

CURBING PROMISCUOUS HABITS AMONG NIGERIANS THROUGH RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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Abstract

The prevalence of inappropriate sexual habit among Nigerian citizens today poses a moral challenge. The idea seems to be that since everybody does it, there is probably nothing wrong with it. It is surprising that many young men and women give reason to justify this evil act. The act of prostitution, adultery and premarital sex has existed since time immemorial and the general public considers it a deviant act which is the act of being different from the popular belief, usually in a bad way. The aim of this study is to discourage inappropriate sexual habit through religious instructions and encourage people to control their sexual urge to avoid sexually transmitted disease like HIV/AIDS which has claimed the lives of those who are too young to die.

Introduction

The Nigerian society is today awash with sexual immorality. The first testimonial to this assertion is the trendy styles of dressing which expose a large part of the female body. In the name of fashion and modernity, most females, both young and old in Nigeria today, dress in such a sexually alluring manner as to expose some vital female anatomy. Some of them are almost naked when they wear these clothes. The females are so bold in flaunting their sexuality with these types of clothes that, they even wear them to the Church during wedding ceremonies. The second sign of sexual promiscuity in the Nigerian society today is the abundance of home movies which do not hide their preference for sexually related films. There is little or no doubt that this development is as a result of sex prevalent foreign films which are shown on people's television screens without discrimination. Added to this, are the sex films shown on the many satellite television stations operating in the country, real sex programmes beamed uncontrolled and unedited from satellite televisions into many Nigerian homes. Foreign and local pornographic materials are sold at virtually every newspaper stand in this country. These magazines show pictures, the anatomy of the sexual organs of both sexes and print in vivid colors various styles and positions of sexual intercourse. Furthermore, culture of boy-friend and girl-friend who has become firmly rooted in the Nigerian society, enables young girls and boys to begin to practice sexual intercourse right from the primary school. It is this culture of boy-friend and girl-friend that has led to an astronomical increase in trial marriages in the society. The fall-out effect of such relationships is the increase in the rate of divorce, unwanted pregnancies and single parents.

There are two muscles in the human body that have destroyed humanity beyond repair. There are two muscles in the body of a man that have put him to shame, reduced him to a piece of bread, and made an elephant to become a lizard and an eagle to look for worms on the floor like chicken. The two muscles are tongue and penis.

There is one muscle and one hole in the body of the woman that have put so many women in disarray. They have caused so many high flying women to swim in the ocean of trouble and despair. They have caused so many promising stars to be buried. They are the tongue and the

vagina. Access to one's body is a sacred thing. Once one makes it loose, one loses his or her destiny as well.

The aim of this study is to discourage inappropriate sexual habit through religious instructions and encourage people to control their sexual urge to avoid sexually transmitted diseases, and untimely death. Prostitution is a social menace and an epitome of moral decadence in the society which will not augur well with the people involved because, inappropriate sexual habit is increasing the transfer of sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS, which send people to early graves. Historical method was used in this work. The historical method enabled the writer to trace the genesis of inappropriate sexual habit and its effects on the people involved in the nefarious act. Data was collected through primary source which involve questionnaire, interviews and observation and secondary source which involves books and journals.

Definition of Terms

Hornby (2005) defined promiscuous habit as having many sexual partners or the uncontrollable sexual urge which is not appropriate or suitable. It is also having sex with some body one is not married to.

Religious Studies

According to Nworie (2000), religious studies are the academic field of multi-disciplinary, secular study of religious beliefs, behaviours and institutions. It describes compares, interprets and explains religions, emphasizing systematic, historical and cross-cultural perspectives. It also refers to the teaching of religions in general and its varied aspects, its beliefs, doctrines, rituals, customs, rites and personal roles. It contributes to the development and growth of humanity and the safe keeping of the society.. (Lawal, 2002) posits that, religious studies teach morality and shapes character.

It is a process of guiding characters and development of an individual in the society in order for him/her to be able to do what is right or just. Also, it attempts to teach standard of right or wrong, as well as the application to individual lives.

Types of Promiscuous Habits

Rape

According to Ave (2000), rape is a type of sexual assault usually involving sexual intercourse which is initiated by one or more persons against another person without that person's consent. The act may be carried out by physical force, coercion, abuse of authority or with a person who is incapable of valid consent such as one who is unconscious, incapacitated, below the legal age of consent. The term is most often defined in criminal law.

The incidence of rapes recorded by the police during the year 2008 varied between 10,000 people in every 100,000 people in Nigeria. According to Akpa (2004), sexual violence and rape in particular, is considered the most underreported violent crime. The rate of reporting, prosecution and convictions for rape varied considerably in different jurisdictions. The Nigeria Bureau of Justice Statistics (1999) estimated that 91% of Nigerians raped victims are female and 9% are male, with 99% of the offenders being male. Rape by strangers is usually less common than rape by persons the victims know and several studies argue that male-male and female-female prison rapes are quite common and may be the least reported forms of rape.

Rape and sexual slavery are recognized as crimes against humanity. Rape is also recognized as an element of the crime of genocide when committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a targeted ethnic group. Victims of rape can be severely traumatized and may suffer from post traumatic stress disorders, in addition to psychological harm resulting from the act. Rape may cause physical injury, or have additional effects on the victim such as acquiring of a sexually transmitted disease or becoming pregnant. Furthermore, a rape victim may face violence or threat from the rapist and in some cultures, from the victim's own family and relatives.

Victims of rape can be severely traumatized by the assault and may have difficulty in functioning as well as they had been used to prior to the assault with disruption of concentration, sleeping patterns and eating habits. It is common for the victim to experience acute stress disorder, unpredictable emotions and they may find it hard to deal with their memories of the event. In the month immediately following the assault, these problems may be severe and upsetting and may prevent the victim from revealing their ordeal to friends or family, seeking police or medical assistance.

Incest

Anney (1996), posited that incest is sexual intercourse between family members and close relatives. The term may apply to sexual intercourse between individuals in a close "blood relationship", members of the same household, step relatives, those related by adoption or marriage, or members of the same lineage.

Incest taboo is and has been one of the most widespread of all cultural taboos, both in present and in many societies. Most modern societies have laws regarding incest or social restrictions on closely consanguineous marriage.

Children whose biological parents have a close genetic relationship have greater risk of congenital disorders, death and disability at least, in part due to genetic diseases caused by the inbreeding. Unintended sexual relations between genetically related persons may also arise when either or both biological parents are unknown or uncertain, as in the case of children born as a result of casual or extramarital sexual relations, anonymous sperm donation, surrogacy or adoption. On the other hand, most prohibitions on incest extend the categories of prohibited relationship to affinity relationship such as in-law relations, step relations, relations through adoption, among others.

Fornication

According to Amolo (2003), fornication typically refers to consensual sexual intercourse between two people not married to each other. For many people, the term carries a moral and religious condemnation, but the significance of sexual acts to which the term is applied varies between religions, societies and cultures. The definition is often disputed. In modern usage, the term is often replaced with the more judgment-neutral terms "premarital sex" or "sex before marriage".

Fornication is unlawful sexual intercourse (i.e., premarital). It should be understood that lawful sexual relations are honorable only between a man and woman who are lawfully married. Any

other scenario is sinful. "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers, God will judge" (Heb. 13:4). The marriage bed is not a bed of defilement but is honorable for the procreation of mankind (Gen. 1:28) and for the gratification of sexual affection (1 Cor. 7:1-5). Note that Paul informed the Corinthians of a way to avoid sexual immorality. People who are unmarried and yet practice sexual relations are in a state of rebellion against God's word (1 Cor. 6:16-18). While Nigerians live in a sex-crazed world, the word of God still says, "Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord" (1 Cor. 6:13b).

The dangers of fornication are real. Too often a young man or woman who has a promising career throws it all away because he/she is in love with somebody. Likewise, parents who have no sanctity of life, force their daughters to have an innocent and pure babies brutally aborted to avoid shame which may hinder the girls from having children in future.

Adultery, according to Akpa (2004), is sexual intercourse between a married person and some one other than his or her spouse. Ave (2000) asserted that adultery has an Abrahamic origin, though the concept predates Judaism and is found in many societies. The consequences vary between religions, cultures and legal jurisdiction.

Adultery according to Omotoye (2006), is an anathema and a sin against God and humanity. It is an exceedingly heinous sin for it is the rebellion of a vile lust, not only against the command, but against the covenant of God. Thus, it is not tolerated, permitted or encouraged in many societies. It is regarded as anti-social, illegitimate, obnoxious, wicked and anachronistic if it is in vogue anywhere. Most religious traditions in Nigeria, that is African Traditional Religion, Islam and Christianity, frown at it. For example, in Christianity, Jesus says "Thou shall not commit adultery" (Matthew 5:27). This is a confirmation of the Mosaic Law (Exodus 20:14).

Omotoye (2006) also stated that adultery is a crime of darkness which those involved in, commonly take every care to conceal yet sometimes, it is strangely brought to light. Christians condemn whoever is caught in such an unholy practice. Both the Old and New Testaments speak against adultery. The Mosaic Law specifically says in Exodus 20:14 "You shall not commit adultery". It carries a capital punishment. Also (Deuteronomy 22:22) says: "If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbour, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death"

Donovan (2003) stated that, in Nigeria today, sex have become a social problem. One of the major challenges of modern life in Africa is how to stop the cancer of sexual degeneration before it destroys the very society itself because sexual sin and degradation are rapidly becoming the most deadly realities in Nigeria which wreck families.

Adultery and the Nigerian Experiences

Anney (1996) stated that one of the major societal problems in Nigeria today is the sin of adultery. It has more or less become a social norm amongst the elite, the middle class and the peasants as well as students, teachers and lecturers in tertiary institutions and in government establishments etc. However, all the three major religions in Nigeria, i.e. Christianity, Islam and African Religion, preach against it.

Many married women who are highly placed and respected in the society have what we call “concubines”. Many lecturers are in the habit of fornicating with students in order to assist them in passing their examinations. Of recent, a national newspaper published stories involving two lecturers in two different Universities who were caught in sex scandals. The issue of sex has therefore become an embarrassing social menace in the society. The issue of sex cannot be totally ruled out amongst the Christians. This is because it has become a worldwide phenomenon. Murphy (2005) summed the situation by noting that “we are experiencing a worldwide plague of illicit sexual activities, even among Christians”.

The fall-out of adultery in developing countries is the high rate of HIV/AIDS patients most especially in Africa and Nigeria in particular. At the Heads of State and Government Conference organized by the United Nations between 25th and 27th June 2001, it was observed that by the end of 2000, 36.1 million people worldwide were living with HIV/AIDS with 90 percent of them in developing countries and 75 percent in sub-Saharan Africa.

It was recently reported by Olatunji (2010) that, world-wide, HIV/ AIDS is the fourth biggest killer disease. It has been observed that most HIV/AIDS patients contracted the pandemic disease through indiscriminate sex. According to Amolo (2003), “it is increasing at an alarming dimension ravaging the black continent of Africa and the so-called third world”.

However, the Nigerian governments at the federal, state and local levels are doing a lot of publicity to discourage people from indiscriminate sex and by advising on measures which can reduce the spread of the disease through the use of artificial materials like condom, etc. The writer believes that one major antidote to the menace of HIV/AIDS is to accept the injunction of Jesus Christ “Do not commit adultery”.

Prostitution

According to Okorodudu (1996), the phenomenon of prostitution is a strong social development in the society. Prostitution is the act of having several sexual partners for the purpose of commercialization. This is a situation whereby women offer their body in sexual act with their male customers for payment of money. In fact, prostitution is not only an institution in Nigeria but also a universal phenomenon. Prostitution is common in U.S.A. Britain, and other Western countries.

However within the past decade, prostitution in Nigeria has been on the increase and many young ladies are daily engaging in the trade. It should be stressed that the growing rate of prostitution among teenage girls and young adults now in the society calls for a great concern. The reasons for this new trend may not be far fetched. Some of the causes are:

Poverty, unemployment, drug abuse and alcoholism, social ills and moral decadence in society, new materialism, inequity and social injustice, dropout from educational institutions, looseness and carelessness of parent and biological factors

The Hazards of Inappropriate Sexual Habit

David (1988) stated that, inappropriate sexual habit has brought in its trail new epidemics of sexually transmitted diseases. It has been estimated, for example, that as many as 5 million Nigerians now suffer from recurrent genital herpes for which no cure has been found. A striking

relationship has been drawn between cervical cancer and promiscuous intercourse. Kistner (2002), stated that the younger the woman is at the first intercourse, the more frequently she engages in it and the greater the number of partners, the higher the risk of contracting cervical cancer. One may infer that these reports reflect the reality in Nigeria where premarital sex and promiscuity seem to be the norm for many young people. Other sexually transmitted diseases that may be contacted through premarital sex include gonorrhoea and syphilis. A young lady can transmit the infection to the unborn baby when she gets pregnant. Nancy (2010) stated that, these diseases spread from person to person almost exclusively through sexual intercourse. Often, it takes just one infected person to spread it to many others. This scenario is equally true for the much-dreaded HIV/AIDS scourge. David (1988) posited that, it is estimated that about 29 million Africans now live with the virus and one-third of those infected are aged between 15-24 years, especially young women. To date, scientific researches demonstrate that the virus for HIV/AIDS pandemic is in most cases spread through sexual intercourse.

Ehioghae (2006) posited that, “today HIV is becoming a teen disease. Every year, HIV finds younger victims. Soon, most HIV may be caught during the teen years”. This has probably informed the message of ‘abstinence’ from the National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA) that is frequently sent to mobile phone users. The message is simply “to abstain from sex until the right time”. The “right time”, of course is marriage. Also, the message: “Zip Up: Sex is worth waiting for”, could be seen on many billboards, especially near tertiary institutions, across the nation.

Regardless of these precautions, so many teenage boys and girls engage in premarital sex with the argument that ‘I can do whatever I want with my body, so long as it does not hurt anybody’. Will somebody not be hurt if premarital sex is freely indulged? With the specter of HIV/AIDS shattering the dreams and aspirations of young people and decimating millions, premarital sex cannot be an innocuous act. Besides guilt and shame and venereal disease often associated with premarital sex, there is also the incidence of unwanted pregnancies leading to ugly stories of babies thrown into gutters or latrines by teenagers. These are ugly scenarios. One may add that psychological disasters such as impotence in the male and frigidity in the female, deep-rooted unfaithfulness on the part of one or both partners have also been traced to premarital sex.

Kubo (2008) posited that while recent times have seen growing acceptance of extramarital pregnancy, it has not and cannot erase the sense of impropriety and shame and inconvenience that it brings to most parents, including the parents of those involved. One solution commonly resorted to is abortion. While the dangers of the operation have diminished, it still carries physical risks and psychological effects, especially in the latter part of the person’s life.

The Effects of Premarital Sex on Marriage and Morality

According to Mbiti (2000), marriage is the focus of existence (for African people). It is the point where all the members of a given community meet: the departed, the living and those yet to be born. All the dimensions of time meet here and the whole drama of history is repeated, renewed and revitalized. Premarital sex undermines the marriage institution; it does not only threaten its security, it provides the dung that desecrates the hallowed place accorded it by a loving God.

Ehioghae (2006) posited that couples that engage in sexual intercourse before marriage are more likely to break up than those who do not. Even if they stick together, the feeling of guilt remains; the couple's premarital sex experience often rises to haunt them. A reality, which many choose to ignore, is that, premarital sex increases the likelihood of extramarital sex. There appears to be strong correlation between cases of extramarital sex and premarital sex. The saying that "habits die hard" is a truism in its application to premarital sex, and where marital fidelity is lacking, the marriage is bound to hit the rocks.

Kubo (2008) asserted that about one third of all girls who engage in premarital sex end up being pregnant. Despite the use of contraceptives (which some ignore because of the feeling that "it can't happen to me"), so many young girls still get pregnant. In many cases of such pregnancy, abortion is attempted at the hands of quacks and charlatans. In the process, young, promising lives are sacrificed on the altar of expediency. Those who survive it sometimes, end up with a damaged womb, leading to sterility. This could put enormous pressure on marriage especially in the African settings. Mbiti (2000) underscored this point when he wrote: "marriage and procreation in African communities are a unity; without procreation, marriage is incomplete. It is therefore easy to concur with Davis that promiscuous (premarital and extramarital) sexual intercourse is contrary to divine law thus, it can endanger the health and childbearing capacity of couples in marriage. When widespread as a societal phenomenon, it undermines morality and contributes to the decline of civilization.

Talking about morality and moral value, a very important aspect that must be considered is the effect of inappropriate sexual habit on morality. It is difficult to dissociate premarital or extramarital sex from the phenomenon of prostitution and other forms of sex commercialization. In fact, premarital sex provides the basis for prostitution. Quite recently, Chidi (2006) gave a chilling report of the gruesome murder of two Nigerian girls in Italy. What was the circumstance surrounding their death? They were there to ply their trade-prostitution. Of course, prostitution as a commercial venture, does not begin in a moment. It is often incubated in the oven of premarital sex. This is not to say that the incidence of sex commercialization cannot be attributed to other factors like poverty, social inequality, peer pressure and a myriad of other causes. When the walls of chastity have been broken down by premarital intercourse, it lures to prostitution under certain conditions becomes almost irresistible. One would therefore like to reiterate the point earlier made by Davis that when premarital sex and other sexual aberrations become widespread as a societal phenomenon, it has a vitiating effect on morality.

Besides linking the great increase in divorce and broken home to sexual sins, Donovan (2005) has also declared that "many societies today are morally and socially unstable because people have determined to live without regards to God's law. Premarital or extramarital intercourse is a disgrace and must be eschewed by everybody.

The Role of Religion in Curbing Promiscuous Habit

Negligence of moral and religious instructions in schools and in the society led to low moral standard in the Nigerian society which many believe is responsible for the wide spread of prostitution with its attendant consequences. Religion is a force that can be used to curb these social vices because religion plays the role of inward conviction which will exert the strongest influences upon all citizens of the country.

Religion inculcates moral discipline into individuals which will help in eradicating these social vices in the society. It provides inspirations required by Nigerians to unanimously fight against these vices. All the Nigerians must adhere to religious tenets to enable it produce total transformation of their lives which will bring sanity to the society.

Conclusion

Premarital or extramarital intercourse is never an innocuous act even when it is done only for “recreation” or “fun”, someone will surely get hurt. The momentary pleasure is corrosive because of the guilt it leaves behind which continues to poison the heart and life. Sex outside marriage seems to give birth to more problems than babies. This seems to be the case in the number of young people who contract venereal diseases through premarital sex. The scourge of HIV/AIDS is decimating millions among teenagers who feel liberated to experiment with sexual intercourse.

The marriage institution is perhaps most affected by painful memories of premarital sex although the grace of God and His forgiving love can avail for the penitent transgressor, the guilt feelings are not easily wished away. There is a strong connection between marital infidelity and premarital sex, which usually plays out in marriage breakdowns.

Most African societies traditionally place a high regard on marriage. Virginitly was valorized. According to Ubrurhe (2000), in African traditional religion, one form of punishment for a fornicator or an adulterous woman is to compose song to lampoon her during festivals. In Agbor traditional religion, the lady’s name will be used to compose songs during moon light and people throw stones on the roof of her father’s house, but the influence of western culture has had a demoralizing effect on the way things were usually done. Today, many young people, who give little or no thought to its pernicious effect on marriage and morality, indulge in premarital sex. It is time a clarion call is given for a return to biblical injunctions on sex and sexuality. The scriptures are unequivocal in condemning sexual sin in whatever form - premarital or extramarital (1 Cor. 6:9, 11; Heb. 13:14). Failure to heed the witness of scripture could be ruinous to body and soul as perceptively pointed out in this proverb: “In the long run, we don’t break God’s laws: they break us”.

Conclusively, many people have been slain and multitudes have lost their lives as a result of sex. Sex finished Samson and David suffered greatly as a result of adultery. His child died, his son Absalom raped his wives at the full glare of his subjects (the Israelites) and he was driven from his throne by his son Absalom.

Sex outside marriage is a devastating time bomb. It brings the curse of God upon the person. Many destinies have been destroyed because of sex. The people that have many sex partners and can not control their sexual urge are dancers at the gate of death because at any moment they can contact AIDS and die. Premarital or extramarital sex is a herd slave driver that keeps one longer than one want to stay and costs one more than one want to spend.

Inappropriate sexual habit is a social menace and an epitome of moral decadence in the country. It is one of the evidence of morally decaying society. Inappropriate sexual habit is increasing the transfer of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). It is therefore a big source of health hazard,

which should be eschewed and totally avoided for one to live a fulfilled life and contribute his or her quota to the development of the nation.

Recommendations

- There should be more emphasis on religious education at all levels from primary to tertiary institutions
- Inappropriate sexual habit should be discouraged
- Proper education of women and men on how to control their sexual urge should be encouraged and their roles in nation building emphasized.
- The government and the church should unanimously fight against sexual promiscuity for people to begin to walk in the path of moral rectitude in this country
- Government should provide job opportunities so that the ladies that resort to prostitution as a result of poverty and unemployment will stop it.
- Parents should train their children well by inculcating the right moral in them so that when they grow up they will not depart from it.
- The names of those caught fornicating or committing adultery should be used to compose songs in order to lampoon them and serve as a deterrent to others

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