

Age Falsification and Public Perception in Nigeria

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Abstract

Over the years, there have been a preponderance of age falsification in the country, and several scholars, have argued that, there are factors that are responsible for this. It is in that regard, this study examines the nature and causes of age falsification from a Nigerian perspective. This study made use of secondary method of data collection. The qualitative tools viz content and historical analysis was exploited. The study posits that age falsification in the Nigeria civil service is caused by numerous factors viz: the fear of uncertainties surrounding retirement; consideration for family pressure and needs; apprehension over lack of alternative means of livelihood; absence of effective social policy and the failure to effectively keep employees records by the directorate in charge, among others. This study asserts that, falsification of age by civil servants in Nigeria, is a well calculated, planned and rational decision, with full knowledge of the pros and cons. Through secondary method of data collection employed in this work, it has become established that age falsification negatively affects retirement and gave rise to redundancy, ethical problems, lack of initiative due to ageing workforce, and what have you. Also, from our findings, age falsification undermines recruitment process in the civil service, by limiting opportunities for young graduates and job seekers. The lack of creative minds as a result of ageing is again identified to be one of the major factors that is undermining efforts at making the civil service result oriented. The Social Restorative Theory, SRT, is used, as an approach to claw back the resulting benefits of the age cheater, upon the discovery of the fraud in order to put society where it would have been without the fraudulent act. In that regard, the following recommendation(s) are outlined: acceptance and judicious use of digital tools. Also, government need to put in place a viable social policy for public servants; investment training need to be conducted for workers getting close to retirement, so that they can better invest from their retirement benefits; government also need to diversify the economy, so as to create wealth and employment opportunities for the teeming population. With adequate employment, the predisposition to falsify age as a result of family pressure from dependant will be reduced. Finally, the pension and gratuity of retirees needs to be promptly paid, in order to, manage and/or lessen the apprehension often associated with the collection of retirement benefits.

Keywords: Age-falsification, retirement challenges, public perception.

Introduction

Age cheating or age falsification is a global phenomenon cum challenge which influence productivity (either positively and/or negatively) both in public and private sector, especially in third world countries. It is not unique to Nigeria or Africa, though the motivations for it may differ from country to country (or profession). The Nigerian labour force for instance is filled with senile and over aged employees due to falsified age. In Nigeria, age falsification phenomenon has been experienced in football, civil service recruitment, job retention and the unilateral postponement of retirement, high level corporate management jobs, sports competitions and qualification for foreign scholarships for post-graduate degrees, and enlistment into the security forces (where a lower age is a pre-condition for eligibility, consideration, acceptance, retention and promotion). This consistently affects production- adversely in our institutions, establishments and businesses. The problem of age falsification in Nigeria is alarming. In almost every agency- public or private, over 70% of staffs are using a misrepresented age. People no longer consider the implication of falsifying their age, as long as it benefits them, it is alright. Take for instance, in sport- football to be precise, we see evidences of footballers old enough to be a father of teenagers, playing in under 18 competition. A popular super eagles winger, Julius Agahowa, having served a couple of years in the Nigeria Police Force, navigated his way to the under 17 World Cup, in the early 2000. What about John Obi Mikel, former captain of the super eagles? Whilst he was far above his 20s, played in the under 21 world cup, around 2010 or so. The civil service is a place where age cheaters can easily find their way through, as long as they press the right buttons. Before now, one would think this was peculiar to public sector, but in reality it is far from it. Even in certain organized private sectors viz, the Banking, Oil and Gas, Engineering and Agricultural sector, to name but a few. There are a number of them there.

As a result of this, there is a high level of inefficiency and ineffectiveness. Calling a spade one, the best time for optimum capacity to deliver is at the youthful stage. When a middle age person, say in his or her forties, gets employed into the public service, alongside youths- those in their twenties and early thirties, if given a level playing ground, the difference would be clear. In football (Sport), players who over increase their age, fade out too often. Nature would always have its course.

Again, there is the problem and/or challenges that characterizes retirement, as well as, problems of pension payment in Nigeria.

The Social Restitutive Theory, SRT, is proposed as a purgatory approach to claw back the resulting benefits to the age cheater or falsificator, upon the discovery of the fraud, and put society on the right track- where it would have been without the fraudulent act. SRT lays down the approach to finding solutions to age cheating phenomenon; it attempts to explain why it happens, and how society could recover any estimated and/or recorded losses that may have occurred, due to the fraud of cheating for personal gain cum aggrandizement in any societal set-up, where normative social structures may have been frustrated by the recalcitrant, deliberately, with intentionality and the obfuscation of personal identifiable information. The restitutive

measures for the recovery of salary and other benefits paid to the actor in age falsification is valid, irrespective of the benefits that may have accrued to society from the individual's enterprise, contribution, or personal circumstance. This paper may contribute to a higher level of accountability, transparency and ethics in the professions, where age falsification is rife as well as encourage further research into the phenomenon.

Objective of the Study

The following are the objectives of this work:

- To critically examine the issue of age falsification in Nigeria.
- To identify the factors responsible for age falsification.
- Ascertain whether there is a nexus between age falsification and retirement in Nigeria.
- To examine the nature and challenges of retirement in Nigeria.
- To suggest possible ways to reducing age falsification and reducing the burden on retirement.

Methodology

This work made ample use of secondary method of data collection. Every data obtained is qualitative in nature. Hence, both the historical and content analysis is fully exploited. This study relied majorly on hitherto works by authors, scholars and academics alike, viz relevant Journals, Articles (published and unpublished), books, and other relevant literatures, were consulted and perused.

Conceptual Analysis

Age Falsification

To understand what is meant by age-falsification, it would be useful to understand what is meant by cheating or falsehood. To cheat is to trick, deceive, swindle, or simply violate the rules of a game. We cheat someone of or out of something if we trick or deceive them so as to gain undue advantage over them. To cheat is to act dishonestly or to take advantage of the other's trust. falsehood is saying or claiming what you are not. In this sense, there is a close link between falsehood, cheating and corruption. Both falsehood and corruption involve the deliberate use of dishonest means for self-interest such as lying, falsifying, distorting, and defrauding. Some forms of falsehood include adultery, tax evasion, non-respect of the rules of a game, intentionally overbilling customers, no respect for promises (Allen 2002: 28-57), secretly receiving receiving undeserved advantages or allowances, remuneration for a job not done, and falsification of documents.

Otherwise known as age-fraud or agecheating, age falsification is the use of false documentation to show that one is either younger or older than his/her real age with the intention of gaining advantage over competitors. Age-cheats may appear younger or older on paper than their real ages(for the most part they appear younger). In most African countries and especially in Nigeria today, age-falsification has become a culture. The practice of age-cheating has become so common that some people find nothing ethically wrong with it, and, even if others find it morally wrong, they consider it a necessary evil-a means of survival in a situation of total deprivation and poverty.

There are several ways of age-falsification and false documentation in Nigeria. Some of these are associated with the citizens, neighborhoods, and/or towns that champion it. For

example, in Lagos-Ajegunle, Ikotun/Abaranje, Berger, Computer village, mainland and a host of others are places, where some dropouts and unemployed graduates make a living out of false documentation. There, if you want any document/certificate, a B.A. M.A. or a PhD, you may have it.

Another very popular nomenclature for age forgery is "official age". It has become the new normal in country that, if you want to spend more time and/or stay in your job, reducing your age is non negotiable.

Authenticity is almost always questioned without verification. Most public servants and celebrities alike, who have obtained an official document for their new age have often been seen as people who lack integrity whenever they go elsewhere and especially in foreign embassies. And, there is the suspicion that their papers might be fake.

The culture of age-falsification in Nigeria dates back to 1960s after the country gained independence. Since then the phenomenon has grown in breadth and depth. In the 1960s and 1970s, most people falsified their ages, just to appear older, to qualify for the newly created jobs in the public service viz armed forces, administration, and teaching. But during the last two decades or so, with the evergrowing rate of unemployment, underemployment, and poverty, the phenomenon has not only changed, but has become more drastic and pervasive. Today, most people reduce their ages to appear younger with some appearing 10 or 20 years younger on paper than their biological ages.

Age Falsification in Nigeria

In examining age-falsification in Africa, our focus here, will be on two main aspects, where the disease is so copious - the public/civil service, and in the domain of sport.

Age Falsification in the Public Sector

In the public sector in Nigeria, the culture of age-falsification is predominant. Most graduate, without the means of survival, resort to age-cheating. A critical enquiry into the rationale behind it, has been carried out in the study.

A personal enquiry was out on similar topic in Delta State, from a number of youths in Warri and Effurun town respectively; to have their opinion about the phenomenon of age-falsification in Nigeria. Three of these responses are powerfully edifying. Here is what the first had to say (which somehow summarizes the general view expressed by most young people):

"I don't find anything morally wrong with age-cheating; it is a game encouraged by the aristocrats in Nigeria. Infact, it is very rampant in the present administration of, President Muhammadu Buhari. Look at Bola Tinubu, Atiku Abubakar, and their likes, most of them are above 70. When some of us were in primary and secondary schools in the late 1980s and early 1990s, they (politicians) used to tell us we were the leaders of tomorrow, but more than 30 years after, the very people who used to tell us so, are still there, not thinking or willing to leave the scene someday. Today, they are still telling the same old stories to our kids. Our politicians have redefined the concept of youth. They claim that being young is not a matter of chronological or biological age, but a 'state of mind.'" "What does this mean?" It means that even if you are 80 and still feel physically and mentally strong, you are a youth. Today they are using their illegitimate positions to place their children and grand children in strategic places control the state apparatus. Is this the future they promised? There is no future for us and may be none for our children and grandchildren, if things do not change. So, my brother, if you have an opportunity to secure a job

for yourself and the age limit thing is an obstacle, I don't see anything morally wrong with 'cutting' even up to 20 years especially for a 45 year old unemployed graduate and parent like me".

From his perspective, age-cheating is a way of economic deprivation and disenfranchisement, caused by several decades of political squandermania, and economic stagnation in most of the past government in Nigeria.

Another graduate, who is today a civil servant said, age-falsification is a means of survival, considering the level of unemployment and economic hardship in Nigeria. She narrated her story thus:

"When I succeeded in the entrance exam into the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), I was 38 and this was 14 years after I graduated from the university. I have never had anything I could really call a job. During those years, I passed the written part of the SUBEB and failed the oral part twice. I also passed the entrance exam put up by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) as a requirement for the recruitment of junior staffs. Here, my name was on the waiting list. While the other candidates with whom I was on the waiting list were called up, I was not. I was asked to bring the sum of 1 million naira cash. I could not afford that amount. So, imagine if I just gave up because I had crossed the 32 years age limit.

Age-falsification, it should be noted, may not necessarily be a solution to the problem of unemployment. Sometimes you may have to falsify in combination with other corrupt practices before you succeed. It is in this light that the lady argues:

"Reducing your age is not a guarantee. I went to the university where I graduated, University of Calabar, Akwa-Ibom, and saw a few people and my age was "adjusted" on my transcripts and attestation. I was 28 when I passed the entrance exams into SUBEB in 2008. This time I was lucky to have a brother-in-law who is closed to someone in a high office. In this country, if you don't have money to buy a place for yourself or someone in a high office to make a phone call, you are doomed.

Sometimes you need to have both the cash and the 'connection' to secure a place for yourself. Having the money at times is not enough because this is also fertile ground for corruption.

The third was a discussion with a 34 year old primary school teacher, who is a not satisfied with his salary and has looked for a way of solving the problem in the nearest future. He said he has changed his name and reduced his age and has written and passed the GCE Ordinary Level and is now preparing for the Advanced Level. With the new identity, he intends to go to the university, get a degree and look for a better job and drop the one he already has. I asked how he was to manage studies and his job. He said he intends to look for someone to teach in his place for a little pay and shall make a deal with his head teacher and inspectors to cover him up.

The example of this primary school teacher is a paradigmatic case of duplicity of identity rampant in public service even in most African countries, especially in Nigeria. Although he intends to drop his current job whenever he succeeds to have a better one, it is not unusual with most people who have succeeded in multiplying their identities and are on the state's payroll.

He may keep both jobs, as most people with double identity do, so long as there is someone in the office covering him up, and/or provided his age identity is not exposed. Every year the government of Nigeria takes measures to purge dubious persons from the state's payroll, but such measures are usually unproductive because of corruption among those who are supposed to do

the purging. For example, in 2014 the Nigerian government uncovered 1050 cases of age cheats in the service (article.wn.com/view/.. /Govt_Uncovers_1050_Age_Cheats_in_Civil_Servic).

In this regard, it is evident that age-cheating is used as a means of survival in a system that no longer cares about its youth and is determined to maintain the status quo for the interest of the ruling elite. Also, there is no doubt from the concerns of some young Nigerians that there is an intergenerational tension between the youths and the ruling elites who, by refusing to retire or create a fair and transparent environment for youths' employment, block the promotion and recruitment of younger workers. This does not only encourage age-falsification but also create a fertile ground for political turmoil which is recurrent in post-independence Nigeria. The above view summarizes the general feelings of the youths in most African countries. In 2015 the Buhari administration launched the Npower program to recruit over 30,000 unemployed Nigerian youths into the public service. The programme is not clear as to the age limit of beneficiaries something different from the 25-30 years age limit usually applied in recruitment into the public service. Some political observers have argued, and correctly, that the Nigerian government was forced to take such measures as a way of deterring the youths from taking to the streets, to avoid uprisings similar to the Arab spring which began in Tunisia in 2010, with unemployment as one of the principal causes. However, in spite of this, the unemployment situation in Nigeria has not changed because of several decades of increasing unemployment.

The abuse of power, the reluctance to retire by the ruling elite, and corruption also encourage age-falsification. In most African countries, Nigeria not exempted, the ruling elite govern the state as though it were their private property, where they decide what, what quantity, and on what basis to give out, or share part of that estate with some of their acolytes. Appointments are more or less a sort of compensation to some individuals or groups for their loyalty to the president.

Take for instance the Civil service in Nigeria, there is virtually no civil servant that does not have two (or perhaps more) age documents. Most of them do it because of a number of factors. For example, it could be that, 1 they could not secure a job on time. Just like the case of the lady earlier. Since they could not get job on time they thought it wise to reduce their age, in order to make up for the wasted years. 2. The economy of the country is noze-diving and the Federal government is doing little or nothing to salvage it. The price of consumer goods is on the increase daily. Even the value of the naira compared to dollar is far cry and an apology. 3. Retirement in Nigeria unlike the Western worlds (UK, America, France, and etc) is what most civil servants do not wish for. The government has been so wicked and heartless that they do not keep to their promises on retirement for the civil servants. In most cases, after about 30-35 years of meritorious service to the nation, these officers leave the scheme debtors, homeless and even penniless. At times, they die of depression due to high blood pressure. These and many more would be considered as we progress.

Age Falsification in Sports

The field where the disease of age-falsification seems incurable in Africa is in the domain of football. In fact, age falsification is for African football what doping is for European of American sports. Some infamous examples of sports fraud in the recent past include: Lance Armstrong, considered the biggest cheat in the domain of professional sport. Armstrong was found guilty of organized doping for most of his career. After being diagnosed with cancer in 1997 and 1998, Armstrong came back to win one of the most difficult events in the world, the

Tour de France, seven times. Other examples include the Canadian Ben Johnson in the 1988 Olympic Games; Floyd in the 2006 Tour de France; American sprinter, Jones in the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000; Spanish Alberto Contador in the 2007 Tour de France; American baseball star, Mark McGwire in 2010; and Irish Michelle Smith in the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games.

In African sports the disease is not doping; it is age-falsification. The phenomenon of age-falsification is so common in African football that most players in junior leagues always have two or three ages, one real, and the other(s), or all false. Football age and real age are some distinctions to even uncritical observers of football in Africa. One of the infamous examples of agecheating in African football is the case of the Cameroonian footballer, Tobie Mimboe, who held several documents during the course of his career which showed he became younger as the years passed (Mungazi, 2010). Since then, there have been several cases of accusations and of age-fraud. For example, the former Nigerian defender, Taribo West; Ghanaian footballer, Ben Clotey; and recent case that caused FIFA to open an investigation is that Congolese player, Chancel Mbemba Mangulu. According to the registration of his first two Congolese clubs, Mbemba was born in 1988. But for a Cup of Nations qualification match in June 2011, his birth date was recorded as November 30, 1991. Meanwhile, the date of birth registered by his Belgian club Anderlecht is August 8, 1994. And, as if that is not enough complication, according to Mbemba, he was born in 1990 (<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/02/01/sport/football/ageafrican-football-mbemba/>).

Another controversy about age-fraud concerns former Chelsea Cameroonian striker, Samuel Eto'o. In a leaked conversation in 2014, his manager, Jose Mourinho, said he may be more than 34 years, and Eto'o's ex girl friend says the player may be actually 39 (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article2568284/Samuel-Etoo-annoyed-Jose-Mourinhos-jibe-age.html>). Whether this is true or not, this controversy brought, once more, to the fore, the issue of age-falsification in African football.

Moreover, most successful African youth teams have been accused of age-falsification over the years. But so far, only Niger has been "officially disqualified" (Guest, 2009) from a youth championship in 2009. The Gambia, for example, which has never qualified for the senior World Cup, has been African under 17 champions (2005 and 2009). Critics that one of the reasons why African teams are so successful in junior FIFA championships but perform poorly in senior championships is because most African teams use over-age players who are physically and mentally more mature and experienced (Guest, 2009) in the game than teams which players with their correct ages, so that by the time they reach the senior level, where they are expected to mature, they are already worn out. African teams have won 5 of 13 FIFA junior competitions, but have never gone beyond the quarter-finals at the senior level. Logically, it is expected that a fantastic junior team should make a fantastic senior team, unfortunately this is not the case with majority of African teams. A good scenario is the current Spanish senior football team in which most of its players played together at the junior levels and has won the European Cup twice, 2010 and 2012, and also won the 2010 World Cup. Why is this phenomenon common in African football?

According to Cora Burnett, in football, the situation is more complex. Burnett considers poverty as the principal reason why young people falsify their ages in football. She argues: You have to understand the social world of professional sport and the dreams of young boys to make it in sport. As [only] about 0,005% actually succeed in making a living out of sport the

pressure is there, especially for youngsters living in chronic poverty, to find a pathway that may lead to a career in sport. For these young boys the pressure is on to find a position in a team, where the competition is fierce. Pressure from the coach and parents ... may also contribute to the overage syndrome. The context that about 20% of children in rural areas and impoverished communities do not have birth certificates or valid [identity] documents leaves the gap for unethical conduct [concerning age] (Burnett 2008).

This observation is revealing. It encapsulates the plight and pressure most youngsters in African countries face. Economic adversity, poverty and the lack of alternative means of survival, caused by several decades of economic deprivation, is one of the main reasons why they resort to age-falsification. Moreover, most African countries lack organized football/sports championships where young talented athletes can be unraveled. For this reason, it takes too long for most athletes to be noticed by foreign clubs. In order not to be rejected by these clubs, when that opportunity comes, because of their age, the players are forced to reduce their ages (<http://www.bbc.com/sport/0/football/26174252>).

Reasons for Age-falsification

There exist a plethora of reasons that can be adduced to why people falsify their age in Nigeria. However, for the purpose of this work, we would look at just a few of them.

One of the foremost reasons for age-falsification in Africa is the high level of unemployment/underemployment (in some countries it is about 60%). In the country, the government is the main employer. The very weak private sector, coupled with job insecurity and low wages, compels most Nigerians to dread the private sector. In the public sector, job security is guaranteed, and although wages are low, one is sure to have a salary at the end of the month. Moreover, there is inertia and laxity in the public sector (Ebai and Forje, 2009) such that you may be able to do other jobs to complement the low wages which is not possible in the private sector. Those in the private sector usually work extra hours for little or no compensation.

Another important reason for age-falsification is the lack of an efficient civil registration system. Age-falsification is common in countries where the civil registration system is antiquated or totally nonexistent. In most rural areas and even in some cities in Africa, children are born at home, and are hardly ever registered on the civil registry.

In Nigeria, some children have their birth certificates when they are preparing for the First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC) exams, where this important document is a necessary registration requirement. In most cases, people only guess their ages. At times parents, most of whom are illiterates, cannot remember the exact year, month and day their child was born. In some instances, they may only be able to recall the season or event leading to the birth and not the exact month, day or year. Underscoring the point of approximating age in Africa, and talking about his own age, the Ugandan President, Museveni, explains:

I use the word "about" because my parents were illiterate and so did not know the date. In such circumstances dates were associated with events. Parents would tell their children: You were born when such and such an event took place. We who know how to read and write can now look back and use all sorts of sources to find out what was happening at the time. That is how I came to the conclusion that my numerical birth date must be 1944 or 1945, but more likely 1944 (Museveni, 2005).

Due to the lack of this vital personal information, fraudsters find it easy to falsify from the simplest personal document to a PhD. You can change your name, date and place of birth as you

see fit or as the situation requires. Some people have different ages and use them depending on the circumstance.

Moreover, the African cultural practice of classifying people according to developmental stages is an important contributing factor which facilitates age-falsification. In most African cultures, those who become responsible at an early age are graded in a particular age group, sometimes higher than their real age. It is from this perspective that Cleveland contends:

"African age systems include formal age classes (for age sets of individuals of similar numerical age, age grades, or development stages based on social and biological development" (Cleveland, 1987). These determinants of age are usually inexact because people's ages are determined based on "their abilities, capacities, and social roles rather than their exact birth date" (Cleveland, 1987). For instance, 'an 18 year old who is married with children would be treated as of a different age than an 18 year old finishing school and playing soccer" (Guest, 2009). It is therefore difficult, in such a culture, to tell the exact age of a person because some people mature, physically and intellectually, faster than others. With such a cultural outlook on age, coupled with an archaic civil registration system or lack of it, the possibility of using the wrong age or of deliberately altering ages on official documents becomes very easy.

Retirement Challenges in Nigeria

Retirement is a time when a person stops working for the government after a long period of activeness and meritorious service. This is the time one retires from public to private life. Usually, when such time comes the civil servants relocates to his or her hometown with spouse. In Nigeria, retirement age is 65 years.

Retirement in the real sense is supposed to be a period every normal workers both in the public and private sector, should look forward to. But the Nigeria situation is a different ball game. While in other western countries of the world, it is a period of rest, but in Nigeria it is a period of rejection, frustration and depression. There are a lot of challenges associated with retirement in Nigeria. These challenges include the following;

- Non-Payment of Pensions and Gratuity
- Bad governance: when a government is bad it affects its citizens. A bad government may not even make provision for retirement and pension benefits.
- Corruption and Nepotism; A corrupt public officer rather than use money meant for pensioners on them, would syphon and squander it on self aggrandizement.
- Failure in Keeping to promises made concerning pension.
- Lack of proper planning: Failure to plan invariably means planning to fail. Planning here is from two angles- the government and the retiree. If the government do not put up the right modalities in place regarding pension, and place people of integrity to oversee it, the whole exercise would be a journey in futility. On the part of the pensioner or retiree, most people fail to plan for their future while still in active service. The best time to plan for retirement is when you're still active.
- Another problem is Paying for healthcare: As people age they fall ill. Most pensioners cannot afford their medical bills during this period. And, it can even lead protracted illness with the attendant effect of death.
- Inability to save enough to cater for old age.
- Reduction in the streams of income. Most pensioners and retiree are unable to maintain their lifestyle immediately after retirement. This is so because, they no longer earn as they use to.

- Having too much debt: Another problem or challenge that accompanies retirement is debt. Most persons who were hitherto debt-free during the period of active service run into huge debt after retirement. They borrow to take care of themselves, as the government support (if there is any) is nothing to right home about.

Are there moral grounds for Age falsification?

Falsification in all its forms is ethically wrong. It is a moral evil condemned by all cultures although the degree of and response to it may change from one culture to another. The argument that age-falsification is morally wrong may sound absurd to some readers. It may be argued that, the wrongness of age-falsification resides in nothing more than the fact that falsification (or cheating) violates the rules of a game and it negates common ethical ground. Hence, cheating is wrong simply because it is cheating. To reason this way is to take the moral wrongness of cheating for granted. The issue here, therefore, is, even if age-cheating, or cheating as a whole, is fundamentally wrong, what makes it morally wrong?

Age-cheating is unfair to honest citizens. An age-cheater receives through dubious means what sincere people strive for. Generally, when you cheat, you deprive those who are qualified of their legitimate rights. Allen (2004): "Cheaters push us to work harder or squander less for their benefit" (Allen 2004:28-57). For example, age falsifiers, when they become tired and weak, continue to 'work' and earn their full salaries, even if they just 'appear' at work and do little or nothing. Allen (2004) argues that:

A major justification why cheating others is wrong is that, it is an injurious lack of reciprocity. By deliberately departing from standards that others stick to, cheaters exonerate themselves from standards of fairness, thereby puncturing the legitimate interests of others, as well as those in wealth, opportunity and self-respect (Allen 2004:28-57). Cheating affects efficiency in the service delivery. The pervasiveness of age-falsification could result in an aging public service, inertia and an unproductive civil service. The phenomenon of age-cheating, like corruption as a whole may be one of the misdemeanors that may blur Nigeria's vision of becoming an emerging economy by 2035.

According to Kantian ethics, an act is morally correct, when carried out of duty. That is to say, by not downplaying the law. "Duty is the expediency of action to be carried out based on respect for the law" (Kant, p.1000). Falsification is contravenes the law. It does not suffice to cheat because everybody or most people do so. In his categorical imperative Kant asserts that, "you should act in accordance to the maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law" (Kant, 1001). Would everyone follow your action of age-falsification? Age-falsification or cheating is not an act done out of duty, in respect of the law and cannot be a universal law.

Also, one needs to look at the intention for which people cheat in the first place. Kant says that "There is no possible of thinking of anything at all in the world, or even out of it, which can be regarded as good without qualification, except a good will" (Kant, First Sect ., p. 995).

However, even if our intention is to secure a job in a system characterized by high level of unemployment, injustice, nepotism and clientelism, two wrongs cannot make a right. "Whilst such a will may not indeed be the sole and complete good, it must nevertheless be the highest good and the condition of all the rest, even of the desire for happiness " (Kant, 997). From a Kantian perspective, therefore, falsification is morally wrong because it is an action not borne out out of duty with good intention respecting the law, as such cannot be a universal law. Only actions performed from duty have "genuine moral worth" (Kant, p. 999). In that regard,

age-falsification is neither a rational nor moral right. Drawing from Kant's deontological ethics; it sees others, competitors, as means and not as ends in themselves.

Another effect of inefficiency is the destruction to the society. There is a great danger for the population to have someone who passes for a nurse, medical doctor or teacher. Such poseurs and impostors are many in the Nigeria public service and by extension many African countries today. Innocent citizens may be physically and/or intellectually harmed because of the incompetence of health workers and teachers. Teachers in particular are builders of the mind, the nation and the future.

Theoretical Framework

Social Restorative Theory (SRT)

The SRT could be traced to Howard Zehr's book *Changing Lenses-A New Focus for Crime and Justice*, first published in 1990. Zehr's work is acknowledged as a watershed, as it is the foremost on the theory of restorative justice, that is well articulated and coherent.

The Social Restorative Theory, SRT, is proposed as an approach to claw back the resulting benefits to the age cheater or age falsifiers, upon the discovery of the fraud of age cheating in order to put society where it would have been without the fraudulent act. This theory does not focus on favouring the society nor to punish the age cheater, rather it seeks to return the latter to his or her previous state.

"Restorative Justice is a theory of justice that premises on restoring the havoc caused by recalcitrant behavior. It is best achieved viz-a-viz cooperative procedures that permit all willing actors to have a physical discussion, that aside, other approaches are accessible should this approach fails. This theory, can lead to tremendous changes on people, relationships and/or communities."

There are a lot of reasons why people cheat in the society, maybe poverty, fear of retirement, delay in getting well paid job, and etcetera. These notwithstanding, is not enough to cheating on another, and that is what the Social Restorative Theory is all about.

Moreso, the society has a major role to play in correcting this anomaly. In doing so, series of intermediation, counseling, and what have you, must take place, between the perpetrators and the agency of the state. The goal here, is to correct without harm, injury, or havoc on the age-cheater, there by putting the state on the right course.

Conclusion

Age-falsification no doubt is one major problem bedeviling the country, Nigeria. This corruption is not only peculiar to her but it is a virus spread all over the continent. It is more noticeable in the public sector - public and civil service. Even in sports, it has stamped its footprint. Fear of retirement, is one reason why people falsify their age. Unemployment and underemployment, delay in get a government job and a host others a factors responsible for it. Retirement which is supposed to be something everyone is looking up to (as it is a period of rest, retreat from public life to a humble family-private one) is now a reason for age-falsification Nigeria. All the blame shouldn't be on the government, as the citizens (workers) have their roles to play.

By and Large, it has been established that there is a close link between age-falsification and retirement in Nigeria because people falsify their age to prevent or better still delay retirement.

Age-falsification, corruption and retirement challenges are partly caused by dearth of good governance which leads to economic failure. The consequence of this is high rate of unemployment, poverty and the total collapse of moral values. Most African countries operate with obsolete civil registration systems that do not ensure proper, if any, documentation of persons at birth and at death, which makes Age-cheat, falsification of documents, multiple identification, and impersonation very easy.

Recommendations

After a critical enquiry into the subject matter, the following measures are recommended:

- An automated system of record keeping to forestall any attempt to alter existing records in the civil service should be maintained.
- Government needs to put in place a viable social policy for public servants; investment training needs to be conducted for workers nearing retirement so that they could better invest their retirement benefits;
- To create wealth and employment opportunity for the teeming population. With adequate employment, the predisposition to falsify age as a result of family pressure from dependant will be reduced.
- The pension and gratuity of retirees needs to be promptly paid to reduce the apprehension often associated with the collection of retirement benefits.

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