

The Menace of Immorality Among Nigerian Youths

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ABSTRACT

One of the fundamental problems with the Nigerian society is lack of moral consciousness. Notably, there is an increase in willful dethronement and immoral enthronement in our society among youths and it has become a serious challenge when one considers the peril associated with this phenomenon. Therefore, this paper made an acute study with specific attention to immorality among youths in Nigeria excavating the causes and aftermath. Based on the scope and objectives aforementioned, this study engaged the Epicureanism hypothesis as a theoretical framework on which this study anchors. This work recommends that family, church and the state as agents of moral formation have irrevocable responsibility in curbing moral decadence among her youths, failure of which will contribute negatively to her.

.Keywords: Epicureanism, Immorality, Nigeria, Society, Youths

Introduction

Immorality among youths in the Nigerian society cannot be overemphasized. Kidnappings, sexual immorality-prostitution and indecency, misappropriation of fund, injustice, bribery, embezzlement, cultism, drug smuggling, human trafficking, armed robbery, rape, violence, corruption, bestiality, homosexuality and lesbianism; and all forms of gross misconduct are the end result of moral degeneration. This

ugly trend is an indication that morality is eroded among the Nigerian youths. This ravaging occurrence calls for a cogent need to explore what immorality entails and to address this phenomenon as it goes beyond the borders. Without mincing words, immorality is a bane that confronts the Nigerian society.

On this premise, makes this research significant because it addresses the problem of immorality occurrences and its multiplicity which is prevalent in the Nigerian society. Since, the debacle in question has reverberating effects on youths, it becomes significant also to enlighten the youths on the causes and the aftermaths of immorality in order to dissuade them from those behavioral patterns. Based on the scope of this work, it is imperative that the researcher carefully choose a suitable theoretical framework for the goal of this work. The study adopts Epicureanism hypothesis to approach the immorality among Nigerian youths.

Term Clarification

A word or words can have variation of connotation to people and also pertaining to dictionary meaning, it can have more than one meaning but in regards to this for proper understanding of the nomenclature below the researcher will explicate what it denotes. In reference to J.B. Lawal assertion he avers that definition gives clarity to statement(s)⁵¹⁹.

Immorality: Adewale avers that immorality is not in conformity with accepted principles of right behavior; it is a violation of the moral code of the community⁵²⁰. Oladele posits that immorality is not conforming to a set of conventional rules for determining one's social actions, and which have been

⁵¹⁹ J.B Lawal, "Poverty and HIV/AIDS in ESTI Journal vol.7" (Ilorin: Amazing Grace Press, 2012), 10.

⁵²⁰ Adewale O.A "Building a Biblical African Christian View of Sex: African Journal of Biblical Studies, Vol. 4", 2005) 15.

internalized⁵²¹. In the same vein, Ololobu argues that “immorality also means not in conformity with the accepted standards of proper sexual behavior”⁵²². In regards to Uba, he opined that “immorality is refusal to adhere to the norms or moral code of the group that is not conforming in behavior to the manners or customs of the social group”⁵²³. The researcher comments that immorality as said above, using a critical lens to view various assertions made by these scholars the concept “immorality” has to do with wrong behavior, character or disposition and attitude which every member of a group has refused to concede with.

Theoretical Framework (Epicureanism)

Is a system of philosophy based upon the teachings of the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus, founded around 307 B C E. Epicurus was an atomic materialist, following in the steps of Democritus. His materialism led him to a general attack on superstition and divine intervention. Following Aristippus about whom very little is known Epicurus believed that what he called “pleasure” (ἡδονή) was the greatest good, but that the way to attain such pleasure was to live modestly, to gain knowledge of the workings of the world, and to limit one's desires. This would lead one to attain a state of tranquility (*ataraxia*) and freedom from fear as well as an absence of bodily pain (*aponia*).⁵²⁴ The combination of these two states constitutes happiness in its highest form. Although Epicureanism is a form of hedonism insofar as it declares pleasure to be its sole intrinsic goal, the concept that the absence of pain and fear constitutes the greatest pleasure,

⁵²¹ Oladele, J.O. “*Fundamentals of Psychological Foundations in Education*”. (Lagos: Johns Lad Publishers, 1998). 45.

⁵²² Ololobou Y.P.S, Jacob, S. Ndazhaga J. *Dimension of Social Studies*. (Jos: WAIS Printing Press 2002), 56.

⁵²³ Uba, A.A. “*Fundamentals of Psychology of Childhood and Adolescence*” (Ibadan: Claverianum Press, 1980), 23.

⁵²⁴ Jones, Howard. “*The Epicurean Tradition*,” (New York: Routledge Press, 1989), 56.

and its advocacy of a simple life, make it very different from “hedonism” as colloquially understood. Epicureanism was originally a challenge to Platonism, though later it became the main opponent of Stoicism⁵²⁵.

Epicurus and his followers shunned politics. After the death of Epicurus, his school was headed by Hermarchus; later many Epicurean societies flourished in the Late Hellenistic era and during the Roman era (such as those in Antiochia, Alexandria, Rhodes, and Ercolano). From this understanding, Epicureans concluded that the greatest pleasure a person could reach was the complete removal of all pain, both physical and mental. The ultimate goal then of Epicurean ethics was to reach a state of “*aponia*” and “*ataraxia*”. In order to do this an Epicurean had to control their desires, because desire itself was seen as painful. Not only will controlling one's desires bring about “*aponia*”, as one will rarely suffer from not being physically satisfied, but controlling one's desires will also help to bring about “*ataraxia*” because one will not be anxious about becoming discomforted since one would have so few desires anyway⁵²⁶.

Causes of Immorality in Nigerian Society

The engagement of youths in immorality has become a serious dilemma in the society and this crisis can be imply to the nonchalant attitude of different entities such as parents, religious leaders, and the society in general which has make this problem to be escalated. The following factors will be unveiled as some of the predominant factors that cause immorality in the society.

⁵²⁵Dane R. Gordon and David B. Suits, “*Epicurus. His Continuing Influence and Contemporary Relevance*, (Rochester, N.Y.: RIT Cary Graphic Arts Press, 2003), 65.

⁵²⁶Holmes, Brooke & Shearin, W. H. “*Dynamic Reading: Studies in the Reception of Epicureanism*”, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 41.

The present decadence in the Nigerian society can be attributed to the careless attitudes of parents who neglect the aspect of giving proper training to their young ones. Most parents these days are too busy to give quality time and attention to their children; strange as it may sound, many parents are not available for their children. They pay teachers and nannies to play their roles while they spend long hours out of the home in the name of fending for the family. At the end, they become strangers to their children. Hassan avers that parents should “talk to their children, answer their questions, go on site seeing with them, tell them stories and give them a sense of security and confidence”⁵²⁷. However, in shaping the lives of the youths, you dare not leave the bulk of the work in the hands of the school system, the church or social influence or foster parents. The present problems that the society is going through today are as a result of the negligence of child training by past generations of parents.

Therefore, for the purposes of this study, it is believed that past generation of parents had really tried their best in child training but the present generation of parents’ need to wake up to their responsibility of child training so as to help revive the society. The role of the mother is necessary for parents (especially the mother) to spend quality time with the youths so as to be able to know their areas of interest. When parents have the knowledge of the areas of interest of the youths, only then would they be able to guide these areas of interest towards helping youths to develop.

According to Uche, peer group is the child’s own friends and equals. They have their own form of behavior and values; and are made up of friends and school mates⁵²⁸. In view of this,

⁵²⁷ Hassan Eguik “Prostitution in D. Levinson and K. Christenson (Eds). *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*”, (Chicago: Heming Bentons press, 1972), 353.

⁵²⁸ V. W. Uche, *Sociology of Education for N.C.E. Students* (London: George Allen, 1980), 32.

Torbet also notes that youth agree with and abide by the norms of their peers in contradiction to those of the parents, schools and the society. Johnson points out that peer group has a great influence on the child's socialization and this can either be negative or positive. Peer group teaches social interaction necessary to reduce social isolation. Through peer influence, the child learns some attitudes, values, and information unobtainable from adult's friends and peers which usually introduce an individual into immoral behavior. Many youths today are involved in immorality as a result of peers influence.⁵²⁹ Shure added that many youths who are involved in misconduct are influenced by other youth of the same age.⁵³⁰

Also, Dagin posits that the economic condition of the country is not healthy enough to guarantee the basic survival of the average Nigerian.⁵³¹ It is very conspicuous that some men that have many wives and many children to cater for in schools are earning low salary intake per month and it may not be able to meet the financial challenges of his grown up children. As a result of this, youth looks up to people who are capable of accommodating such financial problems which leads to their involvement in immorality to acquire a better life for their survival. And this has been part of the cause that has infiltrated the society for promoting immorality among youths.

One of the strongest urges in human life growing out of instinctive tendencies is the quest for approval. More than we realize, we are influenced by it. In order to get approval and be

⁵²⁹ J. O. Oladele, *Fundamentals of Psychological Foundations in Education*. (Lagos: Johns Lad press, 1998), 13.

⁵³⁰ B.M.Shure, "*Problem Solving Techniques in Child Learning*"(London: Jeresey Bass Press, 1978), 45.

⁵³¹ S. Dagin, "*Bring Back the Lost Daughters*" (Jos: Fab Publishing Books, 2005), 76.

seen as civilized or been informed by friends and society, many youths have lured themselves into some uncalled for practices. Observation shows that despite the religiosity that dominates everywhere which should have suppress this obnoxious attitude among the youth it is becoming more escalating which a Yoruba adage avers “kaka ki ewe agbon de se lon le koko si”. In the same vein, Dave avers that “the essence of religion is to teach moral values and moral codes”⁵³².

The underlying factor for morality which is vivid in religion is to impact these values or codes to the child in order to form and lead acceptable behavior in the society. But on the contrary, the Alarming rate of immorality among the youths today makes one to speculate, if they were ever taught moral values or codes at all or their religious involvement in one religion or the other has really be effective which the aim is at developing their character.

According to Bank he said that “poverty makes it difficult for parents not to be able to provide for their children the essentials of life.”⁵³³The issue of poverty looking at it critical can be said to a factor responsible for immoral attitude among the youth. Sandhu avers that adolescents are led into misconduct because of poverty.⁵³⁴That is why young boys who are from rich family and who are influential take advantage of these young girls from poor homes entice them with both money and materials gifts and have carnal knowledge of them. Poverty can also create a sense of inferiority complex in a child and this attitude may lead to misconduct in order to mingle

⁵³² B. Dave, “*Sex and Dating: A Guide to Relationships for Teens and Young Adults*” (Nashi 2000), 34.

⁵³³ O. Banks, *Social Learning Theory* (New Jersey: Prentice Press, 1971). 56.

⁵³⁴ H.S Sandhu, *Juvenile Delinquency, causes, Control, and Prevention* (New York: McCaw Hill Press, 1987).

with peers. Bozimo states that poverty makes youths indulge in immoral behavior⁵³⁵.

The Aftermath of Immorality in the Nigerian Society

For there to be a cause there must be an effect. The attendant effects associated with immorality in the society are enormous and this has been characterized with unpleasant outcome which the researcher will be exploring below.

Immorality amidst Nigerian youths results to pregnancy. Many Nigerian youths believe in “unwanted pregnancies”, it is said that they are pregnancy that is mistimed, unplanned or unwanted at the time of conception.⁵³⁶ And this unwanted pregnancy is the main reason for induced abortion. Some newspapers and magazines have come out with stories like abandon kids for instance, “The News Watch” a Nigerian weekly news magazine of March 15, 1985 had on its front page “abandon kids the unwanted”. In this magazine, it was reported that a greater percentage of this problem was perpetrated by young girls who could not ascertain the paternity of such children and pregnancies because of the contacts with different boys or men. This problem is more serious because it is very dominant in our society. And child abandonment is an off shoot of unwanted pregnancies prevalent among young girls. Which having fall victim of this they abandon their baby and people who abandon their babies are; dependent girls who live with either their parents or guardians, a girl who has a lover and jumps from one bed to the other and a girl who cannot tell people she is pregnant.

According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, Abortion is the termination of a pregnancy after, accompanied by, resulting

⁵³⁵ G. Bozimo, “*Current Trends in Social Studies Education*” (Pankshin: Academic Trust Fund Press. 2004), 43.

⁵³⁶ Eisenberg Leon “*The Best Intentions: Unintended Pregnancy and the Well Being of Children and Families*” (Washington D.C.: National Academy Press, 1995), 34.

in, or closely followed by the death of the embryo or fetus such as: spontaneous expulsion of a human fetus during the first 12 weeks of gestation.⁵³⁷ In view of the above clarity it depicts that abortion is a forceful expulsion or ejection of the embryo or fetus. Immorality among some youth in the Nigerian society usually result to pregnancy and after they become pregnant, the fear of their parents/guardians knowing about it and the shame that is associated with it, make them opt for abortion secretly with the help of old and experienced girls. Some youths use local methods to bring on a spontaneous abortion.

The use of dangerous modus operandi can damage their body system. Abortion has led some girls to their ultimately deaths in the hands of quack doctors and also some of them have had their reproductive systems damaged. According to Black he estimated that half a million girls die each year as a result of abortion. He further stated that most early pregnancies among youths are unplanned and unwanted which lead to abandonment of children who throng the streets of some cities⁵³⁸. This practices increases and it is a major social problem in society today. Immorality contributes immensely to the spread of contagious and deadly diseases. Diseases that are passed from one person to another during a sexual act are called sexually transmitted diseases (STDS). They are deadly and infectious. The sexually transmitted diseases have a major impact on people's health, especially on women and new born babies. In many developing countries, STDS are among the five most common health problems of which people seek treatment. The situation is most serious in urban areas because some persons between the ages of fifteen (15) and above may have STDS at one time or the other.

The number of cases of sexually transmitted disease is on the increase worldwide because there is an increase in sexual

⁵³⁷ Merriam Webster, *"The Merriam Webster Dictionary, New E.D"*(Massachusetts: Merriam Webster Inc. Publisher, 2018), 367.

⁵³⁸ M. Black, *"Better Health for Women and Children through Family Planning"* (New York: Hammarisk Plaza Press, 1987), 67.

activity among young people⁵³⁹. Ifemesia opined that immorality is not only common but increasing because the mass media entertainment and advertisements are filled with presentation of sex as glamorous, exciting and risk free⁵⁴⁰. More and more young people are sexually active and they are beginning sexual activity younger. Some of these diseases are gonorrhoea, syphilis, HIV/AIDS e.t.c. The most serious and deadly of diseases contacted through promiscuous sexual acts is the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). This devastating and deadliest disease spreads fast and presently there is no cure for it. Researchers are trying to develop vaccine to combat it but prospects remain uncertain. Some youths who indulge in immorality their mind are preoccupied with social life and lose concentration in their studies which they develop high taste for money and materialism. There is senseless competition for fashion which makes them lose focus of their purpose for life. In a study carried out by Sandhu, it is on record that 35-40 percent of some the youths, who get involved in deviant acts such as drug addiction, gambling, drinking and sexual immorality performed below average and fell at the bottom of the schools⁵⁴¹. The reason is that they are pre-occupied with seeking pleasure and caring less about academic work. In view of this, youths should abstain from immorality or they will have to live with the consequences mentioned above.

Nigerian Youths as Moral Formation Agent

From the above understanding of Epicureanism, one can aver that the greatest pleasure a person could reach was the complete removal of all pain, both physical and mental. In the same vein, the way to attain such pleasure was to live

⁵³⁹ I.I Reiss, *"The Social Context of Premarital Sexual Permissiveness"* (New York: Holt Rinchart and Winston, 1967), 83.

⁵⁴⁰ B. Ifemesia, *"Moral Revolution in Africa, Stage 1 and 2"* (Enugu: Holmosweb Press, 1983), 42.

⁵⁴¹ H.S Sandhu, *"Juvenile Delinquency, causes, Control, and Prevention"* (New York: McCaw Hill Press, 1977), 75.

modestly, to gain knowledge of the workings of the world, and to limit one's desires. The indulgence of Nigerian youth in immorality such as kidnappings, sexual misconduct, misappropriation of fund, injustice, bribery, embezzlement, cultism, drug smuggling, human trafficking, robbery leads to negative consequences as an end product. Notably, for there to be a cause there must be an effect. The attendant effects associated with immorality in the society are enormous and this has been characterized with unpleasant outcome such as unwanted results. As stated by Epicureanism Hypothesis, the youths should translate or gear their immoral and destructive energies into meaningful activities that are morally accepted by the society. Once the immoral behavior is thrown over-board, the society will enthrone desirable values that embrace good system.

Conclusion

The discussed concentration in this study revealed that we are in an age of peak immorality in the Nigeria context. Thus, it delved into the concept of immorality engaging Epicureanism theory and recommends that the family, church and the state as agents of moral formation have irrevocable responsibility in curbing moral decadence among her youths, failure of which will contribute negatively to her society. Epicureanism has rightly depicts, that the pleasure that will lead an individual to pain should be jettison. For instance, when a youth indulge in fornication and it leads to pregnancy. In this regards the pleasure as lead to pain so it should be avoided by youths because a man of destiny must work with his eyes. And to discern the good or bad embedded in a pleasure is to foresee the action that it will generate so this is the major standard to measure pleasure.

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