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LANGUAGE OF CORRUPTION IN YORÙBÁ SOCIAL CONTEXT: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract
Bribery and corruption persist in society, perpetuating social problems and hindering national development despite scholarly efforts. Perpetrators employ euphemistic language and covert tactics to obscure their illicit activities. This study examines the linguistic dimensions of corruption in Yorùbá social contexts, highlighting language's influence on national development. Leveraging the Ọ̀yọ́ dialect, the most widely accepted and standardized form of Yorùbá, this research analyzes lexical items and linguistic patterns to uncover how language perpetuates bribery and corruption. Grounded in the hermeneutic approach, the study reveals that the language of bribery and corruption reinforces a culture of corruption, perpetuates social inequality, and erodes trust in institutions. However, implementing language education initiatives and awareness campaigns can foster a culture of integrity and promote national unity. This research contributes to understanding the complex relationship between language, corruption, and national harmony, with implications for policy and practice in Nigeria and beyond. The findings emphasize the need for language education initiatives, awareness campaigns, and policy reforms to combat corruption and promote national development. Ultimately, this study underscores the significance of language in shaping societal attitudes and behaviors, highlighting its potential as a tool for promoting national harmony and integrity.

Key Words: Bribery, Corruption, Yorùbá Language, Hermeneutic, Stylistics, National Harmony.

Introduction

The pervasive and insidious nature of bribery and corruption has become a formidable challenge to societal harmony and national development. These intertwined concepts have far-reaching consequences, perpetuating a culture of abuse of power and undermining the fabric of our society. Corruption, defined by Vito (1998) as the abuse of public power for private benefit, is a multifaceted phenomenon that transcends the public sector, affecting private sphere activities as well. Its impact is palpable, with far-reaching consequences for individuals, institutions, and society as a whole. Corruption has become a social syndrome, perpetuated not only by political officeholders but also by future leaders, and our children. Language plays a significant role in perpetuating and concealing corruption, particularly through the use of euphemistic terms, slang, and jargon that obscure the illicit nature of bribery and corrupt practices. The negative use of language in corruption facilitates deception, manipulation, and exploitation, allowing perpetrators to operate with impunity. Terms like "dash," "gift," or "facilitation fee" downplay the severity of bribery, while code words and idioms like "settlement," "sorting out," or "taking care of" mask the corrupt intent. This linguistic camouflage enables corrupt individuals to

communicate without detection, perpetuating a culture of corruption. Furthermore, the normalization of corrupt language erodes public trust and undermines institutional integrity. To combat corruption, it is essential to challenge and redefine this language, promoting transparency and accountability. This can be achieved through language education initiatives, awareness campaigns, and policy reforms that emphasize clear, honest communication. By exposing and rejecting corrupt language, we can dismantle the linguistic frameworks that support corruption and foster a culture of integrity. As Tidwell aptly puts it, language serves as a defining feature of collective identity, underscoring its significance in fostering unity, cohesion, and a sense of shared purpose. Tidwell (1998) sees language as the national identity of each nation, society, or group when he opines that:

> *Language is an external behavior that allows the identification of a speaker as a member of some group. For example, a native speaker of English will identify Nigerians as foreigners by their ways of speech. Languages are not merely means of communication: they stand for or symbolize people. It can also be used to categorize individuals into in-group members. For instance, it will be difficult for the native English speakers to negotiate on equal terms with the non-natives. Individuals from different cultural backgrounds and social units perceive the world through the lens provided by their unique vocabulary.*

The excerpt highlights the significance of language as a fundamental identifier of individuals within a society. Language is a shared convention, a collective agreement among people who share a common identity, purpose, or belonging. In essence, language can be viewed as a coded system designed by a group of people to convey meaning, facilitate communication, and shape their collective reality. While language serves various purposes, its primary function is to enable communication among individuals and groups.

However, language is a multifaceted tool with overlapping functions, making it a double-edged sword that can either unite or divide people. As Bassey and Victor (2014) astutely observe, language is an integral part of human social behavior, operating within a broader framework of human activities. The reality of language use is situated within a specific context, where the form and substance of language intersect with extra-linguistic factors to convey meaning. This intricate relationship between language, context, and circumstances underscores the dynamic and complex nature of language, emphasizing its role in shaping human interactions, perceptions, and understanding. Corruption has been a dominant and enduring theme in Nigerian discourse, permeating all facets of society since the country's independence to the current era. It has permeated every stratum of society, including the elite, various social classes, market women, youth, and political office holders. Consequently, corruption has become embedded in the fabric of our language, manifesting in a unique lexicon and idiomatic expressions that permeate both formal and informal communication. Unfortunately, bribery and corruption remain significant obstacles to achieving national unity and cohesion.

Yorùbá is a Niger-Congo language spoken by approximately 30 million people, primarily in southwestern Nigeria, where it is an official language. It has various dialects, including Standard Yorùbá (Ọ̀yọ́ dialect), Ẹ̀gbá, Ìjẹ̀bú, Ìjẹ̀ṣà, Èkìtì, Ondó, Àkókó, and Okun, among others. Yorùbá is widely distributed across Nigeria, Benin, Togo, and parts of Ghana, with diaspora

communities in the UK, the US, and other countries. It is an important part of Yorùbá culture and identity, used in traditional rituals, music, arts, education, media, and government. The Yorùbá speech community is one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria, with a rich cultural heritage. The Yorùbá language is a vital aspect of their identity, and its use is widespread in various contexts, including formal and informal settings, traditional and modern practices, and local and international communication. This paper examines the impact of language on bribery and corruption in Yorùbá social contexts, arguing that language plays a crucial role in perpetuating, promoting, and reinforcing corrupt practices. By analyzing the language of bribery, this study aims to uncover how language shapes our attitudes and behaviors related to corruption and national harmony.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the hermeneutic approach, which encompasses the analysis of language in its social context, focusing on the everyday usage of standard language in informal communication. Hermeneutics is a theoretical framework that prioritizes the interpretation and comprehension of texts, utterances, and other forms of expression. This approach is essential in various disciplines that require interpretive methods, as it facilitates a deeper understanding of the relationship between the text or artwork and its audience. Hermeneutics examines the dynamic interaction between the text and its context, considering both the literal meaning and the extra-textual factors that influence interpretation (Vidhya, 2022). By adopting this approach, the study scrutinizes the language of bribery in Yorùbá social contexts, taking into account the text, context, and extra-textual elements to uncover a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon.

The etymological roots of hermeneutics theory can be traced back to ancient Greece, where philosophers explored how divine messages or mental ideas are expressed in human language. The concept of hermeneutics evolved, but it wasn't until the modern period that it gained significant attention. The Reformation played a pivotal role in this development, as it shifted the responsibility of interpreting the Bible from the Church to individual Christians. This shift led to a renewed focus on hermeneutics, particularly in Germany, where scholars like Friedrich Schleiermacher and Rudolf Bultmann made significant contributions to the field. During this time, hermeneutics expanded beyond its original scope, encompassing not only the interpretation of religious texts but also the understanding of human communication in general. The theory began to explore how individuals interpret and understand language, considering the complex relationships between the text, context, and the individual's experiences and biases. This broader application of hermeneutics has since influenced various disciplines, including linguistics, philosophy, sociology, and anthropology, among others.

In the modern era, hermeneutics continues to evolve, incorporating new perspectives and approaches to understanding language and interpretation. Its significance extends beyond academic circles, as it offers valuable insights into how we communicate, understand each other, and construct meaning in our daily lives. Itao (2010) observes that:

> *Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutic Phenomenology examines how human meanings are deposited and mediated through myth, religion, art and language. He elaborates especially on the narrative function of language, on the various uses of language such as story-telling, and*

how normativity and temporality interact and ultimately return to the question of the meaning of being, the self and self-identity.

The hermeneutic approach is particularly suited for this study, as it relies heavily on language analysis. This is fitting, given the coded nature of the language of bribery and corruption, which requires interpretation to uncover its underlying meanings and implications. The impact of language on bribery and corruption cannot be overstated, as it plays a significant role in perpetuating and combating these phenomena. While many scholars have investigated the causes and consequences of bribery and corruption, few have considered the crucial role of language in perpetuating these issues. This paper aims to address this oversight by examining the dual function of language in both perpetuating and combating bribery and corruption. Through a hermeneutic lens, this study will delve into how language is used to construct, maintain, and challenge corrupt practices. By analyzing the language of bribery and corruption, we hope to uncover the subtle mechanisms by which language contributes to the perpetuation of these issues, as well as its potential to be harnessed as a tool for change. By exploring the complex relationship between language, bribery, and corruption, this paper seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how language shapes our perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors related to these phenomena.

Review of Relevant Literature

The language of corruption in Yorùbá social contexts has been a subject of scholarly interest, with researchers exploring its implications for national development. Studies have shown that corruption is often embedded in linguistic practices, with certain words, phrases, and idioms manipulated to justify, conceal, or promote corrupt activities. Corruption is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that can be challenging to define, yet its manifestations are often readily recognizable. While it may not always be directly observable, corruption generally involves the abuse of power or authority for personal or group gain, often at the expense of the public interest. This definition encompasses not only the abuse of public power for private benefit but also corruption within private sector activities, such as procurement, hiring, and regulated industries. Furthermore, corruption can also involve the abuse of power for the benefit of one's party, class, tribe, friends, or family, highlighting the need for a nuanced understanding of its various forms and motivations Vito (1998). In the same vein, Adeyemi (2013) opines that corruption has become a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigerian society, and one of the ways it manifests itself is through the corruption of language. When language is corrupted, it becomes a tool for manipulating people's perceptions and concealing the truth, thereby perpetuating corrupt practices. He further notes that the debasement of Nigeria's value system is also closely tied to the corruption of language. When words lose their meanings and are used to justify or conceal corrupt acts, the very foundation of society is undermined. This corruption of language has led to a situation where 'thieves are celebrated as heroes, and the honest are ridiculed as fools (Adeyemi, 2003).

Research on corruption and language has garnered significant attention globally. Studies have explored how language perpetuates corruption, particularly in African contexts (Blunt and McCrary, 2011; Olonisakin, 2013). In Nigeria, Adegbite (2005) examined Yoruba proverbs that normalize bribery, while Uwazie (2013) analyzed Igbo language and corruption. Similarly, in South Africa, Mkhize (2017) investigated Zulu language and its role in perpetuating corruption.

Beyond Africa, works like Cameron's (2007) analysis of Russian "blat" culture and Ledeneva's (2013) study of Soviet-era "korruptsiya" highlight language's significance in facilitating corruption. Additionally, linguists like van Hulten (2010) and van Dijk (2006) have explored how language constructs and reinforces corrupt discourse. These studies demonstrate that language plays a crucial role in enabling, concealing, and perpetuating corruption across cultures and languages.

Corruption and development are indeed antithetical concepts, existing in a state of tension where the presence of one often hinders the progress of the other. In societies plagued by corruption, the likelihood of achieving meaningful development is significantly diminished. This is because corruption undermines the effective allocation of resources, distorts economic decision-making, and erodes trust in institutions, thereby creating an environment inhospitable to development. As Rose-Ackerman (1997) astutely observes, corruption can have far-reaching consequences for development, including the perpetuation of inequality, the misallocation of resources, and the undermining of social cohesion. When corruption takes hold, it can create a culture of impunity, where those who engage in corrupt practices can accumulate wealth and power at the expense of others, further entrenching the obstacles to development.

The coexistence of corruption and development is unlikely, as the former inevitably stifles the latter. To achieve meaningful growth, it is essential to address corruption in all its forms, promote transparency and accountability, and foster a culture of integrity. Only then can societies create an environment conducive to development, where resources are allocated efficiently, and the benefits of economic growth are shared equitably among all members.

In the Yorùbá social context, language plays a vital role in shaping cultural identity and influencing social interactions. These informal language varieties not only reflect the creativity and dynamism of the Yorùbá language but also facilitate social bonding and group membership. The Yorùbá language is deeply embedded in the social context, with various dialects and registers serving different purposes and audiences. For instance, the use of honorifics and polite language is essential in showing respect to elders and authority figures, while the use of slang and cant may be reserved for informal settings among peers. This complex language landscape underscores the significance of language in navigating social relationships and cultural norms in Yorùbá society. Furthermore, Dayo and Ajetunmobi (2017) highlight the impact of globalization and urbanization on the Yorùbá language, leading to the emergence of new idioms and expressions that reflect the changing social context. This evolution of language underscores the adaptive nature of the Yorùbá people and their ability to navigate the complexities of modernization while maintaining their cultural heritage.

In recent years, bribery and corruption have garnered widespread global attention due to their pervasive presence in all aspects of life. While often associated with developing countries, corruption is a widespread issue that also affects developed nations. The terms "bribery" and "corruption" are interconnected and interdependent, as corruption is defined as the exploitation of public office for personal gain, including the use of official position, rank, or status for self-benefit (Myint, 2000). Bribery, in turn, is a manifestation of corrupt behavior, involving the offering, giving, receiving, or soliciting of something of value in exchange for an illicit advantage or to influence an official decision. The intricate relationship between bribery and

corruption underscores the need to address both issues concurrently to effectively combat corruption in all its forms.

Bribery and corruption often involve two parties in a deal – the giver and taker. It observes that many circumstances warrant people to indulge in bribery practice without taking cognizance of its implications in society, among which are; Government contracts, influencing the allocation of monetary benefits, Government revenue, time savings, and regulatory avoidance. Bribery is otherwise known as "grease money" to turn the wheels of bureaucracy more smoothly, speedily, and hopefully in the right direction (Myint 2000). Apart from using bribery to influence government appointments some individual member of society often uses bribes to Influence the outcomes of legal and regulatory processes. Myint (2000) observes that:

> *Bribes can be used to provide incentives to regulatory authorities to refrain from taking action and to look the other way when private parties engage in activities that violate existing laws, rules, and regulations such as those relating to controlling pollution, preventing health hazards, or promoting public safety as in the case of building codes and traffic regulations. Similarly, bribes can be given to favour one party over another in court cases or in other legal and regulatory proceedings.*

The excerpt highlights that bribery is a consequence of corruption, employed as a deceitful tool to unjustly gain advantages or influence decisions. Corruption often hides in the shadows, making it challenging to identify and condemn. However, in today's society, corrupt acts have become increasingly overt and widespread, manifesting in various forms and sectors. Those involved in corruption frequently attempt to justify their actions by disguising bribes as gifts. It's important to recognize that corruption knows no boundaries, affecting individuals of all ages, genders, and professions. Corruption permeates various industries, including government, politics, judiciary, education, and security. The manifestations of bribery and corruption are diverse, encompassing:

- Accepting gratification
- Giving or accepting gratification through agents
- Fraudulent acquisition of property
- Fraudulent receipt of property

These corrupt practices undermine the fabric of society, emphasizing the need for collective awareness and action to combat corruption in all its forms.

Corruption has pervasively entrenched itself in every facet of society, contaminating the very fabric of our political, economic, social, religious, and democratic institutions. The cancer of corruption has metastasized to the point where democracy, the supposed bastion of transparency and accountability, has become a casualty. The electoral process, a cornerstone of democracy, has been hijacked by the scourge of vote-buying and selling, with bribes being offered to electoral officials to influence outcomes in favor of certain political candidates. This has become a disturbing trend in global politics, with Nigeria being a notable example (Babatola, Adewumi, and Ajagbe, 2013).

The insidious effects of corruption have far-reaching consequences, eroding public trust in institutions, undermining the rule of law, and perpetuating a culture of impunity. The corrosive influence of corruption has also led to the commodification of politics, where political offices are bought and sold, and the will of the people is subverted. This has resulted in a systemic failure of governance, perpetuating inequality, poverty, and social injustice. The fight against corruption must therefore be a collective and urgent priority to restore the integrity of our institutions and ensure a functioning democracy that truly serves the people.

The presence of corruption in a country is a significant obstacle to achieving national harmony. Corruption has far-reaching consequences that undermine good governance, distort public policy, and lead to the misallocation of resources and misplaced priorities. It harms the private sector and disproportionately affects the poor, exacerbating social and economic inequalities. Corruption is a severe affront to democratic institutions and governance, tantamount to a slap in the face and a violation of the trust placed in those who govern. As a result, societal development is severely impaired by the corrupt tendencies of individuals (The Punch, 2018, 2019). Corruption is a pernicious virus that has spread far and wide, infecting almost every aspect of society and posing a significant threat to peace and stability. It manifests in various forms and has diverse effects on both the economy and society as a whole. Some of the manifestations of corruption include bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and cronyism, among others. These corrupt practices lead to a lack of accountability, transparency, and good governance, ultimately undermining the rule of law and perpetuating a culture of impunity. The effects of corruption are multifaceted and far-reaching, resulting in reduced economic growth, increased poverty and inequality, and decreased public trust in institutions. Corruption also has a corrosive impact on the social fabric, eroding the moral foundations of society and perpetuating a culture of selfishness and greed. Therefore, it is essential to recognize corruption as a significant obstacle to national harmony and societal development, and to make collective and concerted efforts to combat it in all its forms.

Despite the Nigerian government's efforts to establish regulatory bodies like the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) to combat corruption, the scourge persists and even intensifies daily. Ironically, the heads of these agencies have been accused of engaging in corrupt practices before leaving office, suggesting that corruption is entrenched in virtually all Nigerian organizations. This perpetuation of corruption has far-reaching consequences, hindering the country's socio-political, economic development, and national harmony. Corruption is a virulent virus that spreads rapidly, fueled by public perception and tolerance. The widespread acceptance of corruption has led to a disturbing mantra in Nigeria: "If you fight corruption, corruption will fight you back." This resigned attitude undermines efforts to combat corruption, allowing it to entrench itself deeper into the fabric of society. The consequences of corruption are multifaceted and devastating, leading to:

- Stunted economic growth
- Increased poverty and inequality
- Eroded public trust in institutions
- Compromised national security
- Undermined rule of law
- Distorted public policy
- Misallocated resources

- Misplaced priorities

The fight against corruption requires a collective and sustained effort, involving not only regulatory bodies but also the masses, to change the narrative and create a culture of transparency, accountability, and good governance. Only then can Nigeria hope to overcome the debilitating effects of corruption and achieve meaningful socio-political, and economic development, and national harmony. This research seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the language of corruption in Yorùbá social contexts, highlighting its far-reaching implications for national development. Building on the works of Adeyemi (2013), Vito (1998), and Rose-Ackerman (1997), this study recognizes corruption as a complex phenomenon deeply embedded in linguistic practices. By examining the Yorùbá language's role in shaping cultural identity and influencing social interactions, this research aims to uncover how language is manipulated to justify, conceal, or promote corrupt activities. Furthermore, this study seeks to explore how the corruption of language undermines the foundation of society, perpetuating corrupt practices and hindering meaningful development. By investigating the language of corruption in the Yorùbá social context, this research hopes to provide valuable insights into the nuanced understanding of corruption's various forms and motivations. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to the development of strategies that promote transparency, accountability, and a culture of integrity, essential for achieving national development and creating an environment conducive to growth and equitable resource allocation.

Analysis/Discussion

The data for this study analyzes the complex relationship between language and corruption, focusing on Yorùbá proverbs, songs, and coined words that perpetuate or challenge corrupt behaviors. Through a thorough analysis of linguistic data, this research investigates how Yorùbá language is utilized to describe, justify, trivialize, or resist bribery and corruption, uncovering underlying cultural and social nuances. Specifically, the study identifies lexical items and expressions used to convey or conceal corruption, including the following Yorùbá proverbs, songs and expressions:

1. **Ẹnu tó jẹ dòdò kò nì ran òdodo**.
   (It is impossible to maintain truth and firmness after accepting gratification)

The word plays in "dòdò" and "òdodo" is a clever example of Yoruba linguistic creativity. In this proverb, it is worthy of note that "dòdò" and "òdodo" are words that sound the same when pronounced. "Dòdò" means "gratification" or "bribe," while "òdodo" means "truth" or "firmness." The wordplay lies in the repetition of the "dòdò" sound, creating a sense of rhythm and emphasis. The use of homophones in this proverb creates a sense of irony and contrast. The first "dòdò" (gratification) leads to the loss of the second "òdodo" (truth and firmness). This wordplay highlights the idea that accepting gratification (dòdò) makes it impossible to maintain truth and firmness (òdodo). This wordplay can be analyzed through the lens of linguistic devices such as homophony, repetition, and irony. The use of homophones creates a sense of musicality and emphasis, drawing attention to the contrast between the two concepts. The repetition of the "dòdò" sound creates a sense of rhythm, making the proverb more memorable and engaging. Furthermore, the wordplay can be seen as a form of cultural commentary, highlighting the tension between personal gain (gratification) and moral integrity (truth and firmness). The

proverb suggests that the pursuit of personal gain can lead to a loss of moral grounding, emphasizing the importance of ethical behavior in Yoruba culture.

In the context of Yorùbá culture, the term "Dòdò" refers to a form of gratification or reward that individuals may accept in exchange for compromising their values, firmness, and truth. Therefore, Yorùbá proverb "Bì ẹnu bá ti jẹ òdò kò ní ran òdodo" (It is impossible to maintain truth and firmness after accepting gratification) alludes to bribery in the Yorùbá social context. "Dodo" is used as a euphemism for a gift or rebate, particularly in lobbying for government contracts. When someone says "Ẹ̀yin náà yóò jẹ dọ̀dò" (You will also eat the plantain), it implies that a bribe is expected in exchange for afavor. However, the Yorùbá culture condemns bribery, emphasizing that what is deserved will be given without deceit. Another Yorùbá proverb reinforces this idea: "Sàn án làá rìn, ajẹ́ níí mú ni pẹkọrọ" (If there's no wisdom in human movement, let it be straightforward). This highlights the importance of honesty and transparency in all interactions.

2. Sọwọ́ kudúrú (ṣe ọwọ́ kúdúrú)

The idiomatic expression 'Ṣe ọwọ́ kúdúrú' (to give a bribe in a hidden manner) constitutes a cryptic linguistic device employed in the context of bribery among the Yorùbá people. This phrase serves as a euphemistic tool, facilitating the concealment of corrupt activities while simultaneously normalizing bribery as an acceptable practice. Notwithstanding the societal stigma associated with bribery, individuals engaged in such activities utilize this expression to solicit bribes from their complicit counterparts, thereby maintaining a veil of secrecy and obscuring their illicit transactions from external scrutiny. The pervasive usage of 'Ṣe ọwọ́ kúdúrú' within the Yorùbá social context underscores the clandestine nature of bribery, which is often shrouded in secrecy and linguistic subterfuge. This idiomatic expression exemplifies how language can be leveraged to perpetuate a culture of corruption, subverting transparency and accountability. Furthermore, the deployment of 'Ṣe ọwọ́ kúdúrú' highlights the complex dynamics of power, secrecy, and complicity that underpin corrupt practices in Yorùbá society. Through a critical examination of this idiomatic expression, we gain insight into how language is mobilized to facilitate and conceal corrupt activities, underscoring the need for a nuanced understanding of the linguistic and cultural mechanisms that perpetuate corruption."

3. Riba

"Riba" represents a linguistic borrowing from Arabic, assimilated into the Yorùbá language and culture. Originating from Islamic discourse, Riba encompasses a broad spectrum of corrupt practices, including usury, bribery, extortion, and other illicit activities. Its adoption in Yorùbá society signifies the profound influence of Islamic values and teachings on local ethics, morality, and social conduct.

In Islamic contexts, Riba is considered a grave transgression, unequivocally condemned by the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad. The prohibition of Riba is predicated on principles of justice, fairness, and the protection of vulnerable populations. This Islamic perspective on Riba underscores the deleterious consequences of corruption on individuals and society, emphasizing the imperative of ethical behavior and transparency in all aspects of life. The utilization of Riba as a euphemism for bribery and corruption in Yorùbá society highlights the complex dynamics of language, culture, and ethics. While the term's adoption reflects the significant impact of Islamic values on Yorùbá culture, its widespread use as a euphemism for corrupt practices underscores

the need for a renewed commitment to ethical standards and the eradication of corruption in all spheres of life. This phenomenon warrants further examination, as it reveals the intricate mechanisms of cultural exchange, linguistic borrowing, and the evolution of ethical norms.

Riba in Yorùbá language and culture serves as a reminder of the profound impact of Islamic values and teachings on Yorùbá society, particularly in the areas of ethics, morality, and social conduct. However, the widespread use of Riba as a euphemism for bribery and corruption also underscores the need for renewed commitment to ethical standards and the eradication of corrupt practices in all spheres of life.

4. **Obì (kola nut)**

Obì, the fresh kola nut native to Africa, holds significant cultural and symbolic value in Yorùbá society. Ranging in color from white to dark red, kola nuts can have two or more lobes, depending on the type. Àbàtà kola nuts have more than two lobes and are used for divination purposes, while gbànja kola nuts have only two lobes and are consumed for their stimulating properties due to their high caffeine content. In Yorùbá culture, kola nuts are considered precious and were traditionally used as special gifts for esteemed individuals. This cultural significance may have led to the metaphorical extension of the term "obì" to refer to bribes or gifts given to influence favor. The phrase "obì yín yóò gbó" (your reward will be awesome) suggests that the gift or bribe will yield significant benefits.

In contemporary contexts, government officials and others may use the term "obì" to assure partners or recipients that their wishes will be granted, perpetuating a culture of corruption. By reframing bribes as "gifts," individuals may attempt to legitimize their actions and maintain a veneer of respectability. However, this linguistic euphemism does not alter the underlying reality of corruption, highlighting the need for transparency and accountability in all aspects of life.

5. **Ẹni tí kò bá da omi tútù síwájú kò ní tẹ ilẹ̀ tútù**
(He who did not **pour cold water** forward would not step on cool floor”

The phrase "Da omi tútù síwájú" (Pour water forward) is a coded language used by those who practice bribery. While the literal meaning of the sentence is to pour cold water forward, in the context of bribery, it means to offer bribes in cash or kind to influence the recipient's favor. The words in the sentence take on different meanings in this social context.

For example, "omi tútù" (cold water) no longer refers to chilled water but instead represents the bribe itself, which could be money, a gift, or a favor. Similarly, "ilẹ̀ tútù" ("cool floor") symbolizes the desired outcome of bribery - gaining favor or advantage without merit, whether in securing a contract or receiving a favorable judgment. This phrase serves as a warning to partners in bribery that failure to provide a bribe will result in withheld favor. The term "omi tútù" is also used as a noun phrase to refer to the bribe itself, as in "This is your omi tútù" (This is your bribe). This coded language is meant to exclude those not involved in bribery practices, perpetuating a culture of corruption and highlighting the need for transparency and accountability.

6. **Ẹnu òfìfo kìí dún yànmù yànmù**
(empty mouth did not make noise)

In the Yorùbá social context, the phrase "Ẹnu òfìfo" (Empty mouth) can be interpreted as a subtle demand for bribes, disguising illegality as a legitimate expectation. The language is used to normalize bribery, implying that a "gift" is necessary to facilitate a rightful outcome. This perpetuates a culture of corruption, where individuals are coerced into paying bribes to access their entitled benefits. In government sectors, this practice is prevalent, with pensioners being forced to bribe officials to receive their rightful pensions. The recipient of the bribe may use the phrase "Ẹnu òfìfo" to hint to the giver that failure to provide the bribe will result in delayed or withheld services. This coded language enables corruption to thrive, distorting the moral fabric of society. The phrase "Ẹnu òfìfo" symbolizes the emptiness of integrity and the voracious appetite for bribes, highlighting the need for systemic change and a renewed commitment to transparency and accountability in all aspects of life.

7. **Fi ara ṣe é (use body)**

The phrase "Fi ara ṣe é" is a troubling clause often used by some female youth students who subscribe to the misguided notion of "using what you have to get what you want." This language perpetuates a harmful and exploitative mindset, normalizing bribery and sexual coercion. The interpretation of "Fi ara ṣe é" as "give sex as a bribe" is alarming, as it suggests exchanging sexual favors for unjust advantages, such as:

- Sex for contracts or favors
- Sex for grades or academic leniency
- Sex to escape accountability for criminal behavior

This language and behavior undermine the value of consent, integrity, and fair merit. It's essential to address and challenge such harmful attitudes, promoting a culture of respect, equality, and ethical conduct.

8. **Ẹ̀gúnjẹ**

The term "Ẹ̀gúnjẹ" originated in Lagos, where bribery was prevalent, and people began to trivialize it by using euphemisms like "owó-ẹ̀yìn" (money for fun), "owó-àbẹ̀tẹ́lẹ̀" (money for a favor), "owó-ìbọ̀lẹ̀" (money for a gift), "owọ́-ìpalẹ̀" (money for a favor), and "owó-ìjulẹ̀" (money for a bribe). However, they later coined a more subtle term, "Ẹ̀gúnjẹ", which means "pound it and eat it", implying something that is consumed and enjoyed. In the Yorùbá social context, "Ẹ̀gúnjẹ" is interpreted as a bribe that silences individuals from speaking the truth, particularly in matters related to security agencies and the judiciary. When "Ẹ̀gúnjẹ" is offered, it is expected to expedite the process and distort the truth in judicial matters. This practice perpetuates corruption, undermining the integrity of institutions and the pursuit of justice. The use of "Ẹ̀gúnjẹ" highlights the normalization of bribery and the need for renewed efforts to combat corruption, promote transparency, and ensure accountability in all aspects of life.

9. **Owó Ẹ̀yìn**

In the Yorùbá social context, "Owó ẹ̀yìn" is a euphemism for a bribe or illicit payment, literally translating to "the money given behind a closet." This phrase is rooted in the Yorùbá

cosmology belief that secretive actions, especially those one is ashamed of, are inherently wrong. However, individuals engaging in bribery and corruption have adopted this idiomatic expression to conceal their nefarious activities. In essence, "Owo eyin" has become a colloquialism for money exchanged illegitimately, symbolizing the corrupt practices that undermine social values. Through their music, Yorùbá artists like Ogunde have courageously spoken out against bribery and corruption, exposing their destructive impact on society. Yet, it's a sobering truth that corruption has become an integral part of our societal fabric, entangling almost everyone in its web, either directly or indirectly. The rapid decline of moral conscience and the disregard for the consequences of one's actions have normalized corruption, allowing it to thrive with impunity and recklessness. This has led to a devastating erosion of moral accountability, enabling corruption to spread unchecked and undermining trust in institutions and individuals. As Ogunde poignantly notes that:

Lílé: Owó ẹ̀yìn ló gbòde o	Lead: Bribery has become the norm in our society
Owó ẹ̀yìn ló gbòde o	Bribery has become the norm in our society
Ègbè: Bẹ́ẹ̀ni	Chorus: Indeed yes
Lílé: Ọba ń gba ti ẹ̀	Lead: Even the king is taking his share
Ègbè: Bẹ́ẹ̀ni	Chorus: Indeed yes
Lílé: Ìjòyè ń gba ti ẹ̀	Lead: And the chiefs are also getting their share,
Ègbè: Bẹ́ẹ̀ni	Chorus: Indeed yes
Lílé: Adájọ́ ń gba ti ẹ̀	Lead: Judges are collecting their share
ÈGBÈ: Bẹ́ẹ̀ni	Chorus: Indeed yes
Lílé: Arúfin ń gba ti ẹ̀	Lead: criminals are collecting their share
Ègbè: Bẹ́ẹ̀ni	Chorus: Indeed yes
Lílé: Balógun ń gba ti ẹ̀	Lead: Chief Balogun (The warrior leader) is collecting his share
Ègbè: Bẹ́ẹ̀ni	Chorus: Indeed yes
Lílé: Olóòpá ń gba ti ẹ̀	Lead: The police officer is collecting his share
Ègbè: Ẹ ò ríi báyé ṣe dà Ègbè:	Chorus: Don't you see how life has turned to?
Ẹ ò ríi báyé ṣe bọ̀	Don't you see how life has turned to?
Ayé ń dorí kodò lọ	Life is gradually turning upside-down
Lílé: Owó ẹ̀yìn ló gbòde	Lead: Bribery has become the norm
Ègbè: Bẹ́ẹ̀ni	Chorus: Indeed yes
Lílé: Dókítà ń gba ti ẹ̀	Lead: The doctor is collecting his share
Ègbè: Bẹ́ẹ̀ni	Chorus: Indeed yes
Lílé: Nọ́ọ̀sì ń gba ti ẹ̀	Lead: The nurse is collecting her share
Ègbè: Bẹ́ẹ̀ni	Chorus: Indeed yes
Lílé: Ìgbàgbọ́ ń gba ti ẹ̀ Lílé:	Lead: Christians (believers) are collecting their share
Ègbè: Bẹ́ẹ̀ni	Chorus: Indeed yes
Lílé: Ìmọ̀le ń gba ti ẹ̀	Lead: Muslims are collecting their share
Ègbè: Bẹ́ẹ̀ni	Chorus: Indeed yes
Lílé: Olùkọ́ ń gba ti ẹ̀	Lead: Teachers are collecting their share
Ègbè: Bẹ́ẹ̀ni	Chorus: Indeed yes
Ègbè: Ẹ ò ríi báyé ṣe dà Ègbè:	Chorus: Don't you see how life has turned to?
Ẹ ò ríi báyé ṣe bọ̀	Don't you see how life has turned to?
Ayé ń dorí kodò lọ	Life is gradually turning upside-down
	(Ogunde,1974, *Ẹkùn Oníwògbè*)

In the song, Ogunde highlights the pervasive nature of bribery and corruption, revealing that almost everyone is complicit in the practice, either directly or indirectly. He laments that individuals have become reckless and no longer heed their conscience, leading them to disregard the consequences of their actions. The lyrics paint a stark picture of a society where corruption has become normalized, and moral accountability has been eroded. Ogunde's message is clear: the lack of self-reflection and disregard for one's conscience has led to a culture of impunity, where people engage in corrupt practices without fear of repercussions. The song serves as a commentary on the state of society, urging listeners to reflect on their actions and the consequences that follow. By exploring the cultural significance of "Owó èyìn," we can gain a deeper understanding of the complex social dynamics surrounding corruption in Yorùbá culture and the role of art in sparking meaningful conversations about moral accountability.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has demonstrated how language perpetuates bribery and corruption in Yorùbá society, hindering National Harmony. Bribery terminology is embedded in proverbs, songs, and everyday conversations, normalizing and promoting corrupt practices. Despite its prevalence, bribery is a harmful practice that undermines justice, fairness, and societal progress. It is essential to recognize that bribery takes many forms, including sexual favors, and that its effects are far-reaching, influencing judgment, justice, and accountability. To achieve National Harmony, we must address and challenge bribery and corruption, promoting transparency, integrity, and ethical conduct in all aspects of life. Only then can we build a just and equitable society where truth and fairness prevail? Despite its widespread acceptance, bribery is a harmful practice that compromises justice, fairness, and accountability. It is alarming to note that influential individuals engage in bribery, but this does not justify its legitimacy. Various euphemisms for bribery have emerged, including owó-ẹ̀yìn, riba, obì, and dòdò, revealing its pervasive nature. Moreover, bribery takes forms beyond monetary exchange, such as sexual favors, highlighting its insidious presence in all strata of society. The consequences are stark: corrupted judgment, compromised justice, and perpetuated injustice. To achieve National Harmony, we must confront and challenge bribery and corruption, promoting transparency, integrity, and ethical conduct in all aspects of life.

Recommendations

To achieve national harmony in Nigeria, fostering unity and sustainable democracy, this paper proposes the following:

1. Eradicate the mindset of "rub my back and I rub your back" or "use what you have to get what you want" by instilling justice and righteousness in Nigerians, particularly youths and children. This can be achieved by integrating practical drama and teachings on righteousness into primary and secondary school curricula at all levels.
2. Combat bribery and corruption by setting an example through leadership. Leaders should ensure punishment for bribery and corrupt practices at all government levels (local, state, and federal). The Nigerian criminal justice system must prioritize punishing offenders.
3. Condemn the language of bribery at all levels. Launch enlightenment campaigns to promote positive language use and discourage language that perpetuates bribery. This will help create a culture of integrity and transparency.

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