

# Comparative Ethics Analysis

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

To gain the public's trust there must be a high degree of ethics. This holds true for elected officials, company executives and individuals working in the public sector. In this paper I will compare the major similarities and major differences of two countries. The information used for this comparison has been gathered from two different journals. The first journal is titled "Corruption and Good Governance in Nigeria" and is written by Dr. Robert Dible a Professor at Indiana University in Kokomo, Indiana. The second journal is titled the "Code of Conduct and Ethics for Civil Servants in India and United Kingdom" and is written by Mr. Ratan Reddy.

In both journals several countries have been mentioned; however I will be comparing only Nigeria and India for the purpose of this paper. The format of this paper will be to list the following topics: the major similarities of the two nations, the major differences of the two nations, and a conclusion. I will list a few similarities and differences and then give a further description of each.

Finally, it should be mentioned that there are certainly many other variables that contribute to the ethical situation in Nigeria and India. I will predominately be using the information obtained from the two journals mentioned above, so the analysis of this topic cannot be considered complete and totally inclusive.

## **MAJOR SIMILARITIES:**

When trying to compare the ethical standards of Nigeria and India we must look deeper than just what policies they do or do not have in place. It is important to look at why and how they arrived at where they are today. So some of things listed in this comparison paper may not appear to have a direct relationship to ethics but they may tell more completely the story of

how each country arrived at its current ethical state. I have listed below some of the major similarities between Nigeria and India.

### **1. Underdeveloped or Developing Nation**

Both Nigeria and India are classified as either an underdeveloped or a developing nation. They both spent years under foreign occupation before receiving their independence. In Nigeria's case it experienced some success during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries prior to the influx of Europeans who began setting up settlements along the coastline. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the British moved to gain control over most of the country until 1960 when Nigeria won its independence. However, since 1960 the people of Nigeria have suffered under years of failed governments and military coups which have slowed even further the social and economic improvements so badly needed to develop the country. Likewise India spent centuries under British occupation until finally obtaining independence in the late 1940's. Like Nigeria, India has seen several failed governments and has suffered through attempts to overthrow the leadership of the country (U.S. Department of State, 2010).

Although India has fared much better economically than Nigeria, and is currently the third largest economy in Asia, both countries suffer with inadequate infrastructure. Moreover, most of the population lives in poverty barely able to provide the basics of life like food, water and shelter.

Because of the instability and the inability to sustain a viable government structure, both countries have failed, either through mismanagement or corruption, to put the needed money into improving the quality of life for their citizens. Due to years of neglect in developing the economy of their countries they are now finding themselves behind many of the industrialized

and developed countries of the world. India has fared much better but is still recognized as the 23<sup>rd</sup> poorest nation in the world with a per capita income of \$320 US dollars (Reddy, 28).

## **2. Corruption**

One of the main results of poor ethical standards in both countries is corruption. According to the World Development Report (2006) Nigeria ranks as the 6<sup>th</sup> most corrupt nation in the world. In 2008 a special business report from Forbes looked at 180 countries around the world and ranked their corruption level on a scale from 0 to 10, with zero being the highest level of corruption and anything three and under being rampant corruption. India scored a five, meaning although there is not necessarily rampant corruption there is a great amount of government corruption.

According to Dr. Dibia (2007) in the journal *Corruption and Good Governance in Nigeria*:

The analysis of ethical problems in Nigeria shows that corruption stems from the managerial ineptitude, myopic, and the sheer lack of integrity and justice shown by nations who happily secured the stolen wealth for the accused public servants (p. 2).

Furthermore, those in charge of enforcing the countries laws such as: the police and custom officials are viewed as corrupt and using extortion techniques to collect money from the citizens of the country and those wanting to do business in Nigeria. Dr. Dibia (2007) states Caspar Fithin contends there are widespread cases of corruption in the form of embezzlement of large amounts of public resources.

Corruption does not occur only with those charged with enforcing the laws but it has also filtered into other public service areas like: telecommunications, postal services and the National Electric Power Authority where it is common for them to interrupt service to their customers but at the end of the month still send out a large bill. The perception of the Nigerian people can best be summed up by a quote in Dr. Dibia's journal (2007), "The public sector or government offices are the training ground for absolute corruption" (p. 10). Because corruption has almost become a way of life in Nigeria it is likely, even with sincere efforts to change the ethical standards, to take decades to transform the mentality of the people and gain their trust.

Although not nearly as bad as the picture portrayed in Nigeria, India has its share of corruption and receives low marks when it comes to eradicating corruption from within its public sector. According to Reddy (1999) in his journal, "Code of Conduct and Ethics for Civil Servants in India and United Kingdom", after India's independence in 1947 bureaucracy had to respond to the social and political changes that were occurring across the country. These changes brought about the need for civil servants to handle large amounts of the public's money which in turn gave an increased opportunity for those same public servants to use that money for personal gain. The new change had the potential to greatly improve the quality of life for the citizens of India but at the same time changed the value system for some of the public servants who saw an opportunity to misuse public funds.

Further complicating the problem of corruption in India is the willingness to be soft on those public officials who commit such offenses as bribery or abuse of authority. Reddy states the superior civil service in India enjoys great protection which is promised in the Constitutional provision in Article 311 and the Departmental Rules which not only gives protection but also routes of escape by resorting to technical and legal hair-splitting.

Finally, a minister in India enjoys absolute freedom when it comes to civil service. He is able carry out his actions as he chooses. There is no code of conduct that prevents him from randomly deciding how he will act or respond to a given situation. In the end this potentially leaves the average citizen frustrated and unsure who to trust.

### **3. Loss of Public Trust**

As result of the corruption in both countries there is a great lost of public trust. At the heart of public service is the trust that the public places in those individuals who are making the decisions for the citizens.

The business journal Entrepreneur (1999) in its article; “Violating the Public Trust: The Ethical and Moral Obligations of Government Officials”, states the following definition of what public trust means:

Ownership belongs to the people, i.e., the taxpaying public. Elected officials appoint administrators who select other individuals and entrust them with the public resources to pursue goals and objectives that serve the public good. These elected officials, their appointees, and others selected to work in bureaucracy are public servants. As long as the behaviors of these groups are consistent with official rules, regulations, and the pursuit of objectives that serve the interest of the public, one can say that the trust placed in the hands of these officials is being satisfied.

It is obvious the public trust is not being served in either Nigeria or India. In this paper only a few examples of corruption has been listed for each country. Both journals used to compare the two countries list many more examples, and there is little doubt that hundreds and

perhaps even thousands of occurrences of corruption are occurring yearly in both Nigeria and India.

#### **4. Anti-Corruption Laws**

Although there continues to be major problems in both countries when it comes to corruption and the loss of public trust, there has also been some concerted effort to deal with these issues by establishing anti-corruption agencies and passing anti-corruption legislation.

Nigeria has developed the following anti-corruption agencies: Corrupt Practice and other Related Offences Commissions (ICPC) Act 2000, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligent Unit (BMPIU), Nigeria Financial Intelligent Unit (FIU), the Public Complaint Commission (PCC), and the Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal.

Likewise India has developed anti-corruption agencies or passed anti-corruption legislation to deal with corruption problems. Some of those are as follows: Prevention of Corruption Act (PC Act), Central Bureau of Investigations (CBI), Untouchability Offences Act, and Dowry Prohibition Act. Furthermore, the government has passed the Conduct Rules legislation which governs the behavior of civil servants. According to Reddy these rules can be broken into three statements:

1. A public servant should be a role model of social and familial behavior for society;
2. He shall maintain absolute integrity; and
3. A public servant should be politically neutral.

However, it is one thing to have these agencies and laws in place but another thing to enforce them. Both Nigeria and India have taken some steps to deal with the corruption problems – at least on paper. Similarly both nations have issues when it comes to enforcing the laws.

Dr. Dibia (2007) writes in his journal that there are problems in Nigeria when it comes to these agencies being effective. First, the agencies reside under the power of the Executive Branch of government instead of the judiciary branch or as an independent body. This likely means they will run into obstacles and perhaps even interference from those in power as they try to enforce the laws. He goes on to say there seems to be a determined effort on part of the executive and legislative branches of government to interfere with the activities of the ICPC through lack of funding.

India also fights the issue of successful enforcement when it comes to corruption. Although there are not nearly as many detailed examples in Reddy's journal, a few are listed. Mr. Reddy is not extremely clear in his explanation but states, "corruption is a serious offence under the law, due to a variety of reasons, the successful prosecution of the corrupt has not always been effective" (p. 23). Furthermore, he says although there is a law preventing the giving of a Dowry, it is often circumvented by disguising the Dowry as a gift given by the father of the bride to his daughter.

Both Nigeria and India have attempted to fight corruption by creating laws and agencies to lead the fight, but they also face the same problems of enforcing the laws, many times by those in power who want to prevent such enforcement.

## **MAJOR DIFFERENCES:**

All nations to some extent are different whether it is the demographics or culture differences that define their society. When it comes to the demographics and the make-up of the people of Nigeria and India, there are vast differences. Although both countries at one time or another were subjected to British rule, India spent hundreds of years of occupation by the British where Nigeria in comparison spent a very short amount of time under British rule. This to some extent may explain why India has been able to progress further when it comes to improved ethical standards. Below are a couple of the major differences I found within the two journals.

### **1. History**

Both Nigeria and India experienced British influence over different periods of time. In his journal Reddy (1999) gives credit to the British for establishing a modern civil service in India. He goes on to say it was because of the British that the country absorbed the values of objectivity and impartiality in the discharge of public functions. India was able to understand that the role of public servant superseded his private interests. It was not until after it gained independence in 1947 that it begins to see the values change to more of personal greed.

In India during British rule there seemed to be a measure of stability in the public service area, which created that framework. Although there are issues of corruption still today, unlike with Nigeria there is an established framework to build upon. The difference appears to be in Nigeria's case it has almost become accepted practice that if you work in the public service arena you are corrupt and even expected to steal from those who you are bound to serve. The mere fact that most public servants are severely underpaid, and in some cases go weeks without pay, only adds to the likelihood that they will resort to corrupt practices. Moreover, it is likely in the case

of Nigeria that generations of public servants have been taught that to survive they must steal, take bribes and perform other unethical acts.

## **2. Fighting Corruption**

Although both Nigeria and India still face issues when it comes to corruption there seems to be a more sincere and concrete effort to fight corruption in India – at least at the lower levels of government. For example India has a requirement under its Conduct Rules that all public servants have to inform their organization about the purchases and acquisition of movable and immovable property. The rule is very in depth covering frequent purchases or sales of shares and other investments. With this information it is possible to determine if someone is making purchases beyond their legitimate income.

It would also appear that with India's growing status as a global economy and increased income levels along with more government spending on infrastructure, that cases of corruption will be reduced. In Nigeria's case according to the journal there is little investment into the country's infrastructure and economy and more hoarding of the public's money for personal gain.

Furthermore, a major difference between the two countries when it comes to fighting corruption is their approach. Nigeria has created many anti-corruption agencies but there is little mention of the rules that guide those agencies. India has what appears to be a solid base with many rules in place to deal with corruption. India still has issues when it comes to enforcement of those rules, especially at higher levels of the government but there have been cases of success.

**CONCLUSION:**

In doing this comparison paper there appears to be many similarities and few differences between these two countries when it comes to ethical issues. Both countries are facing some of the same issues with the obvious problem being corruption. They each have taken steps to combat corruption within the public service area, but at the same time they are facing a steep mountain when it comes to enforcing the rules that have been put into place. In reality as long as the leaders who are in place have absolute power to do as they will, then all of the anti-corruption agencies and laws that have been created will have little or no impact on the status quo.

Furthermore, they not only must deal with the issue of corruption but also the perception that nothing can be done about it. In both countries there is little expectation that the government can be changed. Moreover, there is no feeling that the common man is held to the same degree as those in charge. In sense the public trust that is so very important in public service does not exist in either Nigeria or India and it will take years of change to make a difference. The lesson to learn for those who serve in the public arena is that just like when you tell a lie to someone it takes many years to regain that trust, the same holds true in public service – once you violate the public trust it is hard to regain.

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