to the category of virtue-based ethics/theories. 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 in 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 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). Virtue, then, has to do with conducts that show high moral standards in an individual. It refers to the characteristic of being morally good. How is virtue defined, conceived and explained in Ibibio culture? What are virtuous acts?

Ibibio virtue-based ethics stresses both positive and negative virtues. 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).

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 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 the 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 the society. Hence, a moral life is a life commitment to the development of both the positive and negative virtues for the good of the individual and the 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 are judged. Social values and norms are therefore the primary sources of order in a 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 punishment was carried out on culprits based on their gender and depending on what they stole. This was so because the Ibibio had two clubs: one for men and the other for women. These clubs are called *Nka* for men and *Ebre* for women. For instance, a male culprit who stole was stripped naked, smeared with charcoal and flogged by men in the community while he is being taken round the community. However, a female was smeared with charcoal, stripped naked, taken to the community's market, and made to go round the market with the item she stole. These punishments did not just end there, s/he was expelled from the club from that time and s/he was stripped off any title or position s/he held in the community, and his/her family/children were branded “thieves”. Consequently, members of the community denied him/her any form of association and s/he was banned from social gatherings. The traditional Ibibio society did these in order 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 Afa* (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. *Mbiam*, Antia (124) submits,

Was a potent liquid used in swearing oaths. It was more or less a magic liquid. It caused any one who swore falsely by it to fall sick, swell up and die. Each individual swore on “Mbiam” that he had not committed an offence or would refrain from certain offences on the penalty of sickness and death caused by the oath.

Usually the form of the oath was:

If I have done or if I do or if I will do such and such, “*mbiam*” kill me, if not so, *mbiam* protect and bless me and my whole house this and next generation and forever (Antia 124).

There was always time limit fixed, that is, the stipulated time the *mbiam* is expected to work on the person. If at the expiration of the time there was no adverse effect, that is, there was no swelling up or death, then the accused person is considered innocent. There are countless cases where alleged liars died within some days after swearing on *mbiam*.

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 wrong doing or action in the Ibibio traditional society. It is assumed by the Ibibio that punishment for wrong doing is necessary for the continuous 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 vital regulator in inculcating commendable moral traits in individuals (Esema 103). And these moral traits are the result of an 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* (moral 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 is one that acts, behaves, and conducts him/herself in accordance with the positive and negative virtues or one that demonstrates virtuous acts. This brings us to the expected qualities of a good leader in Ibibio society.

EXPECTED QUALITIES OF A GOOD LEADER

According to the Ibibio traditional society, leadership was not within every man's grasp as it is today. In ancient times, leadership positions were sacred and almost divine as well as the procedures for selecting leaders/rulers. Positions of authority were not campaigned for, neither were they conferred on individuals based on the fatness of their bank accounts. Rather, it was based on *edu* (moral character) portrayed by a person. Moreover, leaders (whatsoever their ranks were) were selected through a conventionally systematic procedure involving enquiry.

Below are the expected qualities of a good leader, according to the Ibibio ethical standards:

- A good leader must be one who does not give or accept bribe.
- A person of good moral repute and having good leadership potentialities.
- One who is not self centred, but has the interest of his people at heart.
- One who seeks to know the truth at all times before passing judgement.
- One who is not deceitful and abhors lies.
- Acceptability: leadership was conferred on people based on the level of acceptability, that is, they were not imposed on people. Instead, they were the people's choice.
- One who does not pervert justice (a just judge).
- One who has the ability to handle squalor in the community.
- One who is well versed with the histories of his people.
- A person of proven integrity.
- One who is able to take care (control/ rule over) his house hold as leadership began from the home.
- One who has no record whatsoever of stealing.
- One who does not absent himself from traditional gathering.
- One who is not embittered about the success of other people.

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- One who has respect for instituted laws of the land.
- Credibility: must be one from a royal lineage.

From the foregoing, the qualities of a good leader in traditional Ibibio society can be summed up in four C's (Character, Credibility, Competence, and Capacity). There was a system of enquiry into the moral character of a person. Character is the foundation upon which other qualities rest. This is based on popular opinion that whatever a person is, the village knows (*se owo adodo idung edioonñ*). This opinion influenced the selection of a leader and shows that the moral character of a leader was paramount. Leaders were expected to possess unquestionable character, as one with immoral behaviour was not accepted as a leader whether s/he is from the royal lineage. Leaders were generally accepted by the people as their representative and moreover, leaders possessed a living conscience for fairness in executing judgement. Let us at this juncture examine some ethical principles that originated from Ibibio ethics and the expected qualities of a good leader already glimpsed above.

IBIBIO MORAL PRINCIPLES FOR ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

In the situation of the need for ethical leadership in the Nigerian society, it is expedient to search for the true moral principles to be relied on when making moral judgements. Ethics is fundamentally the study of standards for determining what behaviour is good and bad or right and wrong. The practical application of ethics is vital because, as Garret thinks, "If the principles cannot be applied to life of the individual, to his relations with others, and with the society, they are useless for real ethics" (2-3). Therefore, ethics has both speculative and practical aspects, without bias to its primary normative stance.

For an ethical normative theory to be useful, the theory must be directed towards ethical principle(s). Leaders need principles that allow them to take a consistent view on specific and related issues. Ethical principles are the guiding standards for leading a moral life. They are universal standards of right and wrong prescribing the kind of behaviour an ethical person should and should not engage in. So, for instance, if a leader agrees that it is never right to steal or tell a lie, he or she is appealing to principle; he or she is deciding to do something because it is the right thing, rather than the expedient thing to do.

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 principles include: Integrity, honesty, service to others, justice, courage, respect for others.

Integrity

Ethical leaders show personal integrity and the tenacity of their convictions by doing what they think is right even when there are pressures to do otherwise. In other words, ethical leaders possess and steadfastly adhere to high moral principles. Leaders with integrity "walk the talk" and ensure that everyone else does likewise. The leaders that demonstrate integrity are principled and will not sacrifice principle on the altar of expediency. Ethical leaders' actions are consistent with their espoused moral values; having a courageous integrity, that is, standing for what is right in line with the positive and negative virtues and laws of the land.

Honesty

This principle speaks about the moral uprightness of leaders. The significance of this moral principle can best be appreciated when we think about the opposite of honesty – dishonesty. In the Ibibio traditional society, dishonesty was a vicious act that was seriously discouraged; dishonesty is a form of lying, deception, falsehood and distorting the truth in human relationship and communication. This contributes to the breakdown of relationships in the society. It is believed that leaders that lack honesty will definitely steal. An ethical leader demonstrates honesty in his/her relationship with others. Honesty speaks of a leader's trustworthiness, uprightness, truthfulness and sincerity.

Service to Others

This principle is an example of altruism. Altruism means an unselfish concern for the welfare of others with no regards for the cost to oneself. It is a commitment to the service of others. An ethical leader shows an inborn desire to base his/her action on promoting the common good and the interest of others in the society rather than promoting selfish interest. Put differently, ethical leaders are not self-centered, but rather they are altruistic. They make it their duty to serve others and make decisions that are

beneficial and not detrimental to others' welfare. The principle of service enjoins leaders to be community or people-oriented, place the interests of others' before theirs, and ought to think and behaviour in ways or manners that will benefit others. Leaders that are committed to the principle of service are caring, compassionate, considerate, benevolent and kind-hearted. Ethical leaders are expected to use their privileged position to serve the collective interests of the group or organization or nation rather than their own personal interests or the interests of their friends and loved ones.

Justice

This is an indispensable principle through which an ethical leader exhibits fairness, impartiality, and fair dealing in the way people are treated or decisions are made. Ethical leaders strive to be fair and just in all their dealings. They demonstrate a commitment to both justice and fairness. Consequently, just leaders manifest a commitment to fairness, the equal treatment of persons, open-mindedness, tolerance for and recognition of diversity. They ensure that justice and fairness are crucial part of their decision making; making it a point of duty to treat everyone in the group, organization or nation in an equal manner.

Courage

This principle of moral courage is concerned with ethical leaders taking responsibility for their actions and decisions as it affects others. Ethical leaders are expected to show strong commitment to their moral values in the face of severe censure, disapproval or antagonism. Ethical leaders do not compromise their moral values or principles by doing the wrong things or trying to please people. They demonstrate a strong obligation to the advancement, training, and encouragement of an ethical culture in the group, organization or nation. Hence, ethical leaders show courage to stand up for what is right in line with the positive and negative virtues and laws of the land, but unethical leaders lack courage to confront unjust acts.

Respect for others and Established Norms, Values and Laws

The principle of respect for others means a leader care enough to think about others' feelings before s/he act; they treat others as worthy human beings. Ethical leaders treat everyone with equal respect and dignity regardless of gender, ethnic group, nationality or political affiliation. They respect established

norms, values and laws of the community. They observe and obey the Golden Rule: "Treat others as you would want them to treat you". In the next section, we examine some cases of moral leadership failures by leaders who lack *edu* (moral character) and Ibibio moral principles in every sector of the Nigerian society.

Cases of Moral Leadership Failures in Nigeria

It is instructive to state that available evidence shows that corruption among leaders in Nigeria dates back to 1954 (Agbibo 474; Ogbeyi 6). Many scholars have examined the historical perspective of corruption among political leaders in Nigeria (Agbibo 474; Ogbeyi 6; Awofeso and Odeyemi 245). This present paper is concerned with some of the cases of moral leadership failure in all sectors of the society, not necessarily with the history of corruption in Nigeria. In this section, we shall examine a few of the many cases of corrupt conducts and behaviours of leaders. But, what are these corrupt practices? Onimode identifies six interconnected types of corrupt practices that have infiltrated every sections of the Nigerian society:

- Misappropriation of public funds and embezzlement;
- Looted funds and wealth kept secretly abroad;
- Money laundering including extra-legal and illegal transfer of fund across national borders by official controls over such transfers;
- Gratification involving monetary, pecuniary, material or even physical favours like sexual relationships;
- Abuse of office, including the violation of the oath of office by an incumbent, debasement of official procedures for personal financial or non-material gains and obstructing due process or rule of law for political advantage; and
- Nepotism, favouritism and other forms of primordial considerations (32).

The above statement stresses a variety of ways in which corrupt acts are apparent in everyday life in Nigeria and among Nigerians both leaders and the led. These corrupt practices seemly reveal the loss of integrity, moral principles among many Nigerians both leaders and followers. There are many existing examples of corrupt practices by leaders in both public and private sectors.

For instance, in 1956, the Foster-Sutton Tribunal of Inquiry probed the Premier of the then Eastern Region, Nnamdi Azikiwe, for his abuse of office and conflict of interest in the business of African Continental Bank (ACB). The code of conduct for government officials demands that a government officer shall surrender his holdings in private business when s/he assumes public office. The Tribunal discovered that Azikiwe did not sever his links to the bank when he became a Premier of the Eastern Region. The Tribunal reported that Azikiwe continued to use his influence to promote the interests of the bank (Sklar 185). Few years after, precisely 1962, Obafemi Awolowo, the first Premier of the then Western Region, was also investigated and found guilty of corruption by the Coker Commission of Inquiry. The Coker Commission of Inquiry found Chief Awolowo guilty for the ills of the Western Region Marketing Board, due to his failure to stick to the standards of conduct, which were required of persons holding public office (Magid 73).

Ever since, there have been reports of corrupt acts by leaders which have gone from bad to worse as the years go by. The situation seems to be getting worse by the day, and dishonesty for personal gains among leaders has remained at an alarming level. “The Sanni Abacha Loot” is another near instance corrupt leaders. Abacha administration witnessed a monumental looting by him, his family and his cronies. It was reported that Abacha corruptly enriched himself with public funds between the region of US \$ 5 and 6 billion and he invested most of it in the Western world (Awofeso and Odeyemi 250; Ekwonwa 167).

All through the eight years of President Olusegun Obasanjo, he was fully in-charge of the petroleum ministry, where advanced corrupt practices took place with impunity. The over \$400 million invested on the Turn-Around Maintenance (TAM) and repairs of the refineries failed to yield any positive result, and the contractors awarded the contracts were never brought to book (Adekeye 30). The TAM and repairs of the refineries have become a conduit pipe for different administrations in the country to embezzle, misappropriate and steal public funds. Money meant for the TAM is diverted into private bank accounts to the detriment of the poor masses.

Besides, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) under Goodluck Jonathan withheld 3.2 trillion naira in revenue from the

Federal Government in 2014. The Auditor General of the Federation, Samuel Ukura, disclosed this in the Federal Government’s 2014 audit report of all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), which he presented to the leadership of the National Assembly. He also revealed that “the sum of ₦ 36.6 billion was released to the office of the National Security Adviser, NSA, for the rehabilitation and construction of dams instead of the Federal Ministry of Water Resources” (www.pmnewsnigeria.com). There is no doubt that these monies have been diverted into private accounts of corrupt individuals in the MDAs.

Another case of leadership failure is that of Stephen Oronsaye, a former Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, who was indicted by the Office of the Auditor- General of the Federation over an alleged N123 billion fraud committed during his tenure, between 2009 and 2010. The report entitled “Special Audit of the Accounts of the Civil Pensions”, found Oronsaye guilty of purportedly presiding over the looting of the nation’s resources during his tenure. The audit report uncovered monumental financial irregularities, out right stealing of public funds and kick backs (www.premiumtimesng.com).

Similar case is that of “N195 billion Maina Pension Scam”. It is believed that Abdurashied Maina, former Chairman of Presidential Task Force on Pension Reform (PTFPP), embezzled billions of naira worth of pension funds, which he claimed to have recovered from pension thieves. The senate committee probing pension funds management accused him of mopping up pension funds from banks and depositing the money in his private accounts. The mopping of such funds had made it difficult to pay thousands of pensioners across the nation for months (Helen www.naija.ng).

There are also cases of moral leadership failure in business. For instance, Cecilia Ibru, former Chief Executive Officer of Oceanic Bank, pleaded guilty to three of twenty-five counts of fraud and mismanagement of depositors’ funds. She was jailed for six months and ordered to hand over \$1.2 billion in cash and assets. The government removed her along with other executives from a number of financial institutions in 2009. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) had to step in and bail out nine banks which were on the brink of collapse because of reckless lending and fraud (www.bbc.com).

There are many former governors currently being tried in different courts over allegation of money laundering, embezzlement and misappropriation of public fund, according to the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC). These governors are Sule Lamido (Jigawa State), Alao Akala (Oyo State), Murtala Nyako (Adamawa State), Saminu Turaki (Jigawa State), Orji Uzor Kalu (Abia State), Danjuma Goje (Gombe State), Godswill Akpabio (Akwa Ibom State), Martin Elechi (Ebonyi State), and Gbenga Daniel (Ogun State) among others. There are over twenty senators, including the Senate President, Bukola Saraki, who are also being investigated and prosecuted by anti-graft agencies. It is a shame that majority of these senators are also ex-governors who corruptly rigged their ways into the Senate. One wonders the kind of laws these corrupt law makers can possibly make for the country.

The Judiciary is not left out in the corruption saga. For instance, Justice Hyeladzira Nganjiwa is facing a \$260,000.00 and N8, 650,000.00 million (totalling about N81, 705,000.00) corruption charge, brought against him by the EFCC before Justice Adebayo Akintoye of Igbosere High Court. Other judges facing trial for allegedly receiving bribes are Adeniyi Ademola, Sylvester Ngwuta and Rita Ofilli-Ajumogbia among others. In 2016, agents of the Department of State Security (DSS) engaged in a raid of homes of many judges, arresting some of them, including two Supreme Court justices connected with alleged electoral judgement fraud and professional misconduct.

In addition, there are cases of moral leadership failure in the military. There are allegations that funds meant for the purchase of arms and ammunitions are sometimes diverted to private accounts of leaders. Other cases include inflation of contract, diversion of money meant for soldiers' welfare, rehabilitation of barracks and military facilities. For instance, the former National Security Adviser (NSA) was said to have diverted and supervised the disbursement of over \$ 2.1 billion meant for arms procurement to various individuals. Olisa Metuh, former Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) spokesman allegedly got N400 million from the Dasuki's loot. Musilu Obanikoro, former minister of state for defence reportedly received N4.7 billion from the same Dasuki's loot. The Chairman of African Independent Television (AIT), Raymond Dokpesi was arraigned in court by the EFCC for partaking in Dasuki's loot. Some top military officers are currently facing

corruption charges in court. Among them are former Chief of Defence Staff, Alex Badeh, and former Chief of Air Staff, Mohammed Umar.

The leadership of educational institutions are not exempted from corrupt practices. There exist allegations of corruption against heads of tertiary institutions of outright diversion of funds meant for the development of educational institutions for personal use, embezzlement, misappropriation of funds and diversion of internally generated revenues into personal accounts. For example, two vice chancellors Professor Adebisi Daramola of the Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA), and Professor Olusola Oyewole of the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB) were recently suspended by the Federal Government over allegations of mismanagement and financial fraud. They are presently standing trials for looting funds allocated for running the universities.

From this avalanche of cases, and so many others that are not mentioned here, of moral leadership failure in every sector of the Nigerian society both public and private, one wonders if there can ever be development of any kind in Nigeria. Little wonder, tangible and sustainable development has eluded the country since independence. No one will doubt the fact that there is something missing in these leaders in Nigeria. These leaders lack *edu* (moral character) and *Ibibio* moral principles discussed above. It is unfortunate that the *Ibibio* virtue ethics and moral principles 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 resulting 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. To have a corruption free society, we must as a matter of necessity conquer lack of integrity, greed, avarice, selfishness and nepotism by imbibing *Ibibio* virtue ethics and moral principles. The *Ibibio* virtue-based ethics seeks to engender excellent persons who both act well and serve as example to inspire others. Nigeria leaders can stop and prevent corrupt practices by promoting ethical leadership and becoming an ethical leader based on *Ibibio* virtue ethics and *Ibibio* ethical leadership principles.

CONCLUSION

From our discussion so far, it has been exposed that lack of ethics in leadership is inimical to the development of any nation, society or organization. We can achieve sustainable development in Nigeria if every leader in every sector of the society imbibes, promotes and encourages the Ibibio ethical leadership principles as well as initiates efforts to stop unethical practices and behaviour. Moreover, one way by which the natural and human resources in Nigeria can transform into sustainable development is by having leaders with strong Ibibio ethical leadership principles in all sectors of the nation. Ethical leaders build community with others; it is practically impossible for any nation to develop without ethical leadership. This is crucial because leadership is about influencing others to achieve a communal goal. What is more, ethics is crucial to leadership because of the process of influence. Ethics, like leadership, is concerned about the welfare and well being of others, not particularly the interest of oneself. Hence, leadership is fundamentally linked to ethics. We cannot have leadership without ethics. In other words, ethics is a *conditio sin quo non* for leadership.

Good leadership denotes not only the leader's competence and capacity, but also his or her moral character. Once ethics is taken away from leadership, we cease to have leadership. What we have without ethics in leadership are treasury looters, nepotistic and greedy individuals. Leaders without moral character use their position and privilege to embezzle public funds, instigate ethnic and religious crises to their advantage, encourage and also institute systemic corruption. This portrays the Nigeria's leadership situation: political, institutional, military, religious, business, humanitarian and governmental leaderships. We have leaders that lack *edu* (moral character) and fail to imbibe the Ibibio ethics and ethical leadership principles of integrity, honesty, justice, service to others, moral courage, respect for others and established norms, values and laws.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study was conducted with a Grant from the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND), Nigeria 2011 – 2014 (MERGED) TETFUND Research Project Intervention for the University of Uyo and released in 2016.

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Citation: Odumayak Okpo, "Leadership Ethics: An African Virtue Ethics Approach to Leadership Ethics", *Journal of Philosophy and Ethics*, 1(3), 2019, pp. 29-41

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