

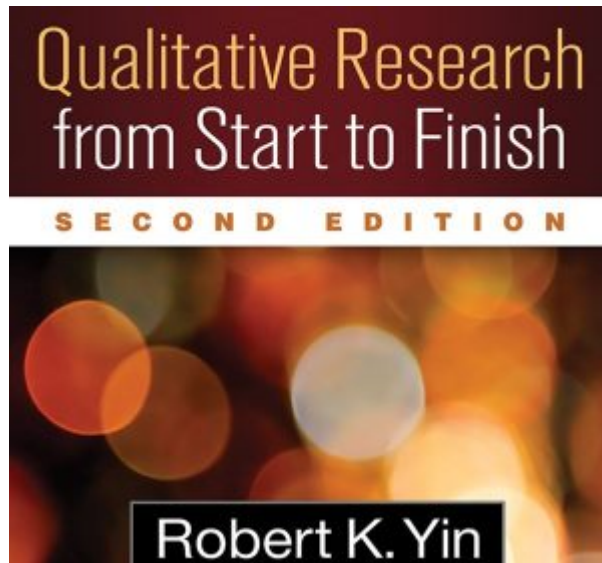
Questions 3, 4 & 5 form the subject matter of this second part of the series on “Can the Poor Fight Corruption? The Views From Nigeria’s Federal Capital Poverty Hubs of Bwari, Nyanya, Mararaba, Jikwoyi and Gwagwalada”. The questions in this part are (3) In what sense is your self-rating in poverty status so; (4) Do you see any connection between corruption and poverty in Nigeria? and (5) What is your assessment of the anti-corruption war in Nigeria?



But before, we go into this second part let us note the reactions to the part 1 published here last Sunday. The reactions are varied but we take note of the reservations of those who are uncomfortable with the manner of presentation of the data. The feeling is that it does not fit into the accepted manner of qualitative research reporting. Some others would have preferred we tabulated the results and, by so doing, would have brought out many other features of the report.

Intervention is excited that the research report is of interest to academia and to powerful economists as to react. There are no objections to the reactions except that this research has been a difficult effort. Ordinarily, it is the pictures and names of those interviewed that would have made it most lively. But the research ethics that insists that the spoken and unspoken preferences of interviewees must be respected has robbed the research report that shine in the sense that we had to decide not to use their names. This is due to their strongly expressed fear that they could be identified. When some members on the panel that reviewed the interview said they did not see what they said that would attract reprisal actions from the government, other members countered that their pastors, Imams and local leaders could use it against them. Whatever it really is that they are ere afraid of, their perception had to be respected since it forms part of their consciousness. It is possible that our researchers did not do sufficient explanation and persuasion just as it could be that perception can be complicated.

Once their pictures were not taken and names are to be described in a way that the person speaking cannot be easily identified, it means the report has to be written in a manner that the interviewees can take away something home from it. Hence, that style of presentation!



Question 3

This question has been overtaken to the extent that majority do not connect or accept the status of being poor. The few who accepted have provided mainly material reasons for rating themselves poor. The debate that reinforces is the debate on whether material lack defines poverty. It is an on-going battle there.

Question 4

21 out of 35 answered yes to the question as to whether they see any connection between corruption and poverty in Nigeria, meaning 60% of the research population. That means 14 persons answered No, meaning 40% of the population. One interesting feature here is that 10 out of the total of 11 women who participated in the interview accept that poverty is an outcome of corruption. But, what reasons or interpretive evidence did each side provide to argue its position?

Below are the views of some of those who say there is a connection between corruption and poverty. It is mostly in their own words:

- The rich keep enriching themselves
- The leaders are reserving opportunities for their children at the expense of the poor
- Government officials embezzle funds meant for basic amenities
- A lot of people are suffering because of decisions of government
- Yes because the money everyone will benefit from is stolen by just one person
- I don't care about the government. I assume they do not exist
- Yes, poverty is connected because those at the top are only enriching themselves with resources meant to better the lives of the masses. That is where poverty came from
- Yes, people are poor because of government and corruption
- How can one person steal billions of Naira meant for everybody and you expect people to survive
- Yes, because resources meant for the masses are being used for their personal gains and we cannot send our children to school
- Yes, corruption is making things worse

So, basically, those who say there is a connection between corruption and poverty anchor their position on looting. Looting or prebendalism is the causal mechanism. What is the situation on the other side of the debate? Below are some of the explanations by those who say there is no connection between corruption and poverty. Again, this is mostly in their own words:

- Those who work hard can beat poverty
- It is laziness, not corruption
- Poverty is a choice because God has given everyone strength
- Corruption is everywhere but if you work hard, you can overcome it
- No because poverty is the will of God
- No, because the Bible says those who do not work hard should not eat
- No, it is not government's fault that I am poor
- Corruption is a contributing factor but not the reason why people are poor
- No, everyone should find something to do
- So, those who say there is no connection between corruption and poverty gave lack of hard work or laziness as cause of poverty; pose the view that poverty is the will of God and are, lastly, convinced that corruption is only a contributory factor, not the sole reason.



- Platforms of popular culture such as music, film, literature, dance and drama as weapons of popular action for accountability and probity



- Flashback to a South African scene of popular action against corruption a few years back
- What is more interesting in the entire story of this research would not be the statistical differential in the figures of 60% for and 40% against but the various reasons given by the respondents. Those reasons answer the 'how' of corruption from their standpoint. And a deeper discussion of the differences could be very rewarding, especially for those involved in advocacy and campaigning as well as revolutionaries.
- **uestion 5**
- The last question is on assessment of the anti-corruption war in Nigeria. The result stands as follows:

- 21 respondents gave answers that out rightly rate the anti-corruption war as either partisan or unserious or badly conducted
- 6 answered “I don’t know”
- One respondent, a corper, answered yes and no
- One respondent said the government is fighting corruption but corruption is fighting back
- One respondent said the government is trying but not enough
- One respondent stands on the position that the government is genuinely fighting corruption
- 2 respondents believe President Buhari is determined to fight corruption but he is not supported by the party and members of his team.
- 2 answers could not be decoded in a manner that places them in any clear position. Meaning making from the expressions used is, in all cases, problematic.

From this summary, the most significant percentage of the research population is where 21 persons stand, meaning 60% of the total. The next closest position has 6 respondents which is 17%. All attention will, therefore, focus on what some of the 21 respondents were saying in defence of their low rating of current anti-corruption war. Below is a sampler:

1. They are all protecting themselves
2. They don’t mean to fight corruption at all
3. Government is playing politics in the fight against corruption. Nobody can fight corruption, only God. They can only make mouth like Buhari
4. Nobody is fighting corruption. It is all politics
5. They are not fighting corruption. They are fighting for their pockets. The president of the country is also the Minister for Oil. What is he trying to achieve?
6. It is only for their benefits
7. The leaders are not selfless but selfish and only act for their gains
8. It is selective pursuit
9. Only those who offend the ruling party are suffering
10. The whole corruption noise is a scam. They are only fighting corruption outside the ruling party
11. They are not fighting corruption. They are only fighting those who are against them



Summary

The larger question is “Can the poor fight corruption?” That is the block question that this phase of *Intervention’s* participation in the MacArthur supported and CITAD administered program of amplifying “voices from below’ is all about.

It marks a shift in *Intervention’s* participation in amplifying “voices from below’ which began in the previous phase, where the focus was decoding elite discourses or framing of corruption issues and the power relations as well as practices revealed by such framing. This was what the series of reports

carried earlier in the self-reporting of presidential, senatorial and gubernatorial candidates during the February/March 2019 elections were all about.

Intervention's point of departure in this phase has been to put the poor in perspective. Putting the poor in perspective here started with how they get their news about corruption. It was followed by asking the poor themselves of their self-understanding in relation to their poverty status and how. Then the question of whether they see any relationship between corruption and poverty and finally, how they rate anti-corruption war which is automatically about the Buhari government's fight against corruption. The result is what has been presented in two reports.

Now, we draw our conclusions from this particular research which is the first in the coming series where newer questions will be posed and answers sought:

1. The predominance of 'bare foot journalism' as source of information on corruption must have been particularly interesting to Nigeria's eggheads in Mass Communications and development experts.
2. The answers to the question of the collective self-understanding of the poor by the poor have shown that those seen as the poor do not accept that categorisation of themselves. It all brings back the literary philosopher, Anaïs Nin's witticism that "We don't see things as they are; we see them as we are". Truth is not out there but in people's minds.
3. While a large number of respondents believe that corruption and poverty are connected because money meant for the masses have been looted, a good number believe the different narrative that it is laziness more than corruption that accounts for poverty.
4. The anti-corruption war in this country is yet to gain popular acceptance if the predominant views in this report is anything to go by.
5. Finally, these results are more for reflections than the question of which positions are right or wrong. It's all a question of beauty being in the eye of the beholder. The point is how consensus might be forged and translated into action on how to route corruption.