



An Appraisal Of Propagation Of Christian Lifestyle: Correlation Of The Moral Index Among Youths In ONELGA, Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the propagation of Christian lifestyle using correlation of the moral index among youths in Onelga, Rivers State. To achieve this, the study raised three (3) research questions, How are the youths, the targets of the messages sufficiently exposed to these messages? How favourably disposed are these youths to the underlying notions of these messages? How does the source credibility have an effect on the overall attitude of youths in ONELGA towards these messages? The study was anchored on one theory, Kohlberg's. Therefore, based on the strength of the study, the study concluded that majority of the respondents indicated that the messages as cumulatively communicated/sermonized and propagated did not sufficiently address the youths and that the youths also exposed themselves to these messages. Equally, the study concluded that majority of the respondents maintained that the messages were targeted at the young people between the age of 16 and 40 years. The study concluded that the youths in ONELGA are not favourably disposed to the underlying notions of these messages. Based on the study, the following recommendations were made, the study recommended that churches, religious organizations should incorporate the youth as part of their major targets in their propagation of Christian's lifestyle. The study also recommended that it is good and relevant for the youth to be favorably disposed to the underlining notions of Christian teachings. The study equally recommended that it is also important for religious leaders, evangelists and pastors to live up to expectations in accordance with their teaching because people are watching them.

Keywords: Propagation, Christian Lifestyle, Correlation, Moral index, Youths

INTRODUCTION

From time immemorial, the quest for moral principle is an intrinsic phenomenon that makes social life governable and blissful. As such, every person, irrespective of age, colour, sex, or social standing is subject to the dictates of moral principles. This is because the concept of morality serves a holistic function as it serves as the bedrock upon which the edifice of a truly righteous and egalitarian society rests. Implicitly, moral principles form a fundamental aspect of every culture as they outline comprehensively, codes of behaviour or conduct of the individual on the one hand and the society on the other hand.

However, technological development orchestrated by globalization and civilization have attenuated and grossly affected our moral ethos. This has brought about a breakdown of the social structure on which society rests. Patrick (2014) notes that civilization had and is still having a lot of negative impact on the life of the Africans most especially Nigerians. Every sphere of life is not spared by this cankerworm which has eaten deep into every facet of the society. This prevailing situation has been incisively portrayed by Iwe (2008, p.43) who surmises that "over-concern with one's self-importance and pre-occupation with self-aggrandizement naturally lead to total indiscipline or moral decadence from the self to the society".

The problem of immorality among the youth population is of universal consequence. The youth population refers to adolescents, teenagers, young adults, and the working-class population. Adolescents are still in their formative years and could be positively influenced toward moral uprightness (Omali, 2016). Consequently, several authors have attempted to uncover factors associated with immorality and the possible interventions

among the youths. Some of the proposed interventions include parental instructions, sermonizing, the inclusion of moral instructions in the school curriculum, advertisement on media networks, punishment for wrong-doing, rewards for uprightness and outstanding virtues among others. However, these studies did not consider the use of modelling as an educational tool for curbing immorality among the youths.

It is assumed that youths in Rivers state have experienced and are still experiencing their share of moral laxity and vices especially as depicted in political instability, corruption in high and low places, drug trafficking, smuggling, advanced fee fraud popularly known as 419, increasing crime wave, theft, robbery, religious and ethnic violence, unemployment, injustice, etc. Abogunrin (2019) states categorically that “there was never a time when humanity was so degraded and spiritually blind as is evident in the madness we see around us daily in Nigeria”. Therefore, meaningful development has been halted and the nation is in the throes of disintegration.

Furthermore, the alarming rate of moral decadence in Nigeria could be regarded as the cumulative effects of the failure of many social institutions in Nigeria. These institutions include the family, schools, Churches, etc in contemporary Nigeria. In Churches, where moral values are expected to be inculcated, many strange practices and teachings are subjects of orchestrated arguments. Eyoboka, (2019) in particular argues that most Pentecostal Churches have not come out to strongly condemn immorality. Instead, they provide comfort zones for moral decadence in all ramifications. He believes that the Church has greatly contributed to the high rate of indecent dressing in Nigeria by allowing its members, mostly ladies to dress half-naked. It seems that indecent dressing is regarded as the normal way of worshipping God in such ministries. Furthermore, some scholars have demonstrated that some unbiblical practices have been associated with some Pentecostal ministries. These include fornication, adultery, divorce and remarriage (Farias, 2012).

Youths appreciate leadership by example and if leaders do not set the right standards the youths have to grow wild. They become immoral and irreligious instead of becoming moral- conscious individuals. The high degree of secret and occult activities ravaging our educational institutions today is partly a product of the compliance of Nigerian educationists and administrators who were responsible for the disengagement of missionaries from the control and management of primary schools and colleges.

The effect of moral decadence is glaring on our nation. It affects the home, private and public institutions, and government organizations. The public outcry printed in the media on insecurity all over the country today is evidence of moral decadence where most residents can no longer sleep at night no work freely with, their daily business for fear of robbery or kidnap. There is no doubt that there is a general decline in discipline and morality in Onelga. Every day, there are reported cases of indiscipline, corruption, and deviation in our socio-economic and political lifestyle. It has reached a frightening proportion. Added to these are the mindless killings and maiming that could be mistaken for jihad.

There are many outcries to beef up morality in the Nigerian society today especially in Niger Delta which Ogba-Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area happens to be part of it. The level of indiscipline and crime waves among the youths has seriously escalated in geometric progression. Immorality in our society today is beyond sexual perversion. From general observations, the severity of immoral actions ranges from simple cheating at school to drug abuse, murder and the exhibition of other anti-social behaviour. The depth of the problem has reached a point where common decency can no longer be described as common.

However, the problem is that with these show of outward display of piety, one would have expected to see a very high degree of social morality among the youths, this is because Christians generally promote truth, justice, honesty but unfortunately the phenomenon of corruption greed and gruff, robbery, drug, sexual immorality have often eaten deep into the fabric of the society especially among the youths and has affected the government and retarded the pace which the society should grow. The problem in this modern society today is the high immorality in the society, as the churches, parents and tutors etc have failed in their roles of moral education.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. How are the youths, the targets of the messages sufficiently exposed to these messages?
2. How favourably disposed are these youths to the underlying notions of these messages?
3. How does the source credibility have an effect on the overall attitude of youths in ONELGA towards these messages?

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

Kohlberg (1958) noted that people often come to similar decisions for very different reasons. Some people do good to avoid punishment; others in hope of reward. Some do it simply to conform to peer pressure; others think in more abstract concepts of what is best for society as a whole. Originally Kohlberg posited six developmental types from 0 to 5 (Kohlberg, 1958). In his later work, he maintained this six-fold schema, but relabeled and renumbered the levels and stages, as follows (Asogwa, 2018).

i. Preconvention Level

Stage 1: The punishment-and-obedience orientation. The physical consequences of [an] action determine its goodness or badness regardless of the human meaning or value of these consequences. Avoidance of punishment and unquestioning deference to power are valued in their own right, not in terms of respect for an underlying moral order supported by punishment and authority.

Stage 2: The instrumental-relativist orientation. Right action consists of that which instrumentally satisfies one's own needs and occasionally the needs of others. Human relations are viewed in terms like those of the marketplace. Elements of fairness, reciprocity and equal sharing are present, but they are always interpreted in a physical pragmatic way. II. Conventional Level

Stage 3: The interpersonal concordance or "good boy nice girl" orientation. Good behavior is that which pleases or helps others and is approved by them. There is much conformity to stereotypical images of what is a majority or natural behavior. Behavior is frequently judged by intention he means well becomes important for the first time. One earns approval by being nice.

Stage 4: The "law and order" orientation. There is an orientation toward authority, fixed rules, and the maintenance of the social order. Right behavior consists of doing one's duty, showing respect for authority, and maintaining the given social order for its own sake.

Stage 5: The social-contract legalistic orientation, generally with utilitarian overtones. Right action tends to be defined in terms of general individual rights, and standards that have been critically examined and agreed upon by the whole society. There is a clear awareness of the relativism of personal values and opinions and a corresponding emphasis on procedural rules for reaching consensus. Aside from what is constitutionally and democratically agreed upon, the right is a matter of personal values and opinion.

Stage 6: The universal-ethical-principle orientation. Right is defined by the decision of conscience in accord with self-chosen ethical principles appealing to logical comprehensiveness, universality, and consistency. These principles are abstract and ethical (the Golden Rule, the categorical imperative); they are not concrete moral rules like the Ten Commandments. At heart, these are universal principles of justice, reciprocity, equality of human rights, and respect for the dignity of human beings as individual persons(pp. 631-632).

According to Kohlberg,(1971).though people may advance from stage to stage at different paces and different ages, and though most people never reach the highest stages (five and six), all people who advance do so in an unvarying order (from one to two, two to three, etc.), never skipping a stage, and rarely reverting to lower, earlier stages That is, Kohlberg claimed to have established that there is a culturally universal invariant sequence of stages of moral judgment.

This theory is relevant to the study because it will help us to understand the physical consequences of how an action determines its goodness or badness regardless of the human meaning or value of these consequences. Avoidance of punishment and unquestioning deference to power are valued in their own right, not in terms of respect for an underlying moral order supported by punishment and authority.

Morality

Morality can also be looked at from the point of view of the altruism, social values, and rules that guide morals (Ma, 2009). It refers to the principle of right or wrong behavior, justice, fairness and basic human rights (Ezeukwu2008, p 16).Therefore uses morality to denote "a generally accepted code of conduct in a society or within a subgroup of society that comes to be regarded as essential to its survival and welfare" These accepted norms or code of conduct in any society often appeal to the moral nature of man and "for the human nature is a moral nature and the moral sphere is exclusively the human sphere (Omoregbe, 1993, p. 102). They appeal to the sense of humanity and relevant for the welfare of the entire members of any society Some of the common moral codes of conduct, for instance, include respect or sacredness of human life, respect for elders, hard work, avoidance of premarital sex, and so on.

Wright (1971) also considers moral rules as “foundational in the in the sense that they are concerned with the maintenance of, trust, mutual help and justice in human relationship. Moral rules form the yardstick against which we evaluate the rules of any particular activity” (p.13). It follows that “moral behaviour consists of all the various things people do in connection with moral rules” (p.1 5)

Moral issues are mediated by socio-cultural factors, since cultural values and norm have a strong bearing on how individuals think and act, Nevertheless, attitudes towards such issues as lying, stealing, murder and the value of justice are generally looked at as shared across cultures (Nucci, 2001). Again moral virtues in the traditional setting, include honesty, integrity, chastity, vivacity, modesty, tolerance, truthfulness, self-discipline, brotherliness, honour, humility, patience, Hardwork, self-control, patriotism (Akinpelu, 1983).

Man fundamentally is a social being. The social nature of the human person spurs him to the life of association and relationships for it is in the web of interrelationships that he (man) realizes himself. In the case of relating with others, man gets socialized and demonstrates his gift of rationality which distinguishes him from every other animal (Okwueze, 2014). The result of his interaction in the web of interrelationships could either be good or bad. The faculty in man that guarantees the evaluation of man’s actions in terms of right or wrong, good or bad is what we refer to as morality. This brings to the fore, the essential dimension of man as a moral being. As a moral being with the gift of rationality, he takes the onus for his actions and inactions by way of praise or blame. In light of the moral perspective, human actions thrive in an already established modality fashioned by the very nature of human existence. This, however, follows the stipulations of natural law.

Utusa (2010) traced the concept of morality to its ontological pedigree thus: Morality is said to come from the Latin “morals” which means habits, customs, way of life, and standards of human behaviour. The word is akin to the Greek “ethos” which means character. This refers to good or bad, right or wrong behaviour, conduct, etc. Eboh (2001) defines morality as the quality of being moral and to be moral is to conform to an accepted good standard of behaviour. There are sets of moral principles that guide the activities of the human person in human society and these standard principles are anchored on the provisions of natural law. As such, the natural law obliges all human beings to do good and avoid evil. It helps to protect and foster values.

According to Omoregbe (2003) “moral principles are guides of the human conduct indicating certain kinds of actions, certain kinds of behaviour which should be avoided and certain other kinds of actions and behaviours which should be adopted”. Without these sets of moral norms and values, the patterned order of the social system of human society would be truncated. In other words, there is a need for human beings to be abreast with those norms that guarantee harmonious societal life. Okwueze (2014) explains morality in terms of a specific form of social consciousness of awareness of your relatedness to others without which social life would be impossible. Because man is a social being that realizes himself in social relationships, he has a moral obligation, therefore, to nurture that which is good that enhances harmonious co-existence and as well avoid that which breaks the web of social relationships.

Ugwu (2010) describes morality as “the astuteness of one’s conduct and behaviour which enhances good conduct and fair relationship.” Morality is neither found in isolation nor the air but it is predicated upon the provisions of natural law. On this note, Monye (2010) remarked that morality does not suddenly appear out of nowhere. It is already embedded in the way of life an individual is born into, its attitudes, values, and practices. Eboh added that “morality is founded on eco-justice and the dignity of the human person.” The above statements point to the level of societal organization, the home, and the social environment for these factors have an inextricable influence on the moral formation of the human person. However, the concept of morality has become a complicated issue in the multi-cultural world of today. This without mincing words could be attributed to westernization and modernization. Some people define morality either subjectively or objectively perhaps based on what they consider ethically right or wrong.

Despite the varied approaches to the concept of morality by different scholars, the bottom line is that morality is an indispensable concept in human society. Little wonder Iwenofu says: It nurtures in a person those virtues and values that make him a good person, thus developing his thinking skills of moral judgment about what is right and wrong. It influences an individual on how he thinks feels and acts regarding issues of right and wrong. Where the human person upholds morality in a high esteem between the vertical and the horizontal web of interrelationship, the individual not only soars on a high pedigree, but the society also enjoys genuine growth and development.

Development

There are different conceptions of development. First, it could be viewed as the development of the mind in which case the humanity of man is no longer subjugated to nature, but has transcended the confines of nature to progressively understand the whole or moved in order to be able to develop from it an environment which is most suitable for him (Lynn, 2003) in (Saheed & Alofun, 2011). The concept of development also connotes growth changes, which usually demands significant structural transformation within a society, and that includes the reorganization and reorientation of the economic and social systems, radical arrangements in popular attitudes, customs and belief (Ogunkola & Egwaikhede, 2001) in (Saheed & Mofun, 2011).

Development in human society is a many-sided process. At the level of individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being (Okon, 2010) citing (Walter Rodney). Development is a process of self-reliant growth, achieved through the participation of the people acting in their own interests as they see them, and under their own control, its first objective must lie to end poverty, provide productive employment, and satisfy the basic needs of all the people, any surplus being fairly shared. This implies that goods and services such as food and shelter, basic education and health facilities and clean water must be accessible to all (Goldemberg, 1993).

According to Thomas (2001), development as an analogy from the development of living organisms, implies moving towards the fulfillment of a potential. Rodney (2005) perceives development from two levels: these are levels of the individual and social groups. At the individual level, development implies increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and maternal wellbeing. At the level of social groups, development implies an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationship.

Development shows change or growth. Development proceeds gradually and cumulatively by making open the internal or hidden abilities. While this process is in motion the whole may be geared toward a goal or end, which is presumably contained in the unfolding process from the very beginning (Anyanwu, 1981) in (Adedeji, 2012).

Moral Development

Lawton (1982) sees moral development to be the learning of the appropriate rule and values that guide social behaviours the extent to which moral thought reflected in moral behaviour. Moral development is learning to know what is right or wrong, good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable behaviour within a particular society. Moral behaviour can only be learned and the child lives. Moral behaviour can only be learned and the child learns by initiation.

Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990) say that moral development refer to the child's action, attitudes and aspirations and volition, to the child's whole character his virtues and vices and at a later stage in his development to his value judgments. Moral development is dependent on cognitive development.

Durheim (1925) in Usakli (2011) viewed moral development as a -process of instilling respect for society so that each would conform to acceptable social norms and standards. Moral development is also the process through which children develop proper attitudes and behaviours towards other people, based on social and cultural norms, rules and laws (Usakli, 2011). Moral development can also be described as being able to understand the differences between right and wrong, the teaching of good behaviour (Oxford Dictionary, 1994:804). Moral development concerns the development of moral action moral character and moral behaviour (Rashid, Mamat & Ibrahim, 2004). Moral development is the development that involves thoughts, feelings, and actions regarding rules and conventions about what people should do in their interactions with other people (Santrock, 200K).

A fundamental question is how can televangelists help society in the process of moral development, especially of the youth, i.e. in shaping moral character? In other words, what approaches and methods are used- for cultivating virtues? However, in circumstances where one cannot make a moral judgment, religion helps by showing the right way in a very practical and real manner. Khazaei (2009) in "The role of religion in shaping moral character: an Islamic perspective," noted that the televangelists and preachers who are considered paragons of morality are upheld as points of reference and emulation and as he observed, televangelists who preaches about God present them as best examples for mankind.

There are different outcomes of televangelism in shaping the moral development of youths. According to Ma (2009), moral development focuses on related characters such as forgiveness, empathy, altruism, universal law and caring. Some of the major points given by Ma (2009) are humanity. Other outcomes of moral

development are autonomy, respect, responsibility, naturalness loyalty and humanity (Bull, 1969, Lickona, 1991, Ku, 2001 and Lao 1992) in Ma (2009). Some of the good moral development as outlined by Ma (2009) are used as guidelines in this study. They include respect for elders, decent dressing, obeying of rules- and regulations, not keeping bad friends, not fighting in public places, not stealing, among others.

Agents of Moral Development

Different agents of moral development exist. Through them the morality of individuals are shaped and developed. They are; the family, school, through friends and within the environment where he belongs.

1. The Family

The family has an important function to carry out in the youths' moral developments. The first initiation of an individual into the choice of good and bad is done by the parent's taking or else refusing these various actions. The actions that are given attention by the parents are taken as good while the rejected ones are termed as bad. However, the truth remains that the foundation of individual's moral development are carried out in the family. Thus, God made the family so that they will contribute positively towards the development of the world through the upbringing of the child so that he/she will be a good citizen in the family and the society in general. Therefore, the need to teach them the right path to follow (Twenfo, 2010). The parents have the obligation to educate the child in a proper manner. But because of the new generation which is incomplete, this responsibility is not being fulfilled until they become adult.

2. School

One of the fundamental human rights of every child is a basic education, and therefore it is a fundamental task of the state, which the family is a part. School therefore has become a critical agent in the moral development of children and youths. In this regard, it is no longer uncommon to find schools institution using specific approach to character building with inputs from teachers, administrator, parents and at a higher grade levels, even students themselves (Lickon 1992). Here valued education is found across the curriculum implemented throughout school building and connected to the home. Such programmes emphasize the individual as a member of the social institution and advocate particular levels of moral behaviour. Schools provide students with a framework of expected behaviour, violation of these standards can then be addressed. Teachers are in a position to foster necessary social skills to allow students to become autonomous and socially competent individuals. Through the use of cooperative learning, a teacher builds a collaborative atmosphere in the classroom and this collaboration enables each student to demonstrate the social competence that helps him or her reach equitable solutions while fostering personal success (Nodding, 1995).

3. Environment

The social domain theory had drawn the idea that there was a link between the development of concepts of morality and the environment. The environment in which people grow up creates standards for them and teaches them the right and wrong from interactions with other people and how they follow social rules. The general social atmosphere also affects the moral development of the individual. It is for this reason that the moral behaviour of individuals belonging to culture societies is markedly different from that of individuals belonging to uncivilized societies. In the same manner, youths who are constantly exposed to crime-prone environment where acceptable standards of behaviour are less respected tend to inculcate those behaviours which in turn make them miscreants and nuisance (Smetana, 2006).

4. Friends

According to Grusec and Goochhead (1994) the field of moral development studies the role of peers and friends in facilitating moral development. In the development of morals, interpersonal interaction plays important and critical role. Interactions between young people among themselves have been shown to influence their development of moral understanding and behavior. Researchers have therefore addressed the influence of friends and peer interactions on moral development from two primary perspectives: Socialization/internalization (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994; Kochanska & Aksan, 1995).

According to Smetana (2006) young people and children distinguishes moral from conventional behaviour based in part on the responses of parents, teachers and peers. In term of socialization and internalization,

Grusec & Goodhead (1994); Kochanska & Aksan (1995) observed that interactions among peers and friends result in the passing down of standards of behaviours learned through parents.

Moral Values

We cannot begin to analyze what moral values are without first having an understanding of what morality and moral education are. Morality is derived from the Latin word *mores* which means “manners” or “morals”. In the words of Aminigo and Nwaokugha (2016), morality is “an accepted code of human conduct in a society”. Morality entails “having laws that will regulate dealings of men who can choose to abide by these laws because they know it is good sense to do so” (Uyanga & Amingo; 2010). Being moral or being morally conscious means adopting standards or principles to guide ones’ actions and conduct in society. Moral education is a programme of study, which teaches the pupil about behaving by what is good while rejecting the bad. It is a holistic approach to stimulate character building and moral development (Okoh, 2013). Moral education should lead youths to develop from a stage of anomie; often characterized by pre-morality to a stage where an individual is not forced to be moral and is personally convinced of standards that ought to guide his/her conduct in society. Moral values are taught in moral education as certain acceptable, valuable, and cherished qualities that are worthwhile in developing a sound character.

Ekpiwre (2008) defines values as “things considered worthwhile, desirable, right and good and thus craved for and applied daily to enhance existence by the people”. Values determine people’s identity and cultural continuity. Moral values are essential values that determine individuals’ perception of morality and moral consciousness in the society. Moral values include truthfulness, patience, obedience, honesty, integrity, hard work, responsibility, respect, tolerance, loyalty, public spiritedness, freedom, respect for human life, and the dignity of persons. Others include justice, fairness, and equality. Moral values are taught to be imbibed by members of society to enhance character development and promote good moral upbringing and moral health in individuals. As Amingo (2003) argues “moral health is manifested in individuals when a person becomes capable of understanding the principles of moral conduct and is committed to behaving morally in his dealings with others”. Principles of moral conduct can only be effectively understood and practiced when moral values are strongly adhered to by individuals in a given society.

Causes of Moral Decadence among Youths

The Influence of Cultural Backgrounds Generally, the typical African man is very inseparable from his cultural background. Cultural background influences peoples’ cosmology and perception of things around them. The religion called Christianity was imported into Africa through the activities of 20th-century European Missionaries (Thompson, 2017). To a huge extent, the African people were receptive to Christianity on one hand, but could not shake off the influences of their cultural backgrounds on their view and practice of Christianity on the other hand. The practice of Christianity in Nigeria is no different. Most cultures in which Christianity is practiced in Nigeria have certain influences on the people’s perception, and practice of Christianity. This stems from their cultural values, beliefs, and practices. To be particular, the Jalingo people’s cultural beliefs, for example, greatly value wealth, glory, titles, fame, adorations, and achievements (Onwu, 2016).

Among the people, failure is greatly avoided while fame, wealth, achievement, etc. are highly glorified. Youth love for traditional titles and fame is exemplified in the question a court messenger asked the elders of Umuofia in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*: “We see that every pauper wears the anklet of title in Umuofi, however, most Nigerian cultures, like that of the Jalingo people, revere wealth, glory, achievement and honour (Amujuri, 2002 & Eze 2002). The effects of these cultural values and beliefs on Christian morality have been great. This is further given impetus by the high reverence and glory the church itself gives wealthy Christians. The source of wealth no longer means anything to the church in Nigeria. this may be the reason David-West, earlier referred to in this work pointed out recently that they (the church) shy away from telling corrupt leaders the truth when they go to church with a lot of cameramen (Ebhomele & Atebe, 2013).

The church has lost the moral power to fight against the powerful influences of ill-gotten wealth in her midst. These to a huge extent encourage the debasement of Christian morality more. For instance, a poor Christian who attends church services where Christian cheats and cons flaunt their ill-gotten wealth to the praise and glory of the church, may not be blamed if he engages in nefarious activities in pursuit of wealth and honour, which will consequently earn him the glories of the church tool, after all, a lot of known “ritual money

makers” abound in churches in Nigeria who churches sing their praises. It is in this line of thought that Ejezu (2008) pointed out that a lot of Christian cheats and criminals abound in churches in Nigeria who are applauded by the church for their monetary contributions to the church.

It is in line with these that it is argued that cultural backgrounds in Nigeria greatly contribute to the steady decline of Christian morality in Nigeria. Poverty; A phenomenal problem in Nigeria It is highly appalling that after 53 years of independent rule in Nigeria, there is no improved standard of living in Nigeria. In other words, poverty is a glaring phenomenon in Nigeria (Ngele & Uwaegbute 2013). A lot of Nigerians are wallowing in abject poverty. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) recently pointed out that about 67.1 percent of Nigerians live below the poverty line. In other words, according to the National Bureau of Statistics, 112 million Nigerians out of the total population of 198 million live below the poverty level line today (Premiumtimesnigeria.com, 2013). This is further corroborated by the World Bank in its Economic Report on Nigeria in May 2013, which indicted President Goodluck Jonathan’s current administration for failing to tackle the menace of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria (Bangudu, 2013).

The United Nations currently ranks Nigeria at 153 out of 188 countries as long as the human development index is concerned. These all show the practical problems of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria. This situation makes Nigerians desperate. Christians, are very much inclusive. Desperate times call for desperate measures. This may be why a lot of Christians throw Christian morality to the wind in a bid to break the yoke of poverty. The church itself has become a huge source of making easy money. In fact, with psychology, perfect timing, and sweet tongues, one can make cool millions through the establishment of churches or embezzlement of church funds. Fraudulent, cheating, deceit, pretense, and corruption, have become the order of the day in the Nigerian church (Iheanacho, & David-West in Ebhomele & Ateba, 2013).

Any denial that the problems of poverty and quest for materialism are not behind the current multiplication of churches in Nigeria is the fallacy of the highest order. Equally, Christians engage in crimes and criminality, prostitution, ritual murder, etc all have the problems of poverty behind them. The claws of poverty are long. It is therefore no surprise that these problems are found among Christians who are in desperate struggles against poverty. It is in this regard that the phenomenal problem of poverty in Nigeria fans the embers of immoral behaviours among Christians in contemporary society today. The Pentecostal Menace Any denial that Pentecostalism has become a phenomenal brand of Christianity in Nigeria is erroneous. In the same vein, to deny that Pentecostalism has contributed a lot towards a revival of first-century apostolic Christianity in Nigeria is to deny the good work of Pentecostalism in Nigeria.

Pentecostalism is a renewal of movement within Christianity that places great emphasis on personal experience of God through the Holy Spirit (Blumhofer, 1989). Pentecostalism has a rich and colourful history in Nigeria. However, the emergence of the Neo-Charismatics/Neo-Pentecostals in the 1980s as Komolafe (2011) pointed out, added impetus to the present Pentecostal movement in Nigeria. On the other hand, the spread of Pentecostalism in Nigeria has greatly contributed to the debasement of Christian morality in Nigeria without any bias, it must be pointed out here that the spread of Pentecostalism in Nigeria made it possible for one person to win, control and direct a church. In this regard, a lot of things began to go wrong. We must acknowledge the fact that the commercialization of churches today, has a link with the above statement. Equally, the current multiplication of churches in Nigeria and the emergence of self-made pastors, bishops, Archbishops, seers, faith healers, and miracle pastors in Nigeria today are direct influences of Pentecostalism on Christianity in Nigeria.

Some of the churches that spring up every day in Nigeria engage in immoral practices in a bid to make money. Scholars like Obiora (1999), Ude (2000), Ugwueye (2002), Ituma (2000) and Iheanacho (2010) have in various ways pointed out the problems associated with the rise, spread, and unschooled practices of some Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. The problems of tithing, marathon offertory sessions, seed sowing, arranged miracles, the claim of fraudulent academic titles, deceit, and lies were all pointed out by these scholars. And what is more? The rise of prosperity preaching in Nigerian Pentecostalism has, in more ways than one, helped the cause of moral decadence in Nigeria. Onwu (2016) investigated the problems of prosperity preaching among the Pentecostals in Nigeria. Onwu links the rise of prosperity preaching with harsh realities of poverty, unemployment, and the challenge of the convention of the centrality of the cross and Christian poorly lifestyles as part of Christian witness.

Youth

Youth refers to a young person, the condition of being young or that period of being youthful. It is a period of life that spans between childhood and adulthood. The youths are those who are not yet adults and who are no longer children. It covers the period from the attainment of puberty to the attainment of full growth (i.e. adult age). Youth as a period is characterized with adventure, curiosity, liveliness and even the tendency to be independent. It also involves some elements of anxiety as to what the stage of life will turn out to be (Nsereka & Orlu-Orlu, 2012).

According to Mukendi (2008), youth refers to young people between the ages of 13 and 25, according to her, this covers those at the secondary school level, higher institutions, and graduates who are on their national youth service, those considered as Youths are those young girls and boys that are in age bracket of 18 and 30. Milson (1972) as cited by Ottong and (2000) see youthfulness as a period of achievement, 'a blossoming time, a period of human spirit indeed, a period of heightened emotionality, beckoning opportunity and expanding horizon with manifestations of things like stresses, tensions, and dependency with strong peer group conformity (Nsereka & Orlu-Orlu, 2012) concluded that a youth is conceived as a transforming adolescent who is a child nor an adult, still struggling to be free from parents, adults, and societal grip.

The attempt to define youth as a concept has been a herculean task. This is because the approach by different scholars from various disciplines is subject to bias and prejudices (Thompson, 2017). Different scholars define the concept of youth to suit specific purposes. Hence, there remains no consensus on the definition of the term youth. To some people, the age bracket could account for who the youths are. Within such a framework, youths are those people who fall within the age limit of 18 or 21 and 30 or 40 while for some other people youth age is between the ages of 18-45. Whatever the case is, the fact remains that age bracket and physical vitality are always in a tussle in determining who the youths are. Some also define youth in the light of biological changes and makeup as well as physiological virility and psychological deposits. According to Maurus (2007) psychologically youth is not a matter of years. Some are old at 20 and others are young at 80. In other words, the responsiveness of any human person to active life irrespective of age merits such person or youth.

However, Muorah representing Nwazojie's view as recorded in Obiefuna (2004) says: Youth is not a period of life accurately determined by age, nor is it a period of life determined by biological and physiological changes in the body. It is a period of life that is determined by sociological factors. The above point out the right dispute for the place of age and biological changes in the body as determinants of who the youth is. Every field has its prejudice in defining the youth. Obiefuna (2004) citing Muorah who adopted Nwazojie's opinion, considers the position of the cultural anthropologists and psychologists while defining youths thus: For cultural anthropologists youth is the time during which the human patrimony is handed on. This means that the youth is a period of principal socialization, a process by which the principal norms and values are inculcated in humans. At this stage of principal socialization, the human person is acquainted with the fundamental standard norms and values of the human society that guarantees harmonious co-existence.

These values within this period are assimilated and internalized. On the part of Psychologists, youth is described in terms of mental maturation and character development. For them, maturation continues until one becomes fully autonomous. This viewpoint could also be deficient in describing the youth because of some factors. The bottom line is that there is no clear-cut in defining the term youth. The point of emphasis is that in describing the youth there are salient factors that must be put in place. Youth should be considered in terms of psychological, cultural, and sociological factors for they cut across each other in describing who the youth are. Youth age is a period of maturation. The cultural background provides a formidable environment for socialization, while the psychological factors boost the character formation and development of the youth all geared towards self-realization.

Youths are the engine room of societies. They are the drivers of any developmental trend and activity in society and major determinants of the extent of growth and development in any given society. Youths are usually very energetic and are always willing to go the extra mile if need be to achieve what they believe in and hold on to. Olujide (2018) quoting the National Youth Development Plan of 2001 defines youth as "young persons of ages 18-35 years who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria". Other groups state different age brackets to embrace a person identified as a youth. The United Nations General Assembly identifies a youth within the age bracket of 18-34 years; the Commonwealth Youth Programme pegs the age bracket at 15-29 years while the Danish Youth Council places youths in the age bracket of 15-34 years. Youths are usually

referred to as young persons but judging from the above age brackets, specific ages cannot be given for a person to be identified as a youth. This can be better explained using the National Youth Service Corps (N.Y.S.C) Scheme as an example. This scheme establishes the statement that to qualify for the scheme, the participating youth must not be more than thirty years of age. The contradicting age brackets of youths as cited above cannot, therefore, make age alone a reliable factor in determining who a youth is. That is in line with Oyebamiji (2008) that youths will be identified as young persons who manifest the following behavioural characteristics. A strong desire to move up the ladder; A tendency to be idealistic as a result of the values passed into them at earlier ages by role models in society;

An eagerness to live with these role models and Frequent frustrations and anxiety as this idealism confronts the cold realism of daily existence. In addition, youths are very energetic, excessively ambitious young people who desire to change things or situations overnight; as quickly as possible and in the shortest possible time frame. Having these characteristics young persons can be helped by present-day leaders to reduce to the barest minimum their frustrations and anxiety in society by putting relevant measures in place to motivate them and also positively harness their strength and vigor for positive change and development in society. One of the behavioural characteristics stated above is that of a tendency to be idealistic. Youths are very idealistic as they are taught right from childhood to value “unchanging” ideals such as justice, fairness, and equality; brought up in a culture that promotes ideals and the “idea of permanence”. These ideals are taught to them in form of moral values which they learn as they grow up. What then are moral values?

Biblical Teaching Concerning Youths

The Bible clearly states that “Youths/children are a gracious gift from God” They must therefore be given good care (Genesis 33:16). Parents are charged in the Bible to “Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it”. Parents are therefore expected to train up their children in a way they want them in line with the Judeo-Christian religion so that they will grow up and be a glory to their parents and God. This means that any training that is of negative effect on the child, is contrary to what is expected of parents, and the blame, if the child grows up to be bad, would be on the parents (Prov. 22:6). The writer of Proverbs says that correction and discipline are good for children. If a child has his way, he will make his parents ashamed of him. Proverbs 29: 15 teaches that parents should train their children in a good way but any parent that spears the rod will certainly spoil the child. It is clearly stated in the teachings of the Bible that children should be taught how to live with people especially, the law of love should be emphasized so that children would grow up to love and be loved.

They should also be diligently taught to love the Lord God (Deut. 6:7). Mathew teaches that parents should love their children and give good gifts to them, in the same way, God the father will also send good gifts to them. (Mathew 7:11). Mark also documented Jesus teaching that children should be first fed and not to throw children food to the dogs, while children are unfed (Mk. 7:27). This implies that parents should love their children and should always feed them well. Paul, in Ephesians, charged children/youths with the obligation of obeying their parents so that they will live long (Eph. 6:2-3). Parents are also charged to be careful not to provoke their children unnecessarily but bring them up in the nature and admonition of the Lord. (Eph. 6:4). Also, in Colossians, Paul again charges children/youths to obey their parents as that pleases God. (Col. 3:20). Timothy teaches that parents shall lead their children/youths to Christ as early as possible lest they go astray to the devil. (II Tim. 3:15).

According to Luke, parents should encourage their children to grow mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially. The child should be taught to grow in all aspects (Lk. 2:52). The Bible cautions parents to check their children's company as keeping bad company corrupts character, so parents should discourage their children from keeping bad friends, especially when you know your child's friend has questionable character. Parents again should be careful with the type of books and films watched at home. Some books and films teach immoralities and so many social ills as they read and watch them on screen (I Cor. 15:33). Parents are equally warned not to neglect the spiritual upbringing of their children. Children should be brought up in a sound spiritual way so that they will grow up to be followers of Christ. For Jesus says “Bill if anyone causes one of those little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone tied around his neck and be dawning in the depth of the sea” (Mt. 18:6).

CONCLUSION

Therefore, based on the strength of the study, the study concluded that majority of the respondents indicated that the messages as cumulatively communicated/sermonized and propagated did not sufficiently address the youths and that the youths also exposed themselves to these messages.

Equally, the study concluded that majority of the respondents maintained that the messages were targeted at the young people between the age of 16 and 40 years.

The study concluded that the youths in ONELGA are not favourably disposed to the underlying notions of these messages.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. Churches, religious organizations should incorporate the youth as part of their major targets in their communicology, sermonization and propagation of Christian's virtues.
2. It is good and relevant for the youth to be favorably disposed to the underlining notions of Christian teachings.
3. It is also important for religious leaders, evangelists and pastors to live up to expectations in accordance with their teaching because people are watching them.

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