



There is no God: Psalm 14:1-7

Favour Chukwuemeka Uroko 

Department of Religion and Cultural Studies, Faculty of the Social Sciences,
University of Nigeria Nsukka
favour.uroko@unn.edu.ng

Abstract: In Nigeria, corruption pervades most sectors, beginning with the executive; the second is the legislature; and the third is the judiciary. The purpose of this article is to examine the aphorism that there is no God in Psalm 14:1-7 and its importance to Nigerians. Several works of literature have not used the aphorism in Psalm 14 in analysing the Nigerian context. Psalm 14 is believed to be written by David, and it shows his cry against corrupters and those who trample upon the rights of the poor in society. This is a qualitative study that used discourse analysis with data gotten from relevant academic literature. Emerged themes include: i) Do as you like (vv. 1); ii) People do not understand (vv. 2-3); iii) the rich and power (vv. 4-6); and iv) judgement is very soon (vv. 5-7). Findings show that in Nigeria, everywhere is pervaded by corruption, beginning with the executive, the legislature, and the judicial arm of government. Most of the policies made by the government are anti-people. Government ministries and parastatals are very much involved in the collection of bribes before doing the right thing.

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1. Introduction

Psalm 14 provides a response for Nigerians who may think that they could engage in any corruption practice or action and go free. Psalm 14 is probably written by David. Zavada noted that King David found a 4,000-piece orchestra to play during worship (1Chr. 23:5), and this was approximately 1440 B.C–586 B.C.¹ It explores the various vices perpetuated in society because people think God is dead or not existing, thus no punishment is accruable for their actions. The Psalmists promise judgement to corrupters. The Psalmist announces that deliverance will come to their victims from God.² The Psalmists saw the end of those exploited. He insisted that those exploited would be recompensed by God, which invariably means that those who engage in

¹ Jack Zavada, "Introduction to the Book of Psalms," Learn Religions, 2019, <https://www.learnreligions.com/book-of-psalms-701125>.

² Nandy Heule, "God Is on the Side of the Oppressed," Anglican Journal, 2016, <https://anglicanjournal.com/god-is-on-the-side-of-the-oppressed>.

evil would be punished by God. The themes in Psalm 14 are very evident in the Nigerian context.

In Nigeria, corruption pervades most sectors. Human Rights Watch calls it “criminal politics”.³ There are three major levels of political governance in Nigeria. The first is the executive, the second is the legislature, and the third is the judiciary. The levels are also called tiers of government. They exist at the federal and state levels of governance. Thus, corruption is a major challenge to governance and development.⁴ At the beginning, it was the executive branch that was soaked in corruption. Then, the legislature continued from there by collecting bribes from the executing and making laws that are anti-people. Thereafter, the judiciary got itself into the corrupt saga. Judges that are supposed to be the watchdogs of the constitution have not begun to sell the poor for money, thwarting justice. In the words of Ige,

Corruption is now a national malaise. It is a monster that has eaten deep into the fabric of the society and the judiciary is not isolated. ... The malady in the justice system was so pronounced at the time that it gave not only the right thinking Nigerians the reason to worry but also the successive military governments which largely contributed to the woes of the third arm of government. The regime of President Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida was the first government that made a serious attempt to purge the system. Specifically, the military government set up a panel to look into the problems be facing the judiciary with a view to proffering solutions to them. But all his efforts became a mere dream as the committee he convoked to handle the assignment never sat.⁵

In Psalms 14, King David's lament presents the world as divided into two categories of people: "the fool" (the wicked; verses 1-3) and "the just" (also known as God's people-"my people"- and "the poor"; verses 4-6). While the wicked persecute the just, this Psalm expresses hope that God will punish the wicked and reward the righteous.⁶ There is a turning away from God in the human heart that leads to all kinds of various sin, symptoms of it, all kinds of different ideas and intellectual declarations, even to the point of denying God's existence entirely.⁷ Existing literature have not contextualized Psalm 14 in Nigeria. In this study, literature was extended to this area. Most of the corruption going on in Nigeria is based on the ideology that God

³ Chris Albin-Lackey, “Criminal Politics: Violence, ‘Godfathers’ and Corruption in Nigeria,” Human Rights Watch, 2007, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2007/10/11/criminal-politics/violence-godfathers-and-corruption-nigeria>.

⁴ Levinus Nwabughiofu Fortune Eromosele, “Corruption Deep-Rooted in Nigeria before My Coming — Buhari,” Vanguard, 2020, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/02/corruption-deep-rooted-in-nigeria-before-my-coming-buhari-2>.

⁵ Ise-Oluwa Ige, “Entire Nation’s Soaked in Corruption – CJN,” Vanguard, 2010, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2010/07/entire-nations-soaked-in-corruption-cjn>.

⁶ Jimbo Kimo, “A Lament over Widespread Corruption–Psalm 14,” Psalm 91, 2020, <https://psalm91.com/2020/09/27/a-lament-over-widespread-corruption>.

⁷ David Platt, “None Who Does Good (Psalm 14:1–3),” Radical.net, 2018, <https://radical.net/podcasts/pray-the-word/none-who-does-good-psalm-141-3>.

does not see, hence, one is free to steal from the national confers without any fear. This pericope is believed to speak anew to the challenge of corruption in Nigeria.

This study examines the concept that there is no God in Psalms 14 and its relevance in the Nigerian context. First, it gives an understanding of Psalms 14. Second, it examines the emerged themes from the pericope. Third, it discusses corruption in Nigeria. Third, corruption in Nigeria was examined in the light of Psalms 14.

2. Research Method

This is a qualitative study. It employed narrative method. Narrative method involve constructing a series from historical documents to identify the reason and/or the quantities associated with a particular change in a variable.⁸ Data was gotten from primary and secondary sources. The primary source was the Bible. The secondary sources include journals, textbooks and commentaries. The data was analysed using literary analysis. Literary analysis means closely studying a text, interpreting its meanings, and exploring why the author made certain choices.⁹

3. Result and Discussion

Understanding Psalm 14:1

The book of Psalms is divided into four sections. First are the psalms attributed to David. Second are the Psalms attributed to Asaph. Third are the Psalms attributed to Korah, and last are the Psalms attributed to the songs of the accent. Psalm 14 falls under the group of Psalms believed to be written by David. Psalm 14, credited to David, opens with him addressing the concept of atheism. David's initial word in this psalm is "fool", as he explores the prevalent sentiment expressed by some, asserting, "There is no God," which is not a novel challenge in our ongoing spiritual journey. Throughout history, there have been and will persist individuals who reject the existence of God. According to David, those who harbor the belief that there is no God are deemed foolish.¹⁰ Credited to David, this Psalm reflects his exasperation with individuals he deems foolish. It serves as a stark portrayal of human depravity, emphasizing the essential role of God's intervention for any prospect of morality or salvation. The source of our hope and salvation, lies in Christ's

⁸ Valerie A. Ramey, "Macroeconomic Shocks and Their Propagation," in *Handbook of Macroeconomics*, ed. John B. Taylor and Harald Uhlig, vol. 2 (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2016), 71–162, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/bs.hesmac.2016.03.003>.

⁹ Jack Caulfield, "How to Write a Literary Analysis Essay | A Step-by-Step Guide," www.scribbr.com, 2023, <https://www.scribbr.com/academic-essay/literary-analysis>.

¹⁰ Brent Kercheville, "Psalm 14, The Way of the Fool," West Palm Beach church of Christ, 2006, https://westpalmbeachchurchofchrist.com/old-testament/psalms/psalms_14.html.

redemption. The Psalms, as noted by Johnston and Firth¹¹ offer spiritual wisdom and a religious legacy from a select group of ancient Israelites, leaving a lasting influence on humanity.

This Psalm is attributed to David and his frustration with stupid people. This is a Psalm that shows humanity's depravity, with no hope for morality, let alone salvation, without God's intervention. Through the Psalms, the spiritual insight and religious heritage of a small number of ancient Israelites have had a profound and lasting impact on humanity.¹² Possibly occurring during David's fugitive period from Saul, this incident involves his encounter with Abigail, a woman of strong faith, and her imprudent husband, Nabal. David and his men had rendered services to Nabal and sought fair compensation for safeguarding his sheep and servants. When Nabal deceitfully withheld payment, he followed a misguided path fueled by pride and greed, underestimating David's potential actions. The Psalms can be seen as a contemporary glimpse into the meditations of Old Testament believers, revealing their inner thoughts, emotions, frustrations, questions, and blessings.¹³ Abigail's intervention, showcased in this account, serves as a powerful illustration that adhering to the principles found in the Word and following the example of our living Lord is a potent force for good, apart from the guiding influence of the Spirit. The foundation of right and truthful action lies in character, as exemplified in this narrative and underscored by biblical passages (1Sam. 25; Prov. 17:13; 20:22; 24:29).¹⁴

Themes in Psalm 14

Psalm 14:1-7 has four structures viz: Do as You Like (v.1), people do not understand (vv.2-3), the rich and power (vv. 4-6), and judgement is very soon (vv. 5-7).

Do as You Like (v.1)

In v.1, anyone that tells himself that there is no supreme being that regulates the activities of man is termed "fool". The Hebrew word for fool is נָבִיל. Hebrew נָבִיל means fool, senseless, stupid, wicked, and a vile person. This is because these foolish people are the ones that involve in so many wrong actions of which corruption is a part of it. In fact, the rhetor in v.1 noted that everyone who practice corruption is a fool because indirectly they are saying there is no God. People are doing anything,

¹¹ Philip S. Johnston and David G. Firth, "Introduction," in *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches*, ed. Philip S. Johnston and David G. Firth (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 17.

¹² Johnston and Firth, 17.

¹³ Craig Keener and Danny McCain, *Understanding and Applying the Scriptures* (Bukuru, Nigeria: ACTS Publishers, 2008), 260.

¹⁴ Richard J. Krejcir, "What Is Character?," ChurchLeadership.org, 2017, <http://www.churchleadership.org/apps/articles/?articleid=42500&columnid=&contentonly=true>.

cheating people, and taking the lives of others because they do not see any judgment. They feel that with their strength, they could get anything they wanted. It seems that everyone has joined in corrupt practices. According to Platt,¹⁵ the situation is so terrible to the point that human beings have denied God altogether, abandoning the fact that we were created by God. Humanity engages in all forms of corruption, denying the image of God, his power, and his existence. The young and the old, the rich and the poor, the wise and the foolish—there is none with clean hands. Lloyd-Jones¹⁶ noted that the greatest tragedy of the fool in the pericope is not only that they have rejected God as their creator, but that they have also rejected God as their saviour.

People do not Understand (vv.2-3)

In verse 2, when God looked to check if there were those who were yet to engage in corruption, he discovered that everyone is corrupt. God was checking for two people. First are those with understanding. Second, for those who want to know God, that means changing their evil ways. Providing a sketch, Calvin noted that:

God himself is here introduced as speaking on the subject of human depravity, and this renders the discourse of David more emphatic than if he had pronounced the sentence in his own person. When God is exhibited to us as sitting on his throne to take cognisance of the conduct of men, unless we are stupified in an extraordinary degree, his majesty must strike us with terror. The effect of the habit of sinning is, that men grow hardened in their sins, and discern nothing, as if they were enveloped in thick darkness. David, therefore, to teach them that they gain nothing by flattering and deceiving themselves as they do, when wickedness reigns in the world with impunity, testifies that God looks down from heaven, and casts his eyes on all sides, for the purpose of knowing what is done among men.¹⁷

In verse 3, the psalmist lamented that God could not get anybody with understanding or see anyone who was tired of doing wickedness and cheating others. Thus, God is looking for anyone who will seek him or turn their heart towards him¹⁸.

The Rich and Power (vv. 4-6)

The Psalmist insisted that God see those who engage in bad things, immorality, and corruption as those who do not know the implications of what they are doing. Gerber¹⁹ says that King David was amazed and astonished at this brazen wickedness,

¹⁵ Platt, "None Who Does Good (Psalm 14:1-3)."

¹⁶ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "The Fool Says in His Heart, 'There Is No God,'" MLJ Trust Sermon Website, 2023, <https://www.mljtrust.org/sermons/old-testament/the-fool-has-said-there-is-no-god>.

¹⁷ Jean Calvin, "Commentary On Psalms Volume 1," SermonIndex.net, 2002, https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/bible_books/?view=book_chapter&chapter=9199.

¹⁸ Bunni Pounds, "Psalm 14 – Are There Any Who Understand and Seek God?," Christians Engaged, 2023, <https://christiansengaged.org/blog/psalm-14>.

¹⁹ Jacob D. Gerber, "Yahweh Is the Refuge of the Poor - Psalm 14:4-6," Guard the Deposit, 2014, <https://guardthedeposit.com/2014/07/yahweh-refuge-poor-psalm-14-4-6>.

which is seen in his exclamation, *"Have they no knowledge..."* This could also entail, *"Are they so stupid as to persist in what they are doing? Don't they know where this will lead for them?"* They are prepared to kill people to get their way in anything being done. They are not disturbed by their actions. They do not care about what the implications of their actions are. They do many terrible things because they feel that God is not there; hence, there are no repercussions for their actions.

Judgement is Very Soon (vv. 5-7)

The Psalmists insisted that God would fight for the oppressed and victims of violence. In verse 5, the psalmist insisted that wicked people were not afraid of what they were doing against the citizens. Rulers were not afraid of their actions towards the citizens. King mentioned that the prophet now offers the greatest consolation to himself and to all the faithful, namely, that God will not desert his people even at the end but will eventually reveal himself to be their defender.²⁰ According to certain interpretations of the word "there," God will exact revenge on the wicked in front of his saints because they exercised their tyranny on them.²¹ Parents were not afraid of their actions towards their children, and vice versa. For David, the corruption of everyone did not make God change. The judgement of God for sinners will continue to be death. According to verse 6, God will give the poor protection. He will serve as a refuge for the poor. He will restore everything that the aggressors have taken away from the poor. God envisaged an Israel where immorality would seize. God envisaged an Israel where corruption will seize and everyone will be happy. Beckett²² noted that this is an eschatological reality of God's justice for His people. For instance, verses 5-7 is actually repeated again in Psalm 53:5-6, and both times David is exercising faith, looking forward to the Messianic promise to come out of Zion, which Isaiah later prophesies in 2:1-5 and 24:21-23.

Corruption in Nigeria

The discourse on corruption in Nigeria has eluded policymakers and elder statesmen. It seems as time progresses and more efforts are put in place to fight corruption, more gory narratives of escalating corrupt cases emanate. Olasupo noted that:

Corruption involves the giving and taking of bribe, or illegal acquisition of wealth using the resources, of a public office, including the exercise of discretion. In this regard, it is those who have business to do with government who are compelled somehow to provide inducement to public officials to make them do what they had to

²⁰ John Calvin, "Calvin's Commentaries, Volume 8: Psalms," trans. John King, sacred-texts.com, 1850, <https://sacred-texts.com/chr/calvin/cc08/cc08013.htm>.

²¹ Calvin.

²² Ricky Beckett, "Geeking About the Psalms: Psalm 14," www.geeksundergrace.com, 2017, <https://www.geeksundergrace.com/christian-living/geeking-about-the-psalms-psalm-14>.

do or grant undeserved favour. It is therefore defined as official taking advantage of their offices to acquire wealth or other personal benefit.²³

There are three levels of government in Nigeria. The president is the commander of the Armed Forces of Nigeria. He is the leader of the executive arm. Nigeria runs a federal system of government where the president is placed as the leader. However, over the years, in fact, since independence of Nigeria from Britain in the 1960, there have been narratives of gross abuse of federal resources by the president and his cronies at the federal level and the governor and his cronies at the state levels. There are instances where the government, both at the federal and state levels steal state resources. For instance the former Chairman of the Nigerian Governors' Forum, Abdulaziz Yari, was on several occasions grilled by the economic and financial crimes commission for alleged illegal financial dealings and misappropriation of funds.²⁴ Local government officials have squandered rising revenues that could provide basic health and education services for some of Nigeria's poorest people.²⁵ Also, fifty-five people who were government ministers, state governors, public officials, bankers and businessmen stole 1.34 trillion naira (\$6.8 billion) from Nigeria's public purse over a seven-year period.²⁶ There are reports of government ministers embezzling public funds while the president does nothing. A former government minister in Nigeria stole \$6bn (£3.8bn) of public money (BBC, 2015).²⁷ There have been reports of federal appointees amassing wealth to the detriment of the masses. Nigeria's minister of humanitarian affairs and poverty alleviation Betta Edu was sacked over the use of a private bank account for ministry financial transactions in the government's social welfare program.²⁸ It is only when the press raises the issue that the government in power may make a public pronouncement that they are investigating the corrupt issue. In fact, in so many instances, the president pretends that he is not even listening to the cases of

²³ Fatai Ayisa Olasupo, "Due Process Corruption in Public Services in Nigeria: Local Government as a Case Study," in *Public Administration in Nigeria*, ed. O. Aborisade and I. O. Aransi (Charlotte, NC: Catawba Publishing Company, 2009), 33.

²⁴ Kunle Sanni, "SPECIAL REPORT: 11 Forgotten Cases of Alleged Corruption by Former Nigerian State Governors," *The Premium Times*, 2022, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/politics/549627-special-report-11-forgotten-cases-of-alleged-corruption-by-former-nigerian-state-governors-2.html?tztc=1>.

²⁵ Human Rights Watch, "Nigeria: Corruption and Misuse Rob Nigerians of Rights," Human Rights Watch, 2007, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2007/01/31/nigeria-corruption-and-misuse-rob-nigerians-rights>.

²⁶ Reuters, "Nigerian Minister Says \$6.8 Bn of Public Funds Stolen in Seven Years," Reuters, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKCN0UX0D4>.

²⁷ BBC News, "Nigerian Former Minister 'Stole \$6bn of Public Money,'" BBC News, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-33689115>.

²⁸ Aljazeera, "Nigerian President Suspends Humanitarian Minister in Corruption Scandal," Aljazeera.com, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/9/nigerian-president-suspends-humanitarian-minister-in-corruption-scandal>.

corruption raised by the masses. Thus, Igwe ²⁹noted that Nigeria is still suffering from widespread corruption, despite government promises to crack down. There are situations where the government is only interested in chasing political enemies who are corrupt, while the major people involved in corruption are spared.

The second in the governance structure are the legislators. The legislators are supposed to be making citizen-based laws. Laws that protect the weak from the strong are supposed to be the centre of legislative activity. The legislators are also supposed to control the executive. Anytime the executive is engaging in anarchy, it is the legislature that is supposed to call the executive to rest. Unfortunately, the legislators have been bribed by the executive arm to accept any requests from the executive. Pat Utomi calls this corrupt legislature “a rubber stamp” legislature.³⁰ Providing further lamentation, Sam-Duru said:

Rubber stamp is even better because in the rubber stamp Assembly that was termed the 9th Assembly, at least they would deliberate, debate, interrogate the executive but the executive will end up finding their way. This one they don't debate, interrogate; they don't do anything. You heard it from among their members, not external people, that when bills are brought to the house they are passed speedily, thereby bypassing the procedure for bill passage.³¹

Furthermore, Obadare³² noted that bribes—while an important marker of corruption—do not begin to describe the breadth and scope of regular corruption in Nigeria, which essentially boils down to the commonly accepted fact that little gets done without money being exchanged. Nigeria is in huge debt due to the billions of dollars that it has borrowed from organisations and countries. It was only the legislators that had the opportunity to stop the legislature from borrowing, but because they have been bribed, they must respect table manners. This entails that they must not talk about why they are enjoying the government of the day.

The Supreme Court is the highest court in Nigeria. It is the major tool the judiciary uses to bring justice to the people. The hierarchy of courts in Nigeria is below:

- a. Supreme Court
- b. The Court of appeal

²⁹ Uche Igwe, “Nigeria Has Failed to Tackle Corruption,” London School of Economics and Political Science, 2023, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2023/02/21/nigeria-has-failed-to-tackle-corruption>.

³⁰ Bashir Bello, “Our Legislators Are Rubber-Stamp, Watching Nigeria Drift Aimlessly, Says Pat Utomi,” Vanguard, 2024, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2024/01/our-legislators-are-rubber-stamp-watching-nigeria-drift-aimlessly-says-pat-utomi>.

³¹ Prisca Sam-Duru, “10th Assembly Is Worse than Rubber Stamp, They’re Copy and Paste of Executive,” Vanguard, 2023, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/12/10th-assembly-is-worse-than-rubber-stamp-theyre-copy-and-paste-of-executive>.

³² Ebenezer Obadare, “Nigeria’s All Too Familiar Corruption Ranking Begg Broad Questions Around Normative Collapse,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, February 24, 2022, <https://www.cfr.org/article/nigerias-all-too-familiar-corruption-ranking-begs-broader-questions-around-normative>.

- c. Federal High Court
- d. High court (state level)
- e. Customary Court of appeal (state level)
- f. National industrial Court (state level)

The judiciary is supposed to be the watchdog of the constitution, but they have made themselves protectors of corrupt people. According to Daniel and Janamaike, it is unfortunate that the judiciary has been unhelpful in enforcing laws against corruption due to the way that politicians are granted court adjournments during trials and how the court gives orders preventing anti-graft agencies from investigating or prosecuting them.³³ Politicians have captured, weaponised, and corrupt the Nigerian judiciary, thus, politicisation of judicial appointments and lack of independence, among other challenges facing the judiciary, are the primary causes of its declining integrity.³⁴ When a corrupt person is indicted, the judges are bribed to offer the wrong interpretation, freeing the person who is accused with evidence of corruption. Uthman avers thus:

We cannot deny the existence of judicial corruption, where judges are bribed or succumb to pressure from above; where Nigerian politicians put judges on payroll, even when such is against judicial code of ethics; where high-ranking judicial officers acting as couriers of bribe; where some legal practitioners in addition to their legitimate fees demand other fees from their clients purportedly to influence the judge or judges handling their cases; where judicial staff perverting the course of justice, showing partiality, and accepting a bribe and subverting the course of righteousness; among others challenges.³⁵

Osoba (noted that corruption has thus become a way of life in Nigeria, one that existing governments neither wish to nor can control.³⁶ There have been accusations and counter-accusations of judicial officers caught in acts of corruption.

Psalm 14 in Nigerian Context

The Psalmist mentioned that people are doing anything they want because they feel that there is no God. People do terrible, blatant, and obscene things without thinking about the implications for their victims. This is similar to what is available in

³³ Soni Daniel and Luminus Janamaike, "EFCC Stampeded by Politicians, Emasculated by Judiciary: How Nigeria's Losing Corruption War," Vanguard, 2023, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/10/efcc-stampeded-by-politicians-emasculated-by-judiciary-how-nigerias-losing-corruption-war>.

³⁴ Bankole ABE, "Politicians Have Captured, Corrupted Nigerian Judiciary – Odinkalu," The International Centre for Investigative Reporting, 2023, <https://www.icirnigeria.org/politicians-have-captured-corrupted-nigerian-judiciary-odinkalu>.

³⁵ Samad Uthman, "INSIGHT: Are Court Rulings Weighing down Nigeria's Fight against Corruption?," TheCable, 2022, <https://www.thecable.ng/insight-are-court-rulings-weighing-down-nigerias-fight-against-corruption>.

³⁶ S. O. Osoba, "Corruption in Nigeria: Historical Perspectives," *Review of African Political Economy* 23, no. 69 (September 1, 1996): 371–86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056249608704203>.

Nigeria, where the political class is concerned with stealing national and state funds. The legislators are collecting bribes from the executive and accenting all the requests from the executive. The judges at the courts collect bribes and orchestrate the miscarriage of justice. Folarin argues that anti-corruption agencies should be answerable only to the judiciary, made up of persons with records of integrity and led by a judge with a record of accomplishment, forthrightness, and fearlessness³⁷. This is similar to what the Psalmist insisted: that when God looked down, he found out that everyone was corrupt. Thus, in the Nigerian context, the executive, legislature, and judiciary are all corrupt. No arm of government is free. Those working in ministries and parastatals of government are collecting bribes to move files from one office to another, which they are paid for. Kale & Stolpe

Bribery dealings can be initiated in different ways: direct bribery requests by a public official accounted for 60 per cent of all bribery transactions in Nigeria in 2019, representing a moderate decrease from the 66 per cent recorded in the 2016 survey. As in 2016, indirect requests for a bribe accounted for 20 per cent of all bribery transactions, while spontaneous payments to facilitate or to accelerate a procedure accounted for 8 per cent. Some 5 per cent of bribes were also paid with no prior request from the bribe-taker as a sign of appreciation to a public official for services rendered.³⁸

Everyone seems corrupt in Nigeria. The Psalmist insisted that no one was found to do good. There is no government-owned establishment where there is no gross corruption going on. Ghost workers in their thousands are on government payroll, and those people who put their names on them are collecting a certain percentage of their salary. According to Nwakanma, Abia State Government says it discovered 2300 ghost workers in its payroll system and has saved over N220 million on monthly wage bills following ongoing verification of civil servants and other public workers in the state.³⁹ Also in Borno, of the 22,556 ghost workers, 14,762 were discovered at the local government level, while 7,794 were found to be collecting salaries from public primary schools without being teachers.⁴⁰

The Psalmist further quips that the rich are using the poor as their victims. In fact, the psalmist said that the rich were extorting from the poor, like someone quizzing bread that the person wanted to eat. This has implications in the Nigerian

³⁷ Sheriff Folarin, "Corruption, Politics and Governance in Nigeria," in *Advances in African Economic, Social and Political Development*, ed. Rotimi Ajayi and Joseph Yinka Fashagba (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 377–94, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-50509-7_21.

³⁸ Yemi Kale and Oliver Stolpe, *Corruption in Nigeria: Patterns and Trends, Second Survey on Corruption as Experienced by the Population*, ed. Jonathan Gibbons (Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2019), 6, https://www.unodc.org/conig/uploads/documents/Corruption_Survey_2019.pdf.

³⁹ Sunday Nwakanma, "Abia Uncovers 2,300 'Ghost Workers,'" Punch Nigeria Limited, 2023, <https://punchng.com/abia-uncovers-2300-ghost-workers>.

⁴⁰ Vanguard News Nigeria, "The Ghost Workers Syndrome in Nigeria," Vanguard Media Limited, 2021, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/01/the-ghost-workers-syndrome-in-nigeria>.

context, where rich people who are usually involved in politics are very involved. The president and state government do make policies that will better the lives of the common man. Instead, what is obtainable are harsh policies that deal with the citizens of Nigeria. Most Nigerians do not have jobs to do; it is not that there are no jobs, but those in the political class are busy reserving those positions for themselves, their children, and their grandchildren.

However, there is hope in verses 6-7. The Psalmists insisted that the transgressions of politicians would be taken against them. The Psalmist sustained that the politicians have perpetually put the citizens in disgrace and suffering. However, God will provide for the poor and protect them from destruction. In Nigeria, the harsher the policies, the more the poor have been surviving. In Nigeria, youths have continued to break academic records, notwithstanding that members of the political class have not been providing the needed funds for the growth and development of education in Nigeria. The Psalmist was anticipating a time when the corrupters would change their wicked ways. The Psalmist foresaw that when that time comes, everyone will rejoice, the citizens will rejoice, and Nigeria will be great again.

Recommendations

The following suggestions would help stem the stem of corruption in Nigeria. There is a need for members of the political class, academics, and other Nigerians in privileged positions to use their positions to better the lives of the people. The presidents, state governors, and local government chairmen should not allow themselves to be used as tools to impoverish the lives of the citizens. They should engage in social schemes and people-oriented welfare programmes for the citizens.

The legislators should make laws that look at the welfare of the citizens rather than collecting bribes from the executive and making anti-people laws and policies. There is a need for leaders at the local government level to start recalling any legislator who cannot deliver democratic dividends to the people. Also, the local government leaders should discourage their people from voting for any legislators with a record of corruption.

The judges should see themselves as the last hope for the common man. Cases of corruption against political office holders and those in privileged positions should be treated with fear or favour. When someone steals money meant to provide democracy dividends to the masses, it shows that the person is going against God, who is the refuge of people. The individual caught in corruption should be prosecuted; this will discourage others from engaging in those actions.

4. Conclusion

Psalm 14:1–7 has important aphorisms that address the growing political corruption in Nigeria. The pericope shows that people who practice corruption do as they like because they feel that there is no God to monitor their actions or punish them for their wrong actions. Corruption in Nigeria is a hydra-headed monster and has been the sole reason for the endemic poverty and underdevelopment in Nigeria. From the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary, corruption pervades the entirety of the Nigerian political space. The Psalmist in the last structure insisted that God is on the side of the victims of corruption. This shows that corrupt people by the actions are saying God does not exist, but they will be surprised to meet a sad ending. The Psalms 14:1-7 insisted that a society that is free of corruption is the heartbeat of God.

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