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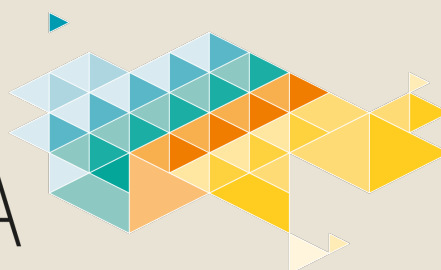
Media Transnationalism and the Politics of 'Feminised Corruption'

Sharon Adetutu Omotoso, 2023

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Media Transnationalism and the Politics of 'Feminised Corruption'

Dr Sharon Adetutu Omotoso

1 Introduction

Over time across the states in Africa, besides cheering male politicians, women are gaining political awareness and visibility through active participation in and contributions to political issues. Such awareness and political awakening have fostered actual and imagined place-making in political spheres for women as group leaders, political office aspirants or holders, supporters of political parties, spouses, mothers, and sisters of political office holders and so on. This development is accompanied by public scrutiny of women's moral commitment to leadership and good governance. Recent reports covering countries including Finland, Germany, New Zealand, and Taiwan, countries led by women during the heat of Covid-19 pandemic, attest to how women are under global watch, and have expanded the areas of concern within which women's competencies in public life may be determined. This suggests that women were seen as 'higher moral agents' during the Covid pandemic because women-led countries, specifically Taiwan & New Zealand, had (at first) significantly less cases of Covid. While scholarship is rife with feminised poverty, I introduce in this work the concept of 'feminised corruption' by specifically calling attention to how media transnationalism essentialises women as higher moral agents yet turns its back on them by weaponising corruption against women in public office.

Since the medialisation of a concept, ideology, or issue rests on mobility, spaces, and networks of people as facilitated through the media (Quayson & Daswani 2013), to argue that corruption is feminised through media is to reveal the mediality of corruption in one of multifarious performative constructions. Consequently, this study emphasises how corruption involving women or charged against women is performed, constructed, distorted, and reported across global and local media and how these activities impact on the pursuit of the goal of gender parity in politics.

My arguments further underscore how medialised corruption translates into feminised corruption drawing on recently observed trends of medialising corruption against women in public office, so much so that men often receive a soft landing and women, a crash landing.

Nigeria's political landscape has been observed and found to typify feminised corruption depicting the bias of corruption against women, with the media as key player. Nigerian female public office holders including Patricia Etteh, first female speaker of the National House of Representatives; Stella Oduah, former Minister of Aviation; Winifred Oyo-Ita, former Head of Service of the Federation; Diezani Alison-Madueke, former Minister of Petroleum Resources; Kemi Adeosun, former Minister of Finance; Adenike Grange, former Minister of Health; and so on, have all been caught in the web of corruption since 1999 when the Fourth Republic commenced. Interestingly, none of the cases has been brought to a legal conclusion. As corruption threatens state sovereignty and undermines the achievement of gender parity in politics, the media have been pivotal in feminising corruption within socio-political spaces, and by extension, on a transnational scale.

I adopt a qualitative method of inquiry, using purposive sampling technique, to select Diezani Alison-Madueke (Nigeria's Minister of Petroleum Resources, 2010-2015) as a case study. Focus on Nigeria's Diezani's corruption saga seeks to understand how the moral conduct of female political office holders affect women's political participation, and to proffer a feminist moral approach that could address the challenges of feminised corruption.

From 2015 to 2021, the period within which the corruption charges retained media attention, was selected and a content analysis of selected dailies (national and international) that reported the cases was conducted to tease out different themes around the issues. To address the challenges of feminised corruption, I propose a feminist ethics of vigour, having noted how the theoretical framework of care ethics has failed women in this regard. While this study in no way justifies corruption or seeks to exonerate anyone, it calls attention to the misogynistic use of media to deprive women of public office and discourage new entrants from venturing into politics. It emphasises the moral tools necessary for any meaningful involvement of women in political activities and suggests how women may use these tools to survive and thrive within political spaces across states.

Following this introduction, the study has five additional sections. Section II presents Nigeria's Diezani as a case study to show how corruption is feminised in transnational contexts. Section III discuses media as vital agents of transnationalism, how media transnationalism is central to promoting medialised corruption, and the implications for developing nations. In Section IV, the subjects of corruption and feminised corruption are interrogated and linked with media transnationalism, evidenced with examples drawn from across Africa to foreground burgeoning feminised corruption. Section V stems from the idea of 'doing ethics' to understand ethics not only in abstract terms but as judgements, claims, evaluations, and criteria that emerge in everyday interactions constituted in and by practice, communication, and negotiation. It problematises care ethics for women in public offices and proposes ethics of vigour as an alternative. Section VI concludes the discussion.

2 Nigeria's Diezani Alison-Madueke: a case study on feminised corruption

Nigeria's democratic experience has never been more elaborate than now. 1999 marked the end of protracted military rule, the beginning of a civilian-to-civilian uninterrupted change of power, the restoration of domestic and international confidence in the Nigerian state, and, most importantly, previously marginalised populations and segments of the country gained the confidence to participate in governance. The focus here is one of the results of women's participation in politics: the nature and processes of corruption indictments against women compared with their male counterparts.

Nigeria has maintained a fickle chart of women in elective and appointive offices, yet there is a trend that drives the few women in the political sphere into oblivion after being heavily indicted for 'gross misconduct' and 'corruption'. Most corruption cases have taken the forms of Tanzi's one – six classifications (discussed in section 4) and questions the morality of female political office holders across Africa.

Since Nigeria's return to democracy, the media has pervaded the public sphere with reports of corrupt practices among politicians. The fact that Diezani Alison-Madueke, (hereafter, Diezani) has remained on the media radar since 2015 justifies her selection for this study. The study observes that ethnic leaning, age, class, and educational background are not necessarily contributory to how corruption is feminised, in Nigeria (which may be different when other countries are studied); rather, the feminine identity of women in political space is the fundamental factor predisposing them to feminised corruption. Diezani came into the public eye on her first appointment as Minister of Transportation in 2007. She was moved to the Ministry for Mines and Steel Development in 2008 and later became Minister of Petroleum Resources. Her performance peaked, having risen through the ranks to become the first female Executive Director of Shell Petroleum in 2006. Aware of the challenges ahead as one operating within male-dominated systems, Diezani's conversations with media showed her as prepared for the task ahead. She started out by reducing foreign domination of the sector through the Nigerian Content Act[1] aimed at the increased involvement of indigenous companies in contract execution. Under her leadership in 2012, the controversy over the government's policy to remove subsidies on the fuel price in Nigeria ensued. Within the crises, Diezani spoke glowingly on how the subsidy "poses a huge financial burden on the government, disproportionately benefits the wealthy, encourages inefficiency, corruption, and diversion of scarce public resources away from investment in critical infrastructure" (Dodondawa 2012). By 2014, she became the first woman elected President of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

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[1] The Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development (Local Content Act) 2010 was enacted to promote indigenous participation in the Nigeria's oil and gas industry for the purpose of improving the economic and social well-being of those engaged in operating in the oil and gas industry. Section 2 of the Local Content Act, states that "all regulatory authorities, operators, contractors, subcontractors, alliance partners and other entities involved in any project, operation, activity or transaction in the Nigerian oil and gas industry shall consider Nigerian content as an important element of their overall project development and management philosophy for project execution.".

2.1 The Corruption Charges

Following allusions from political quarters in Nigeria, the news broke from foreign media. PBS News Hour (December 2, 2015) alleged that Diezani had diverted $6 billion (N1.2 trillion) from the Nigerian treasury. The popularly known "Diezani oil scandal" began with accusations of illegal non-remittance of $20 billion of oil revenue by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) which was raised by Sanusi Lamido Sanusi- former Governor of Nigeria's Central Bank in late 2013. In addition to money laundering charges (*The Cable* 2017), Diezani was also accused of awarding huge contracts without following due process, diverting public funds for private use, and wasteful spending (Sahara Reporters 2012). For these, she was indicted, recommended for prosecution, and charged to court. Although a few other names were mentioned alongside Diezani's in the charges, by February 2014, media concentration focused solely on Diezani based on her performance in office as Minister of Petroleum Resources (2010-2015).

In all these, media transnationalism features within the involvements of foreign media including Reuters, Pandora Papers, PBS News Hour, CNN, BBC, and Al Jazeera, alongside other foreign agencies such as the UK Crime Agency and the US Justice Department's Kleptocracy Team, among others (Reuters February 27, 2017) to galvanise feminised corruption. This argument becomes tenable because several corruption cases involving men have existed before that of Diezani's and were not given the attention commanded in this case. A flashback at corruption charges involving men in Nigerian politics, for instance, reveal male politicians such as James Ibori, Rotimi Amaechi, and Abdullahi Ganduje who have been indicted for corrupt acts with some media attention, yet most have escaped opprobrium and returned triumphantly into political spaces. Meanwhile the reverse is the case for female politicians who, once indicted for corruption, withdraw in shame, literally remain on the run, and mostly never return to the political space. Perhaps the 'old boys' alliance' come to play in matters of this sort since the political space is largely male-dominated.

2.2 The Personal versus the Political

Interactions between the personal and the political abound whenever feminised corruption ensues. This has taken unnoticed forms as follows:

> Naming and shaming: In its original construction, naming and shaming, which was developed for the protection of women against all forms of violence, is now being deployed in political spaces to attack women's personalities.[2] Feminised corruption is characterised by a habitual pattern of media smuggling names of family members who have no direct involvement with the scandal and weaving stories around them in a sensational manner, thereby not only naming the female politician in question, but also shaming her family members alongside her (*elombah.com* January 18, 2012).

> Making news of women's private lives: With the exposition of Diezani's health status (*Vanguard* October 10, 2015) and the making of sensational headlines about her battle

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[2] This sense of naming and shaming also reflects in Dennis Muller's article of July 31 2020. https://theconversation.com/naming-and-shaming-two-young-women-shows-the-only-enemies-of-the-state-are-the-media-143685.

with breast cancer, feminised corruption is seen to expose the possibly unrelated private matters of women in public offices.

Objectifying and disciplining of women's bodies: Feminised corruption hypes feminine objects (make-up, headgear, underwear, and so on) and uses them to reinforce sexism in politics. Headlines reporting that the Federal Government listed Diezani's bras for sale (*Punch* October 27, 2021) reflect how objects are engendered as modes of spectacle to discipline women's bodies.

Playing the 'stoop to conquer' role: feminised corruption considers women's self-assertion as abominable, particularly when/if they fail to play along with their male counterparts on matters. Among other whistleblowers, the then-Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, alleged that $20 billion cannot be accounted for at the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation under Diezani's leadership. There are insinuations that the Governor was fired from the Central Bank of Nigeria for making this public and, in an interview with a British journalist, Sanusi spoke bitterly about Diezani, stating that "If she goes to court and if she's jailed, for example, it sends a signal, … that there is a day of reckoning." Responding to this allegation, Diezani accused Sanusi of attempting to strike back because she did not support his bid to become President of the African Development Bank (AfDB) (*Pulse Nigeria* April 6, 2016).

2.3 Of the 'Spoken and the Unspoken

For the obvious reason that women have not sufficiently taken root in the top echelons of Nigerian politics, more men have been whistleblowers of corruption charges against women. While factors including fear of retaliation and punishment, risk versus rewards, pervade whistleblowing research (Near & Miceli 2008; Fatoki 2013; Fapohunda 2016), male counterparts may not consider these factors in instances of whistleblowing for feminised corruption as they are almost certain that the women are too timid to retaliate.

Evidence from the dailies consulted show that there is always a side of feminised corruption that is rarely pursued with vigour, and that is usually the side of the woman/women in question. When women respond to corruption allegations, what do they say and how do they say it? In the Nigerian situation, responses from such women include "Others are involved" as in the case of Patricia Etteh (The Nation April 26, 2016), "I was misadvised" (This Day March 3, 2008)- as in the case of Adenike Grange, and "I did not steal" (The Cable January 22, 2017)- as in the case of Diezani Alison Madueke.

Diezani's voice has not been as loud, the most reported was her stating that:

> If there is one issue I must pursue in this world it is the biggest lie of this money. How can $20 billion disappear just like that? Where did it disappear to? Is it possible that such an amount would not be traceable? This is more painful coming from someone I considered a good friend who should appreciate the gravity of such allegation. I challenge anyone to come forward with facts showing that I stole government or public money. I've never stolen Nigeria's money." (Vanguard November14, 2015).

Affirming the culture of silence to which women in politics are also prone, Diezani hoped that her silence would help matters, hence The Cable reports her stating that:

> I have up till now chosen to maintain my silence and not to respond to inaccurate press reporting. However, given the level of deliberate inaccuracies, I am now forced to respond because it is clear that the EFCC is taking advantage of my silence to try me by media and to convict me in the eyes of the public (The Cable January 22, 2017).

In another 2017 report, she says:

> First and foremost, whilst the reasons for my being out of the country are public knowledge, the principle of fair hearing demands that I should have been notified of formal charges if truly there was a prima facie evidence or indictment against my person linking me with the said issue, so as to ensure that I had adequate legal representation. This was never done. I wish to state that I cannot forfeit what was never mine. I do not know the basis on which the EFCC has chosen to say that I am the owner of these funds as no evidence was provided to me before the order was obtained and they have not, in fact, served me with the order or any evidence since they obtained it. I do not, therefore, understand how the EFCC can in the same breath say that the monies in question are mine. If they had evidence that the monies were mine, then they would not /should not, have used the procedure which applies only to funds of unknown ownership. If indeed they used this particular legal procedure because they did not know who owned the monies, then how can they now be falsely attributing the ownership to me. Let me restate categorically as I have always maintained, for the record, I have not and will never steal money from or defraud the Federal Government of Nigeria. I am willing to respond to any charges brought against me that follow duly laid down procedures." (Sahara Reporters February 27, 2017)

The Cable of January 22, 2017 published a full response from Diezani on these allegations, which prompts the question whether the corruption she sought to fight (when she introduced the Nigerian Content Act) is fighting back. With new discoveries in the case, perhaps there are grey areas left unexplored as more recent reports present counter-narratives around how the missing funds went into President Goodluck Jonathan's 2015 election (Sahara Reporters September 27, 2021). What about other persons connected with the allegations? Why is the system frustrating taking the case forward and bringing it to a legal conclusion? A 2019 Anti-Corruption Evidence Working Paper (Komolafe et al. 2019) reveals medial-feminised corruption exemplified in how "most of the newspapers reported on the story in such a way that they simply restated official press releases and statements by officials from the EFCC," with the exception of ThisDay newspaper "which published two pieces in November 2018 – one feature article and the other a column – that criticised the EFCC and accused it of using Diezani as a "propaganda tool" (Akinloye 2018) and of "fighting elections, not corruption" (Momodu 2018). By and large, Diezani's case of medial-feminised corruption is considered transnational based on the roles played by foreign media; first in breaking the news and also in sustaining international coverage of the corruption saga. Furthermore, availability of the newspapers for her to speak back depended on the structure of Nigeria's media landscape which features "media politicisation" (Omotoso 2018, p. 560) wrapped around recent media proprietorship by political elites. The whole gamut of feminising

corruption rests on what is said or silenced to protect certain political actors, to promote male chauvinist tendencies in politics, or to utilise female politicians for comic relief.'

3 Media as Agents of Transnationalism

Media within material conceptions are suspect for altering (or even inventing) the messages they communicate (Voss et al. 2020), such that form can be conferred on an immature and self-dependent idea or concept (Fohrmann 2014); "as it reaches masses, it also can form masses and can address masses" (Bauer 2021, p. 10). It is on this basis that Krymer (2015, p. 29) examines the question of what lies 'behind appearances' to discuss media and mediality from a metaphysical perspective. Krymer highlights how "at the same time that media bring something forth, they themselves recede into the background; [thereby enabling visualisation], while simultaneously remaining invisible" (p. 30). Using examples of how "we hear not a CD, but rather music; and the cinema screen 'disappears' as soon as the film grips us," Krymer argues that "the smoother media work, the more they remain below the threshold of our perception, only to become noticeable when caught up with noise, dysfunction, and disturbance".

The transition from 'media' (as an object) to 'mediation' (as an intermediary) within which 'mediatisation' is popularised, and now to 'medialities' take media beyond being the message (McLuhan 1964) into becoming the force that influences the source, the message, and the receiver. This showcases media materiality as "'matters' for the type of meanings that can be encoded" (Ryan 2004 pp. 1–2).

'Transnationalism' as a theoretical and analytic tool has attracted a wide range of discourses from varying fields. Among other understandings, the concept of transnationalism has been interchanged with inter-state relations (Hunger & Kissau 2009; Mazzucatto 2010); to rebrand what used to be called multinational business transactions (Bonin 2002); as a structure that shapes nation-state identities despite recognised bound networks (Clavin 2005); as "contracts, coalitions and interactions across state boundaries" that were not directly controlled by the central policy organs of government (Keohane & Nye 1981), and as a prevalent discourse which presupposes non-confinement of activities (be it social, political, economic, and so on) within a single nation or state, but rather, an extension of operations within more than one state (Omotoso 2016). By these, transnationalism explains how bodies of knowledge or technologies are developed despite their not being bound by nation-states. It emphasises a shift from internationalism as nations are ignoring differences and closing divides. It thus affirms Pence's and Zimmerman's (2012, p. 495) assertion that "scientific inquiry, pop-culture, consumerism, art, media all emerge through transnational networks."

Going forward, social, political, and cultural derivatives from transnationalism, such as 'transnational democracy' and 'transnational feminism' among others, have emerged to examine issue-based interconnectivities amidst individualities. For instance, transnational feminism highlights the interrelationships of players situated in different contexts across the globe by seeking camaraderie irrespective of divergences and boundaries (Campt 2011; Omotoso 2016) and accounting for multiplicity and connections between nationhood, race, gender, sexuality, and

economic exploitation in the context of capitalism's worldwide spread. Nnaemeka (2022) affirms this when she notes that "transnational feminist works unfold at the borders" studying the patterns, comparing notes, and expanding contexts. Without ignoring contradictions surrounding transnationalism and how it transforms socio-cultural and political relations, the term continues to attract scholarly attention in analysing themes, specifically within gender research (Mohanty 1994; Salih 2003; Mahler & Pesser 2006). Towards this end, transnationalism speaks significantly to how corruption is feminised.

The emergence of new communication technologies which reach out to people across boundaries has produced transnational media which, in turn, have fostered media transnationalism. Media transnationalism denotes boundless reach, mixed audiences (Bardoel & Deuze 2001), increased access to information, and unrestricted cultural interactions (Morley & Robins 1995), to an extent that there would be no transnationalism without media. This is an expansion of the operations of media in Africa as compared with that of African media[3] wherein multiplicities of content and ideologies may be shared. Media transnationalism brings a mixed bag of the good, the bad, and the ugly embedded in news, entertainment, politics, religion, and culture. It brings to bear media power to construct and/or distort reality (Omotoso & Razak, 2015).

Vincent (2005) affirms the downside of media transnationalism as profit maximisation under the free-market economy that deprives the consumer of benefits due to problems of monopolistic behaviour, promotion of consumer values at all costs, and denigration of journalistic values. In addition, just as it has promoted values, major social and political vices have gained their spread by virtue of media transnationalism. To this end, "global media [can] be more harmful than helpful … in shaping African media tenets, whims and caprices" (Omotoso 2018, p. 558). With recent events which have called attention to an infodemic propelled by how disinformation and misinformation are drawn from local media's reliance on foreign reporters who "tell stories through their own lenses" (Kalu 2021), to argue that corruption is feminised through media is to reveal the mediality of corruption in multifarious performative constructions. This leads to medial-feminised corruption, a concept introduced to capture how corruption involving women or charged against women is performed, constructed/distorted, and reported across global and local media, and how these activities impact the pursuit of gender parity.

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[3] I have in an earlier work distinguished between media in Africa and African media; the former being all media organisations both local and foreign operating within Africa, and the latter being media organisations based in Africa, owned by Africans, and operated to serve Africa. My definition of African media here is post-colonially oriented and does not follow literal descriptions of African media as the traditional means of communication p. 1290. See Omotoso S.A. (2018a) Media, Society, and the Postcolonial State. In: The Palgrave Handbook of African Colonial and Postcolonial History. (pp.1285-1303) eds. Shanguhyia M., Falola T. Palgrave, Macmillan, New York.

4 On Corruption and Feminised Corruption

'Corruption' as a phenomenon could manifest and be understood in various, yet related contexts, relating to an abuse of public power for private benefits (Rose-Ackerman 1997); an intentional noncompliance with an arm's length relationship aimed at deriving some advantage from this behaviour for oneself or for related individuals (Tanzi 1997). Continuing debates over the othering of corruption as the exclusive reserve of the Global South remains problematic, with Rose-Ackerman's description of some countries having poor growth records and low per capita incomes despite being well endowed with natural resources; and "others, especially in the former Soviet bloc, [having] weak economic records in spite of a well-educated labour force" (Rose-Ackerman 1999). It may therefore be uncritical to discountenance the "complicity of the West" (Rønning 2009, p. 155) and "suspected stigmatisation (real or imagined difference) in order to negate identity" within global corruption discourses (Staszak 2008).

Thelen and Alber (2017) in their sociological and anthropological research describe a hitherto downplayed connection between kinship and politics, and how within such connections, new meanings develop, thereby giving room for "such concepts from kinship studies as descent or incest that have made inroads into concrete politics as well as those that are privileged mainly in the realm of politics that have travelled into the realm of kinship, such as transparency and corruption." Also on concepts, Herzfeld's (2017:41) likening of corruption with incest explains "what the state treats as the malfunctioning of institutional structures". Just as "incest is a sexual relationship between individuals whose relationship normatively precludes it," (p.42) corruption becomes the political synonym of incest, as "both represent ways of damaging the collective interest in favour of more selfish concerns, moreover, that are never purely individual but inevitably also involve suborning others" (p. 41). It is also noteworthy to include on a corruption list "incidences of unfair allocation of a country's wealth; intentional distortion in a country's social and political decision-making, cases of 'stolen elections', lopsided political appointments, ethnic and religious influences in a political system, and other forms of nepotism" (Albert 2018, p.3).

A further dimension speaks to ongoing debates around gendered corruption (Dollar 2001) which remain largely subjective, based on findings (Solnik 2001; Michailova & Melynkovska 2009) that women are not necessarily or automatically prone to be less corrupt than men (Bauhr et al. 2018), and the relationship between gender and corruption may be highly dependent on the social conditions in which opportunities for corruption arise (Esarey & Schwindt-Bayer 2018). Be that as it may, a nuanced spatio-temporal explanation of 'us' and 'them' play out in corruption discourses both locally and globally.

In foregrounding corruption, one must manifestly capture its ontology, and properly distinguish it from its empirical manifestations. This is important for, at least, two reasons: (i) a person that abuses entrusted power for personal gain or facilitates economic transactions for some personal benefit may already be corrupt (say, personal corruption) before the occurrence of either power abuse (say, institutional corruption) or self-serving facilitation of economic transaction (economic corruption), and (ii) there is a difference between a phenomenon and its public manifestation(s): to be in a state of corruption is one thing; the various public and contextual manifestations of the state of corruption are quite another: without the existential reality of a phenomenon, to begin

with, its public manifestation is inconceivable. Thus, among other classifications according to Tanzi, corruption could be: (1) Bureaucratic (or petty) or political, i.e., corruption by the bureaucracy or by the political leadership (2) cost-reducing (to the briber) or benefit-enhancing (3) briber-initiated or bribee-initiated (4) coercive or collusive (5) centralised or decentralised (6) predictable or arbitrary (Tanzi 1998).

Studies have shown that the poor, in their powerlessness against corrupt public officials and their lack of resources to seek private services, are the most affected by corruption across Africa (Transparency International 2019). Further to this is an avowal that women are the world's proletariat, linking feminised poverty with feminised corruption. Many corrupt practices do not have direct victims. "The harm arises from their negative externalities… However, when corrupt payments or favours are extorted, someone is hurt directly" (Sierra & Boehm 2015). Feminised corruption infers that woman carry more moral responsibility, a greater burden, of culpability and experience more of the impact of corruption than men. Ultimately, women are also victims of corruption directly or indirectly ranging from "enrolling children in schools, seeking healthcare, speaking up about physical abuse by family members, experiencing sexual exploitation in schools and places of work, partaking in government subsidised programs and when participating in electoral processes" (Andisi 2018). This is based on a deficit standpoint captured within the argument that women's exclusion in leadership or their absence at decision-making tables explains why they are affected by corruption. To address this gap, studies in feminist politics have proffered increased participation of women in politics and policy making.

With a growing increase in women's political participation, and the opening up of leadership positions for female politicians, the idealisation of cultural roles of community nurturing and national development by women justifies transnational feminism as fostered by globalised media forms, although, from another standpoint, transnationally mediated femininity complicates the construction of identities and how women negotiate transnational influence (Darling-Wolfe 2015). That media transnationalism essentialises women as higher moral agents is comprehensible; what is worrisome is how media transnationalism turns back to weaponise corruption against women in public office. The feminisation of corruption depicts the bias of corruption against women. With the media as key players, feminised corruption harps on an increased difference in the level of corruption among women and men, placing emphasis on how feminine traits correspond with corruption across spaces. By feminised corruption, I refer to recent trends of transvesting,[4] that is, making corruption into an act that is typical of women and making more women visible among the corrupt across political spaces. Consequently, feminised corruption is characterised by media trial, politicising the personal, and shaming women to silence, often traceable to political victimisation which Albert (2018) describes as a careful handpicking of political rivals or errant former allies. Noting that the concept of corruption is essentially a moral issue often emerging from an environment of moral diminution or depravity, "…corruption… typically involves the despoiling of the moral character of persons…" (Millers 2017, p. 55), "and/or to the undermining of a morally legitimate institutional process, role, or condition" (Millers 2005, p.5). By implication, the condition of persons could be made worse or more complicated by their personal moral disposition and/or corrupt actions domiciled within

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[4] This is drawn from Pence and Zimermman's (2012) reference to Judith Butler's idea of transvesting.

institutions to which they belong. This presents a structure-like relationship: first, of personal corruption, coupled with consequential institutional corruption. Within the discourse of political participation and representation, it is also important to consider how access to political spaces and public offices contribute to determining how corruption is gendered. This will form part of the discussion in the following section.

4.1 Feminised Corruption and Media Transnationalism

The focus on feminised corruption in this work is not about whether women are more corrupt than men or whether more women have been found guilty or not. Rather, it is about how more women are found or drawn into corruption discourses to the detriment of the sustainable development goals of 'gender equality', 'reduced inequalities', and 'partnership for the goals'. As transnationalism denotes "a connection between actors in a field (whether they are institutions or cultural objects) that takes place across multiple, but not all nation-states" (Marieke, 2018, p. 190-191), it also focuses on mobility, ideologies, spaces, and networks of people (Quayson & Daswani 2013). The idea of feminised corruption in transnational contexts shows how corruption charges levelled against women across national borders,[5] thereby emphasising spatial characteristics that gives prominence to media coverage of certain stories that may not directly impact on local recipients yet claiming salience so as to reinforce certain stereotypes. While media transnationalism in the context of this work resonates with Haraldsson and Wängnerud's (2019) idea of 'media sexism', feminised corruption is seen by transnational media as a theme that possesses immediacy, justifying its coverage across countries. Thus, feminised corruption may be transnationalised by media in four possible ways as follows:

First, showcasing how global controversial matters ensue across local spaces; for instance, how issues of feminist leadership come into question across numerous countries. Second, spotlighting states' commitment to foreign relations; as media reveal certain states' disposition towards assisting others to achieve accountability and good governance. This is evidenced in media reportage of formerly colonised countries by their colonisers. The third is to map a comparative scale of corruption among women across countries. Fourth is a ploy by the government of the day, using media to assert itself to the world by discrediting predecessors specifically through women who served in their administration. This is found in President Muhammadu Buhari's statement that "the prosecution of those suspected of misappropriating the NNPC's revenue under past administrations would begin soon."[6]

On media transnationalism of feminised corruption, Joyce Banda,[7] former President of Malawi, affirms from her experience that media treat women differently when it comes to corruption.

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[5] This context of transnationalism is drawn from Lobato's literal description of trans-national. Lobato, Ramon. Netflix Nations: The geography of digital distribution. New York: New York University Press, 2019.

[6] This is exemplified in media reports from Reuters which asserts that "getting tough on corruption would deflect criticism of Buhari for failing to appoint a cabinet or an economic team four months after taking office as Nigeria's economy is going through a severe crisis due to the plunge in global oil prices." See https://twww.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-oil-arrest-idUSKCN0RW21020151002.

[7] See The Weight of Corruption on Women Leaders in Africa https://www.cipe.org/events/weight-corruption-women-leaders-africa/.

Examples across Africa reveal similar trends of media reportage of feminised corruption. A report on Angola's Isabel dos Santos traces her wealth to her politician father, stating "how insider deals, political connections and an army of Western enablers helped dos Santos amass a fortune… using her position as daughter of the Angolan President … to reap an extraordinary financial gain to the detriment of … Angola" (Fittzgibbon 2021). Here, emphasis is not on her being innocent or guilty, but on her connection with a political figure to assume a corrupt status.

BBC News reports on Tunisian Member of Parliament Abir Moussi as widely "criticised as a corrupt supporter of the old regime who wants to thwart Tunisia's transition to democracy". The report notes how she attends sessions wearing a helmet and a flak jacket because, she says, she has received death threats from Islamists, and concludes that "in free and fair elections, deeply conservative forces may win the vote and set the liberalisation of society back, and women are often the first losers" (BBC July 18 2021).

In 2018, CNN reported how Diane Rwigara lost Rwanda's presidential race and ended up in jail. The report states that "electoral authorities disqualified her, claiming she doctored the number of signatures needed to qualify and accusing her of submitting the names of dead people, which she denied." On this, an interviewee in the report asserted that "Rwanda is often described as the best place in the world for women in politics, with more female lawmakers in parliament than any other country, but it's not the case if you challenge President Kagame" (CNN August 28 2018).

Recent developments in Ethiopia may also be of interest in media transnationalism as scholars have argued that the "heavy media emphasis on the fact that half of Ethiopia's ministers were women obscured other criteria that also influenced their selection" (Breuning & Okundaye 2021 p.1071).

These examples from across the continent attest to how gender inequality as a global issue commands attention in the news, and how media organisations consequently ride on gender controversies to make news across transnational spaces. The examples equally provide multiple dimensions for future research areas on feminised corruption including how corruption may be skewed against women, whether it would still be tagged feminised corruption when the woman in question is found guilty, and an inquiry into what kinds of corrupt practices are mostly feminised. This leads to the need to explore feminist moral approach(es) that address the challenges of feminised corruption.

5 Doing Ethics of Care and Risk, to a Feminist Ethics of Vigour

Studies have proffered feminist ethics of care to address a variety of social problems and moral dilemmas. Arguing that rather than applying reason to issues of rights, rules, and justice, a different voice of emotions, relationship, and responsibility contribute in no less manner to being ethical, Gilligan (1982) provided an alternative way to address moral issues. That Gilligan's ethics of care emphasises voice, relationship, and responsiveness make it laudable across spaces; however, many more different voices seeking to address further complex issues are emerging to transcend Gilligan's 'different voice'. The complexities of caring, empathy, and mutual understanding in feminist ethics of care become evident when it transforms into a human ethic within democratic frameworks. This informs Imafidon's (2018, p. 170) position that "when a Western feminist examines African women's understanding of care from her epistemic lenses, she is bound to experience difficulties and misjudge matters." It is on this note that Olojede (2020, p. 3) has reiterated the yearnings of several scholars on the "need to develop our own contextualised African feminist ethics that is grounded in endogenous African realities, experiences, and contexts".

Within the framings of feminised corruption, care ethics over-moralises women by morally judging them against a background of idealised cultural roles. Caring in politics is multi-facetted, ranging from (1) a duty of care which female politicians owe the masses, (2) the loyalty women owe their political parties and referees, and (3) the moral duty to serve the nation as stipulated in the constitution. When these three greedy political regimens are imposed on women, they often result in victimcy.[8]

For instance,

> 1. On the one hand, if Diezani has assumed the silent mode so as to protect certain powers connected with her political career, her deployment of care ethics, within the context of relationship and empathy, has put her person and ambition in disrepute. She will therefore remain silent to protect her sponsors, party interest, and perhaps by extension the chances of other women who would be offered political appointments and forced to keep mute as she has presumably done.

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[8] The concept of 'victimcy' is as used by Utas, 2015:408, being a collapse of agency and victimhood, where women exercise agency under trying, uncertain, and disempowering circumstances, within their social navigation as victims of war.

2. On the other hand, if Diezani is guilty of these corruption charges, she would have abused the 'voice' she obtained through her appointment in office, and consequently betrays the principles of care ethics vested by her party's trust in her which led to her appointment. She will also be betraying the mass populace wallowing in abject poverty by not empathizing with them while venturing into corruption. Worse still, she also jeopardises the chances of fellow women intending to assume political offices as her record extends to discredit women's representation in politics.

Either way, care ethics is problematic in Diezani's case study on corruption, consequently leading to a search for new ethical principle(s) to cater directly for Africa's predicaments (Mangena 2009, Olojede 2020).

The search for new ethical principles that will directly address the challenges of women as they navigate public and private spaces in Africa call attention to descriptive ethics (Brennan 1999), normative ethics (Tong 2001; Jaggar 2001), and or a "convergence of both for practically engaging to give a voice to the experience of women across all cultures and creeds" (Oyeleye 2018, p. 280). While such descriptions and prescriptions have been attempted, not many of these have been named as African feminist ethical theory.

Mangena's (2009) argument faults care ethics for failing African women because it validates women's traditional roles as caregivers and subsequently reinforces the patriarchal view that women should be domiciled mainly in the domestic space. This perception has followed women who have broken the glass ceiling and are now operating in public, including political spaces. Perhaps Mangena's argument would have been invalidated if women expectedly came into the public spaces with their caring and empathetic nature by committedly embracing care ethics, using public funds more for the wellbeing of the people, rather than embezzling them, which is contrary to the 'spirit' of care ethics. For instance, Mangena's argument would be flawed in Ethiopia's politics, where women were recently brought into the political space based on the perception that women are more humane and would bring their caring nature into governance. This is affirmed by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's position that "women can help fight corruption, reduce inefficiency, and bring accountability and fairness to government – and that is leadership" (*Al Jazeera* 2018, October 19). Correspondingly, this is Wubante's (2021) finding, revealing that women political leaders in Ethiopia are more conservative, bureaucratic, and less autocratic than male political leaders. However, further findings from Ethiopia affirm Mangena's assertion, noting that more women in cabinet is not always tantamount to power distribution and gender transformation. On this, Marijke and Okundaye (2021) argue that the recent dramatic election of Ethiopia's 50% female cabinet "can signal responsiveness to external cues [from bilateral and multilateral donors]… if aid-dependent, developing countries receive explicit or implicit cues that the appointment of more female ministers will be understood as a commitment to women's empowerment and gender equality, they will appoint more of them" (Breuning & Okundaye 2021, p. 1057).

To follow Mangena's position then, is to suggest that care ethics in African politics serve primarily to instrumentalise women. It echoes Imafidon's (2018, p.174) idea of 'patriarchal opportunism' which exploits women's caring attributes and "proceeds for several reasons to the exploitation of

this ontological fact about African women in a manner that is draining, demeaning, and abusive to African women". In the same vein I have found feminist ethics of care problematic for Africa, for "placing more moral burden on women... promoting objectifying and sexploiting perceptions of women" (Omotoso 2018b, p. 69-70). The difference lies in the outcomes of such instrumentalisations across countries. Aside from civil society and a sizable part of Nigerian elites, the grassroots masses still display gross ambivalence towards women in politics. Subsequently, their expectations of such women still fall largely within care ethics which is laden with hydra-headed challenges for women in politics (as found in earlier Rwandan and Tunisian cases discussed) and, like the Ethiopian example, women's instrumentalisation persists as assigned cabinet portfolios still reflect sexist undertones (Breuning & Okundaye 2021, p. 1068).

Working in a male-centric environment, and specifically within African politics, requires more than ethics of care. That the political glass ceiling is shattering calls for scrutiny of the glass cliff that put women at risk[9] in such spaces. This resonates with Welch's (1990) questioning of what it means to work for social transformation in the face of seemingly insurmountable suffering and evil.

In the context of feminised corruption, ethics of care overlooks how the environment of operation is either toxic or friendly to warrant relationship and empathy. In an environment where the code of silence plunges women into disrepute, any moral theory that would address the lacunae must dissect the personalities of interested parties - whistleblowers and the accused. It must also allow for an equitable presentation of voices. To this end, 'ethics of vigour' is proposed.

In response to the increasing need for home-grown ethical theories that is both normative and descriptive, ethics of vigour is a proposed a moral philosophy of self-efficacy to exemplify strength and resilience in struggles towards entrenching justice. It stands as an answer to the yearnings of African feminists in search of theoretical frameworks that speak to the experiences of the entire community of African women.[10] Founded upon African ethico-feminism, which prioritises "dignity over human debasement, reason over emotions, changes over absolute traditional practices, and virtues over vicious acts in masculine/feminine interrelationships" (Fayemi 2009, p.205), ethics of vigour presents a framework that prescribes strength, courage, and resilience as its three-fold constituent. These three are directly proportional, so that the increase/decrease of one directly affects the other two. By emphasising strength above empathy, I argue that no amount of empathy will move a bedridden mother to run and save her child from falling off the stairs; strength is required. One could be faced with realities where empathy fails to sustain commitment to care; where the toxicity of relationship raises existential questions. Would empathy for systems suggest that women's voices in self-defence be suppressed? Is Diezani guilty of these corruption charges or is she empathising with her political party to protect their integrity at her own peril? What would be the outcome of such a situation? To borrow from Olojede's (2020) prescription of African feminist ethics as that which showcases a woman of wisdom, whose speeches depict

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[9]Risk, here is in a moral context as discussed by Altham who in 1983 identified a moral gap in how risk and uncertainty have not been near the centre of discussions by moral philosophers. See Altham, J.E. (1983) Ethics of Risk Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society New Series, Vol. 84 (1983 - 1984), pp. 15-29

[10] In recognition of the complexity in defining African women, it would consist of female members of African communities who hold such identities by birth, marriage, naturalisation, or association. See Omotoso Sharon, 2021.

strength, and who is rendered in a powerful voice. Feminist ethics of vigour proceeds to delineate between the woman, "an independent campaigner who walks in the streets and talks with people, ...exhibits clear leadership qualities not only in the public" unlike "many male African politicians who take advantage of the African people ...walk in the streets, make all kinds of promises, and then after they are elected to office betray everyone" (p. 6).

From this point forward, strength and courage as the first two constituents of ethics of vigour will chart the path for a lasting solution to feminised corruption, provided the women in question are guilt-free and can prove it. To imagine Diezani taking on these two constituents (strength and courage) might be double-edged; first, if she is for instance found guilty, the law will take its course without stripping her of the power to decide her return to, or retirement from politics after serving her term. Secondly, if she pleads not guilty with all reasonable proofs, her strength and courage in the process would rest a case which has lingered as an instrument of media sexism and save women's future in politics from the taint of feminised corruption. It then gives room to resilience; the third constituent which may be tapped first, by the person in question such that she regains the right for her face to appear in other spaces, having served her term of punishment. This resilience would equally rub off on other women who may then boldly present themselves as viable candidates for public office. Ethics of vigour hereby suggests that women in situations of ethical dilemma should possess the strength to speak up, the courage to push forward, and the resilience to bounce back.

In its application to issues of feminised corruption, a feminist ethics of vigour takes risk, care, control, and justice into equal considerations in purely feminist perspectives (Omotoso 2018b, p. 70)**.** It begins with disinterestedness - the will to be bold enough to stay in a bad situation in order to avert falling into a worse one. It calls for resonating women's contextualities and optimisms in repelling oppression. Consequently, ethics of vigour presupposes strength, courage, and resilience as directly proportional requirements for any form of caring, where caring is situationally operationalised within virtue and utility contexts. Suffice to say that strength, courage, and resilience as deployed in this theoretical framework do not subject women to the perils of liberal feminism which places sole responsibility on women and prescribes vigour in solitude. It must be noted that a feminist ethics of vigour must be put in motion with society and media as key players. On the part of society, socio-political issues must be handled with more seriousness. The masses must insist that matters of corruption be treated with utmost urgency and transparency. Particularly when women are involved in corruption charges, ethics of vigour will compel society to bring morality to the table in a more disinterested manner rather than trivialising the case.

As for the media, ethics of vigour imply building moral commitments to the sanity of socio-political spaces while also faced with the challenges of pushing global, regional, or local agendas of the political class and international diplomacies. It requires incorporating gender dignity into media ethics to assure a responsive media space that can nurture equitable governance.

In this exploration of a feminist moral approach to address medial-feminised corruption, feminist ethics of vigour becomes an idealistic-pragmatic moral approach within which the normative and the practical intersect to project, protect, and entrench women in matters of justice, accountability, and good governance.

6 Conclusion

Here, an attempt has been made to examine the problem of medialised and feminised corruption; that is, how the media of communication have wrought the problem of corruption to be more feminised rather than something common to both male and female in human society. The recurrence of concepts such as corruption, accountability, inequality, equity, and good governance on glocal scales spotlights their medially shaped perfomativities. In the same vein, these concepts gain materiality subject to certain levels of cognition (through media forms) that enables citizens to understand them based on individual and/or group experience, pointing again at intentions, cognition, and perception as determinants of how processes may be engaged and explained.

Consequently, the focus has been the Nigerian context of Diezani Alison-Madueke, Nigeria's Minister of Petroleum Resources from 2010 to 2015. The study argues that Diezani's corruption allegation has been (over)medialised, something that is not the case when allegations of corruption are made against men. It has been noted that Diezani has been largely mute rather than vocal about the corruption allegations made against her by the Federal Government of Nigeria. To counter this identified deficit of the mute option, this work has proposed ethics of vigour as well as attempted to respond to some likely objections to the proposal in the present context.

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