

**REPRESENTING CORRUPTION AND SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT: A
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ACHEBE'S NO LONGER AT EASE AND
HANGULA'S "THE SHOW ISN'T OVER UNTIL..."**

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Abstract: This paper comparatively analyses the representation of corruption and sense of entitlement in Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and Vickson Hangula's "*The show isn't over until...*" (1999). The texts were chosen purposively because they share common themes of corruption and sense of entitlement. Furthermore, this paper aimed to explore, discuss and examine the forms, causes and effects of corruption and sense of entitlement as represented in the selected novel and play. A qualitative research approach was employed and premised on the two theoretical frameworks, the Fraud Triangle Theory and Social Realism Theory. The theories were utilised to inform the discussions on the causes and effects of corruption and sense of entitlement as presented in the texts. The Fraud Triangle theory particularly winnowed out the causes of corruption and sense of entitlement from the two texts, whereas the Social Realism theory helped to explore the link particularly between the forms and effects of the two vices as expressed in the literary works. Data were analysed using content analysis. Findings established, bribery, nepotism, favouritism, abuse of power and embezzlement, as some of the forms of corruption in the two literary texts. Additionally, this paper concludes that Achebe's (1960) and Hangula's (1999) texts show that the dispossession of black people as a result of colonialism and neo-colonialism cause corruption and sense of entitlement. Moreover, it was concluded that poverty and western education were some of the causes of corruption and sense of entitlement as western education alienates Africans from their socio-cultural and political economies. This alienation results in a vicious cycle of debts which leads to a precarious financial lifestyle. Subsequently, the findings of this paper revealed that corruption and sense of entitlement perpetuate poverty, racial disharmony and bolster the misuse of national resources. Lastly, further studies on corruption and sense of entitlement in different African literary genres are recommended.

Keywords: Corruption, Enlightenment, Fraud Triangle theory, western education, African literary genres

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1. INTRODUCTION

Corruption and the sense of entitlement are rampant vices which affect governance and individuals' lives alike (Grycar, 2015) in most African states. As such, these concerns have found expression in literary works. Echoing similar views, Adetiba (2016) observes that corruption has been a recurring subject in discussions about development and nation-building across the globe but mostly in Africa. Adetiba (2016) further cautions that across the African continent is a great concern for the negative effects of corruption on economic development

that has unfavourable impacts on the lives of the people. In agreement with this, Otaluka (2017, p. 73) observes that corruption has gone from an alarming proportion to a critical stage since the end of colonialism in Africa. Otaluka (2017) adds that the most common form of corruption in Africa is nepotism which hinges mainly on the people's culture. In this regard, this study argues that in the two texts, people resort to nepotism without showing remorse because of the existing culture of the sense of entitlement. Supporting this idea, Dominic and Ibrahim (2014) state that a sense of entitlement leads to corruption, but at the same time, corruption could breed a sense of entitlement, thus resulting in an equation that problematises the two concepts in Africa. More so, corruption weakens policy formulation and implementation in Africa and because of its cancerous nature, many African writers such as Ayi Kwei Amah, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Achebe, Hangula and Habila have written texts that seek to expose as well as lampoon this vice in Africa.

Achebe (1987) in *No Longer at Ease*, demonstrates the normalisation of corruption within the rank and files of the public service sector of Nigeria. Therefore, the novel is imbued with realism as it starts with the main character Obi, confronted with social and economic challenges that saw him acquiesce to the mayhem of bribery, an act he was initially determined to fight. On the other hand, Hangula (1999) enunciates, in the satirical play, "*The show isn't over until...*" the predicaments of sexual harassment, nepotism and favouritism as a result of the sense of entitlement. It is in view of this that the study investigates how the critical issues of corruption and sense of entitlement take shape in the prisms of the selected texts as well as the forms, causes and effects thereof.

In order to provide a clear perspective to this study, it is important from the onset to explain the two key titular terms to this study, corruption and sense of entitlement. Thinkers such as Obiora (2016), Morris (2014), Abioye (2009) define corruption as the attainment of material or non-material wealth or advantage by someone in a powerful and influential position through a dishonest and often fraudulent manner. On the other hand, sense of entitlement is learned behaviour around self-centred beliefs that an individual is worthy or owed certain privileges because of their status or position in a given setting (Evans, 2013; Mishra, 2006; Sylla, 2011). The selected works for this study Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* and Hangula's "*The show isn't over until...*". Utilising these two genres (novel and play) was important as it enlarged the spectrum of the means and strategies which were employed to represent the core issues of concern in this study. The current paper's thrust is however not focused on the different literary genres but on how they imaginatively present the vices under study. This argument found resonance with the aim of this study as it allowed the researcher to explore the representation of corruption and sense of entitlement concerns within literary contexts in Africa.

2. CORRUPTION AND SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT

Corruption can be defined as the dishonest, deceitful, law-breaking and fraudulent conducts by those in power or those who occupy offices of influence (IPPR, 2016). It involves bribery, nepotism, or bestowal of patronage by personal choice rather than by economic rationality and merit, and misappropriation of public funds and resources for

enriching private ends. Corruption thus means abusing one's official authority to give favour to an individual or group of individuals in exchange for monetary or non-monetary gains (Namibia Institute for Democracy & Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung, 1997, p. 9). In addition, Evans (2013) defines sense of entitlement as a set of learned behaviour through socialisation that is around self-centred beliefs that an individual is worthy or owed certain privileges as a result of their status or position. Whether the status of the said person is real or perceived, the person feels owed and gets what one may not necessarily deserve to the detriment of those who deserve it (Evans, 2013). However, Joel (2015) define sense of entitlement as a false feeling of indebtedness to a certain treatment that under normalcy would not be owed to you. This definition is cemented by Khan (2019) who espouses that entitlement is what an individual squarely deserves such as a salary and perks for a given position, while sense of entitlement is the gap between what the people squarely deserve and what they think they deserve (Khan, 2019, p. 44).

On the other hand, the term corruption defies a singular definition. Its definition varies with different authors. For instance, Mishra (2006), defines corruption as the behaviour of deviating from the formal and normal way of doing things for personal gain. Mishra's definition underscores a very key element in the meaning of corruption; the 'gain'. Moreover, Mishra (2006) opines that the deviation can take place either in a public or private sector and it is often done for private gains of individuals and not for the common good of everyone. Supporting Mishra's (2006) definition, Sylla (2011) affirms that corruption is a phenomenon that has been around since time immemorial that can take place in any government at any given time for private gain. In addition, Sylla (2011), like Mishra (2006) talks about the 'gain' element of corruption. Sylla (2011) further expounds on the definition of corruption that it is categorised into grand (the corruption on a big scale) and petty (corruption on small scale), which are both a result of enabling environments of poor control and loose ethics of individuals and organisations or states.

Another scholar Obiora (2016), defines corruption from the perspective of "corrupt leaders in various leadership positions whether military or civilian who embezzle public funds, oppress the masses, inhibit press freedom and neglect their duty to the masses" (p. 84). Evans (2013) agrees that corruption links directly to leadership when they put their personal desires above institutional aspirations, which in turn leads to mistrust and damages the reputation of institutions. Following this line of thought, Evans (2013) sees the sense of entitlement as something that can cause corruption or rather a manifestation of corruption. As such, Evans (2013) states that a culture of sense of entitlement can breed multiple forms of corrupt practices that result in unethical and unjustified deeds. Writers of fiction like Achebe (1987), Hangula (1999) and Obiora (2016) have shown concern with these retrogressive deeds in society, yet the comparative literary criticism particularly within the Namibian context, is scarce. These misdeeds had hitherto remained un-investigated, hence, this paper sought to fill this gap.

These representations of corruption and sense of entitlement surface the harsh effects of corruption within the public service. The section below outlines how these issues are represented in the texts under scrutiny.

3. REPRESENTATION OF CORRUPTION AND SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT IN NO LONGER AT EASE AND "THE SHOW ISN'T OVER UNTIL..."

Since no study has attempted to comparatively looking at the representation of corruption and sense of entitlement specifically in the two literary works, *No Longer at Ease* and *"The show isn't over until..."*, this study, bridges this gap in literary studies. Scholars such as Dominic and Ibrahim (2014) examined the theme of corruption in Soyinka's *"The Road"*. On the other hand, Obiora (2016) only assessed the representation of corruption holistically in African novels and found that corruption poses a real threat to the survival of a functional society. The findings of the above studies one of the objectives of this study which is to ascertain the imaginative effects of corruption and sense of entitlement as represented in the literary works under review. Similarly, Ajakah (2018), only gives an account of the representation of corruption and sense of entitlement in the *Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Based on the foregoing, corruption and sense of entitlement have not been analysed comparatively so far, hence the significance of this paper.

This section outlines a comparative discussion of the vices under review as presented in the two literary texts. It is apt to state that both literary works delve into the issues of corruption and sense of entitlement. Although the novel deals more with corruption than the play, it also has some hues of sense of entitlement that manifest in multiple ways and forms. The play explores the sense of entitlement and abuse of power than the novel but also heartily addresses some fundamental cases of corruption as well. In this section, the similarities and differences of these issues are outlined.

Achebe shows an element of recourse, and the repercussions for corruption are felt right from the beginning of the book with the arrest of Obi. However, in Hangula's play, no recourse of the abuse of power is felt and this leaves much to be desired as far as the future is concerned. While Achebe included predominantly the young people in the novel, which gives hope that the future belongs to the young people and there is hope that one-day things will change for the better, Hangula, on the contrary, has a lot of old people featuring in the play which presents a bleak future as young people are pushed to the kerb. This signifies the sense of entitlement in the play as the war veterans feel entitled to the resources and opportunities after independence, hence excluding the young minds that can bring in the needed ingenuity and innovation in the country.

The opportunity pillar of the Fraud Triangle theory comes out strongly in both texts. In Achebe (1960), the opportunity for Obi to abuse power came when Miss Mark presented herself to Obi's house saying she could do anything to get the scholarship. A similar opportunity to abuse power and resort to corrupt activities is also shown when Festus's lack of a resolute accounting mechanism other than the "white" secretary was presented. This means the opportunity to commit fraud was there and hence, utilised by Festus to siphon public funds to his *cuca* shop in the north.

The play provides a reasonable fidelity of the former freedom fighters' plight after independence and how bad governance and corruption disadvantages the livelihood of people and derails the development of nations. Similarly, the novel mirrors the realism of the life of

an educated young man amidst a corruption-ridden society. Both the novel and play give a lucid account of contemporary life and society buoyed on the Social Realism theory. The literary works narrate social reality with imagined solutions that the novelist and playwright think can possibly solve problems faced by different societies today.

Moreover, sexual favour is another form of corruption that is explored in both texts. While in Achebe's novel, Miss Mark offers her body to solicit a scholarship, in the play, the incident with nurse Maita reveals the carpet interview in which Festus (Director of Aluta Constructions) treats Maita as a sex object in order to give her a job. Interestingly, Achebe's novel does not condone this behaviour. Obi refused to concede to the girl's advances and tells her to trust the process: "Please, Mr Okonkwo, you must help me. I'll do whatever you ask.' She avoided his eyes. Her voice was a little unsteady, and Obi thought he saw a hint of tears in her eyes" (Achebe, 1960, p. 70). Similarly, Hangula's play also discourages the act through Maita's response and conviction that she "will never be used as a sex toy ever again" (p. 26). These two similar events of sex for favours represented in both novels demonstrates the reality that punctuates these vices, which is in accord with the Social Realism theory of fiction mirroring society virtually verbatim (Hakibou, 2018).

Furthermore, Hangula's (1999) discouragement uncovered the veil over the sense of entitlement at the epitome of the play when Maita revealed that women were raped and used as "sex toys" in exile by the male combatants. This authorial intrusion contorts the whole significance the play places on the need to call out the heinous acts committed to women in exile by the soldiers who had a sense of entitlement to these women's bodies.

Both literary works mirror society verbatim, as the problems grappled with by the characters in the novel and the play are similar and relatable to the contemporary problems facing society today both in Namibia and Nigeria alike. This relates closely to the study's theoretical framework, Social Realism. Regarding corruption, the novel prompts for a definition of what a bribe constitutes. This serves to dissect how corruption can take a broader scope that ought to be avoided by those who hold positions of influence. In the argument between Christopher and Obi, he painstakingly shoots down: "Now tell me, Christopher. What is your definition of bribery?" Well, let's see. ... The use of improper influence." Good. I suppose" (p. 92).

This definition is not strange too, not only the realities witnessed today in society and mainly governance, but also to the issues raised by Hangula (1999) in the play. The use of improper influence and abuse of power to acquire personal gains reigns supreme in "*The show isn't over, until...*". This paper concludes that both the novelist's and playwright's messages are that corruption and sense of entitlement can be overcome. For instance, when Obi and Clara are going through a breakup, Clara discovers that she is pregnant. In their quest to abort the pregnancy, the first doctor they consulted refused to be involved in criminal activities:

'I am sorry, my dear young man,' he said, 'but I cannot help you. What you are asking me to do is a criminal offence for which I could go to jail and lose my licence. But

apart from that I have my reputation to safeguard – twenty years' practice without a single blot... (Achebe, 1960, p. 110)

Again, the novelist shows that corruption can be overcome and that it is possible to say no to both crime and abuse of power. The possibility to uphold ethics and integrity shows positivity and hope for a better tomorrow. Although the texts were written and set in different countries and during different times, their similarities and differences regarding the issues of corruption and sense of entitlement show the monumental effects of these vices in the African continent.

4. EFFECTS OF CORRUPTION AND SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT IN THE TEXTS

In the novel, the effects of corruption are sorely felt by Obi himself from a character perspective. As he lost himself in the aftermath of all what transpired. This is evidenced by the excerpt below:

And Obi had remained completely unmoved. Mercifully he had recently lost his mother, and Clara had gone out of his life. The two events following closely on each other had dulled his sensibility and left him a different man, able to look words like 'education' and 'promise' squarely in the face (Achebe, 1960, p. 5).

The impact of losing key stakeholders in one's life can come out daunting on an individual's functionality and sensibility alike and the passage above demonstrates that Obi is no exception. His sensibility has been dulled by the loss of his mother in a concatenation of bad moments of financial insolvency and the breakup he just had with the love of his life Clara. With all these predicaments, compounded by the unequally yoked political economy in his midst, had robbed him of sense and rendered him feelingless, directionless, making him fertile ground for corruption and other misdeeds.

Furthermore, the moment Obi starts engaging in corrupt activities, he firstly sees his conscience seared and he no longer has a heart – he would sleep with someone or take a bribe and go celebrate with a friend. Secondly, his loss of conscience culminates in him not going to his own mother's funeral, something that even his fellow Umuafians could not fathom. His loss of self is evidenced when he takes away the life of his own unborn child through abortion, a move that created a rift and immense enmity between Clara and himself. Clara is also a victim herself as she is emotionally wounded. Also, with Obi's arrest, it seems there is no escape and Galloway will have a party on him as he is sentenced. Thus, Obi's corruption case exacerbates racism and confirms stereotypes. Mr Green now firmly, with proof thereof, believes that the African is corrupt through and through. Obi's arrest further creates a sense of apathy. By the same token, those who knew him as a crusader against corruption would possibly feel that corruption is way too powerful to be fought. Consequently, they'd rather be also corrupt since their champion Obi was also corrupt. The result is a vicious cycle of systemic corruption.

At family level, one can also begin to think about the effects Obi's arrest would have on his father who is now a grieving widower and is old and poor. The arrest would devastate

his father and beleaguer his societal standing and reputation as a pastor. Obi's young brother would also not be spared from the ramifications of Obi's arrest as he is his only sponsor. The young brother's future could be placed in limbo as Obi would no longer be able to pay school fees therefore perpetuating poverty in the family and ruining the young boy's life even before it starts. This is all in tandem with the Social Realism theory that shows literature portraying society as it is with all its misgivings and blessings. Achebe's novel cements Chatman's (1978) view of fiction as a string of stories or discourse that take a narrative structure and angle that depicts the reality of society.

Moreover, in the play, the effects of corruption and sense of entitlement as represented by Hangula (1999) are that of betrayal. First, there is a sense of betrayal felt at the collective level because a score of liberation struggle veterans feels side-lined in enjoying the fruits of independence and many are left toiling in the streets without jobs, after over two decades of sacrificing their lives in the bushes at the picket lines. Second, betrayal is felt at individual levels as many veterans that Festus knew personally came looking for jobs but could not secure any even when they felt deserving and suitable for such jobs. They believed that Festus would empathise with them considering that some of the veterans had saved his life during the struggle – such as Comrade Denga Ombulu. This is illustrated when Comrade Denga Ombulu was interviewed by 'Comrade Kakodi' Festus. Because of what Cde Denga Ombulu did for Festus during the struggle, he felt he would land a job right away but on the contrary, he was told to wait for Festus to first inspect how he would fit him in. This is shown below:

SIMON: Yeah. Those were the tough times. I remember how we had to hide under those bushes until the morning hours because the choppers were encircling the area and dropping bombs no end. I was hungry, thirsty and in pain. In the morning you carried me all the way until we reached Lubango. How did you manage that, comrade?

STEVE: I suppose the will to free my country and people kept me going. Even at times when I really felt that I could no longer go on... But I had to keep moving for our sake. Well, and I suppose if I had left you there, I wouldn't have been able to ask you for a job today.

SIMON: (absentminded) Yeah, you're right.

STEVE: So, when can I start?

SIMON: (now alert) Hum... what? Start what, comrade?

STEVE: Start to work. I have the job, right?

SIMON: I wish it was as easy as that, comrade. This independence has brought us a lot of problems ... (Hangula, 1999, p. 13)

As seen in the above dialogue, Comrade Festus really owes Comrade Denga Ombulu, his life, but contrary to what Comrade Denga Ombulu expected, Festus did not offer him a job right away. The unemployed comrade felt entitled to the job because he had saved Festus' life, and had carried him miles to Lubango. Denga Ombulu then asked when he could start because considering his sacrifice to save Festus' life in the bush, he believed Festus would return the favour by giving him a job. However, Festus had an explanation in lieu of the job, hence, Comrade Denga Ombulu felt betrayed. The collective betrayal involves all those veterans who sacrificed their youth and lives to

fight for the freedom that they could not enjoy after independence. This brings new waters to navigate, as Hangula (1999) presents the action signaled by the veterans that they knew where they had buried some of the weapons and they were willing to fight again for their recognition, as comrade Denga Ombulu reminisces:

STEVE: Thanks. I haven't tasted this since I left training in 1979, (takes a gulp). Sometimes I am really tempted to regret having spent all those years at the front. What makes me shudder is the fact that I still remember many places where I have buried some of the guns... there are enough weapons to arm a platoon. And I am sure I am not alone. Those of you who have... (stops and looks at the DIRECTOR) Should I really say that? (Hangula, 1999, p. 15)

The above shows a sense of despondency on the part of the unemployed veterans who spent many years of their lives at the war front. It also presents a possibility of an up-rise of the combatants which could threaten the peace, harmony and tranquility of the young democratic nation. The situation is further exacerbated by the fact that the exclusion of some combatants from employment perpetuated poverty. The following section concludes this paper.

5. CONCLUSION

Public debate and introspection have become moribund in relation to corruption and transparent governance in most African countries after gaining their independence. Corruption and sense of entitlement keep drowning all voices of reason within governments to the demise of countries and their economies, institutions and moral rectitude; these issues found resonance in fictional work. It is in light of this that an analysis of how these issues are represented in literature as outlined in this paper necessitated an endeavour to conjure measures to remedy the broken societies that came about as a result of the tapestry of corruption and sense of entitlement hovering particularly over the African continent. Meanwhile, this paper outlined how corruption and sense of entitlement have become recurring maladies hovering over the African continent. Despite the fact that the effects of these vices prove to be detrimental to the developmental agenda of the continent, they are left at the periphery of social and academic debate. This study sought to register the representation of these vices in fiction. As with all issues that bedevil society, literary works serve as the conduit and safe space through which burning issues can be addressed and solutions sought via the use of characters and imagined settings. This paper lays bare feasible imagined forms, causes and effects of corruption and sense of entitlement as presented in the two literary texts in order to derive an advanced understanding of the said social problems with the confidence that, it is only when requisite knowledge about certain social problems is outlined that such problems can be overcome. Additionally, the paper buttresses the nuanced representation through novel theoretical frameworks of the Fraud Triangle and the Social Realism, hence, providing an erudite contribution to the body of knowledge in the sphere of literary analysis. More studies on corruption and sense of entitlement in different African literary genres are recommended.

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