



A Study on the Incorrect Practice (Petty Corruption) in Accessing Social Services from Government Agencies and its Detrimental Effects on Malawi's Development

A Dissertation submitted to the Department of Social Work in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Masters (Project Management Evaluation and Implementation)

Case Study Area: Karonga District Northern Malawi

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ABSTRACT:

This research paper studies comprehensively *the Incorrect Practice (Petty Corruption) in Accessing Social services and its Detrimental Effects on Malawi's Development*. This paper acknowledges the broadness and numeracy of the incorrect practices that are taking place in government agencies in Malawi hence the study focuses on understanding corruption as an incorrect practice. As it is a fact that much international and local ratifications have ever been endorsed by both Developed and developing countries with an emphasis to root out corruption using different frameworks, but the reality is that, corruption still exists in many parts of the world, including Malawi. The puzzling question remains why corruption continues to manifesting itself among people despite such colourful agreements.

The existing literatures and discussions about corruption show to have put emphasis on Political and Grand corruption, but leaving out the very basis or foundation of all corruption called "Petty Corruption" which the researcher believes that it is the most endemic and catastrophic, as it involves many people at grass root level. The researcher believes that the terminology "Petty" blinds most anti-corruption activist to start believing that such a corruption bears trivial impact on people which this paper is refuting in its strongest terms with a support from the gathered data..

The paper therefore, aims at educating the masses especially those with special interest on fighting corruption to understand that there is a need to prioritise *Petty corruption* if the battle of uprooting corruption is to be won, failing to do so, then, it will remain an empty rhetoric attempt for those advocating against it. Therefore, the central aim of this research work is to sensitise stakeholders and everyone concerned with the evil and harm that corruption bears on human development. It also seeks that people start appreciating that it is a waste of time and resources to start rushing in dealing with Grand corruption before addressing Petty Corruption. The paper is partly prompted by the first Sustainable Development Goal (SDGS) which emphasises on the elimination of mass poverty by 2030 especially in developing countries like Malawi. At national (Malawi as a country) level the paper is also backed up by the Malawi Growth Development Strategy (MGDS) of 2017-2022 and the Vision 2063 strategy that all agree that there is a need to uproot corruption if the country is to achieve an exponential growth in

development. However, the challenge of all the existing strategies is that they fail to clearly state which type of corruption should squarely be tackled as a priority. This lack of distinction and prioritisation contributes to the cumbersomeness in dealing away with corruption since efforts are channelled in addressing the end instead of the primacy or cause. The common datum in Chichewa which is a national language in Malawi states: '*Konza ka pansi kuti kapamwamba kasike*', which means if you want to solve the problem start with the root cause and not secondary causes.

Lastly, the research work is also driven by Bucchianerri E.A (2014) who said "*it is unpatriotic not to denounce an injustice committed on our behalf, perhaps it is the most patriotic thing we can do*". Therefore, through this research work, the researcher finds it duty bound and important to actively participating in denouncing the evils of corruption especially by bringing to a better understanding of Petty corruption and its detrimental effects on development in Karonga District, which is the case study area and Malawi at large.

Key words: Petty Corruption, Incorrect practice and Development

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

"The world has enough for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed". (Gandhi(www.goodreads.com accwsed on 12/01/2023))

Malawi which is geographically located within a latitude $9^{\circ} 11'$ and $35,3^{\circ}$ and longitude $33^{\circ},40'$ and $35,55^{\circ}$ south of the equator, sub Saharan desert, has for a long time been characterised by incorrect practices in rendering social services to those that need them from agencies responsible, namely Government and Non-Governmental agencies(Malawi Anti-Corruption Bureau strategic report 2021 p.4).Such incorrect practices have prolonged the poverty situation in Malawi whose majority of its population still leave below \$1.25 dollar a day and is deemed to be one of the poorest country of the world(National Integrity system 2021) .The observation and study has shown that there is rampant incorrect practices in government agencies than in Non-governmental agencies, despite that these government agencies are supposed to be in the forefront in setting a good example in providing excellent services to the citizenry so as to achieve meaningful development. Besides, it has been a trend to finger point the affluent only and those in decision making positions to be involved in incorrect practices like corruption which has made the task of uprooting and dealing with corruption to be futile and impractical as only a small fraction of the population is considered corrupt leaving the grass root people who are the majority((2017 -2022 Social Economical Profile for Karonga District, p 194). It is on this background that this research work intends to bring to knowledge that if the battle of dealing with corruption shall be won, then it has to start at the very bottom of the social strata.

Subject of the Study: The study seeks to establish the prevalence of incorrect practice Petty corruption as an incorrect practice in relationship with the accessibility of social services in duty bound government agencies which its consequences are detrimental to Malawi's development. Besides, the paper devotes much attention in ironing out the misconception of considering the affluent and politicians as the only driving force for the prolonged occurrence and existence of corruption in Malawi and other developing countries where corruption is an order of the day

OBJECTIVES

➤ **This research paper aims at achieving the following main objectives:**

- 1.Raise awareness that the battle of fighting corruption in Malawi cannot be won if Petty corruption is not given a priority which derives its logical basis from the principle of causality by Aristotle 'Who argued that whatever exist should have a cause. Therefore it is imperative and logical that the cause should be dealt with first (Means should justify the cause .This paper also argues that the prolonged existence of corruption in Malawi should be due to failure to tackle petty corruption which is the basis and source of other types of corruptions.
2. To help stakeholders in fighting corruption know that fighting corruption requires an inclusive approach like Youth and Women that have been sidelined for quite a long time due social perception towards them.

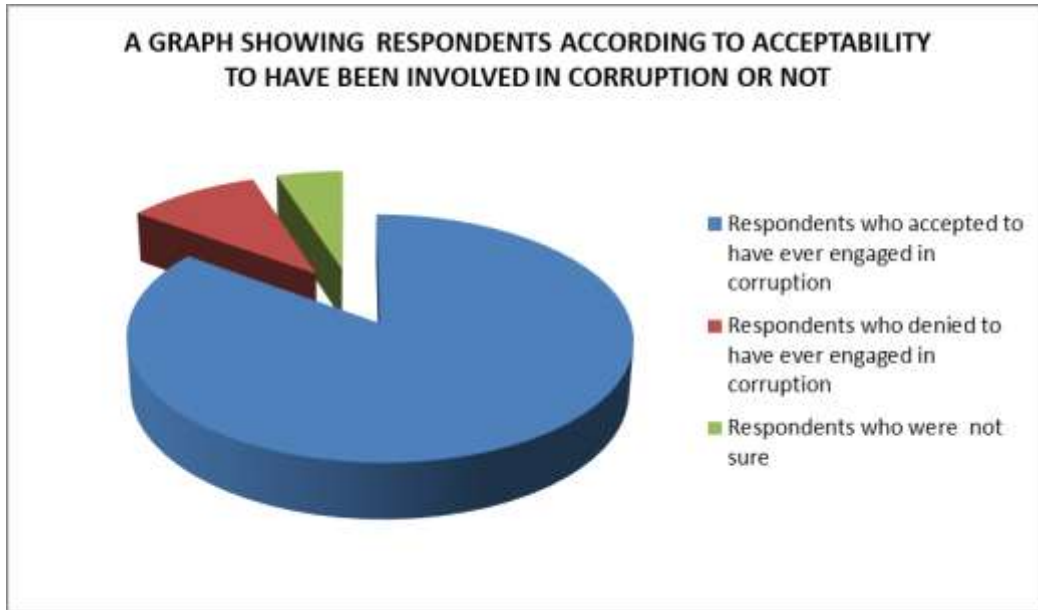
RESEARCH FINDINGS:

The research work used questionnaires and baseline survey that was supported by an extensive literature review to collect data. A total of 150 respondents were targeted. The following areas were part of what the researcher used to establish the truth about Petty corruption in Malawi.

a) ACCEPTABILITY OF THE GRASSROOT PEOPLE IN CORRUPTION

From the data received, 45% accepted the blame to rest on grass root people themselves to be the catalyst of corruption while 55% still consider corruption to be reinforced by the affluent and not the grass root themselves However, when the same question was twisted to check if they have ever been involved in any form corrupt practices before, 85% accepted to have done so, 10% denied to have not been involved in corruption and 5% were not sure.

The graph below illustrates the responses of those who consented and refused to have been involved in corruption.

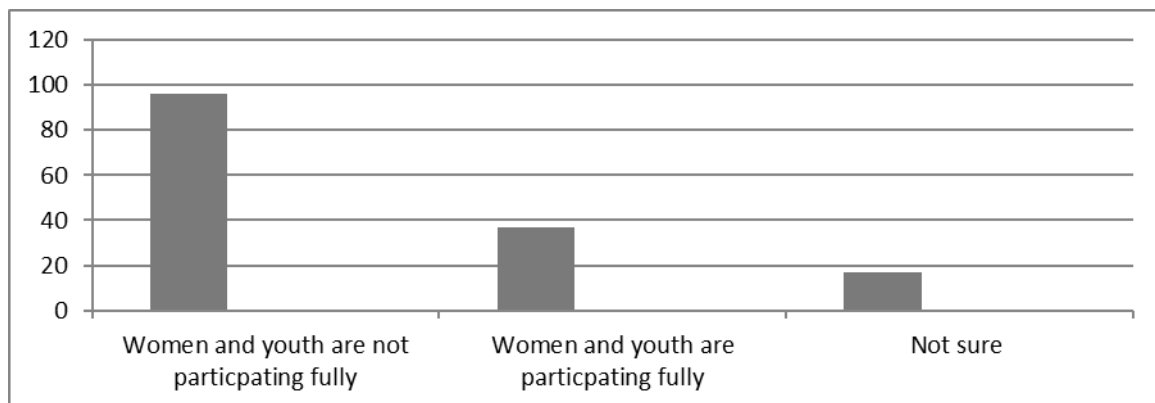


From the presented data above it is clear that corruption has reached at an alarming level in Malawi as majority of the grass root people as well engage in it. The bearing of this situation is that useful resources that could be used to develop the country are being personalised by individuals through corruption. This has negatively affected development in Malawi and its GDP (Gross Domestic Product). This was strongly expressed by (Mr Chaje , A social provider at Karonga Social welfare who said *“Petty corruption is really a serious problem, its magnitude surpasses that of grand or political since the former is done by the majority and at daily basis”*(Interviewed on 8 January 2023.) . This was also the concern with Transparency International report of 2018 corruption in Africa that indicated that despite Petty corruption being given less attention by most stakeholders and anti-corruption activists but its consequences are so catastrophic on development due to its magnitude in numbers of those that engage in incorrect practice corruption hence a need for rigorous and bold attention to ways addressing such malpractice(www//transparency org/2018,Accessed on 23/01/2023)

b) WOMEN –YOUTH INCLUSSIVENESS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

In line with inclusiveness of women and youth in fighting corruption in Malawi the findings have revealed that there is still gap despite the recommendations made by numerous stakeholders to be one area that has to improve if success will be achieved in dealing with corruption. For instance the Malawi National Anti-corruption Strategy II of 2019 to 2022 strongly recommends the need to involve women and the youth who are the majority in addressing the mushrooming corruption in Malawi. This is due to the fact that it is this group that consist of the bigger fraction of the population hence their active involvement to root out corruption can be of great help.(MNACST II 2019-2022,P44,49).The information sourced from the respondents of this research work is clear manifestation that a great work has to be done to achieve women youth inclusiveness in tackling corruption in Malawi.

Graph Showing Responses of informants who about Women –Youth Participation in fighting corruption



From the graph above, it is clearly showing that majority of people in the society are aware that women and youth are side-lined when it comes to fighting corruption. Not many women and youth are comfortable to reveal the ordeals of corruption. This is due to the innate nature of women who are usually accompanied by fear hence finding it difficult to disclose about the incidences of corruption where need arises. In the same way the youth are taken to be unknowledgeable of the societies population hence side-lined when it comes to fighting corruption. However, what is so exciting with women and the youth is that there are again the most vulnerable groups to exploitation and acts of corruption.

b) MALAWI GOVERNMENT EFFORT IN FIGHTING CORRUPTION

The researcher focused at knowing if the grassroots' people appreciate the efforts rendered by the government of Malawi in combating corruption. From the responses gathered through questionnaires 130 out of 150 respondents were naïve concerning government efforts to combat corruption. This is seen in this response by Mr Chisuse who said: Government pay a lot of lip services when it comes to addressing pervasive issues that affect us like corruption. They are good at making an empty noise than taking bold action to those found guilty.(Mr Chisuse interviewed on 23/01/2023).Another respondent , Mr Viyola had this to say, *"Surely the government of Malawi is not vigilant in stumping out corruption as they is too much shielding of those found guilty....for example imagine how many incomplete cases are in courts that have taken years some even as old as the year 2000, prisons of Malawi are for those who still chickens and not real thieves that enrich themselves through corruption"*(Viyola Interviewed on 24/01/2023).

Similar findings were also uncovered by Afrobometer report of January 2023 that show Malawi to have gone steps back in fighting corruption as there is too much lip service towards it especially by protecting their so called untouchables like prominent political leaders that are accused of corrupt acts like the Vice president himself.(Afrobometer report 2023)

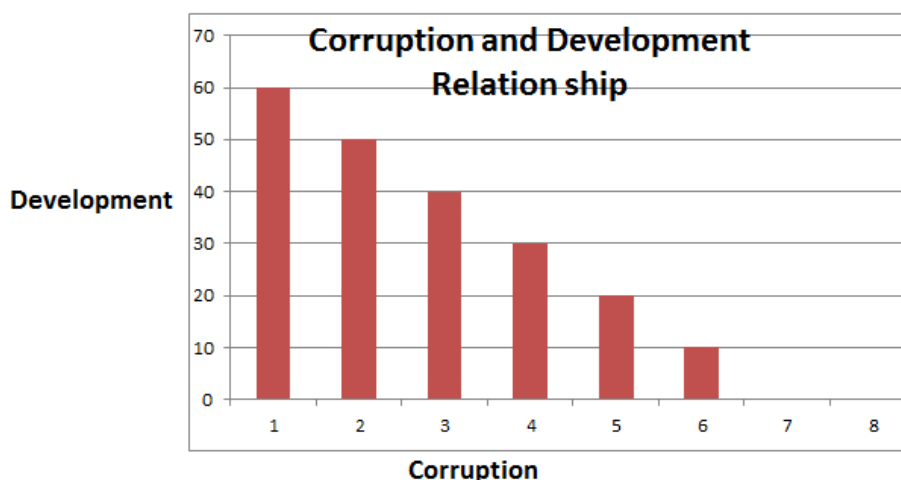
Not only that but also the recent events of the government attempts to silence the Director of the Anti-Corruption Bureau Martha Chizuma who has shown to be vigilant in dealing with corruption without fear or favour is another indication that the systems of government are not willing to uproot corruption hence its continuity.(Mkwanda N.2023).

Another vivid example that shows that government of Malawi is not doing enough in rooting out corruption is loss of trust by many international bodies and charitable organisations that have refused to directly channel their humanitarian assistance to the Department of Disaster Management(DODMA), that was instituted lawfully by Malawi parliament in 199, but instead have opted to use Non Governmental and religious bodies in the provision of assistance to the people that have been devastated by the heavy cyclone Freddy in the Southern region of Malawi.(Malawi Nation News Paper dated 14 March 2023).The refusal comes due to the department failure to account for huge sums of money that were meant to lessen the transmission of Covid - 19 in 2021-2022.

c) CORRUPTION AND DEVELOPMENT

A significant number of respondents subscribed to the idea that there is relationship between Corruption and under development that is experienced in Malawi by citing that the resources that were meant for meaningful development end up in the hands few individuals that mostly use them for personal benefits and not for the betterment of the nation.

The graph below illustrates the relationship between corruption and development in Malawi.



The graph above shows that when Petty corruption is low development is high as resources are channelled towards intended purpose and when corruption is high development is low since useful resources are misappropriated.

d) FACTORS THAT ENCOURAGE CORRUPTION IN MALAWI

The researcher had interest to establish if people know the factors that result into such a devastating corruption in Malawi. A wider range of responses were given. The table below shows some of the common responses that informants gave.

A Table shows some the common responses that informants gave to be the cause of corruption in Malawi

FACTOR	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	%
Ignorance of the Constitution	20	20
Low Salaries/wages	75	50
Unfixed prices for services and tariffs	40	20
Lack of patriotism	10	6.6
Not sure	5	3

The data above shows that majority about 75 respondents consider low Salaries /wages to be contributing to corruption which is followed by unfixed charges to services that give room to negotiations that in the end fuel corruption. Generally in average a Malawian worker receives an average of \$33 dollars a month that translates to \$1.1 dollar a day which is still below poverty line according to the World Bank daily minimum required earning for an individual which is marked at \$2.15 dollars a day. (Fact sheet 2022, www.worldbank.org/en/news). This is self-evident from the government wage circular released in 2022 that places a minimum wage to be at 50 Malawian Kwacha an equivalent of \$29 a month. Such meagre amount of remuneration fuel corruption in many African countries. This is also worsened due to extended family styles in which all the members rely on a single person who is working as a breadwinner despite that the salary is calculated for a single person only. Such scenarios force many in Malawi to devise survivor mechanisms which are to

DISCUSSION

The research findings about corruption experienced by people when accessing social Services from government agencies in Malawi is a self-manifestation that those who have been fighting corruption have ignored the very basis of all corruption (Petty corruption) that result into the establishment of all other types of corruption. It is therefore imperative that those stakeholders interested to fight corruption should always aim at addressing this type of corruption in the first place before they can start addressing the consequent forms. The desires to have basic needs brings a strong tension in most Malawians in the midst of crippled economy that cannot suffice them hence resorting into corruption. In so doing it affirms **Merton's Strain Theory and Corruption**; which states that there is a tension between a society goals and means that people use to attain the goals. The existence of the tension that forces people to engage themselves in ways that are not proper like corruption in order to facilitate the attainment process of the set goal.(Charlotte N. 2021). Similarly the findings is a manifestation that to every social problem there is a need to tackle the cause first before attempting to address the effects.(Affirmation of causality principle)

CONCLUSION:

As it logical that if you want to destroy a tree completely then stumps out together with the roots. Similarly chronic corruption in Malawi that makes it to rot in the vicious cycle of Least Developed Countries since its existence can be tackled only if Petty Corruption and its causes are addressed. Failure to do so shall mean a waste of time and energy to those who attempt to address such a malpractice. Not only that but also the findings of this research have also exposed that women and youth are still marginalised in the fight against corruption despite being victims of all kinds of exploitations in the society. On the causes the research has exposed that low salaries that is accompanied by greenness which requires that the government of Malawi looks at ways of boosting its economy that can assist that workers at least start receiving a reasonable pay for their duly work done. Above all it is important that every citizen raises his or her moral judgement in detesting corruption so as to build a society that is corrupt free.

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