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Editorial Note

In this issue, we continue to engage in how social and economic dynamics influence the family. The irrefutable point that the family is the basic unit of every society is made with the fervent belief that it nurtures its members and releases them to society. The failure or success of a society is intricately connected to how the family grooms its members. The inevitable conclusion is that the stronger the family in contemporary society, the better for all. In this light, Ayantayo blazed the trail by arguing that the traditional roles played by members of the family in the past have been affected by the ever-changing socio-economic factors in contemporary society. This dynamic and forward-looking social reality immediately suggests that members of the family must assume new roles that align with the demand and expectations of society. However, he argued that we must holistically develop a family based on blending treasured traditional values with contemporary dynamic values.

Alawode and Aderele examine the causes, effects, and solutions to substance abuse by members of the family. According to them, the rate at which the youth use or abuse substances has become so alarming that it requires deft musicological intervention. They argued that musicologists must take it as a point of duty to engage and minister to youth involved in substance use to restore them to fellowship with their families and Christ. Asaolu argued that although conflict is natural, marital conflict is complex and has serious implications for the family and society. Since conflict is human-made, Asaolu identified natural and potential causes of conflict in marriage and suggested that there are irreducible ethical prescriptions whose adoption and application can help to minimize conflict in the family. Salifu and Hammans's empirical exploration of drug abuse among the youth in the Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria, clearly shows that it has assumed a dangerous trend that requires urgent intervention by government institutions and the family. They suggest that ethical principles are required to address this trend through socialisation as well as the spiritual exercise of

faith. Adeola's article centers on how flexibility is a virtue that couples should cultivate to navigate traditional impositions that might negatively affect the family. He adopts a theological standpoint that argues that consistent and mutual fellowship together in the family helps prevent external infiltration into the family.

Odeleye and Adeyanju examine the necessity of resolving conflict among young couples. As part of the mandate of pastoral care ministry, pastors should ensure that their ministry intentionally cares about the health of young people's marriages. As a result of the potential consequences of failure in early marriages, the moral burden to guide and guard against unnecessary conflict in young homes must be borne by pastors by deploying their spiritual and moral training and authority. Oyedele specifically examines the roles of pastoral care in infidelity in Christian homes. He argues that one of the causes of conflict in the family is sexual infidelity by a spouse. This, he argues, can lead to the breakdown of marriage if pastoral care is not given in such a way as to ensure forgiveness. Still, on pastoral care, Adeyanju unfurls the complexities that COVID-19 imposed on communal coexistence. Social distancing affected the communal setting in that members of the community had to deliberately keep some reasonable distance to be safe. At such a moment, Adeyanju thinks that pastoral care ministry is critical in mitigating the consequences of social distancing and keeping healthy by all.

Kelechi and Oderinus's interest is in unhealthy rivalry among siblings in the family. The adverse effects rivalry has on the family call for critical attention to be paid to it. They suggest that parents must conduct themselves do not suggest that they love one child more than the other. Ogundipe returns to the role of the pastoral care unit in fostering unity and resolving marital conflict. To correctly resolve conflict, each issue that causes conflict must be examined on its own rather than deploy one solution fits all approach. This is where the dexterity of pastoral care comes in. Oluwaronke believes that Christian parenting is a critical means of mitigating social vices that

have continued to plague contemporary society. Oluwaronke itemizes and also proffers solutions to the causes of social vices that require good parenting and counseling to resolve. Victor re-examines the concept of one flesh marital bond as a quintessential measure couples need to take to resolve their conflict. The one flesh approach argues that conflict inflicts self-pain on the couples, and they should see each other as one. And finally, Ayinde explores the impacts of social media on Christian youth couples. She argues that time is essential in developing relationships in marriage. Consequently, when more time is spent on social media to neglect the spouse, conflict is bound to arise. Christian principles are thus recommended to ensure a balanced use of social media for the family's health.

I, therefore, welcome you to explore in detail the arguments and issues raised in this issue.

Prof. Benson Ohihon Igboin
Editor in Chief

PHOTO VIEWING THE CHANGING ROLE OF FAMILY MEMBERS IN YORUBA COMMUNITY, NIGERIA USING ETHICAL LENSES

By

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Abstract

The family is the basic unit of society. What we see in society, in most cases, flows from the family, this paper in a way is a departure from the sociological, psychological, and legal dimensions of causes of marriage failure, this paper from an ethical point of view highlights the concept of the family members, roles of members of traditional Yoruba families, the contemporary Yoruba family, the new role of a father, the new role of a mother, and the new role of child/children. It concludes that there is a need for every member of the family to be aware that they need to work together in the spirit of love, cooperation, respect, and mutual respect. It recommends that as part and parcel of the modern time, none of them could hold tenaciously to the culturally induced roles and responsibilities. The modern realities call for accepting the family dynamic and a logical understanding of what social changes and globalisation in modern times orchestrate a family.

Introduction

In any society, the family is the basic unit of it. In most cases, what we see in society flows from the family. Given this sociological

truism, whatever happens in the family becomes a social matter which needs attention. It is so because many scholarly works from psychological (Tolorunleke, 2014), sociological and legal (Nwonu and Ifidon, 2014) points of view (Amadi and Amadi 2014) on the family have brought to the fore that the family of today, particularly in Nigeria bedeviled with a myriad of problems such as broken homes, family instability, divorce, parental irresponsibility, child delinquency, wife battery, the husband has beaten distance- spouse ship).

In all these, little attention is placed on the changing role of family members and the factors responsible for that change from an ethical point of view. We raise the question of ethics because the issue of role, what it is and why it changes, the patterns of change, and the effects of the change is a subject of moral disquisition. This is so because, for emphasis, ethics is a systematic study of human actions and intentions to determine their goodness or badness, rightness or wrongness, correctness, and incorrectness and with attention given to how such a course of action and intention being evaluated affects the person who performed the action or showed an intention in question, the person at which it is directed, and the society or the environment where the action is performed or the intention is muted (Smith, 1991). This subject of our discussion is done descriptively because it is anchored on an experiential approach. Reference is made to Christianity and the Yoruba society of Western Nigeria as a reference point in passing simply and as a case study. The paper highlights the concept of the family members, roles of members of traditional Yoruba families, the contemporary Yoruba family, the new role of a father, the new role of a mother, and the new role of child/children, looking into the future of family members and final remarks.

The family Members

From a layman's point of view, a family comprises a father, a mother, and their children. According to sociologists, there are many

types of family, such as nuclear family, extended family, single-parent family, blended family, grandparent family, and childless family. For our scope of the study, we shall discuss mainly a nuclear family with attention placed on their members in the Yoruba setting. The Yoruba is a people who are majorly found in the Southwest of Nigeria in states like Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ondo, Ekiti, and Lagos. The nuclear family in the Yoruba traditional setting comprised the father, his wife (mother), and their children. The father has the wife and children as his belonging. The wife of the man functions as a wife to her husband and mother to her children. The children, that is, the offspring of the father and mother, are differentiated on a gender basis so that we have male and female children (Shitta-Bey, 2014). In such a setting, male children are very close to their fathers, and female children are close to their mothers. References are also made to seniority, which has to do with when each of them was born. This led to social stratification in the family. We will not dwell on that now because it is unimportant to our discussion.

Roles of members of traditional Yoruba family

By their geography, the Yoruba people could be described as agrarian people known for planting cash and food crops. In the traditional milieu, most of them are farmers, and most of their days are spent on farms. Nevertheless, the farm work was done by fathers and their male children while the mothers and their daughters attended to domestic needs such as the provision of water for cooking, washing and bathing, cooking of food, and washing of cloth. The female members of the family only went to assist in the farm work during harvest time. They are seriously involved in harvesting farm products and carrying those homes, part of which is eaten and sold at marketplaces.

Regarding social relationships and interactions among family members, the father, the husband of his wife, and the father of his children was the overlord. He was the head of the family with all the power to direct the affairs of the family. He gave instructions to

the wife and children, which they were bound to obey without asking questions so they would not be punished for being unruly. The mother is expected to be loyal to the husband and see the husband as *Olowo ori*, the one who bought her with money or, better put, the one who owns her by virtue of the bride price the husband paid. On this note, she revered the husband, listened to him when he talked, and obeyed his instructions, which touched every aspect of her life, including sexual matters. Regarding the children as members of the family, the father and mother at a point gave instructions to their children on what to do and not do, when to go out or remain at home, where to go and where not to go, the types of friend they should have or otherwise. In this case, the children have no specific autonomy except the one defined by their parents and are expected to be subservient.

Even though the father enjoys the aroma of being the head of the family with the power to direct the affairs of his family according to his whim and caprices, he is expected to be the family's sole breadwinner. His duties were to provide food, clothing, shelter, and security for his family members. He laboured and toiled day and night with his energy to discharge the responsibilities. Any assistance from his wife or children is considered an appendage that is not obligatory.

The contemporary Yoruba Family

A typical contemporary Yoruba Family is different from the traditional one earlier discussed. In terms of structure and the nature of interaction among members, the contemporary Yoruba family can be adjudged as a clear departure from the traditional. Many factors, including religious modernisation, education and global best practices, inform the difference. For instance, in this wave, globalisation brought a new dimension to the understanding and definition of the persons in the family, particularly the wife (who is also a mother) and the child or children. Globalisation is the construction of the oneness of the world. It presupposes a global unit

in all aspects of human life: social, cultural, political, and economical. (Marshall 1996:202). Perhaps in light of this, Akanmidu (2001:7) likens globalization exercise to the construction of the oneness of the world. Such an impression has led to several coinages, such as global society, global community, international society, and the global village. In other words, globalization brings about the cultivation of cosmopolitan lifestyles and accepting the reality of the emergence of world political systems such as the League of Nations and the United Nations. All these, among others, led to alteration of the social structures, organizations, patterns of beliefs, ideas, norms, values, relationships, institutions, symbols, thoughts, conducts, means of production, and delivery of goods and services and, more significantly the emergence of the global concept of human rights — including wife right and child rights.

New Role of a Father

In today's society, the role of the father, mother, and children are no longer the same. For instance, an average father today is a career person so also his wife. The children, too, are students in day schools or boarding schools, which means they are not always around to relate with their parents subserviently. The father is no longer a full breadwinner; more importantly, his salary is not enough to care for all the domestic needs. So also, the mother has to cooperate with the husband to meet the family's needs. In some homes cooking food and bathing children at home are no longer left in the hands of the mothers who are career officers such as bankers and high-top government workers who have to leave very early before the children wake up. Where this takes place, the onus is invariably on the husband to cook food and bathe the children. This development is a product of necessity. Despite this, the bible still expects the husband to show her wife affection by loving her (Ephesians 5:25), understanding her (1 peter 3:7), honoring her (1 peter 3:7), leading her (Ephesians 5:23), providing for her (Ephesians 5:29), accord her conjugal rights (1 Corinthian 7:3). All these are grounded on the fact that having a wife is a blessing from the lord (proverbs 18:22).

New Role of a Mother

Modern social and economic realities do not allow mothers to depend on their husbands. She is now a partner to the husband in the upkeep of the home and nursing and nurturing their children. At times, she foots all domestic bills when the husband is economically incapable, probably due to the loss of a job, or underemployment, which led to poor salary or non-payment of his salary.

She is no longer docile and submissive because she has been made to believe that she is entitled to certain rights which are expected to claim. Mother's rights are the legal obligations for expecting mothers, existing mothers, and adoptive mothers. These rights are extensions of women's rights, a few of which are the right to live free from violence and discrimination; to enjoy the highest achievable standard of physical and mental health; to be educated; to own property; to vote; and to earn an equal wage. However, women are still facing discrimination based on gender discrimination. This accounts for why many of them still experience domestic and sexual violence, lower pay, lack of access to education, and inadequate healthcare. These inadequacies are frowned upon by many women's organizations, particularly amnesty international, which is a global undertaking of more than 10 million people who take inequality personally (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/who-we-are/>). These rights do not stop the mother from discharging her responsibilities, providing a home for their children, protecting and maintaining them, as well as disciplining the child, ensuring they are educated, agreeing to necessary medical treatment, naming the child, and looking after them. In the same vein, her religion, for example, Christianity as a case study, enjoins the wife to be a helper to her husband (Genesis 2:18), respect him (Ephesians 5:33), love him (Titus 2:4) and submit to the husband's leadership (Ephesians 5:22-30)

New Role of Children

In modern times, children are not necessarily laborers as in the past. Nevertheless, they are still expected to be engaged in washing plates, washing clothes, sweeping, mopping, fetching water, and cooking. Unlike in the past when they were not accorded rights, today, children are entitled to certain rights known as child rights. The ROC is an offshoot of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, reflecting what is declared in Chapter Four of the Nigerian Constitution. Historically, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified on April 16th, 1991, by the Nigerian government being a signatory to all conventions on human rights. The rights are expressed in 10 principles, as paraphrased below:

Principle 1

The child shall enjoy all the rights outlined in this outlined without any exception, without discrimination on account of the status of his/her race, colour, sex, language, political, religion, opinion, national or social origin, property and birth, and that of his family.

Principle 2

The child shall enjoy special protection and access to entitled opportunities and facilities granted by law and other lawful means, which will enable him to mature physically, morally, spiritually, mentally, and socially in a healthy and normal manner and an atmosphere of freedom and dignity. This is meant to serve the best interest of the child.

Principle 3

The child shall be entitled to a name and nationality from birth.

Principle 4

A child shall benefit from existing social security and is made to grow and develop in a healthy environment; enjoy the protection and special care from his mother or caretaker both at the pre-natal and post-natal stages of his life. In addition, a child should have the right to adequate nutrition, housing, recreation, and medical services.

Principle 5

Physically, mentally, or socially handicapped children shall be given special treatment, education, and care.

Principle 6

For the full and harmonious development of a child's personality, he needs love and understanding as much as possible. With this background, the child shall grow up in the care and under his parents' obligation, and, in any case, in an atmosphere of love and material security. A child of tender years shall not, save in extraordinary circumstances, be separated from his mother. In the same vein, society and the public authorities also must extend particular care to children without family members and to, those without adequate means of support, and children from large families.

Principle 7

Receiving free and compulsory education, at least in the elementary stages, is also a child's right. Given this, the child shall be given education, which will encourage his general culture and enable him, on the basis of equal prospect, to develop his abilities, judgement, and sense of moral and social responsibility towards making him a useful member of society. This implies that the child's best interests shall be the controlling principle of those answerable for his education and guidance. This responsibility, in the first place, lies with his parents. In addition, full opportunity for play and recreation, directed to the same purposes as education, should be granted to the child. At the same time, society and the public authorities shall attempt to promote the satisfaction of stated rights.

Principle 8

The child shall be among the first to receive protection and relief in all circumstances.

Principle 9

Protection against all forms of negligence, brutality, and exploitation shall be a child right. By so doing, the child shall not be the subject of traffic, in any form or be admitted to employment before a suitable minimum age; under no condition shall he be acceptable to engage in any occupation or employment which would preception his health or education, or restrict with his physical, mental and moral development.

Principle 10

The child is to be protected from practices which may lead to racial, religious, and other forms of discrimination against him. Also, the child shall be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace, and universal brotherhood, and full awareness; this enables his energy and talents to be dedicated to the service of his fellow men.

Looking into the future

Having discussed the changing role of the family members, we need to synergize all the roles in such a way that they will not damage the essence of the family in a society in which success depends on the structure of the family because the popular adage says that charity begins at home. So we need to know that none of the family members can do without one other. On this account, we recommend some ethical principles for all of them to work together. Primary among these is the principle of respect and mutual respect. Respect means to hold in honour, esteem, regard, and value others. It is an act of identifying and appreciating the work of other fellows. Accepting the existence of others besides us in any society or setting is the basis of respect. Respect is based on the fact that apart from us, some other people also possess the attributes we possess. In this sense, we speak of self-respect and mutual respect. Through self-respect, we may recognize our position and point out an issue or the other. In this case, one can ask oneself: “what will I think of myself if I do this or fail to do that”? Self-respect has to do with living up to one's conception of oneself, which eventually becomes a basic value in a personal lifestyle. Mutual respect has to do with respecting others while others respect us. It is in this context we talk of respect for the rights of others. This goes with responsibility. On account of this, the demands of individuals or groups must be matched by appropriate accommodation of common interests (Ayantayo, 2009).

The second principle is cooperation. By a way of definition, cooperation implies collegueship, co-partnership, and tie-up

relationships. Where there is a cooperative spirit, there is always the growth of fraternity, solidarity, fellow feeling, voluntary association, coalition, federation, united fronts, common front, mutual assistance, and reciprocity. It also propels the spirit of give—take mutual concession, compromise, and comradeship. Generally, cooperation in practical terms, brings about teamwork and encourages competition and we-feeling (Ayantayo, 2009). All these are needed in contemporary society which globalization has set agenda for

Concluding Remarks

There is a need for every member of the family to be aware that they need to work together in the spirit of love, cooperation, respect and mutual respect. As part and parcel of the modern time, none of them could hold tenaciously to the culturally induced roles and responsibilities. The modern realities call for acceptance of the need for the dynamic of the family and a logical understanding of what a family is in modern times. The global world set the agenda for us all. Why we dont expect to throw away African social values regarding the family, we are also not expected to be rigid so that the family can move with the global needs and expectations. On this, I am expecting that all agencies dealing with the family should not relent in their effort in advocating for a good family that blends old and new cultures.

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MISSIOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO THE IMPACT OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE ON FAMILY AND SOCIETY

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Abstract

Substance abuse is a global phenomenon with associated hazards to families and society. It has taken diverse forms from one family and society to another; it is, therefore, necessary for all stakeholders to approach it diversely. Conventional treatment through medical sciences is fundamental; however, the complex socio-economic factors have rendered it ineffective in some regions of the world. The response of God through the activities of the Church has become imperative in tackling this global neurological illness ravaging families and societies across continents. This report provides a concise missiological response to substance abuse in family and society. In this 21st century, no singular method can help resolve the menace of substance abuse in families and society. The combination of conventional and spiritual methods in combating substance abuse is a necessary step to be taken by all stakeholders in the fight against substance abuse. Spiritual input of the Church of God has proven effective in some regions of the world, and it is applicable in any society where there is humankind with this problem. Therefore, through the descriptive research method, the writer elucidates the concept of substance abuse in the 21st century, the causes of substance abuse, missiological response to substance abuse and draws a logical conclusion.

Keywords: Drug abuse, Church, Missions, Impact and Society.

Introduction

Generically, 'substance' is a philosophical term corresponding to the Greek word *ousia*, which means "something that stands underground" (Hoard, 2018:1) but connotes drugs or prescription medications and chemicals in social and medical sciences. A substance is any drug that changes the human body's function mentally, physically, or emotionally (Abriel, 2018:7). This drug description does not differentiate between tobacco, illicit drugs, prescription medications, solvent, alcohol, and over-the-counter drugs. When taken into the body, it includes anything that positively or negatively affects it and encompasses both licit and illicit drugs (Abriel, 2018:7). On the other hand, abuse is the excessive use or misuse of licit and illicit substances.

Substance abuse, therefore, represents a wide-ranging spectrum of the use of therapeutic and non-therapeutic drugs or substances with physiological and psychoactive effects on the body and mind. As stated earlier, it refers to the excessive use or misuse of licit and illicit drugs. It is the loss of control over drug use or compulsively seeking and taking the drugs despite adverse consequences (Nestler, 2017:119). It is a neuropsychiatric disorder characterised by a recurring desire to continue taking the drugs despite harmful consequences (Mukesh, Sanyaaders & Kumari, 2021:17). It is illicit and non-medical drug usage.

Substance abuse has an intense psychosomatic effect across all areas of society. Given the paucity of substance use surveys in many families and the larger society, it often goes undetected for months or even years until the users' damages occur through neuropsychiatric manifestations; because of limited research data, and insufficient knowledge, many family members and societies often overlook substance abuse and its damaging effects. Substance abuse amongst youth and the elderly is a global phenomenon affecting every race, tribe, community, and nation.

Substance abuse in the 21st century

United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime in 2018 revealed that 29.5 million substance users globally suffer from substance abuse disorder and other substance-related crises (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018:6); this is worrisome because no part of the global society is free from the menace of this neurological sickness. Medical prescriptions like codeine, tramadol, and raphrol, as well as non-medical substances like cocaine, ketamine, methamphetamine, tobacco, alcohol, cannabis (marijuana), "hard-coke" (a mixture of Coca-Cola, Codeine and Tramadol), and substances like paint thinner, and glue have become abused substances in virtually all human society. Although the damage varies from one society and family to another, the negative impact is similar.

Family and society rules and laws, and efforts from other stakeholders in the fight against substance abuse globally, have not been able to reduce the impacts as statistics have shown that the extent of drug use amongst younger people remains higher than before (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018:6) with cannabis on top of the preference list. There are no race or people to which licit or illicit substance has engaged in vain once it is apprehended. All who embrace its allures are not free from its negative consequences.

Before examining the impacts of substance abuse, it is imperative to know the causes of such abuses in the 21st century.

Causes of Substance Abuse

Recreational Settings: Recreation settings are places for relaxation. Traditionally, these places include college bars, community or street bars, house parties and concert centres. However, in the 21st century, creational settings have become availability centres through which people access and abuse substances of all kinds. Substances have filtered into recreational centres, and it has become a relaxation "drink" of a kind in this century, and abuse has become inevitable. The mere fact that a substance is available at a reduced price is a platform for abuse (Ezinnen & Nweze, 2011: 148-149). The view of Ongwae

supports the fact that a neighbourhood where substances are available and accessible increases the involvement of youth in substance abuse (Ongwae, 2016:20). The relative ease with which substances are available to a person will ultimately increase their abuse.

Unethical-family Values: Modernism in the 21st century arrived with a dark side. Although there is no perfect index to measure the impacts of the dark side of modernity on family values globally, nevertheless the words of Jeff Alexander capture it vividly:

To say that modernity has been a disappointment would be understanding horrors that continue to endanger the very existence of humankind. Nevertheless, to say modernity has been only a nightmare would be telling a one-sided story. Modernity has also been liberating, providing ideas, movements, and institutions that can repair some of its self-inflicted injuries and cultural and structural disorders that have plagued social life from its beginning (Alexander, 2013:1).

Modernity has reformulated all facets of humankind, which has subjected family structure to new strains. Complex factors influence substance abuse by any person affected, one of which is unethical family values. This factor is often beyond the control of the person. The home has been the first human environment where children relate with other family members. The family is the building block and smallest unit of society and the support base for growth, and this is the first line of defence against any problematic attitude (Tsang & Leung 2005:77-89). The possibilities are high when a family with corrupt values raises a child; such can render the child vulnerable to substance abuse later in life (Spooner & Hetherington 2014 456). Many victims of substance abuse are products of 21st -century families with unhealthy lifestyles like substance abuse.

Negative Human Relationships

At the micro level, the family influences a person on substance abuse, but at the macro level, the larger society equally contributes to the

substance abuse vulnerability of a person. At the societal level, peer group influence is a major contributing factor to substance abuse. Findings have revealed that interactions with a peer group member who engages in substance use influence all the group members because of the socio-cultural process in which experienced users essentially teach new users (Abdalla, 2003:17). Generally, the urge to socialise is a norm for all humans. However, where the peer group is hooked on substance use, the pressure from such a group dictates behavioural patterns of a new person who seeks to secure the group's approval (Lutomia & Sikolia 2009:61). The risk factor is high for anyone who is part of a substance-abusing group not to be partaker with them.

Reverse Psychology

Reverse psychology is the principle of subtly encouraging a behaviour or belief by advocating its opposite. That is, it is a technique that involves asserting a belief or behaviour contrary to the one anticipated, with the expectation that this approach will encourage the subject of the persuasion to do what is desired (Ibid). The adventure by people to experiment with new things like substance intake leads to extensive exploratory behaviour. Initially, this behaviour promises excitement (thrills), but the reverse is the case later. Substance abuse is a neuropsychiatric disorder characterised by a recurring desire to continue taking a substance despite harmful consequences. Abuse is first experimental, then occasional use and finally, increase to heavy usage and sometimes to a substance use disorder (Mukesh, Sanyaaders, & Priyanka2021:73). The exciting reward promised initially when a person is experimenting with a substance will sooner or later become an addiction that adversely affects the nervous system.

The Impacts of Substance Abuse

Substance abuse has multiple direct effects on a person, his or her family, and indirect effects on society. The following are the impacts of substance abuse, amongst others:

The Possibility of Lower Life Expectancy and Mental Health Disorderliness.

Various actions can lead to mortality, and substance abuse has been identified as one of them. According to the research conducted by Kendler, the excess mortality rate results directly or indirectly from substance abuse (Kendler, 2017: 886). Likewise, mental health disorderliness is sometimes traceable to substance abuse (Kim, 2020:1).

Suicide Tendencies and Dysfunctional Social Relationships.

Substance abuse brings about the dysfunctional social relationship, which may lead to suicide tendencies, especially among children that are involved in alcohol abuse (Wu, 200:08)

Destructive Behavioural Patterns/Risky sexual Behaviour (like rape).

Destructive behavioural patterns like cutting oneself, driving while drunk, using unsterilised needles, unprotected/weird sexual practices, and a few others can be observed among individuals involved in substance abuse (Moonajilin, 2021:3).

Unemployment and Physical health challenges

Substance abuse results in psychotic disorders, which can lead to physical health challenges. Such an individual with a psychotic disorder has little to offer to the community and lacks employment (Fiorentini, 2021: 5).

Missiological Response

Research showed that family religiosity helps prevent substance use and brings recovery for substance-dependent people. Emerging reports emanating from Latin America suggest that religious groups like the Evangelicals involve in the recuperation of drug addicts within the religious setting, using only the faith of their adherents as a means of treatment without recourse to any medications (Saude 2008: 42). Although Pardini et al point out that while few scientific studies analyse the impact of religiosity in treating people who abuse substances, many researchers theorise about the potential factor (Pardini, Plante, Herman, &Stump

2000:19). However, there is strong evidence that religiosity reduces drug consumption which is better for recovering patients receiving medical treatment for drug addictions (Hodge, Cardenas & Montoya 2001:25).

The import of the above assertion may be described in words borrowed from two ex-substance users from Latin America:

I know that I had to find God. As I was hearing things about the Evangelicals everywhere and thought to myself, if God did heal blind men and including lepers, He can as well cure the drug addict. "The solution is to have faith in God, and you will see that God is powerful (Sanchez 2006:3-4)

These testimonies prove the effectiveness of God's power in curing illnesses, including substance abuse.

The Missiological Response shall be discussed through three offers:

Faith in God through Prayers.

Bible Study.

Accountability Group Support (cell fellowship)

Faith in God through prayers.

Historically, faith in God and religious confessions have served as 'religious treatments' among the Evangelicals for all offenders, including drug addicts (Mark 2:5, Luke 17:37). Moreover, the treatment is free and easily accessible. Medical practitioners have often advised that medical treatment should be sought simultaneously with spiritual assistance. Faith can heal, promote a person's mental health, and save them from any form of sin, including substance abuse (drug addiction) (Romans 10:9-13). The Christian missionary should employ the place and importance of prayers as an anxiolytic method to 'treat substance abusers in families and society.

In the form of conversion, religious confessions and pardons allow substance users to rid themselves of the blame for the mistakes of their past life, thus open up the possibility of a new future starting from scratch (Sanchez 2006:17). Confessions through prayer calm a substance user by placing him in a meditative and mind-altering state and help the 'recuperant' develop faith in God by sharing the responsibility for the 'treatment' with God.

Additionally, the role of Christian missionaries in helping those addicted to substance abuse is to use faith in the living God through the proclamation of the morality of the Gospel to deal with the emotional state of the addict and improve their self-esteem, thus, helping them to face up to any future difficulties relying on the power the Gospel provides for all who believe. The Christian missionary is better equipped with the Gospel prayer tool at his disposal to help families of drug addicts because prayers deal with both the spiritual and psychological effects of drug addiction.

Bible Study

Christian missionaries have deployed the tool of missionary education to exercise a decisive influence on their target groups' moral and religious future. All the students who attended Christian mission schools received daily instruction in the Christian scriptures (Charles 1915:128). Bible study is part of a Christian missionary to influence the life of one damaged through substance abuse. Bible teachings that emphasise the purpose of living using arguments that focus on God's plan in that person's life will undoubtedly help anyone who has been out-raised socially due to substance abuse to reintegrate the person into God's family and society at large.

Accountability group support (cell fellowship)

Accountability group support or cell fellowship is one common element of religious treatment for drug addicts. The essence of this cell fellowship is to create a spiritual micro-family or society for persons undergoing religious treatment from substance abuse to find recovery support. Dermatis et al noted that the cohesion in the cell fellowship provides friendships that are important in drug addicts' recovery as the cell begins to form a new micro-society in which they feel accepted and valued (Dermatis, Salke, Galanter & Bunt, 2006).

A hopeful symptom from cell fellowship is the confession made by one recovery patient who affirms: "I worshipped every day at the meetings; it was there I found freedom and God began to bless

us, and I no longer wanted to carry on with my old life (Publica, 2008:42)." The Christian missionary must realise the strategic place of cell fellowship in treating persons suffering substance abuse and effectively utilise it as a response to substance abuse in this century.

Conclusion

Substance abuse is a critical combination of many risk factors in a person's socio-cultural environment. The protective factors absent at a particular stage of development in a person's life make a difference in people's susceptibility to substance abuse. Poverty, negative peer pressure, lack of opportunities for socio and economic advancements, and lack of family protection have contributed significantly to those who fall victim to substance abuse and those who do not. The response of the Church in dealing with this new social phenomenon is to effectively apply the spiritual tools of prayers, Bible teaching and cell fellowship in the recovery process of patients under her care.

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ETHICAL RESPONSE TO CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

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Abstract

Marriage is a divine institution established for the purpose of stabilizing human society. God knew that the things He had created would need proper care by a human agent, and therefore, saw the importance of making man. The man was made in the image of God with the capacity to care for the created order. The significance and magnitude of the assigned task to man prompted God to provide a helpmate fit for man. With the creation of woman, man became equipped to face life with greater vigour. Two good heads are better than one. The man was no longer lonely; he now enjoyed the sweet companionship of another human being. Critically looking at contemporary marriage and family life, there is a need to go back to the way it was in the beginning, the way God meant it to be; love between the husband and wife should be like hearts and flowers. Today there is a vast difference between a house and a home. The researcher noticed that in this contemporary society, truly, there are beautiful houses and gardens, yet very often, behind their front doors are pressure, problems, heartache, and tragedy, which later end up in conflict. Conflict is considered in this work as a state of dispute, disagreement, or open clash between opposing groups or individuals, ideas or interests. It also means antagonism or opposition, even to the point of hostility and violence. In every home, the problem that exists, as observed by the researcher, is sharp disagreement between husband and wife, especially when there is opposition against what one party does, including all other sorts of a thing the two of them may disagree with; the process of managing this may lead to conflict in the family life if it is not handled correctly. The component of this paper will include an introduction and an overview of cases of

conflict in the Bible. It will also examine the causes of conflict in marriage and family life, which include poor communication, finance, sex denial, and anger, resulting in divorce, domestic violence, and hatred. In addition to the above, Honesty, cooperation, contentment, caring, respect, and tolerance, which form part of the ethical responses to managing conflict in marriage and family life, also form part of the task of the paper.

Key Words: Ethical, Conflict, Management, Family, Marriage

Introduction

Marriage celebration gladdens the heart of spectators and sweetens the emotion of participants. It is delightful to sight, to the extent that the numbers of those who get married daily outbid, outdo, and outmatch the population of divorce rate. Every marriage has a unique design that does not necessarily fit into another. The absence of peace and joy in many homes is already spelling doom for marriages and family life. The man and the woman, as designed by God, are to complement each other to make meaning out of their marriage. However, two people coming together from different backgrounds as one requires the need to tolerate and accept each other's view because of their different backgrounds. As revealed in scripture (Heb.13:4), the divine concept for marriage is that marriage should be honourable. According to Kristilere (2004: xix), marriage is God's creation for man and should be understood as such. Worthy of note is the fact that not many marriages met God's idea for an honourable marriage. Maintaining a godly perspective of the marriage, as submitted by Ojo (2014:26), provides the foundation for a successful marriage relationship. Marriage then becomes a spiritual endeavour rather than being dependent on financial status, bearing children, or specific employment. Most marriage falls apart because of a lack of good moral and spiritual foundation.

In his own contribution, (Ogundipe 2015: xiv-xv) submitted that God's purpose and ultimate goal on marriage were disrupted by a

corroded human view, thinking, and free will; and this is an irony in human life and existence, a riddle that needs a solution. Thousands of couples are joined in wedlock across the globe on a yearly basis, but not fewer than five percent succeed because only a few of them possess the attribute of marriage, such as the moral standard laid down by God, who is the author of marriage. The hope of joy envisaged dropped, dashed, and resulted in tears, fingers biting, and disappointment. This at times, led to a rift, which may latter end up in separation. This brings the writer's attention to the wrong idea that people hold about the perennial notion of conflict in Christian homes: "should a Christian home experience conflict at all?" Fronting this, Aworinde (2003:6-7) opined that being a Christian husband and wife presupposes that one is filled, controlled and guided by the Holy Spirit. Differences are not appreciated, tolerated or understood when people hold such a conception. This implies that people undermine individual differences.

Many couples who have been filled with the great love for their spouses during courtship have been forced to ask after a few months of their marriage, "why are we facing these conflicts and where are they from?" In response to this question, Aworinde gave the following reasons: Individual differences, the husband and wife came from different backgrounds with different principles, ideas and goals of life. Secondly, every Christian is a saint in the making, i.e., both the husband and wife are saints in embryos. They are still struggling to become what God wants them to be. In the third aspect, the reversal of marital responsibility or roles conflict in the home could also contribute to this. In marriage, the woman is responsible for being a wife, not a husband, and vice versa. Couples should plan together and respect the opinion of one another about the journey they are making through life. With this submission, Awotunde (2004:2) affirms that conflict is a natural response that people make under certain conditions that have to do with people's sense of well-being. It always arises when situation threatens an individual and it can be morally responded to where there is genuine

love. The threat may be real or imagine but the reason is usually the same. Conflict is neither something to be avoided at all cost, nor it is a preoccupation to perpetuate and delight in as if it was the primary emphasis, but conflict must be noted as a sign of love. Thus far, the researcher has established that conflict is inevitable and that it is part and parcel of marriage and family life, which can be ethically responded to where there is mutual love and agreement.

An Overview of Cases of the Conflict in the Bible

Conflict is inevitable as people interact with one another. People come with different experiences, expectations and interests that have to be lived with or resolved in everyday life (Atkinson: 1995:249). The word conflict is used only occasionally in recent translations of scripture. Equivalent words are many, including strife, contention, and quarreling. Titus 3:9 employs three parallel words: “But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law because these are unprofitable and useless.” Yet the whole Bible is the account of God, who confronts the world's rebellion with its resultant conflict that spills out of the supernatural realm into the created world. Conflict in this debilitating sense is the clash for control and possession between the two competing, though unequal entities, God and Satan, which played out at the macrocosmic level (Green: 2011: 163).

The opening scene of the Bible is a scene of conflict between human being and God (Gen1-4). From the very beginning, humans' relationship with each other has reflected their relationship with God. Not long after Adam and Eve disobeyed the creator (Gen. 3), Cain killed his brother Abel for a selfish reason (Gen. 4). There are catalogs of conflict situations in the Bible. Some of them are also between Abraham and Lot Gen. 13; Jacob and Esau Gen. 27; Moses and the Israelites Exodus 16. The people mentioned above were in conflict with each other at one time or the other in the Old Testament. It then means that conflict is inevitable in any institution. No individual, church, or family is immune to it (Awotunde: 2004:1).

Scripture shows a variety of interpersonal conflicts between Adam and Eve, the first married couple, who had a disagreement in the Garden of Eden Gen. 3:12-13 Bible also recorded the arguments between Abraham and Lot's herdsmen Gen. 13:6-7 the conflict between Joseph and his brothers Gen. 37:8, 10-11& 18-20. More so, the conflict of jealous and popularity led to the odds between Saul and David I Sam.18: 6-9, and disagreement between Job and his three friends Job 32:1-3 (Collins: 2007:316).

The New Testament also records conflict situations. An example of conflict among Jesus' disciples is noted in Luke 9:46-48 and resurfaced in Luke 22:24 when there was a dispute among the disciples "as to which of them should be considered the greatest". Greek and Jewish Hebrew Christian Acts 6:1. The scripture also revealed that Peter resolved his internal conflict over the role of the gentiles in Acts 10:34-35. There were records of conflict between Paul and Barnabas Acts 15:39. The church in Acts of Apostles also went through conflict when the Apostles argued whether to legalize Jewish and Gentiles Christians or not Acts 15:1-38. Jesus also had a conflict with His own people. Conflicts also arose among members of the Corinthians church I Cor.3:1-3; 6:1-7 (Green: 2011: 163-164). Awotunde (2004:1) submitted that church historians revealed that there were records of conflict within the early church fathers, which dealt with doctrinal beliefs and ethical and practical issues. Throughout the centuries, the church of Jesus Christ has passed through untold suffering and bloodshed. Many have died in defense of the truths of Christianity. The conflict then is inevitable wherever human beings are found to interact. Whenever people are gathered together for any activity, the potential for conflict is there. In support of the above writer, (Green: 2011:164) stressed further that; the history of Christianity is replete with conflict. The struggle to define orthodoxy resulted in a succession of councils that marginalised heretics and splintered the church into various factions, primarily between Eastern and Western branches. The reformation of the sixteenth century brought new conflict with the emergence of Protestantism in its myriad forms, sometimes battling for

supremacy, often in overt competition for the lives and souls of the adherents. In modern times, Christians has killed Jews, Catholics and Protestants have engaged in fratricide, and Christians and Muslims often die at one and another's hands.

The theological understanding of conflict revealed that it was not the plan of God for humanity. The Biblical account of creation in Genesis 2 and 3 affirms that from the very beginning of human history, there was the harmony of human relationships, which was the intention of God for humanity. The fall of mankind made him the enemy of God. One can then say that the doctrine of creation gives the foundation to understand and hope for solving conflicts. Conflict is so prevalent in the church because the church is a community of sinners being saved by the grace and has been redeemed in God's future kingdom (Awotunde: 2004:4). With the above in view, the researcher affirms that conflict is as old as human race and it is inevitable in any relationship right from the Old and New Testaments era to the early church history as recorded in the Bible. It will be interesting to note that many couples face many problems and conflicts in their marriage and family life. Since conflict occurs when we have more than one person, family life also cannot be ruled out against its problems and effects

Causes of Conflict in Marriage and Family Life

Poor Communication: Communication is the act of imparting or exchanging information by speaking, writing, or using some other media. One key factor in a successful marriage relationship is communication. Lack of good communication is a significant problem in many families today (Kristilere: 2004:58). Every human has a unique way of perceiving issues. The choice of words in marriage should be encouraging and inspiring, not otherwise. The tone of discussion should be persuasion, not accusation (Olaniyi 2004:55). One of the great problems in many marriages is poor communication. The tragedy of it is that two young people become bed mates before they become soul mates (Newman: 1999:10). With the above in view, the researcher deduced that poor communication

could lead to anger which could cause loss of life or property as the case may be. The couple in their marital home should work to develop good communication skills, as poor communication skills can engender conflict in marriage and family life.

Adjustment: Conflict arises in marriage because of adjustments that the couple will have to make from time to time in their matrimonial journey. It is good to note here that apart from conflicts that usually arise as marriage graduates from one stage to another. Many other adjustment factors are capable of engendering conflicts in marriage. These include spending habits; the husband may be a spending thrift, while the wife may be loose in handling money. Differences in adjustment in spending habits could cause conflict. More so, sexual adjustment can engender conflict. Sex, as good as it may be and as God created it, can cause crises because of denial on the part of the wife. The wife may complain of excess and, as a result, use it as a weapon to punish the husband. At times the wife can be found to be more active in sex than the husband; in such a case, the wife would complain that the husband is too weak for her. In this case, if both of them find it difficult to adjust, it can trigger conflict (Aworinde: 2004:8, 11).

Anger: This keeps everyone on their toes in the home; it makes a total mockery of God's concept of marriage. Anger is a monster that couples must frustrate in order not to frustrate their marriage and family. Medically, anyone who keeps getting angry all the time will develop high blood pressure, which can as a result, destroy kidneys and eyes. This is what the scientist calls "The target organ." As a result of anger, some wives have permanently deformed their husbands with the object in anger. In anger, some husbands beat their wives to death (Amaga 2003:17, 19).

Infidelity: This is unfaithfulness in marriage between married couples. This can trigger conflict in the family, especially when the infidelity is confessed openly and discussed together by the couple. The person in question among the couple may show a sense of remorse or guilt, but the innocent partner would feel betrayed, hurt or

sometimes that he or she was unable to satisfy the infidel mate. In this regard, it becomes difficult to trust each other. This, at times, leads to anger and threat and later results in a conflict that would end up in separation or divorce (Collins: 2007: 612).

Finance: Financial problems are a common cause of marital problems. The difference in opinion about spending and saving habits can cause conflict. Conflict can also arise due to drastic differences in income between the husband and wife, especially when one person makes more money than the other, and they may start to think that they have more right to spend money than the other at any time. This can trigger conflict in family life.

Sex Denial: Sex in marriage is important and also the most common cause of marriage conflict. Sex denial can lead to a lack of intimacy, making the other person feel unwanted or unloved. This has resulted in a conflict that has made many marriages collapse and later ends up in divorce or separation.

Change in Appearance: As one grows older, there is a tendency for a change in physique. Things like gaining or losing weight, age, stress, and genetics all affect how one grows. Couples might want their posture to look and act the same forever, which could never be possible as a result of stress and age. When this is not so, unrealistic expectations set up the marriage for arguments that later end up into conflict in the family life (bestlegalchoices.com accessed 24/1/2022).

Effects of Conflict on Marriage and Family Life

- a. **Divorce:** Divorce is undesirable, psychologically traumatic, and socially disruptive. (Kunhiyop: 2008:255) submitted that divorce means disunity, the separation of two parties who were formerly united. It shatters the hope and aspiration of many families. It is one of the worst tragedies in human life. In his own contribution (Collins 2007: 616-618) is of the opinion that divorce in a family involves a period of mourning because, most time, friends and relatives scatter because when a marriage breaks up, there is a ripple effect that extends to family members and friends. It sometimes tore them apart by their confusion and uncertainty about how to respond. This

can leave the separating partners feeling alone and abandoned, which can be accompanied by an endless range of emotions, including depression, sadness, sickness, and withdrawal from spiritual activities. When the divorce is about to take place, there can be sadness over the loss of a relationship that once was happy and fulfilling, along with the difficulties of picking up the demands of life and learning to live without a mate. The researcher agreed with these scholars that really it is not the best for a married couple because, in time, most couples begin to face the realities of their new status in life; set time apart for reflection and probably for meditation, prayer, and make contact with new friends; and seek God guidance in making a realistic plan for the future.

- b. Domestic Violence is another resultant effect of conflict in marriage and family life. According to America Psychological Association, some 40-60 percent of men who abuse women also abuse children (1996:8). Fronting this, (Kunhiyop: 2008: 244, 246) affirms that domestic violence does not only occur between the spouses but can also be perpetrated against children. Demonstration of power and control by men and denial of sex by the woman during the time of conflict can lead to domestic violence. This is enormously destructive, apart from causing injuries or loss of life; the constant insecurity with which the family member live may even lead to problems in sleeping. When a woman flees a violent marriage, she may have to leave her children behind to be raised without the loving care of their mother.
- c. Children Suffering: Divorce affects children in a variety of ways, depending on their ages. This includes a sense of loss and abandonment, fear about the future, feeling of self-worth, resentment at the parents, and delays in maturity. Children from divorced families suffer insecurity, lack confidence, and are deeply concerned about their marriage and ability to become a parent. In addition, there can be academic and relationship problems and regression to more childish

behaviour, such as thumb- sucking, thumb- sucking and rebellious acts. These lead to emotional upheaval, irrational decisions, and interpersonal tensions. It affects the couples and their children, other members of the family, and even grand children who might be born later (Collins: 2007:615, 618).

- d. Hatred: This refers to an emotion of intense dislike or detestation generally of another person or group. Hatred can lead to the desire for punishment, revenge or humiliation in some way. In marriage and family life, hatred is the diametrical opposite of love among the married man and woman during the conflict (Atkinson: 1995:429-430). The writer agrees with Atkinson that when there is no love in marriage, instead of valuing, respecting and caring, hatred sometimes leads the couples to wishes of harm or disrespect of individual personal identity.
- e. Sickness: This is one of the resultant effects of conflict in marriage and family life. (Oladapo: 2016:55-56) Submitted that, sickness exposes family life to many problems. Apart from the fact that the sick person will not be able to enjoy him or herself, it will also deny the person many things that should have been done at that time. Some serious sicknesses that the affected man or woman may have include depression, blood pressure, loneliness, or severe injuries, which may lead to loss of life if the person involved does not give adequate treatment.

Ethical Responses to Management of Conflict in Marriage

Maintain Good Intimacy: Intimacy has to do with two people who are in close relationships. In their friendliness and closeness, the two relate to each other in private and personal ways. His contribution (Adams: 2002:41) submitted that an intimate relationship between husband and wife is essential to the success of a Christian home because when the husband and wife confide in each other, and share

their life experiences, the pressure of marital life becomes evenly shared. This made their burden to be lighter and easier to bear for both of them. It has been discovered that an intimate relationship is one of the moral virtues between husband and wife to manage conflict and master the pressures of life.

Care: In the context of this work refers to the couple's responsibility in marriage to nurture one another and try to meet each other's needs for a life time. Since care means sustenance, support, and nourishment, ethically, couples must try to do their best to care for each other. In a situation where one of them fails to do this, whether physically or emotionally, it can result in complaints or resentment, which, if not properly addressed, can lead to conflict in the family life (Adam:2002:42).

Honesty is another ethical response to conflict management in marriage and family life. A popular adage says, "honesty is the best policy" (Niyi-Ojo: 2014:150) opines that honesty is the only way for couples to understand each other. Without this, adjustments that are crucial to creating compatibility in marriage cannot be made. (Adams 2002:29-30) view honesty as a basic Christian concept that needs to be reinforced within the family. One of how honesty can be applied in the family is by fulfilling the promise made by both the husband and the wife or the one made by the parents to their children.

Fidelity is loyalty to one's spouse, which calls for maintaining a healthy sexual relationship among the couples. (Niyi-Ojo 2014:175) suggest that couples must resist the temptation to look after the opposite sex. They must build boundaries around their heart by being content with each other without emotional gaze over another person outside their marital home.

Forgiveness: This is the act of granting a free pardon or giving up a claim of retaliation for an offence. It has to do with personal relations between one who has been wronged and a wrongdoer. In the act of forgiving, the cost or penalty for a wrong, whether actual or perceived, is born by the forgiver and not by the one forgiven (Green: 2011:309-310).

Respect: It means to hold in honor, esteem, regard, and value others. Respect is an act of identifying and appreciating the work of other fellows. Couples should value themselves regardless of race, tribe, and social status. God's work of redemption in Christ views every person as worthy of respect. The husband should respect the worth of his wife by loving her, and likewise, the wife should give due respect to her husband no matter his weakness. Constant criticism, abuses, and fighting are all signs of disrespect of persons. Children should respect their parents in family life, and likewise, parents should respect their children as they bring them up.

Justice: This simply means giving to every person what is due to him/her. Justice is not only thought of in terms of politics or social responsibilities but an ethical virtue that should guide every marital relationship because of its importance for family living. When used in family life, it carries a sense of fairness and righteousness (Adams: 2002:28). Thus in the word of Emmanuel Kant's ethical theory of categorical imperative, which is corroborated with the word of Jesus Christ in Matthew 7:12:” In everything do unto others what you would have them do to you”

Consistency: This ethical response is submitted to the fact that couples should not allow their marriage to turn them into the opposite of who they are. (Ayinde: 2019:74) affirms that marital challenges can be so engulfing and make one quickly let go of Christian identity and testimony. Couples should never let the love, passion, and interest they have for each other taper.

Tolerance: This simply suggests accommodation of views and opinions. In marriage and family life, tolerance is recommended to enhance cordial, human, and social relations. It is anchored on the concept of live and let live, in which rich and poor are entitled to co-exist (Ayantayo:2009:79-80). Tolerance is implicitly one of the ethical responses to conflict management.

Cooperation: This is another ethical response to conflict management in marriage and family life, as expressed by Ayantayo (2009:74-75). Cooperation implies a co-partnership and tie-up relationship. There is always growth of fraternity, mutual love, assistance, and reciprocity

when there is a cooperative spirit in family life. In Christianity, cooperation suggests unity which is presented in the community of faithful (II Cor. 13:11). This researcher supports the above that cooperation should not only be between the husband and wife but also among other members of the family on the issues that concern the family life welfare in order to suppress any form of misunderstanding that may later give birth to conflict.

Patience and perseverance: The word patience is the quality of being patient, which means to sustain or repress. It also means to make one's mind easy and stop worrying. Patience is indispensable in a couple's marital relationship with circumstances of life or other challenges surrounding their family life. Perseverance means to persevere, i.e., to keep on trying and maintaining one's grip (Ayantayo: 2009: 85). The writer agreed with the author that these virtues are an essential ethical response to conflict management in marriage and family life because most conflict would have been avoided if these virtues are maintained. Therefore, the researcher suggests that couples are to incorporate them into their marriage and family on a daily basis.

Loving Confrontation: Confronting one's spouse with grace and tactfulness requires wisdom, patience, and humility. In a confrontation, the couples are to focus on facts rather than judging motives, and behaviour rather than character, seek to understand each other's view and understand the circumstances and their nature rather than who is winning or losing (www.tourch.org.sg Accessed 6/2/2022).

Good Financial Plan: The couple should sit down and work together on a family budget. A budget is nothing more than a plan. (Newman: 1999:21) opined that money can be the best area of communication in a marriage or it can be the worst. It can cause great mischief and misery or, if well planned, will prove a great blessing. Poor money management can cause a bad temper; it will corrode a relationship that, if not properly managed, can result in conflict that can tear up a home. Therefore, the writer agreed with the above author that a good financial plan and mutual understanding when it comes to the issue of money and spending is one of the ethical responses to manage conflict in marriage and family life.

Peaceful life: Conflict in marriage is inevitable. When two people come together, it is like two rivers that merge. There is that time of turbulence, but when it flows on to become a more vital force, the couple may become extremely proficient at the trading insult to each other. To live a peaceful life means stepping aside or simply refusing to retaliate. Therefore, seeking peace in marriage and family life can help to manage conflict in marriage and family life ethically.

Conclusion

Conflict in marriage is inevitable. When two people come together it is like two rivers that merge. This paper has examined conflict management in marriage and family life with an overview of the cases of conflict in the Bible. It was also established that many factors like poor communication, sex denial, infidelity, lack of respect, dishonesty, financial problem, and adjustment promote conflict in marriage and family life. It was established in the paper that divorce, domestic violence, death, children suffering, and separation are the resultant effects of conflict in family life. In addition to the above, the work also revealed that couples, family members, and society at large could ethically respond to conflict management through good communication, respect, care, forgiveness, and an excellent financial plan. This is possible when couples tolerate themselves, cooperate and are ready to live a peaceful life in their marital home.

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ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF DRUG ABUSE AMONG YOUTHS IN DEKINA AREA OF KOGI STATE

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria is widely recognized as the giant of Africa. Its greatness is attributed to its huge territory, the endowment of natural resources, and energetic, youthful population. However, the menace of drug abuse is seriously threatening the youthful population. The aim of this study is to provide an overview of the ethical implications of drug abuse among youths in Dekina Area of Kogi State and provide valuable information for stakeholders. The study is basically qualitative. It made use of unstructured interviews and observation methods in data collection. A simple Random Method was used to select 15 interview respondents across the three districts (Okura, Biraidu, and Dekina) that made up Dekina Local Government Area. The study findings reveal that drug abuse among youths in the study area is accompanied by severe ethical problems such as drunkenness, promiscuity, stealing and robbery, and truancy with obvious consequences that manifest in avoidable death, insanity, terminal disease, high rate of crime violence and poor academic performance. Thus, the study recommends that the government, religious leaders and religious institutions, schools, and traditional leaders who are the major stakeholders in the society should be involved in the fight against drug abuse among the Dekina youths that will ultimately lead to its decrease.

Keywords: Ethical implications, Drug abuse, Youths, Dekina Area of Kogi State.

Introduction

In Nigeria, the youths seem to be more involved in drug use and abuse. The theoretical foundation is the Socio-cultural Theory of Drug Abuse, which asserts that drug Abuse is determined by the sociocultural values of the people (Abudu 2008, 34). This theory has its root in the world of scholars like Oshodi, Aina, Onojale (2010, 52-57), and Oshikoya, Ali (2006, 133-139). The popular opinion held by them is that among some tribes in Nigeria, their culture permits the consumption of alcohol and marijuana, while other cultures do not. Among the tribes in Nigeria, for example, Edo, Ijaw, Igbo, Ibibio, Urhobo, Itsekiri, and Yoruba, alcohol is used in cultural activities. This theory is applicable to the Igala people of Dekina Area, whose main aim of consuming alcohol is cultural. Hence, the validity of the theory. Considering the delicate and sensitive position of the youths within the country, drug addiction among them remains a significant threat to national growth and development (Amadi and Akpelu 2018, 21).

According to Kazeem (2009, 67), nearly 15% of adult populations in Nigeria (around 14.3 million people) are involved in psychoactive drug substances. The data Kazeem used which is apparently obtained from Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the centre for Research and information on Substance Abuse (CRISA) shrived the high levels of drugs. Sedatives, heroin, cocaine, and non-medical use of prescription opioids were also noted. The survey excluded the use of tobacco and alcohol. Again the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA 2018) has also expressed concern over the increasing level of drug abuse and drug trafficking among Nigerian youths. According to the NDLEA, the situation has been worsened by the affordability of substance abuse.

Odebunmi (1994, 42) linked the problem of indiscipline in schools to drug use when they claimed that the current trend y indiscipline among students in school and Nigerian youths in general has become so rampant that recessive governments have bought for ways of combating its problems.

In another study by Gobir et al. (2006, 4), the determinant of drug abuse included the type of family and occupation.

Adenike et al (2014, 22-24) revealed that a significant relationship existed between drug abuse on youth development and academic (failure). Abdu – Raheem (2013, 25) study showed a significant relationship existed between family background, peer influence, family cohesion, and drug abuse.

The study also revealed that drug abuse negatively affects students' academic performance.

Apart from Adenike et al. and Abdu – Raheem's work showed a correlation between drug abuse and youth development, especially in academic performance. Other studies identified above revealed significant indicators and factors of youth engagement in drugs, yet they did not consider the ethical implications of drug abuse among youths, how it can affect their involvement in crime, Academic Performance, avoidable death, insanity (mental health) and the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases. The study attempts a clearer analysis of the ethical implications of drug abuse among youth in the Dekina Area of Kogi state. The study, therefore, seeks to address the following research question, which will serve as a guide.

1. What is the nature of the substance abuse in the Dekina area of Kogi state?
2. Are there some ethical problems identified with drug abuse among youths in the Dekina Area of Kogi state?
3. What are the ethical implications or consequences of drug abuse on youths in this area?

Conceptual Clarification

What is Drug Abuse?

Humanity had always depended on herbs, leaves, and plants to treat themselves from various ailments, and their uses never constituted any danger because correctly administered drugs become medicine while the unprescribed application becomes abuse.

Therefore, a drug, according to Ogunbiyi (2018, 24) is a substance used for medical purposes that changes the state or function of the body. It is considered as a substance that modifies discernments, cognition, mood, behavior, and general body functions (Balogun 2006, 19). Likewise, Fawa (2003, 42) asserts that a drug is any substance that is used for the treatment or prevention of disease in man and animals. Based on these definitions, we can infer that when drugs are misapplied, they become or constitute abuse. Then, what is drug abuse?

Drug abuse may be defined as the habit of over-dependence or miss – use of one precise drug with or without a prior medical diagnosis from qualified health practitioners (Lakhan pal, Agnihotri 2007, 1-11 and Oluremi 2012, 342-374). The abuse of legal drugs can happen when people use the drugs in a manner other than directed by the manufacturers or for legitimate purposes (Ogunbiyi 2021, 18). According to the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC 2018), drug abuse is seen as excessive and persistent self – administration of a drug without regard to the medically or culturally accepted patterns. Similarly, The World Book Encyclopedia (2004, 250) vicious drug interferes with a healthy and productive life. According to World Health Organization (2018, 66), substance abuse is the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs.

Salifu (2021, 93) opines that youth is a period of time that begins when puberty starts but continues longer in some cultures than others. Youthfulness includes puberty, but it also has to do with changes in the roles and attitudes that are part of the culture in which the individual lives. According to Oderinde (1998, 144), young age is difficult for both parents and youths. During this stage, adults are prone to say, “I just don't know what is the matter with them.” He further stated that youth is an extension of childhood and thereby presents unique characteristics.

In developing countries for which Nigeria is referenced, youth is about 29 percent of the total population and is declining as a

proportion of the total population while still growing in absolute numbers, altering the landscape for many social and financial policy issues (Nugent 2015, 34)

According to the United Nations, for statistical consistency across regions. (UNESCO 2017), defined “youth” as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. Taking into consideration the Youth Bulge Theory (Tendaishe 2014, 43) identifies young men or women as a historically volatile and ever-increasing population. It explores the idea that the presence of more than 20% of young people raises the potential for rebellion and unrest. The concept specifically equates a large percentage of young men with an increased possibility of violence, particularly in the global south, where youths often account for 60% of the population. Wikipedia considers youth as the time of life when one is young, especially the period between childhood and maturity, the early period of existence, growth, or development

According to Mariam Webster, “the passage from a dependent childhood to independent adulthood.” When young people are in transition from a world of rather secure development to a world of choice and risk.

Nature of Drug abuse in Dekina

Dekina Local Government Area is Located in the Eastern part of Kogi State and situated in the tropical middle belt region of Nigeria. It is located between latitude 7°20N and 7°50N and longitude 6°50E and 7°30E (Ucholi 2007, 4). In the Dekina area today, the youths have access to narcotics or hard drugs. They are considered dangerous drugs because they negatively impact the health of persons who take them without medical prescriptions or advice (Salifu 2021, 84). Narcotic drugs include marijuana, cocaine, heroin, and opium.

These drugs have medicinal value. Doctors use them for selected medical problems, but their effects are too strong for ordinary people who use them freely without control. In the course of our investigation, Momoh, Ocheja, and Angela (Interview

respondents) note that cigarettes and alcohol are the gateway drugs (initial drugs taken before they progress to harder drugs) taken by youths in the Dekina area. These drugs are eaten, smoked, swallowed, drunk, or injected into the veins. Their effects are destructive and powerful. It was discovered that some youths emulate the drug use pattern of their parents. They say this was due to the nature of the occupation they grew up seeing their parents doing. Such occupation includes local lumbering, Indian hemp plantation, and tobacco farming for commercial purposes.

On the other hand, youths in the Dekina area are increasingly becoming increasingly engaged in taking alcoholic beverages. The abuse here is that they drink more than they actually need for an ordinary taste for drinking alcohol. Excessive drinking of alcoholic beverages has increasingly intensified the incidence of drunkenness and multiplied the number of drunkards among the youth. Intoxication has become a phenomenon in which Dekina youths find pleasure. Corroborating this, Emmanuel, Elizabeth, and Abigail (interview respondents) posit that alcohol has been accepted as a social drink. And that there is virtually no area in Dekina that does not brew local alcohol such as “Ebecha”, “Alah”, “Aguye” and “Akpayingo” all of which are the brands of “burukutu” (an alcoholic drink made from millet). In line with the above submission, Pastors Inalegwu, Sunday and Idoko (Interview respondents) affirm that the majority of youths drink regardless of their religious background because alcohol, be it industrially or locally brewed, is allowed to be consumed as a symbol of social identity during the various festive periods such as Egbe, Ibegwu, Okwulla, Itallo, Salla and Christmas festivals in Dekina Local Government Area.

There is an argument that traditional drinks, such as palm wine, and locally made gin (ogogoro or kai-kai, burukutu etc) are improved than that of foreign alcohol. Whether local or foreign, they are all very hazardous to the body if taken consistently. Many youths in the remote spaces are prone to abusing drugs, especially locally made gin (kai-kai), palm wine and brukutu. Brukutu, typically called BKT is an intoxicating drink initiated mostly in the northern part of

Nigeria. It is a very solid and intoxicating drink made of guinea corn. Even though it is a strong wine that is being abused, it is said to contain protein. "It is often stated that alcoholism would conquer among the natives, even if there were no import of spirit" (Albert 1995, 34).

Aka et al (2003, 22-24) reveals that cannabis was brought into Nigeria by slave traders and soldiers who returned from the world wars. Millions of people broadly use this drug because of its efficacy in mood alteration. Research has revealed that it is being abused by all grades and strata of Nigerian society, especially the youths and adolescents in Dekina.

Causes of Drug Abuse

There are a lot of features that cause drug abuse among the Dekina youths;

- a. **Peer Group:** This is one of the mutual causes of drug addiction and abuse. It is a form of societal stimulus on the affected youth. A peer group is a group of people of the same age or social status. A lot of evil, like drug abuse, armed robbery, and rape, among our youths in Nigeria and beyond are caused by peer groups. Someone can be influenced to become a drug addict by his friends who are drug addicts.
- b. **Family:** The parental background of a child can expose a child to all sorts of evil, including drug abuse. This could be due to family problems like broken homes, polygamous families, poverty, cultural influence on children, having a father who is a drug addict, etc. if a child has a father who is a drug addict, it is likely that the child will become a drug addict, "like father like son." As the child watches his father, there is every tendency that the child will become a drug addict or smoker, and from cigarette smoking, he will graduate to other hard drugs.
- c. **Frustration:** This is another fast and shared factor that leads to drug abuse. Many youths are irritated in our society today. Many of our youths' desires or dreams are unfulfilled. Some are in higher institutions without graduating because of references and other hidden things that are setting them back.

- d. **Search for a Dreadful Identity:** This is commonly found on the streets, in some secondary schools, and higher institutions. Some youths like to have a bad look, they like to be identified as “bad guys” and to be feared.
- e. **Occupational pattern:** Alcohol (Burukutu) production and sales in this area encourage consumption among youths. Likewise, the farming of tobacco. Cannabis and tobacco are mostly consumed during hunting and lumbering activities at night.
- f. **Social factor:** Alcohol is considered a drink for social identity during occasions such as naming ceremonies, marriages, funerals, and festivals (Egbe, Itallo, Ibegwu, Ogede, and Uchuito).

Ethical Problems of Drug Abuse Among Youths in Dekina Area.

Some of the moral problems associated with drug abuse by youths in the Dekina area include the following:

1. Promiscuity

Among the youth in Dekina Area, promiscuity has been noted as a growing phenomenon. In night parties and clubs, there is indiscriminate sexual intercourse. Such prostitutes drugged themselves before attempting such an immoral adventure. This promiscuous act promotes fornication and adultery in society. Deborah, Rebbeca, and Akogwu (interview respondents) state that female students get themselves drugged before going out with men to lodge in hotels such as Abuchi, Kapitool, Obeya, wildlife and Lambina in Anyigba town.

2. Drunkenness.

Youths in the Dekina area are increasingly becoming increasingly engaged in taking alcoholic beverages. The abuse here is that they drink more than they actually need for an ordinary taste for drinking alcohol. Excessive drinking of alcoholic beverages has been increasing the incidence of drunkenness and multiplying the number of drunkards among the youth.

3. Stealing and Robbery.

In Dekina area, most youths involved in robbery use the drug as a means to an end. They operate under the influence of an illicit drug such as marijuana, ogoro and burukutu (alcoholic drink). Some of them steal to satisfy their drug cravings.

4. Truancy

In Dekina area, there are many youths who idle away from schools or offices, their precious time without good excuses. On this ground, Idoko, Aminu, and Okolo (Interview Respondents) assert that truants in this category turn their attention to roaming in the streets, dancing at musical shops, playing games, gambling for pleasures, drinking beer at kiosks or beer palours, taking narcotics or engaging in other frivolous activities when they are supposed to be at school or in the place of work.

Ethical Implications of Drug Abuse Among Youths

1. Avoidable death

It has been shown that alcoholics hardly live as long as non-drinking fellows. An officer of the Road Safety Commission, Dekina branch, states that the high incidences of road traffic, and industrial and domestic accidents in our society are attributed to drug abuse. A road accident due to drunk driving has claimed the lives of many in this area. He further cites an example that the majority of the road accidents between 2015 to 2016 were mostly fatal with no survival of lives, and hence it was discovered from an investigation that eighty percent of those drivers were under one drug influence or another, especially alcohol and cannabis.

2. Insanity

For many addicts in the Dekina area, life is a waste, having lived life unable to benefit themselves or their communities. Most of their time is spent taking drugs or nursing the effects of the drugs thus rendering them useless to themselves and to others. Often time, they are so deformed that they are unable to perform any physical or mental function. Most young people who take to drugs tend to lose interest in all other things except drugs. They do

not care about their looks and personal hygiene, often looking dirty and wearing unkempt hair and beard. Their bodies are always oozing out the offensive odour. Their lives revolve continually around drugs only.

3. Terminal Diseases

Deadly infectious diseases such as hepatitis and HIV AIDs (oga alokili), capable of causing premature death are contracted through the exchange of needles contaminated by infected adults during drug rounds. And it was reported that over the span of 5 years, 26 youths have been lost to other diseases like (uko owe) tuberculosis (ofu ojedo) anthritis-B and (Edo wuna) liver inflammation, especially those addicted to Indian hemp and alcohol. It was affirmed that “most of these youths come for treatment when their condition is at the irredeemable stage.

4. High Rate of Crime/Violence

Youths engaged in drug abuse usually start committing minor crimes. It is important to note that drugs are the principal motivation of crimes like stealing, burglary, prostitution, cultism, armed robbery and financial scams. In other words, it is correct to say that drugs and crime are inseparable. It does not matter to the addict how he gets the money; what matters is being able to satisfy his drug need.

5. Poor Performance in Academic Works

In Dekina, youths who have formed the habit of going to school late miss a lot of periods almost every day, affecting their academic performance in school. Because they could not, at the end of the day put their notes together, and during the examination, they definitely could not do well. They then resort to cheating in the examination as they want to pass at all costs. One realizes that at the end of every term and session, a lot of them are asked to repeat their classes or withdraw from the school because of their poor academic performance (Salifu 2021, 93)

Recommendations

Based on the discussions, the following recommendations were offered.

Religious Leaders/ Religious Institutions

Religious leaders in the country and particularly in Kogi State should focus much of their attention on moral regeneration instead of materialism. Religious organisations in the society and on campuses should be more aggressive in their drive to win souls. Religious differences should be set aside, and collective efforts geared towards cleansing the society should be embraced. People cannot be religious in the real sense of it, and oppress, suppress, intimidate, harass, commit incest, rape and kill fellow human beings. Religion promotes love, peace, tolerance, obedience, loyalty, confidence, trust, commitment and conformity among members of a particular social group. Therefore, we should go back to religion for the successful moral regeneration of members of the institutions and society in general.

Traditional Leaders

- a. Every individual is his brother's keeper – This value is fundamental in the practice of extended family relationships, which is cherished in Nigeria and all over black Africa. By this value, it follows logically that his brother has been part of his family throughout his life. At his death, his immediate family becomes his direct responsibility. His children and his wife are supervised and guided by him
- b. Corporate responsibility of bringing up children. All adults in society must correct offending children. If the children persist, they can be punished by the adults without their parents taking any offense.

School

The school has an important role to play in the prevention of drug abuse. Some of the roles are as follows:

- a. To teach the students the dangers of drug abuse
- b. Caring and monitoring the students
- c. Organizing lectures/seminars for parents and students on the

dangers of drug abuse.

- d. Having workshops, conferences, and symposia on drug abuse and its effects on students.
- e. Counseling centers should be opened to discourage the students from even attempting to give their a first trial.

Law Enforcement Agencies

Law Enforcement Agents, Civil Defence, and Police should avoid collaborating with criminals. They should ensure that any erring youth should be punished accordingly. In regulating conduct, the law rewards complaints, persuades, recalcitrant, coerces, intransigents, and punishes offenders. The law enforcement agents include the court, the police, prisons, and legal practitioners. They deal with delinquents, deviants, and criminals. Effective enforcement of law implies indirect enforcement of public morality. This is because the law encourages and promotes moral restraints.

Government

Regrettably, the recent depressed economy in the country apparently renders the government at all levels incapacitated and unable to live up to the youths' expectations in the area of employment opportunities. Hence, some of the youths in the country and Kogi state in particular, use this as an excuse to engage in all kinds of fraud. This is morally significant because it is the popular belief across the world that idle youths are workshops of the devil. Idle youths resort to criminal activities of all sorts. But this is not to suggest that all the employed youths are free from immoral activities, hence the need for government to provide opportunities for youths in the area.

Conclusion

The abuse of drugs constitutes ethical problems among the youths in Dekina area. It is also important to emphasise that youth development in this area is negatively affected as a result of these eminent consequences on them.

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FLEXIBILITY IN MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS AS A MEANS TO UNDERMINE CULTURE-RELATED CHALLENGES IN CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

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Abstract

Culture cannot be separated from marriage because it is part of human existence and forms a significant part of individual lifestyles. In other words, culture is the way of life; it determines the tradition, customs, beliefs, and practices in every society. As crucial, weighty, and essential culture is in marriage, marital relationship outweighs, exceeds, and surpasses culture. Marriage was established for a mutual relationship and should be sustained at all costs. This paper examined cultural influence in Christian homes and discussed flexibility in the marital relationship as a tool to undermine problems that culture poses in contemporary Christian marriage. The analytical research method was used with a purely library approach. Various scholars' views were analyzed from related literature. Findings revealed that flexibility in marriage helps Christian couples open to new ideas; encourages couples to express and release strong feelings; helps couples accept that readjustment in marriage requires time; assists each of the spouses to understand him or herself; and helps them understand their partners; assist the couples to understand the roles that each should assume in marriage; and finally, help them fully surrender to Christ and experience Christian maturity. Cultural-related challenges can destroy the unity and growth of any Christian home if those challenges are not handled maturely and appropriately. Therefore, couples should be committed to the sustainability of their homes; develop a flexible mindset in marital relationships with their spouses; think of other partners in their decision-making; identify conflict-prone issues; and take the initiative to talk it over as children of God.

Keywords: Flexibility, Marital-Relationship, Couple, Culture.

Introduction

Marriage is the gift of God to humanity; it is an institution divinely ordained by God, even when it is worldly or concerned with material values or ordinary life rather than spiritual or sacred. Marriage is neither established by the declaration of any human priest or pastor nor involved the consent of (Adam and Eve) the partners involved, but on God's divine love, care, and value for human relationship. God observed that it is not suitable for the man to be alone (Gen 2:18) and decided to provide for the man to help meet, which was to be the helpful companion, partner, or in more formal words, a wife. From marriage, the sacred and legal union, God proposed that family be established and that the human race be sustained, multiplied, and replenished.

Family, a unit system that comprises parents and their children, is designed to come from marriage. Family is not just an important thing, but everything in life. The earlier people acclimatize, attune, and respond cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally to the fact that family determines society, the better and stronger the community becomes. People are identified with their family structure and history, and this is because family is life and first, while everything else comes second, no matter how important it may be. "A happy family is but an earlier heaven (<https://www.shulterfly.com>, 2022).

Covid -19 pandemic has shown the whole world how important families are. Many would have died if not for timely family intervention through calls, prayers, supply of relief materials, warm hospitality for those who are circumstantially locked down outside their immediate families, and health care support, to mention a few. Ayankeye affirms that African culture has a solid family tie, which explains why Africans see themselves as responsible for their brothers' and sisters wellness (Ayankeye, 2019, 17). This relationship is beneficial and helpful in the survival of the African economy and social bonds.

As beautiful and essential a family is, it is emotionally irritating to see some Christian families living and promoting detrimental and defeating cultural beliefs, like seeing their wives as properties, placing the interest of the extended family above the interest of their spouses, which affects their homes and society. The influx of cultural beliefs and superstitions, the widely held but irrational beliefs in supernatural influences, especially as leading to bad luck or a practice based on such beliefs, are compelling underlying factors collapsing some Christian family unions (Odunze, 1981, 201). One factor in navigating destructive cultural beliefs in marriage is flexibility in marital relationships. Flexibility in marriage is the ability to change, bend, and shift ground but be resilient for the common good, growth, and development of the family. To this end, this paper examines culture and marriage, how to navigate defeating cultural beliefs in Christian marriage and family, and the purpose of marriage and family from a biblical standpoint.

Culture and Marriage

Progressive scholars have emphasized poor economy as the reason for marital instability and decline in marriage. In contrast, conservative scholars submit that inadequate public policy is the reason for marriage shortfalls and dangling situations. Studies find qualified support for liberal and conservative positions, though neither can fully account for the overall problem, retreats, or awkward or perplexing frame of mind in marriage. Wilcox, Wolfinger, and Stokes opine that neither economics nor public policy can fully explain the challenges in marriage and suggests that cultural and civic factors are to be incorporated into any serious consideration of contemporary family trending style or pattern. Probing back to the late 1960s, these authors discovered five significant cultural trends in family life (Wilcox, Wolfinger, and Stokes, 2016, 104).

First is the rise of “expensive individualism,” the idea that personal desires trump, outclass or are better than social obligations. This means that people feel less obligated to get and stay married. In

turn, rising expectations for marriage have contributed to many people's hesitant to marry, while those who are married have less fulfillment in marriage, quicker to divorce because they are less likely to trust that marriage and parenthood must be wrapped together (Wilcox, Wolfinger, and Stokes, 2016, 106). Second, the changes in mores and behaviour associated with the sexual revolution. This sexual revolution diminished the connection between sex, marriage, and parenthood, thereby presenting marriage as a less necessary and non-marital childbearing, a more acceptable and common trend in society (Wilcox, Wolfinger, and Stokes, 2016, 108).

Third, high sense of independence and equality. A sense of freedom among women raised their expectations for equality and intimacy in marriage. The authors posit further that the move came from second-wave feminism and women's rising force participation in the 1960s and 70s. To them, this force move reduces the imperative of marriage as many have declined to get married and stay married (Wilcox, Wolfinger, and Stokes, 2016, 111).

Forth, training children in non-impact families. An increasing number of children are raised in demoralized and fragmented families. Many of these children became pessimistic about their prospects for a lasting and successful marriage. Hence, they either remained unmarried, uncommitted to their wedding, or ready to break up at any slightest misunderstanding (Wilcox, Wolfinger, and Stokes, 2016, 114). This contributes significantly to increased spousal abuse and domestic violence in contemporary marriage. These developments make a family-centred ethos less central to human life, and parenting becomes a difficult task and harder because many untrained children are now parents (www.un.org, 2017).

The fifth cultural trend is transitioning from a “cornerstone” to a “capstone” marriage model. These authors avow that the transition is responsible for the way people see marriage. To them, men and women are less likely to see marriage as a substance for

adulthood and as the venue for sexual intimacy and parenthood. Instead, the capstone model of marriage makes people see marriage as out of their reach and places their minds on high economic, social and emotional strengths as the requirements for marriage. People spend less of their time and lives within the bond of matrimony and are likely to see the connection between parenthood and marriage (Wilcox, Wolfinger, and Stokes, 2016, 109).

Culture is an essential aspect of societal development, as it refers to how people understand and appreciate natural resources and each other. Culture should be intentionally taught at home for sustainable societal development. When culture is lost, society becomes polluted and corrupt. Younger generations and the physical environment within the polluted suffer from the loss of culture (www.un.org, 2017).

Culture can also influence an individual's awareness and expectations regarding marriage and family. In some cultures, with a clear division of rights and responsibilities for gender status, husband and wife may have distinct roles to play in marriage (<https://www.dipietropllc.com>, 2016). In some cultures, men have to provide for the housekeeping; he goes out of the world in search of money, security, sustenance and other comforts for the family; for the women, they remain at home to nurse the children and prepare food and other household chores. However, in the family where both the husband and the wife pursue their careers, ambitions subvert these traditional cultural expectations and practices, though people see them as disruptive (Wilcox, Wolfinger, and Stokes, 2016, 110).

Overall, as good and essential culture is to the daily activities of humanity, Christian couples should work hard to make marital relationships of higher value than the institution. It is a reality that the emphasis of Jesus Christ on relationships is a strong one. Suppose the purpose of the initiator (God) is understood. In that case, it will go a long way in motivating the actors (man and woman) in the marital relationship to do their best to make the home peaceful and help them fully surrender to Christ and experience Christian maturity.

Flexibility in Christian Marriage

Flexibility in marriage means being open to each other's plans and ideas and being willing to go beyond the comfort zone where necessary. It also means getting over the idea that one's desires are the most critical consideration in the relationship and responding to the needs and desires of the other party. Flexibility in a relationship means being open to new ideas, diverse ways of doing things, and even alien life experiences.

Flexibility in marriage creates a living relationship that becomes a growing unity. The essence of a biblical marriage is expressed in the concept of one flesh, regardless of personal cultural background. In the view of Ayankeye, the second of the creation accounts introduce the one flesh concept. This is found in Gen 2:24; thus, “a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Ayankeye, 2019, 38). Flexibility helps the husband to consider his wife's happiness, love, and desire in decision-making to live in unity and as one flesh. Flexibility in marriage also promotes a cordial relationship. Relationship in marriage is of high value because the marital relationship is likened to Christ relationship with the church.

Marriage flexibility helps couples see marriage roles as gifts and needs. It must be noted that a marital relationship calls for flexibility. This is because the part to be played are given based on the gift and needs of the individuals involved. God designed marriage so that the needs will be met in the gifts of the other. Flexibility in marriage strengthens the relationship and builds a robust marital tie between the couple. It helps to raise godly children and live together in marital harmony. Flexibility in marriage assists couples in expressing and releasing strong feelings and handling them maturely. It allows the couple to accept that adjustment in marriage requires time and understanding of their mate. Flexibility also assists couples in surrendering to Christ and experiencing Christian maturity, as well as motivates members of the family to translate their new understanding into appropriate action. Finally, flexibility encourages couples to find valuable and enjoyable activities in their mate (O'Donovan, 1996, 280).

Flexibility is essential in a marriage because it helps couples adapt to the challenges of today and thereby maintain a happy marriage. Closeness is a robust prediction because happy couples have learned how to pursue their interests and reconnect with their partner. Closeness describes how emotionally connected one feels to one's partner (<https://madaboutmarriage.com>, 2014).

Flexible in Christian marriage relationships can be developed by making sure decisions are two-sided. Couples should make decisions considering other family members' feelings, desires, and goals. Also, it is a great sign of maturity and flexibility for couples to think before speaking. Flexibility requires that one should process thoughts before they are uttered. To make plans in advance and share them with the other person is another quality of a person with a flexible mind. Many couples are too rigid in their thinking, feelings, and behaviour. These are qualities that destroy marriage and family relationships. Being psychologically flexible allows couples to see the other person's side and work on a compromise (<https://www.wellandgood.com>, 2020). This can bring safety and trust into a relationship and allow other partners to feel important, acceptable, and relevant in the family. It also allows spouses to have good conversations about working toward a more profound feeling of intimacy.

Navigating Culture-Related Challenges in Christian Marriage and Family

Africans are notoriously religious, yet they are culturally robust. Idowu (1968), Mbiti (1990), and Abimbola (2006) submit that culture shapes people and differentiates one tribe from another. This can be noticed, among others, from assigned (weather, water, language) and ascribed (tribal marks, dresses, festivals, modes of greeting) cultural milieus. In the view of Abimbola, Yorubas are a great set of people with a high level of religion-philosophical beliefs based on their organization, regulation, and moderation of daily lifestyle. As reach and good culture are, sometimes cultural influence wreaks havoc in many marriages and homes (Abimbola, 2006, 25-27)

For instance, the Yorubas value and better practice a communal lifestyle. Community is the first identity of the Yorubas. It is emotionally and intrinsically twisted or worked into every structure, makeup, and organization of their culture, the absence of which affects or damages relationships, customs, and societal stability (Makinde, 2004, 164). Communal living sometimes leads to misunderstandings when couples are of different cultural backgrounds. To navigate these hurdles, counseling for cross-cultural relationships is required. In a cross-cultural relationship, couples should first understand, respect, and be ready to compromise. No one should expect their partners to settle seamlessly into their way of life. Second, the husband and the wife should get a first-hand understanding and experience of each other's culture. Third, parents should pass on both cultures to their children, and fourth, they should be positive about individual differences (Garrity, and Marisa, www.goodhousekeeping.com, 2021).

Also, in Yoruba traditional settings, leadership is framed around patriarchal considerations, which present men in control and authority in society, and the women are subjected to subordinate or complementary roles (Makinde, 2004, 170). This explains why a female child is relegated from childhood to give in to her male counterpart, which is given a dominant position. This cultural position has damaged many families, particularly in role play and reversal. Marriage is not established for gender to dominate the other but to enjoy one another. When a culture negates the purpose of God for marriage, such culture should be modified and subjected to the design and principles of the divine moral principles for peaceful coexistence (Makinde, 2004, 172).

Polygamy is another traditional practice that destroys family unity in 21st-century marriage and family, particularly among Christians. Polygamy, the exercise of having more than one wife or husband simultaneously, is one of the strong cultural beliefs in African society. Men are allowed or even encouraged to contract polygamous marriage when there are challenges in their homes.

Traditionally, polygamy is more practised in some tribes that are predominantly farmers and local artworks; they farm to grow guinea corn, maize, yams, beans, rice, Groundnuts, and Bambara nuts and rear animals like cattle, sheep, dogs, goats, and chickens. Some are skilful in making mortar, pestle, hunting, and blacksmith (Makinde, 2004, 175-177).

From the writer's interaction with some students, married men have more than one wife to work on their farms. The more their wives, the more their children, and the larger and better the harvest. This practice does not exclude Christian homes and is generating conflicting issues in the church; and many cases get to the police for legal intervention (Ishaya, Wasiri, and Adamu. Interview, February 2022).

In the view of Ayankeye, every human being grows with cultural beliefs that form their socio-psychological structure. Ayankeye states that Christian couples should work on a few of these cultural beliefs in their union to avoid conflicting ideas or marital crises.

It has been observed that marriages and families have been bedeviled by tension, confusion and despair. Perceptions of the family as the bedrock of society have become challenging to sustain. This picture of marriage and family is shown in a number of indices. There are many changes in lifestyles, which impose significant demands on marriage and family (Ayankeye, 2019, 67-70).

Christian couples should learn the strategies for handling marital challenges because marital challenges are part of human existence; it is inevitable. Ayankeye proposes some ways out of cultural affinities that are “cankerworm” to mutual family stability.

Total Commitment: Sincere and total commitment in marriage ensures a cordial family relationship. Total commitment is real dedication, devotion, allegiance, loyalty or faithfulness that helps

couples develop short and long term visions for their homes and pursue them regardless of cultural background or principles. When couples are committed to their marriage, it helps them to disaffirm or deny individual cultural views, principles or practices harmful to family stability. Devotion to marriage will also assist each spouse in being less critical of their partners and open-minded to make corrections (Ayankeye, 2019, 67-70).

Discover the Conflict-prone Issues: Another way to navigate defeating cultural beliefs and practices in Christian homes is to recognize, spot or point-out areas of struggle or clash in ideas or interests between the spouses. This assists the couples in analyzing, reflecting, and being critical in addressing the issues and discussing them (Ayankeye, 2019, 67-70). Taking the initiative to talk over conflicting issues in the family is a quality and valid proof of being a child of God. Christian couples should seek peace and pursue it, for no one will see the Lord without it (Heb. 12:14).

Tolerating Each Other: To tolerate each other in a marriage context is to suffer with or, in a more formal way, is to be patient with one another. Ayankeye postulates, “It is a wrong notion to think that couple should not disagree at all. This wrong notion makes most couples feel they are not meant for each other.” Spouses should understand that disagreement in marriage is an indication of growth. When a person grows intellectually, psychologically, spiritually, and in other aspects of life, there will be disagreement. This is because the two are not increasing at the same pace but as unique individuals (Newman, <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu>, 2022). Tolerance helps us not always see issues from our perspective and ask, “why should my view, beliefs or desires over-ride”? Christian couples should be objective and sincere in dealing with one another. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a complaint against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you (Col. 3:13).

Forgive as the Lord forgave you: Unforgiveness has destroyed many Christian homes. Forgiveness is to pardon, outright absolution, exoneration or remission. Psychologists commonly define

forgiveness as “a conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of bitterness or revenge toward a person or group who has harmed you, irrespective of whether they deserve your forgiveness.” Experts who study or teach forgiveness make it strong that when people forgive, they do not gloss over or deny the seriousness of an offense against them. Forgiveness can help repair a damaged relationship, rehabilitate the offender and reform them. Forgiveness brings the forgiver peace of mind and frees them from harsh anger. In that way, it empowers people to recognize their pain without letting it define them, enabling them to heal and move on with their lives (Newman, <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu>, 2022).

Forgiveness and forbearance have fundamental lessons for every Christian couple. God commands it (Col. 3:13), exemplified by God (Eph. 4:32), receiving forgiveness from God is contingent on our practising it (Matt. 6:14-15), and answers to our prayers depend on readiness to forgive (Mark 11:25-26). Couples will successfully handle their culture-generating conflicts in marriage and enjoy healing their brokenness if they allow space for forgiveness in their hearts (Collins, 2007, 356).

Consonant Family Prayer Life: Consonant prayer life is to develop congruously, agreeing and consistent moments of prayer as a family. Consistent prayer life is a potent spiritual tool to subdue cultural beliefs ravaging the family's peace. As stated by Adeola (2021) “Trouble is common to man. There is no exception in any age or climate or situation. Rich and poor alike, the learned and the ignorant, one and all, are partakers of this sad and painful inheritance of the fall of man.” Therefore, prayer in times of trouble puts God at work (Adeola, 2021, 46). Prayer is not the opposite of work; it does not paralyze activity; instead, prayer itself is the most excellent work; it works mightily.

Conclusion

This paper has examined culture and its influence on the peaceful coexistence of Christian families. It has been observed that cultural beliefs and practices are part of the underlying factors causing marital conflicts and disunity in Christian homes; consequently, critical and practical approaches to navigate contradictory culture-related challenges are discussed. Overall, flexibility is emphasized in Christian marriage and family to subdue negative cultural influence in marriage.

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RESOLUTION OF MARITAL CONFLICT AMONG YOUNG COUPLES AND ITS MORAL CONCERN FOR PASTORAL CARE MINISTRY

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ABSTRACT

Marital conflict is increasing among young couples nowadays. This is evident from the frequent report of cases of conflict involving young couples in the society. The problem often leads to grave consequences for the couples, their children, their family, and their Churches. Therefore, this paper examines marital conflict among young couples; identify causes and effects of marital conflict among young couples; discusses moral concern for the pastoral ministry to resolve marital conflict among young couples. The paper submits that marital conflict is a misunderstanding between couples that often involves the display of hatred, insult, anger, abusive words, and frequent heated arguments between the couples. Its causes include a lack of financial provisions to meet needs, wrong handling of individual differences, in-laws' negative interference, and sexual dissatisfaction. The paper submits that the prominent effects of marital conflict among young couples are incessant brawling, loss of happiness in the marriage, abandonment of sexual relations, and unnecessary animosity. The paper, however, presents the moral concern for pastoral care ministry to resolve marital conflict among young couples by offering moral guiding, reconciling approach, behavioural adjustment and spiritual nurturing. The paper recommended that young couples with marital conflict should freely consult their pastors and marriage counselors. Churches should frequently organise programmes to empower conflicted couples for sustainable family life.

Keywords: Marital conflict, Pastoral ministry, Resolution, Young couples.

Introduction

Marital conflict is increasing among young couples nowadays. This is evident from the frequent report of cases of conflict involving young couples in society. Marital conflict often leads to grave consequences for the couples, their children, their family, and their Churches. People marry with the hope of having lasting happiness. Couples start their marriage believing that the love they profess for one another would make them give and receive joy readily. They usually do not expect to be hurt by each other, at least not in the early stage of their marriage. However, it could be devastating when they enter married life and find the reality of conflict, cutting short their marital expectations.

Young couples are the couples whose marriages are between one day to ten years (1 day-10 years), not minding their biological age. Such couples are in the early stage of marriage, still trying to know, understand and adjust to each other. Marital conflict refers to disputes involving misunderstanding or disagreement between couples in the course of their day-to-day interaction. Islami (2017:1) states that marital conflict often stems from “incompatible needs, desires, goals, and interests.” Thus, young couples in churches are not immune from this problem, despite their exposure to church life and services, including sound biblical teachings.

In some cases, unresolved marital conflicts can lead to physical, psychological, emotional, social, and spiritual challenges. This paper attempts to provide solutions to this challenge from a Christian ethical perspective, aiming to curtail the challenges of marital conflict. Thus, this paper examines the resolution of marital conflict and draws moral concern for the pastoral ministry.

Overview of Marital Conflict

Marital conflict is a common challenge in society and it is a moral problem in society. Marital conflict is a threat to the sustainability of marital life. Tolorunleke (2014:21) defines marital conflict as “the state of tension or stress between marital partners.” Adepoju

(2017:12) sees it as a combination of problems like communication, alienation, or threats to the security of the marital relationship, leading to anxiety and erosion of the marital system. In Brown's (2020) view, marital conflict is a disagreement between husband and wife “that leads to power struggles, contention or personality clash.” It is important to note that “marital conflict” and “marital disharmony” appear to have the same meaning in literature. Ibeh, Obidoa, and Uzoechina, (2013:41) define marital disharmony as a quarrel in which the persons involved see a threat to their wants, interests, or concerns. It is also viewed as a battle or competition between people with competing needs, ideas, views, values, or ambitions. Going by the definition above, it is clear that marital disharmony is not different from marital conflict. The writers are in agreement with the above positions and the paper submits that marital conflict is a threat and inimical to the healthy life of the couples.

Islami (2016:23-25) clarifies that conflict arises from how individuals process information in relationships, especially when they feel the action of another person is threatening their interest. According to Runde and Flanagan (2007:65, 67), conflict is “any situation where people have incompatible interests, goals, principles or feelings.” In some cases, conflict ensues because the spouses have different values, adopt different principles and prefer different tactics for addressing issues. An unresolved conflict can grow increasingly through the levels of differences, misunderstanding, discord, and polarisation.

Dildar, Sitwat, and Yasin (2013:1435), identify different types of marital conflict, which include aggressive husband, lack of cooperation, lack of spending time together, children's issues, decreased effective communication, and financial problems. The paper adds that marital conflict also includes: selfishness, role issues, changing traditional marital roles, sex issues, and infidelity issues. According to Groesberk and Swierezer (2006:230-232), marital conflict can be classified into three types: domestic violence, emotional abuse, and opinion difference. Domestic violence is when

the couple engages in physical assaults and uses expressions that threaten the security of their relationship; emotional abuse is when the couple uses vulgar, name-calling as well as dehumanising statements to inflict emotional hurt and intimidation on one another; opinion difference is where the couple express opinions that differ from the perspective of the spouse.

Akinsola (2016:23-24), also groups marital conflict into three types. He, however, used different designations: foundational, structural, and operational. Hence, foundational conflicts are the conflicts that challenge the reason for marriage; structural conflicts are the ones that relate to the influence of third parties in the relationship, while operational conflicts are disagreements that are fuelled by the differences in methods or approaches to issues. In the view of Cloud and Townsend (1999:238-270), however, marital conflict is of six types: the presence of sin in the life of one of the spouses; lack of maturity or brokenness in the husband or wife; having hot feelings without specific offence; the presence of contradicting desires; the interests of a spouse running contrary to the relationship's need; and known versus unknown problems.

Scholars have also noted that marital conflict goes through some stages. Akinsola (2016:11-12) holds that marital conflict goes through mild, severe, and critical levels. Collins (2007:326-327) highlights five stages, including the tension development stage, role confusion stage, injustice collecting stage; confrontation stage; and adjustment stage. In the view of Shoremi (2002: 32-35.), however, there are seven stages of conflict. These are the honeymoon stage, the neutral stage, the negative stage, the explosive stage, the run-away stage, the divorce stage, and the stage of marriage. The levels represent an increasing depth of the conflict. As the conflict progresses, it also gets more difficult to be resolved. There is the tendency for the couple to respond to the conflict situation with the same attitudes that brought them into it, such as shouting at each other, harshly criticising one another and name-calling. Sadly, these would only sustain the cycle of conflict in the marriage.

From the above positions, the paper identifies the following parametres to identify marriages that have marital conflict; physical fighting, violence, noticeable unhappiness, withdrawal from friends by one or both spouses, poorly catered children, verbal abuse, open criticism, ironic comments, threats, humiliating comments, unresponsiveness and technical divorce.

Causes of Marital Conflict among Young Couples

Marital conflict among young couples is a common problem today. Some causes for the occurrence and increase of marital conflict among young couples nowadays are classified into moral and psychological factors.

Moral Factors: Moral factors responsible for marital conflict include couples' ignorance of healthy patterns of handling conflict, finance or money matter, differences in faith or religious belief, lying, communication failure, in-law Interference in cross-cultural marriages where the in-laws have different cultural practices and traditions from their son-in-law or daughter-in-law. Marital unfaithfulness, lack of commitment, sexual dissatisfaction, unmet expectations when the journey begins (Ayankeye, 2010:14, and Tolorunleke, 2014:25). Unfulfilled emotional needs, infidelity, anger, dirtiness, inability to cook food, alcoholism and change in marital roles due to the current economic reality.

Psychological Factor: Psychological factors responsible for marital conflict include untamed anger, aggression, the intention to do things that would harm the other person, slander, which is speaking to damage another person's reputation; unwholesome speech, which is the use of filthy language in conversation, stress and individual difference (Ogundipe, 2015:64-65, Olagunju, 2007 and LaHaye, 1999:8-9).

Effects of Marital Conflict

The couples involved, the family, church and the society feel the effects of marital conflict in several ways and it is categorised into moral, psychological and spiritual effects.

Moral Effects: Moral effects of marital conflict include domestic violence, revenge, verbal or physical attacks, enmity, hatred, grudges, use of diabolical power to fight one and another, withdrawal, desertion, separation and divorce, poor parental care for the children, divorce, poor academic performance of children in the school, violence and gang activities (Olagunju, 2007, Collins, 2007:324, Familusi, 2019:23, Agomuo, 2020). Collins (374:366) agrees that marital conflict leads to sex problems in marriage. He, however, observes that, sometimes, it is sexual problems that lead to marital conflict but, “more often, marital conflict or drifting apart comes first.” The author further notes that lack of sexual intimacy can cause further deterioration of the relationship and immoral practices such as masturbation, pornography and infidelity. Marital conflict can lead to a lack of sexual interaction. Some spouses may not even express sexual desires to the spouse for years. Where marital conflict reigns, the family would not progress as expected because the couple would not cooperate or unite to pursue common goals. The writers are aware of a situation where the husband and wife were pursuing individual building projects. The slow pace of the two projects was a testimony that their lack of cooperation was not helpful. Marital conflict can affect couples physically by impacting their health and physical well-being.

Psychological Effects: Psychological effects can include anger, depression, guilt, low self-confidence and anxiety, reactions like fatigue, headaches, tense muscle, stomach upsets, psychological agony and pain, health impairment, untimely death, despair, hopelessness, confusion, susceptibility to depression, especially by girls, emotional instability, and vulnerability to drug abuse (Okafor, 2013:32-33, Olagunju, 2007:34-35).

Spiritual Effects: Marital conflict affects couples spiritually. Conflict situations affect couples' commitment to one another and God. Some spouses withdraw from church out of shame and the depressive influence of the crisis in the marriage. Retarded marital growth and spiritual drains, such as the inability to pray or enjoy fellowship with

God because of unforgiveness, guilt and bitterness, reproach, and shame in society, are shreds of evidence of the spiritual effects of marital conflict. Ayankeye (2021:3), states that a breakdown of the cordial relationship between husband and wife can disturb them from sustaining spiritual activities like praying together, studying God's word together, observing family devotion, or attending worship services together. Thus, this sort of spiritual decline is common in many marital conflicts among young couples in society. The tendency for marital conflict to affect the spiritual life of young couples in the church is an important reason for pastoral ministry to do its best to curb the prevalence of the problem.

Marital Conflict Resolution among Young Couples

The African view of marital conflict and its resolution is evident from the concept of marriage in the African cultural setting. Culture plays a significant role in marital conflict and its resolution. An understanding of the cultural context is crucial to the understanding and resolution of marital conflict. The cultural view of gender differences in Africa often contributes to marital conflicts. Thus, disputes among young couples may be triggered by the culture of gender stereotypes in their background. Malek (2022) notes that, whereas gender culture varies with time and individuals, some fundamental differences between males and females can easily engender conflict. For instance, gender role from an African perspective determines how each person sees themselves and their relationship with their spouse. Nwoye (2000:77), notes that most sub-Saharan African countries have a patrilineal system that builds the family economy around the male partner. "Gender roles are learnt by children from the time they are young.

According to Dildar, Sitwat, and Yasin (2013:1433), one can classify couples' responses to marital conflict as either constructive or destructive. A constructive response can improve the relationship, while a destructive response can worsen dysfunction and further stress in the marriage. Islami (2016:570) highlights two conflict theories: the first views conflict as a negative occurrence because it

leads to destructive confrontations. The second theory views conflict as a positive phenomenon because it can serve positive purposes when it leads the couple toward steps that can reduce the stress in the marriage. Dildar, Sitwat, and Yasin (2013:1433) also express that marital conflict can result in renovation and facilitate intimacy if adequately handled.

Indeed, Cloud and Townsend (2014:231) urged couples not to see marital conflict as their enemy. They counsel: “make conflict your ally, not your enemy. It is the iron that sharpens your marriage (Proverbs 27:17).” An essential factor determining whether the conflict becomes negative or positive is the conflict resolution style adopted by the spouses. As Islami (2016:571) notes, “conflict in itself is not destructive or negative,” what makes or mars the relationship is the couples' approach to the marital conflict.

The various styles Dildar, Sitwat and Yasin, (2013:1436-437) explained are: avoidance style is where there is a denial of the conflict, and the persons involved try to dodge their role or responsibility in the conflict; competitive style is where the partners seek resolution on their terms without consideration for the other party's need; adaptation or accommodation style is the non-assertive style where spouses try to consider the issues from the perspective of their partner and allow for peace by disregarding their own need; collaboration is where the spouses choose to cooperate toward reducing the stress in the marriage by expressing concern for one another, prioritising the relationship and the other partner's goal; and compromise is where one person accepts to settle for less and expects the other partner to also do for peace to reign in the relationship.

The submission of Islami (2016:570-572) agrees with that of Dildar, Sitwat, and Yasin (2013:1433-434) on the view that couples with constructive conflicts usually adopt constructive styles like accommodation (or adaptation), collaboration (or cooperation), and compromise. In contrast, destructive conflict is common in couples who adopt negative techniques like avoidance and competition (or rivalry). Akinsola (11-12) affirms that a constructive approach to marital conflicts would lead to a transformation of such conflict. In other words, conflict transformation entails seeing marital conflict as

an opportunity to develop. Such couples engage in interaction that leads to understanding, change and intimacy. However, apart from the aforementioned resolution methods, the writers added additional resolution of marital conflict from the perspective of pastoral care ministry. Pastoral leadership resolves marital conflict among young couples through different pastoral care functions, which are guiding, sustaining, healing, reconciling and temporary separation when the couples involved cannot resolve their marital conflict.

Moral Concern for Pastoral Ministry

Pastoral ministry, by nature, is a ministry of care. Pastors as shepherds seek to offer care and support for the parishioners in all areas of their lives, especially where the members have struggles that challenge their peace and usefulness to themselves, their families, and the Church. One of such areas is marriage. This section draws moral concern for the pastoral ministry of every Church to address the challenge of marital conflict. These moral concerns are considered as proactive strategies for achieving the resolution of marital conflict among young couples in the context of Church setting. These moral concerns are considered to help young couples whose marriages have been affected by conflicts.

Moral Concern for Education on Family Life

Education occurs in the context of guiding and equipping the young couples with biblical insights for the sustainable Christian family. The paper submits that young couples will gain insights into what to do to overcome the challenge of life facing their marriage through education. Thus, the pastoral ministry should educate the concerned couples to enable them to understand the nature, causes, and effects of their marital challenge and what they can do to amend the situation. The pastoral ministry should carefully guide young couples on matters of family life. According to Ogundipe (2015:81), guiding involves facilitating spiritual and mental growth in people or enabling them to grow independently. Pastors' role is to assist troubled people in making confident choices between some options of thought and action when such decisions are viewed as affecting the

present and future state of the soul. Based on the reflection on the above position, the paper submits that pastoral care ministry of the church should carefully and deliberately lead and direct couples who have marital conflict toward the right attitudes and actions that would facilitate a peaceful resolution of the conflicts and bring about happy coexistence as husband and wife.

Studies have shown that marital conflict is a normal and inevitable experience in marriage. Tolorunleke (2004:21) submits that conflict in marriage is a natural experience. Marital conflict is unavoidable and essential for the running of the marriage relationship. Thus, conflict is unavoidable in a normal marital relationship and couples cannot avoid it completely. Therefore, the pastoral care ministry of every Church should empower the concerned couples to face or handle their marital problems by themselves, without having to always depend on the pastors, friends, in-laws and anyone else to solve their problems for them.

Moral Concern for Separation

Marriage, like any other form of relationship, involves individuals with different ideas, expectations, and preferences. These are bound to clash at one point or another. Thus, one can state that conflict is a normal, and inevitable occurrence in marriage. However, when marital conflict cannot be handled, it can lead to damage to life and property. Marital conflict is severe and causes irreparable loss to the family, children, and society. When all strategies fail to resolve the marital conflict between the couples, and there is a danger that threatens the life of another partner, pastoral leadership should encourage temporary separation. This is to provide an opportunity for the concerned couples to realise their mistakes and adjust. Similarly, this period helps the church, family, and friends intervene in matters. The journey of marriage is lifelong, and the marital oath is until death does them part. However, when couples are unable to resolve their marital conflict and this is generating domestic violence, it is ethically imperative for them to separate. Hence, separation among the couple is ethically permissible to save life and ensure peace for the

concerned individuals. Time is significant in conflict resolution; it helps certain individuals to rethink and retrace their steps.

Concern for Reconciliation

Conflict creates a gap between people. In marriage, conflict pulls couples apart and contradicts what the marital bond ought to be. Reconciling, therefore, involves putting people whose relationship has suffered strain back on friendly terms. According to Oyedele (2011:36-37), reconciliation may take the form of facilitating expressions of forgiveness, administering discipline through correction or warning, or encouraging confession, repentance and amendment. Therefore, from a Christian ethical point of view, the pastoral ministry of the Church should re-establish cordiality in marital relationships broken by conflict.

Moral concern for Effective Pastoral Ministry

The hurts people suffer when they feel they have been unfairly treated over matters they consider important can create wounds in them. That can cause damage to the persons affected as well as their relationships. It can bring about impairment, deterioration, weakness, disability or inefficiency in the marriage. In such a situation, the pastoral leadership should minister to the concerned individuals to overcome the impairment by restoring soundness and helping the person to rise above the reality of the situation. The pastors should assist young couples with marital conflict to reconnect better and stronger ways than before their crisis began.

The pastoral ministry should provide a person with needed nourishment to enable such a person to forge ahead correctly. Sometimes, restoring a situation to the previous status before the crisis is impossible or difficult. Therefore, pastoral ministry should try to help the hurting person endure the current state or transcend the circumstance. Therefore, pastoral ministry is to help people recover by instilling hope and confidence.

Pastoral leadership helps open people's eyes to what God wants them to be or have and helps them build the capacity to attain that level. This goal is achieved through caring actions like visitation to the

troubled person(s), prayer, preaching, teaching, discipleship, etc. In the Church, the pastoral care ministry is to help the conflicted couples recognise and develop their capacity to understand and manage their problems by themselves.

Moral Concern for Behavioural Adjustment

Marriage is an institution ordained by God. It is a relationship that involves a man and a woman who are of different backgrounds, exposure, knowledge, experiences and upbringing, to mention but a few; hence, there is a need for adjustment between the two so that their view about issues can almost be the same and avoid conflict. Behavioural adjustment is the ability to modify ones' behaviours, opinions, exposure and needs to have cordial relationships between two individuals. For the young couples to resolve their marital conflict amicably, there is a need for behavioural adjustment among them. There should not be losers and winners among the couples, but they should be ready and willing to let it go and have a sustainable family.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Marriage, like any other form of relationship, involves individuals with different ideas, expectations, and preferences. Marital conflict is inevitable among Christian couples. The paper identifies the following parameters to identify marriages that have marital conflict physical fighting, violence, noticeable unhappiness, withdrawal from friends by one or both spouses, and poorly catered children, verbal abuse, open criticism, ironic comments, threats, humiliating comments, unresponsiveness and technical divorce. The causes for the occurrence and increase of marital conflict among young couples nowadays are classified into moral and psychological. The couples involved, the family, church and the society feel the effects of marital conflict in several ways and it is categorised as moral, psychological and spiritual effects. Marital conflict resolution is the process of settling and dispel amicably arguments or disagreement that came out between couples to have a sustainable home.

The paper however presents the moral concern for pastoral care ministry to resolve marital conflict among young couples. The paper recommended that young couples with marital conflict should freely consult their pastors and marriage counsellors for education to handle their marital conflict. Churches should frequently organize programmes to empower conflicted couples for sustainable family life. Young couples need to seek education regarding sexual relations, communication skill, emotions, and parenting from the pastoral care ministry as strategies for stabilizing their marriage. Churches should frequently organize programmes to empower conflicted couples for sustainable family life.

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ROLES OF PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELING IN FORESTALLING SEXUAL INFIDELITY IN CHRISTIAN HOMES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Everything God made was designed to function in a particular order, failure of which leads to various kinds of perversion. Sexual relation as one of those things designed for lawful expression within the confine of marriage, is being perverted. It is, though, not a contemporary trend, it has been an issue since the Bible time. However, there is the need for a kind of examination in the light of the Scripture due to the fact that cases of sexual infidelity are becoming more frequent with consequential effect on perpetrators, families, church, and even society. There is no doubt about the existence of works on human sexuality, marriage and sexual infidelity. Attention on pastoral care and counselling roles in forestalling sexual infidelity in Christian homes is rare. Using the descriptive research method, the paper depends on secondary sources to clarify basic concepts and establish roles of pastoral care and counselling in forestalling sexual infidelity in Christian homes, families, church and society. The study reveals that sexuality and marriage find clear loci within the context of God's intent and design. It has also been identified that fidelity to a one-man, one-woman marriage and sexual union is clearly the affirmed position of the Bible while sexual infidelity is repeatedly regarded as an unprovable practice. The attempt is also made to present some of the causes and consequences of sexual infidelity in Christian homes. The study revealed that sexual infidelity among Christian couples is a mighty sin the devil uses against contemporary families and the church. As the study identifies the consequences of sexual infidelity on Christian homes, church and society, special attention is given to pastoral care and counselling as tools to forestall the situation for blissful marriage and family in contemporary society.

Keywords: sexuality, infidelity, family, pastoral care

Introduction

God desires to see those who enter into a marriage relationship fulfilling the purpose for which it was established. At the same time, failure to pursue divine agenda for marriage have an adverse effect on the individual, family, church and society. Meanwhile, family as a unit and best place for effective evangelism and church growth is no doubt bedevilled by the evil of sexual infidelity with a weakening effect on the church's Great Commission drive to the world. Sexual infidelity as an act of illicit sexual relation between a married person and any person outside the covenant of a marriage relationship is not without crushing effect. For this reason, proactive and redemptive roles of pastoral caregivers are highly required to salvage the situation for a church to fulfil its mandate on earth through marriage and family. In order to find out the roles of pastoral care and counselling in forestalling sexual infidelity in Christian homes in Nigeria, the paper thus looks at sexuality and marriage within the context of God's intent and design using secondary sources. Biblical basis affirming the position that sexual infidelity contravenes biblical injunction is presented even as the causes and consequences of sexual infidelity are highlighted in the paper. In all, special focus is placed on the roles of pastoral care and counselling in forestalling sexual infidelity in Christian homes in Nigeria for blissful marriage and family as God desires, resulting in church growth.

Sexuality and God's Design for Marriage

While sexuality can be viewed from different angles, it is essentially an integral part of being human. It begins in the creation of what Peterson (2021) called the binary of gender – male and female (2). By implication, God is the maker of sexuality because the idea of sexuality is deeply rooted in the original narrative of the male-female relationship found in Genesis 1:27. Therefore, sexuality is what differentiates human beings from other beings, albeit, there gender differences exist. Worthy of note here is that both the male and female are made in God's image, thus, the dignity of being made in God's image and the dignity of binary of gender – male and female (Gen.

1:26-28). This is why Aben (2020) concisely asserts that Christians should never forget that male and female, equally have the dignity of bearing God's image, and so sharing something of the divine essence (40). There would have been no difference from animals who mate around with no specificity if not the image of God in human beings. The same image that dignifies male and female distinguishes them from all other creation.

It is important to state that God who created male and female, created sexual organs as part of what constitutes human body. By implication, LaHaye (1976) submits that, “God is the creator of sex. He sets human drives in motion, not to torture men and women, but to bring them enjoyment and fulfilment” (14). This indicates that expression of sexual receptivity and sexual activity are parts of God's investment in human sexuality. He designed human sexual organs for their enjoyment to the glory of his name, so that his purpose might be fulfilled on earth (Gen 1:28, 2:25). Peterson (2021) affirms that, Bible clearly indicates that human sexuality was made subservient to the will of God (4). They are also to honour God with their sexuality. God is sacred; therefore, sex and sexuality of human beings should be viewed as God's sacred and perfect work. People made by God have their source and origin from God and must remain connected to the origin for their sustenance and continuity (Kore 1995, 4).

Just as it was God's idea to make human beings in his image and likeness (Gen 1:26), it was his idea also to institute marriage. As recorded in the Bible, “Then God remarked, it is not good for the man to be alone” (Gen 2:18a), highlighting that it was God who discovered the aloneness of man and the possible dangers associated with it (Peterson, and Sprinkle 1981, 11, 742). It was not the man that discovered a vacuum in his life, God did. O' Donovan (1997) submits that, “Adam needed the companionship of another human being like himself” (277). God saw what was not good in the man and proposed and executed his plan to make a help meet for him – a woman/wife.

Human beings made in God's image and likeness is now free to express sexual relations as husband and wife in a marriage relationship (Gen. 1:26; 2:24). This means that sexual receptivity,

expression, enjoyment was established to take place between one male and one female, otherwise known as husband and wife. It should be noted also that the companion created for man is singular not plural (Kore 1995, 8-9). Hendricks (1972) states that marriage is not the product of human plan, rather, the product of a divine plan. God has specifications for the marriage relationship. It is a heterosexual product designed to take place within the covenant of marriage relationship. Therefore, attempting to build a marriage without following the plan invites failure (80). God's design for marriage, therefore, is that a man be united with his wife not wives, and the two will become one flesh (Gen. 2:24). This establishes the fact that marriage union is designed to exist between one man as husband and one woman as wife (Ogundipe 2015, 73). Therefore, marriage becomes a bonding of a male as the husband with a female as wife in a monogamous relationship. Thus, practice of any union with the opposite sex outside monogamous marriage contradicts God's original design.

Furthermore, marriage between man and woman is a sacred relationship that should be shared uniquely and exclusively by the couple in the privacy of their love (LaHaye 1976, 11). In their theological reflection of the purity of marriage, Kisembo, Magea and Shorter (1977) state that marriage is part of the created order and the whole of this created order is sacred (17). It is sacred because it was not an institution created after the fall or as a remedy for sin. It was God who gave the order on when sex should be practiced – which is within the confined of marriage. Kisembo, Magea and Shorter (1977) further submit that, “It is especially through human relationships that man experiences the communication of God's love. Human values such as friendship, sharing, and fidelity are how humans begin to relate to one another in God's infinite love” (17).

A Christian is called to respond to that love through a sacred marriage covenant relationship with his or her spouse. The quality of love and the quality of its expression to one another is an expression of God's love which should be responded to by husband and wife. The quality of love that a couple should display should not give room for

infidelity because marriage is a sacred covenant relationship between a man and a woman as husband and wife. Therefore, man and woman should faithfully and committedly respond to God in this holy estate by being moral and faithful to one another. A marriage that is kept holy serves as a healing agent to the society with direct result on church growth.

Biblical View on Sexual Infidelity

The root of sexual infidelity can be traced to the fall of man. Sprinkle (2003) submits that with the fall in Genesis 3 the ideal sexuality changed. “In place of openness came shame; joy and love were marred by pain, lust and domination (Gen 3:7; 16)” (742-743). This is not to mean that sex or sexuality became evil with the fall, it remains good and holy within the confine of marriage and between husband and wife. However, Sprinkle (2003) further states,

The creator provides instructions by which Israelites would be set apart from the nations (Lev 18:1-5; 20:22-26) and would know how to express their sexuality within their covenant relationship with God. Failure to control one's sexual expression according to those standards was detrimental to that relationship, the integrity of the family, social identity and societal order and the individual's felicity (752).

God gave laws against infidelity, as a preventive measure in consonance with all other warnings and instructions, which clearly indicate what God requires and forbids. Pentateuch generally sees sexuality as good when lawfully expressed but destructive if uncontrolled.

Adultery is sexual infidelity. One strong biblical injunction against sexual infidelity is the seventh commandment, “You shall not commit adultery” (Ex. 20:14 NIV). This clearly spells out that God forbids sexual involvement between two people outside marriage covenant. Sexual infidelity is an act of defilement and uncleanness which introduces contamination that compromises the purity of the marriage union before God. The fact that the Torah forbids sexual infidelity indicates that covenant children are not to be found in the

act. It does not only violate God's covenant with man it also causes uncleanness to the individuals and may ultimately result to death.

One of the most emphasized Old Testament laws in the Gospel has to do with sexual fidelity. The significance of this commandment perhaps made Jesus place it before the sixth commandment (Mark 10:19). As a preventive measure, he warns against lustful look at the opposite sex (Matt. 5: 28). Lust is a powerful and dangerous weapon that causes the mighty to become miserable. Anyone who looks at the opposite sex with lust in the heart is already committing sexual immorality. Christ emphasizes here that the root of every sin is the heart because that is where the processes that becomes action takes place (Matt. 15:19).

In most of the places where Paul addressed sexuality, they were in response to particular questions. In some other places, his reflection revealed an understanding of the Hellenistic society. He stresses the incompatibility between sexual infidelity and the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9) severally. He pointed to sexual infidelity as a sign of lack of sound doctrine and listed it among the works of the flesh (1 Thess. 4:3-5; Gal. 5:19-21). The Bible warns against being sexually yoked with opposite sex outside marriage. It is singled out as the only sin against one's body, the Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:15-19). As the Temple of the Holy Spirit Christians should be wary of such practice. Anyone who makes it a lifestyle practice has no part in the kingdom of God (Eph. 5:3-5). The Christian's body belongs to Christ and should be lived to glorify him (1 Cor. 6:15).

The church is also the body of Christ which should not allow any member to indulge in sexual infidelity. Wright (1993) declares that sexual infidelity desecrates a Christian's bodily union with Christ. He further states that, "The association between Christ and the believer is regarded as just as close and physical as that between the two partners in the sex act" (872). The "one flesh" of Genesis 2:24 is the core aim of marriage which should not be practiced outside of it. In addition, Wright (1993) submits that, "A couple's becoming 'one flesh,' which entails sexual congress whatever else it may entail, is comparable to the bonding between Christ and believers (872)." This

is why a body belonging to Christ should not be found in sexual infidelity.

Causes of Sexual Infidelity

Infidelity on the part of marriage partners in the society is alarming today. Christian couples as well as church are not spared in the evil of this phenomenon. Various reasons that could be traced as the causes of sexual infidelity today includes the following briefly examined points:

Cultural Influence. Polygamy was an approved practice in Africa before the advent of missionaries. This Kisembo, Magaesa and Shorter (1977) assert that African society generally approves polygamy (81-82). It was practiced as a custom with cultural, social, and economic values. Randee Ijatuyi-Morphe (2011) while citing Desist, affirms the existence of a large family in Africa. Though the basis of large family was to have enough hands “in view of a high infant mortality rate..., a large enough offspring to take care of parents in their old age” (84). Meanwhile, in the process of securing large enough hands was a direct invitation for polygamy. Many people leverage on the fact that, in almost every situation a woman is incapable of giving birth to large enough offspring to engage in multiple sexual relations with polygamy as an outcome. However, every polygamy has its root in sexual infidelity. The result of sexual infidelity is polygamous marriage contrary to God's original design.

Sexual Need. African societal norm generally forbids sexual intercourse during certain periods such as pregnancy and lactation. It is believed in Africa that intercourse during pregnancy and lactation negatively affect the fetus or the baby. Kisembo, Magesa, and Shorter (1977) affirm,

In most African societies there is a traditional belief that the mother's milk will fail, if sexual intercourse takes place during lactation. Since baby's foods did not normally exist, the breast-feeding period was usually two years at least before a baby was weaned. This custom and belief imposed a very long period of sexual abstinence on the husband, and if he was not capable of it, he could only gratify his needs outside of his marriage, if he was monogamous (71).

In order to ensure total compliance, it was seen as taboo for husband and wife to have sex during pregnancy and the period of lactation (Kisembo, Magesa, and Shorter (1977, 17). The abstinence may last for two-three years from pregnancy to weaning. However, some men who cannot afford long time sexual abstinence, engage in sexual intercourse with other women in order to cater for their sexual needs because their wives are either pregnant or lactating, thus, committing sexual infidelity.

Sexual Dissatisfaction. Sexual dissatisfaction in this sense is inability of the spouse to sexually satisfy their marriage partners which causes the partners to seek for satisfaction outside the marriage. Infidelity due to sexual dissatisfaction is found among both genders. Rather than working through sexual difficulty with their spouses, some people try to find satisfaction elsewhere when their spouses begin to show signs of sexual difficulties. Common causes of sexual difficulties among couples listed by One2One are sexual dysfunction, loss of sex drive, premature ejaculation among men while among women includes reduced sex drive, inability to reach orgasm, pain during sex.

Living Apart. Stability of marriage and family was a central concern in time past, that transferring marriage partners alongside the spouses and family members was almost always the norm. The story is different in today's employment market. Transfer takes place with little or no consideration to the necessity of making sure that husbands and wives stay together for marriage and family stability. Many married couples are now living apart due to the nature of their jobs and businesses. Job and business activities take more and more time, instead of the two living and sharing together, they become lost in their little world. In such situation, it is easy for partners to take each other for granted. The example of the above described situation is seen in the case presented by Augsburg (1971). When he was narrating the importance of confession he presented different cases in which one is relevant to this study. He shared the case of a woman whose friend engaged in sexual infidelity with her husband due to long time absence from home (294). The wife was not available when

her husband needed sex. This kind of situation has caused many to sleep with housemaid, driver and house-guard when the other partner was nowhere to be found, especially, when body chemistry was demanding for intimacy.

Consequences of Sexual Infidelity on Marriage and Family

Infidelity on the part of marriage partners in the society is alarming today, that Christian couples as well are not spared in the evil. Although, various reasons serve as causes of sexual infidelity, however, it should be remarked that sexual infidelity as a detestable sin has negative consequences, notwithstanding the ignorance of the perpetrators. Earley's (2012) emphasis clarifies that infidelity has a crushing effect that no one can bear (38). The crushing effect is not only on the perpetrators; marriage and family, church and society are also affected, however, the focus of this section is to highlight some of its negative consequences on marriage and family.

Disgrace. Sexual infidelity is a disgraceful act worthy of the death penalty in the Bible. The disgrace brought by sexual infidelity elicits more distressing feelings on the path of a faithful partner. Although death penalty may be illegal in contemporary society but sexual infidelity can put an end to family bliss, even if the couple do not consider separation or divorce as an option.

Distortion and Corruption. Perhaps, failure to understand what the holiness of God involves as Barrick (2010) submits is a reason for recorded cases of sexual infidelity among Christians, which inevitably disturbs Christian consecration and personal holiness (181). Sexual infidelity also disturbs marriage covenant and the covenant relationship between God and the perpetrator. Although Nida (1965) focuses on the effect of sexual infidelity on the quality of church members, however, coming to marriage and family, one can also see, among others, spiritual fervor, emotional intimacy and moral quality of members of the unfaithful partners being affected by sexual infidelity (99). Similarly, sexual infidelity can easily expose innocent family members to evil attacks of any kind due to the corruption.

Lack of Mutual Love. This researcher considers love as the soul of marriage. However, the first devastating effect of sexual infidelity is the termination of mutual love that should exist between marriage partners. Once love is no longer in the family, marriage is no longer in existence. Where there is no mutual love, anything goes.

Lack of Trust. Sexual infidelity as Nida (1965) in the context of the church, is evidence of lack of faithful commitment to the word of God in general, an indication of unfaithfulness to the marriage covenant in particular (99). If the partner is not faithful to marriage covenant, trust will be absent. Worse still, love cannot stand where trust is absent. If trust is destroyed once on the note of sexual infidelity, it becomes difficult to build it again. The devastating effect of sexual infidelity makes it hard for the faithful partner to trust the perpetrator not only on the opposite sex but on every other issue of life.

Separation and Divorce. It can lead to termination of the marriage relationship. While it is true that Bible does not support divorce, at the same time, some marriages have come to an abrupt end due to established cases of sexual infidelity.

The Roles of Pastoral Care and Counseling in Forestalling Sexual Infidelity

Having highlighted some of the consequences of sexual infidelity, attention is shifted to the roles of pastoral care counseling to salvage the situation. No doubt sexual infidelity is one of the weapons devils use to destroy marriage and family and deter effective church growth, which makes the roles of pastoral care counseling crucial, through the following pastoral care functions.

Pastoral care function of guiding. Christian homes are to be models of heaven on earth because the effectiveness of the society begins from home. In the same vein, ability to communicate faith with its commensurate result in the society vitally depends on Christian uprightness before God and faithfulness in sexual expression and Christian marriage. This is why guiding is very crucial. Guiding in mate selection affords young people opportunity

to know appropriate things to look for in the choice of marriage partner (Ogundipe 2015, 45-58). Selecting the right partner is a step in right direction of sexual fidelity. Furthermore, issues that are encouraging sexual infidelity will easily be overcome through guiding function of pastoral care.

Pastoral care function of reconciling and healing. Church is a redeemed community and should do everything possible to restore the erring member and the broken relationship. When talking on the redemptive nature of the church, Oyedele (2011) affirms that the church is not just a redeemed community but also a redemptive fellowship (29). As a visible sign of the reign of God, church has the obligation to discipline the erring member. At the same time, such discipline should be redemptive in nature (Gal. 6:1-2). Furthermore, couple whose partner is found in the web of sexual infidelity should be encouraged to embrace spirit of forgiveness. A home where partner embraces the spirit of forgiveness, restoration of the marriage relationship will not only become possible but it will also become easy, as pastoral care functions of reconciling and healing are being fulfilled.

Pastoral care function of educating. In his discussion of education as a distinct function of pastoral care, Ogundipe (2014, 82) states the purpose of education as making available, principles that will help liberate the church. Without education, people will continue to wallow in sexual sin, thereby incurring God's wrath. Citing Aluko, Ogundipe also identifies "winning and holding people together for the church" as part of the values education proffers. People will be won over and held together for God when pastoral caregiver properly educates the couples about the evil of sexual infidelity.

Pastoral care function of nurturing. Ogundipe (2014) calls it pastoral care function of empowerment (83), and it can also be called equipping, depending on the context. Nurturing is as good for prevention as much as reinventing. People are equipped and empowered when they are nurtured to please God without the assistance from any caregiver. This is why sex education is required from the early stages of life or before they are being exposed to thing

that encourages sexual infidelity. The nurturing should be with emphasis on heterosexual practice within marriage relationship as biblically approved practice and legally acceptable sexual relations. Hodges (1965) submits that nurturing new converts as well is very important, though, the effectiveness of this depends on spiritual vitality of each Christian (28). Thus, the church as a redeemed community is duty bound to nurture the next generation and the new converts for the Lord. In the church, people should be nurtured to find their sexuality affirmed as human beings, individuals, and persons created in God's image. They should be nurtured to be sanctified and control their sexuality against any kinds of immorality (1 Thess. 4:1-7).

Pastoral care function of sustaining. Suppose the word “sustain” has something to do with provision of nourishment and/or the necessities of life, as cited by Ogundipe (2014, 81). In that case, it is used in this context as inclusive function of sustaining original standard of God. Nida (1965) submits that church growth begins in the heart of God and it is committed to Christians today to establish the visible reign of God on earth (27). For God to reign on earth, Christian couples should abstain from sexual infidelity. The task of pastoral caregiver however is to find ways to uphold human sexual dignity in all the stages of human development and relationship. Recognizing the dignity of male and female and sanctity of marriage will promote sexual sanctity in marriage relationship and transform their own lives, with inevitable positive impact on family, church and society.

Conclusion

In order to find out the roles of pastoral care and counseling in forestalling sexual infidelity in Christian homes in Nigeria, the study looked at among other things sexuality and marriage within the context of God's intent and design. The study revealed that sexual infidelity is contrary to divine design. The paper also presented some of the causes of sexual infidelity. Meanwhile, it is clear in the paper that marriage was instituted to prevent sexual infidelity. As

uncovered in the paper, sexual infidelity does not only affect individuals and marriage, it also has negative consequences on family, church and society. The study thereafter presented the roles of pastoral care and counseling in forestalling sexual infidelity in Christian homes in Nigeria for blissful marriage and family as God desires. As pastoral caregivers properly carry out the discussed care functions, the family will be healthy, consequently transforming the church and society.

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PASTORAL CARE RESPONSE TO THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL DISTANCING DURING PANDEMIC AND ITS EFFECT ON AFRICAN COMMUNAL LIVING

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Abstract

This paper investigated the impact of social distancing on African victims of pandemic. A significant factor of motivation is communal living vis-a-vis the necessity for the social distancing that the nature of COVID 19 pandemic demands. Social distancing could affect many African functions such as naming ceremonies, funerals, wedding ceremonies, housewarming, and other joyous ceremonies. Any hindrance to the communal way of life can appear suicidal to Africans. The study employed a descriptive research design involving library work and unstructured interviews. It was discovered that Africans, whether at home or in diaspora, are uncomfortable with the social distancing measures, thereby compounding their challenges more instead of bringing healing. The study enlightens Africans in diaspora and modern Africans on the traditional African mindset that cannot be erased and highlights some African pastoral care measures for ameliorating the pandemic's effect in its conclusion. It also suggests how the necessity for social distancing demanded by the nature of many pandemics can be blended with African communalism.

Keywords: Social distancing, Pandemic, Communal living, Pastoral response.

Introduction

Victims of pandemics, especially COVID 19, who are Africans seem to be clamouring for care in ways that will not contradict their beliefs and values. The primary strategy of combating and reducing the spread of the pandemic is through social distancing. The isolation that could result from social distancing seems to be detrimental to the

emotional well-being of both the primary and secondary victims of the COVID-19 pandemic. The primary victims are the patients that are already infected or are suspected to be infected with the virus, while the secondary victims are the caregivers of the patients, who could be their family members or relatives. The paper aims to provide pastoral care response to victims of pandemic, especially COVID 19, who are having challenges with the strategies available for combating the pandemic because of their values and beliefs. The overview of pandemics and the existing strategies for combating COVID 19 pandemic were discussed in the paper. Pastoral care measures of blended social distancing for African victims were also suggested.

Overview of Pandemics

A pandemic refers to an infection or disease that usually extends over large geographical areas. Pandemic also involves disease spread or movement through a transmission that could be traced from place to place (Aja 1991, 37). Disease movement also includes person-person widespread diseases resulting from respiratory viruses or by vectors. Pandemic as a term has been applied to severe or fatal diseases than applied to mild diseases. Classification of diseases as pandemics involved a high transmission rate and high rates of symptomatic disease, coupled with the widespread of such disease (Nabarro & Wannous 2016,2). A pandemic is characterized by population immunity that makes it easy to infect a large population part (Maharaj & Kleczkowski 2012, 681). A pandemic cannot be used to describe health challenges like obesity and depression; it could only be associated with infectious or contagious diseases.

Causes of Pandemic

The World Health Organisation is saddled with the responsibility of announcing new pandemic emergence. The WHO announcement of a disease as a pandemic is based on the spread of the disease as it fits into her pandemic phase. Pandemics are majorly caused by contagious diseases, which readily spread by transmitting pathogens from an infected person through physical means such as touching or

kissing to an uninfected person. Contagious diseases could also be transmitted through microbes travelling by air or through blood transfusion.

The adoption of western lifestyles by Africans in the recent past is also a significant contributor to the emergence of pandemics in Africa. There is fast and intense mobility of people resulting from the availability of modern and sophisticated means of transportation such as aircraft, trains, cars and ships. Globalisation, which has encouraged an unprecedented urbanization level, also poses a greater danger to disease transmission. Increased contact between humans and wild animals through deforestation, hazardous agricultural practices, and food production like poultry in residential areas could lead to new pathogens that can cause pandemics. Limited access to an adequate health care system or inadequate health care facilities could also lead to a pandemic. Access to good health care could be hindered by insurgencies or government or government agencies mismanagement of funds.

From the African perspective, contagious diseases that could eventually lead to pandemics are perceived to be god-sent punishment for the misdeed of a person or the entire community (Yai 1993, 245). Contagious diseases may occur due to the anger of a deity on the community as a whole. The anger may result from the inability of the community to offer a statutory sacrifice or the offering of such sacrifice inappropriately. Priests of deities are also believed to possess powers to spread diseases when angered. Disease like smallpox which has been recorded in history as a world pandemic, is believed to be spread as such. Deities who could cause diseases and spread them are also believed to have the power to cure such diseases when appeased (Akpomuvie 2014, 56).

Victims of Pandemics

Victims of pandemics are humans, who could be of male or female gender. The immunity of a particular gender can influence the vulnerability of such gender to a specific disease. Pandemics victims

could also be identified by their nationality and age group (Drake, Chalabi & Coker 2012, 940). In Sub-Sahara Africa, the victims of COVID-19 are majorly the aged of both genders. The pre-existing health conditions which contributed immensely to the vulnerability in experiencing the severe symptoms of COVID-19 made it more prominent in the female gender than their male counterparts. Statistics showed that there are more aged females than males in Nigeria; hence, more females are becoming victims of the pandemic.

The victims of a pandemic also include the family members offering care to the primary victims. Family members and relatives of the infected persons are saddled with more responsibilities, most of the time, than the primary victims. The relatives of the infected persons are sometimes more apprehensive and suffer emotional instability in some cases (Agusi et al. 2020, 52). For instance, a child whose aged mother is suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to be affected financially and emotionally. The child will also be involved in running around to ensure that the mother is healed. Africans believe in rallying around the sick even if it is detrimental (McNeil 1977, 26).

Effects of Pandemics

A pandemic could easily break across geographical borders to affect economic and regional stability. The case of COVID-19 is a recent example of how the economic activities of various nations of the world were negatively affected. Pandemics can affect the social, economic and political structure of a country in a negative manner (Drake, Chalabi & Coker 2012, 941). SARS and Ebola, which are recent pandemics in China and West Africa, negatively affected the economies and social structures of the nations involved. The pandemic caused deaths and illnesses, which reduced the quality of life of families and communities. Nabarro & Wannous (2016,2) recorded that Ebola disrupted education, tourism, transport, and other essential services and reduced West African economies and

isolated populations. Africa's continent was affected economically due to the global effort of curtailing the Ebola pandemic from spreading outside Africa.

Pandemic generally has severe negative impacts on society. It infects typically many people through a widespread severe illness, which could eventually lead to multiple deaths. Pandemic is a severe threat to the economy of nations and the world at large. The effect of a pandemic on the economy of countries could manifest in economic instability due to direct and indirect costs coupled with a long term burden. A pandemic could also affect the social life of the entire world. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a restriction on both national and international travel. Schools were closed for almost six months. Markets were partially closed as well as religious centres. Sport and entertainment centres were also closed down for a long time. Another notable effect of the pandemic is its threat to the world's security as a global village.

A pandemic could also affect religious activities in diverse ways. The COVID-19 pandemic brought significant disruption to religious activities for close to a year. Religious activities in some states are yet to come back to what they used to be due to one form of restriction or the other. The Federal and State government directed churches and Mosques to shut down for a while and were later asked to be worshipping with worshippers not more than 25percent of their auditorium. Many Christian churches opted for online services, which some people joyfully accepted. Still, some were left behind due to varied reasons such as financial incapability, poor network connections and computer illiteracy. The love of some Christian waxed cold due to a lack of constant fellowship with other brethren during the lockdown period. Some people were not used to going to church again even after the lockdown and worship restriction.

Strategies for Curbing Pandemic

A pandemic can be curbed by prevention and prompt management, which is achievable through the employment of WHO infection prevention and control recommendations (2007 & 2018). Early recognition of infectious diseases, isolation of infected persons, reporting the health condition to health practitioners and agencies and surveillance of episodes of Acute Respiratory Diseases (ARD) are included in the infection prevention and control recommendations of WHO. Early recognition of infectious diseases calls for establishing methods to ensure timely detection of diseases, especially respiratory diseases. Health care authorities should promptly investigate patients that are possibly suffering from respiratory-related diseases. Public health authorities are encouraged to place suspected or confirmed patients suffering from respiratory diseases in secluded places to curb the spread of such infection.

Other major strategies for curbing pandemics, especially those that could emanate from ARDs, include social distancing, consistent washing of hands, and the use of nose masks. Social distancing is the act of keeping some healthy space between one person and another. It is a method to minimise the interaction between crowds to prevent the spread of diseases within groups of people. The recommended space is six feet. Infections are believed to spread through respiratory droplets. When a distance of six feet is between the person spreading the droplet and the next person, the probability is high that it will be difficult for the droplet to reach another person since it may not be possible for the droplet to fly. The space encouraged by social distancing tends to slow the spread of a pandemic, thereby decreasing the pressure on the health care facilities. Social distancing could be practised by staying at home and avoiding crowded areas (Maharaj & Kleczkowski 2012, 679). Social distancing helps in keeping its practitioner healthy as well as others around. Strict adherence to social distancing measures could help reduce health costs as it will encourage a remarkable decrease

in the rate of disease spread (Reluga 2010, 69). Governments are responsible for the health care of pandemic victims most of the time; hence, a reduction in the number of infected people will be of advantage to the government in terms of cost reduction. In Nigeria, the National Center for Disease Control (NCDC) described social distancing as a set of methods for reducing frequency and closeness of contact between people to decrease disease transmission risk. The description shows that social distancing involves physical distancing. Keeping appropriate physical distance could drastically reduce the potential spread of diseases (Agusi et al.2020, 23). Regular washing of hands coupled with adherence to maintaining a social distance is also a potent strategy in curtailing the spread of pandemics, especially ARD-related.

Africans Communal Living Vis-a-vis Social Distancing

The Sub-Sahara African family is typically community-based. Communal living literarily connotes a group of people living together. It is an intentional community consisting of a group of private houses gathered around a shared space. The word 'communal' is synonymous with 'common'; hence, communal living refers to a group of people living together with many things in common (Jegade 2010, 43). They share common interests, properties, resources, possessions, work, food and many more. A viable and enduring unit for sustainable development is embedded in the African communal living as it is culture-bound and a driver for self-definition, actualisation and dignity. The communal living features traditional festivals and ceremonies that could be seen as a means of expressing community solidarity. It fosters the preservation of Africans' cultural heritage and encourages traditional architectural design development, further promoting the people's values and aspirations.

Communal living encourages contact between generations, thereby closing generational gaps. Community members in the African setting are taught social and ecological environments management, which helps maintain their way of life for future

generations (Ilmi 2014, 145). The indigenous communal spirit of working in cooperation for the more significant betterment of the people has been the heartbeat of development in Africa for ages past. African communal living encompasses a thinking frame that is philosophically and politically oriented towards developments. Africans engage so much in identifying with one another in times of joy and sorrow. It is a form of solidarity that seems to be in-built in all Africans. People identify with one another during ceremonies such as marriage, housewarming, the burial of the aged and naming of newly born babies.

In some parts of Africa, marriage ceremonies last a whole week. Family members and relatives will be wining, dining and dancing with the family of the groom and that of the bride. The compound of the celebrants will be crowded with friends and well-wishers from far and near, and the atmosphere will be filled with joy and happiness. The recent lockdown and restriction of movements and number of people at occasions that characterised the COVID-19 pandemic were very strange to the African communal living. Ceremonies were handled like mourning sessions, while many people were falling sick essentially because of loneliness due to isolation. The act of African communal living informs the practice of religions in Africa. The lockdown of religious centres negatively affected many people because meeting in churches meets social needs in no small measure.

The naming ceremony serves the purpose of childbirth announcement in traditional African society. The child is introduced to the extended family and the larger community. The naming ceremony is a crucial and significant part of the rite of passage in life. Africans believe that the process of naming a child could influence his or her personality. The ceremony is expected to be done in the presence of all the community members, if possible. The community are to gather in large numbers to welcome the new additional member of the community. Restriction of movements and social distancing has led some African community members to perform naming ceremonies with few or no community members in attendance.

Health authorities have changed the burial ceremonies process and patterns, leaving out some essential elements of importance due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Lying -in-state that enables many family members and the community to bid the dead farewell has been banned, especially if the death is suspected of having occurred due to complications from the pandemic. Many children were not allowed to see the corpse of their departed parents, thereby denying them proper closure.

Social distancing is alien to Africans, especially in the aspect of crowd avoidance. Living in isolation to avoid contracting or spreading pandemic seems contradictory to sharing common interest that characterises African communal living. How then can Africans curb pandemics, especially COVID-19 and other related ARDs?

Pastoral Care Measures of Blended Social Distancing and African Communalism

In a bid to proffer strategies that could curb the spread of COVID-19 and other pandemics without contradicting the beliefs and values of the victims of the pandemic, the following pastoral care measures of blended social distancing are recommended from the African viewpoint:

Isolation centers with communal living considerations: health caregivers should be educated towards arranging the isolation centres to accommodate a minimum of two patients in a room. The pandemic victims should be allowed to interact with one another to avoid loneliness. This could be done without bridging the social distancing protocol. Living in isolation is alien to traditional African society; anyone living in isolation is termed an outcast, and as such, Africans endeavour to avoid living in isolation at all costs (Ilmi 2014, 152). The pandemic patients should be allowed to use their phones to communicate with their family members and relatives.

Levelling on Communication Technology: Communications technology, which is also called information technology, refers to all equipment and programs used to process and communicate

information. Professionals in communication technology specialise in developing, installing, and servicing these hardware and software systems. The opportunity for technological advancement of the contemporary time should be adequately utilised. Video calls, conference calls, and other social media should be employed to communicate with the victims, even in isolation centres. The video call could encourage seeing the picture of the person one is speaking with and hearing the voice. A conference call would accommodate as many family members or relatives in a single discussion with the possibility of beholding their faces and hearing their voices. Conference calls could offer the victims a close alternative to having people around without inflicting them with the pandemic. Levelling on communication technology will help the victims to have a sense of communal living without defying the health rules and guidelines of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prayer: Prayer is communication with God, who is the creator of all beings and things. Elements such as adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplications are expected to be included in prayers as the case may be. Prayers of supplications should be organised for the victims, and the victims should be made aware of the prayers. The awareness that the church is praying for the victims will help increase their morale. This serves both a spiritual and psychological purpose. The prayer could also be held through the zoom platform to enable the participation of the victims if possible and also to give the victims a psychological satisfaction of seeing people around, identifying with them in their trying period. Prayer is capable of changing situations and the Bible established that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much (James 5v16b, KJV). Furthermore, prayer introduces the victims to the ministry of the Holy Spirit which brings comfort and sustaining grace (Kuyper 2007,19).

Financial Assistance: the financial implication of COVID-19 treatment is relatively high, and the government is gradually withdrawing its involvement in funding the treatment. Unfortunately, the Health Insurance Cover in Africa is poor and

limited to only a few enlightened and financially empowered elites to access it (Spaan et al. 2012, 687). The cost of COVID-19 treatment for a single victim in Nigeria (as at the time of carrying out this study) is between N250000 and N500000. The church could help give financial assistance to the financially incapacitated victims. The financial assistance could be by paying the bills or by providing information on how to get financial aid (Kofi Ahorator 2009,2). African communal living is also capable of helping the primary and secondary victims financially as what concerns one concerns all in the setting. Family members, friends and well wishers could be encouraged to rally round the victims in helping to source for funds.

Conclusion

Proffering solutions to a pandemic and its victims in Africa requires an indigenous approach. This paper explored pastoral care response to victims of pandemics in the African context. The western world has tried her best in proffering solutions to the COVID-19 pandemic, but there is a need to apply the solutions suitably for Africans. The paper concludes that the necessity for social distancing demanded by the nature of many pandemics can be met by a blend of African communalism. The pastoral care function of educating and nurturing could be employed to sensitise African Christians on how communal living can be inculcated into all the health measures of safeguarding the spread of pandemics.

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SOCIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO SIBLING RIVALRY IN THE FAMILY

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Abstract

The family in the 21st century has witnessed diverse challenges. The traditional family system beseeches by the tenets of modernization and globalization, which spread their undesirable tentacles to sibling relationship. Sibling rivalry is as old as man and human society, however, the quest to enhance ones understanding of this family relationship menace and be acquainted with the different approaches to mitigate the effects of such unpleasant situation in order to maintain family relational balance and stability, led to this research. The issue of rivalry in family serves no immunity for any home, and as a parent, it is a dreadful challenge. Therefore, this paper adopts a descriptive method of study. This elucidates sociological insight from Structural Functionalism Approach, which projects an interdependent system working together in an internal relationship to maintain balance and proper functioning of a system and psychological perspective from Personality Approach, which focuses on giving stability and uniqueness to peoples' character, in tackling sibling rivalry in the family and their implications. Furthermore, this study will take closer look on family, siblings and causes of rivalry. In addition, findings from the study will significantly augment better understanding of sibling rivalry and dissecting the approaches will enhance peaceful family relationship that will positively influence the family, church and society. This will help families understand and proactively dictate and adequately correct behaviours, rationale, mental disposition and social mind-set for certain actions which could lead to sibling rivalry.

Key Words: Family, Sibling Rivalry

INTRODUCTION

Family is God's gift to humanity; through which the deep longings of human needs are met. The desire for love, joy, intimacy, care and appreciation of members' thirst and receive fulfilment. No matter how contemporary culture, politics, economy, language, law, society, sexuality with all of its sinister secularization has affected the family, no matter how perverted human ideologies have sought to influence the family globally, it remains the fulcrum of the society and any nation. The whole gamut of what the family expresses transcends a mere definition of people united by a common hood. Rather, the persons and personalities of those involved fuse in a way that rivalry of any kind if unchecked could upset the family balance and stability both internally and externally. Duane and Sydney Schultz (2005, 134) explained, "Even though siblings have the same parents and live in the same house, they do not have identical social environments. Being older or younger than one sibling and being exposed to different parental attitudes create different childhood conditions that help determines personality". Hence, with such diversity of experiences rivalry among sibling seem inevitable and, in most cases, a constant and with a firm grip on the intricacies surrounding sibling relationship remains very vital to handling any facet of imbalance in family relationship among siblings.

Therefore, this paper premises on sociological and psychological approaches to sibling rivalry, which rests on the ideology that inadequate comprehension that the beauty of humanity does not lay in uniformity of persons, personality and social orientations alone but on the corporate existence of humanity for a common good in the family. These approaches inculcate knowledge necessary for parents to understand and dictate traits as exhibited by their children that could lead to rivalry among siblings because each child is unique in the way he/she thins and behaves under same or diverse circumstances. In order to expand this premise, this paper will explicate conceptual clarification of family, sibling rivalry and establish a context of rivalry among siblings then approaches from sociological and psychological studies posit recommendation for handling sibling rivalry in the family.

Conceptual Clarification

Family

From the African viewpoint, the renowned scholar James Mbiti (1975, 175) posited, “Each person in African traditional life lives in or as part of the family”. Indeed, no one in human history is devoid of belonging to a family; humans, animals or plants. Furthermore, Kisembo Magesa (1998, 202-203) expressed, “The family community was the fundamental element of the African, this basic sphere of action, through which he became integrated with the layer, human community...he always acted from within the sphere of family”. The above perspective tallied with the submission of Emmanuel Ibout, who cited Ogbueli that, “the foundation of the society is family, but the foundation for the family is marriage institution. Therefore, when a society losses mental values and family values collapse, the result is the decay of moral fabric of the society”, (Ibout, 2017, 222). This statement entails that when the family experiences an imbalance and disintegrates into anarchy and rivalry the moral values of the society risks being eroded. Hence, the family influences every society. It is a citadel of cultural and social transmission, a forte for protection and security of members, a base for economic welfare and a care channel for everyone related (Ibout, 223).

In similar opinion, H.B. Davis (1955, 48) held that, family created a platform for the satisfaction of member's needs, for example; sexual needs, psychological, social and emotional support, intimacy with common and long lasting existence. Moreover, P. Mattessich and R. Hill (1987, 48) conceived of the family as “Groups related by kinship, residence or close emotional ties and they display four systematic features: intimate interdependence, selective boundary maintenance, ability to adapt to change and maintain their identity over time and performance of the family tasks”. These factors enumerated above potentiate the family as a place of genuine balance and focused relationship. D. K. Walker and R.W. Crocker (1988, 133) maintained that family is “Any social unit with which an individual is intimately involved and which is governed by family

rules". It is of note that family is not run at loose ends; there are rules, which are expected to be adhered to for mutual interdependence and harmony. According to G.P Murdock (1949, 2) family is "A social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction". This closely related group is expected to grow numerically yet connected seeking to achieve goals by acquiring, allocating and disbursing of resources (Day 2010, 14). Family as conceived in this paper is akin to the perspective as expressed by E.J. Leeder (2004, 19) "A caregiving unit...consisting of a couple, a mother, father and children; a single parent and child grand-parents and grand-children; sibling group, a circle of friends. Furthermore, Seun. O (2010, 57), reflected that family is "A psychological group constituted by at least one adult member and one or more others who work as a group towards mutual need fulfilment. Hence, family is a place where both psychological and sociological needs interface and seek fulfilment.

Sibling Rivalry

Wiehe Vermon (1997, 20) observed that a sibling is one of two or more individuals having one or both parents in common. Charles Higham (1984, 257) posited that the plural is siblings, and it can refer to brothers, sisters or a combination of both. Siblings can be any age they are not necessarily children. In most societies of the globe, siblings usually might grow in the same house; this enhances deep bonding and emotional attachment seen strong passionate and emotional attachment seem complex at various periods, however parental influence, birth structure, personality and life experiences produce diverse behaviours on siblings (Senghor, 2012, 36).

On the other hand, rivalry according to Kay Richardson (2019, 28) rivalry is a state of two people or groups engaging in a lasting competitive relationship. From the perspective of William Thompson (2019, 45-47), rivalry is an act 'Against each other spirit' of two competing sides. A relationship could be termed rivalry and each participant or side, a rival to the other. David Buss (2019, 101) posited that rivalry is "a perceptual categorization process in which

actors identify which states are sufficiently threatening competitors”. Walter Skeat (1993, n.p) wrote from a more psychological perspective about sibling rivalry and stated that it is “a subjective competitive relationship [which] increased psychological involvement and perceived stakes”. Furthermore, sibling rivalry surfaced as an academic subject in 1941, with the claim that “An older sibling's aggressive response to the new baby could be typical and common feature of family life (Barry Starr, 2020). In addition, Gary Goertz and Paul Diehl (2018, 141) highlighted that “Sibling rivalry describes the on-going conflict between kids raised in the same family. It can happen between blood-related siblings and even adopted or foster siblings. It might take the form of verbal or physical fighting, name, tattling and bickering being in constant competition for parental attention and voicing feelings of envy”. Moreover, John Sforza (2019, 289) stated that sibling rivalry is particularly between same genders and/or, where one or both children are intellectually gifted. While Syliva Rimm (2007, 41) added the word 'animosity', Tish Davidson (2004, 81) mentioned “antagonism and physical fighting”. Furthermore, P. Slater (1980, 326) noted that sibling rivalry is “an upset in equilibrium at the failure of one's traditional problem-solving approach which results in disorganization, hopelessness, sadness, confusion and panic.” A. Yahakangas (2004, 53-75) saw sibling rivalry as a creator of family imbalance and as “a situation that requires changes in normal patterns of behaviour. It upsets the normal functioning of the family and requires a new set of responses....”

Therefore, the context of sibling rivalry is hydra-headed, real and a challenge for families, which calls for knowledge and understanding of its social and psychological dimensions. Hence, employing appropriate mechanism form this study to alleviate families of the dread of sibling rivalry.

Context for Understanding Sibling Rivalry

From psychological context, Jess and Gregory Feist (2008, 10) in the perspective towards personality asked the question, why do people behave the way they do? Do people choose their actions or could it be that there are factors responsible to the way people behave? Do people have options to conflict or be happy? Do experiences and expectations consciously or unconsciously determine a person's pattern of living? In what ways do traits and social interactions affect someone's perception of life? To establish a context for sibling rivalry, Richardson Kay, Thompson William (2019, 45) and Michael Brecher (2018, 11) expressed the view that such rivalry could be caused by insidious relationship and the spirit of competition (2019, 28). This Feist (2008, 76) saw as 'strife for success'. Among siblings, the feeling of any form of deficiency could lead to strife especially if the older sibling is in the light. He /she might feel that oppressing the younger sibling could make up for such deficiencies. Hence, “psychologically unhealthy individuals strive for personal superiority” (2008, 76). Secondly, the quest for personal superiority; in this guise most siblings lack altruism while relating with their siblings. Their action and reactions are motivated by self-interest, personal credits, personal goals in a bid to sub-ordinate others (2008, 80).

Equally, in the Sociological context, such superiority pursuing siblings tend to displace apathy and lack of civic cooperation. This form of apathy could lead to emotional out pour of jealousy, fear, anger and anxiety. Therefore, truncating the social balance of sibling relationship and engendering rivalry (Achim, Schiltzwohl, 2012, 123). Furthermore, J.A Thompson (2008, 89) came up with an idea of 'Implicit Theory', which has to do with the way children think of strategies to deal with new situations. Most parents do not prepare the older siblings for the arrival of the younger one, hence the older devises way to handle this new situation, could produce rivalry. This Susan McHale (1999, 994) observed, as parent seem to withdraw their love from the older sibling in order to care for the newly arrived sibling. In addition, the perceived

inequality in the distribution of resources could give rise to rivalry among siblings (Thompson, 2008). McHale also noted that the parent's reaction to their children's academic performances, the coaches' comparison of sibling activities in sporting events could create a lasting hostility, hence a rivalry (Susan, 994). Lastly, in a case where a disable sibling feels unwanted and unloved; such a person could adopt a reactionary antisocial behaviour as a means of getting attention needed (Kids Health, 2016, n.p).

Therefore, what the families experience contemporarily, as sibling rivalry is in effect the symptoms of which the psychological and social negligence might be the actual disease leading to hatred, self-isolation, animosity, aversion, dispute, discord, incongruity and variances of diverse kinds. Hence, the approaches to mitigating such undesirable situation could be psychological and sociological.

Psychological Approach for Understanding Sibling Rivalry

Duane and Sydney Schultz (2005, 124) informed that, “The goal of human soul is conquest, perfection, security, superiority; every child is faced with so many obstacles in life that no child ever grows up without striving for some form of significance”. These scholars further emphasized the driving force behind mental attitude is inferiority feeling and the motivation to overcome it and strive for a higher life quest. This unguarded mental attitude gives rise to the following: poor self-opinion, feeling of unworthiness, anger, distrust, hostility, and little social feeling show of apathy toward other sibling's success (127). Corroborating the above view, Karen Horney reported on sibling with such personality as “moving against people, in their world everyone is aggressive, life is a jungle in which superiority, and strength and ferocity are the paramount virtue. They [These siblings] act tough, domineering and have no regards for others, in other to achieve their desired control and superiority” (2006, 160). Furthermore, Karen agrees with Schultz that such siblings are driven by insecurity, anxiety and hostility; expressed through seeking self-benefits in all relationships, criticize others, no effort to appease others and will do anything to retain power, control and superiority even at the expense of other siblings (160).

In addition, Feist (2008, 10) elaborated on the nature of the sibling who displays the above dispositions of personality as 'a pattern of relatively permanent traits', this contributes to individual differences in behaviour, consistency of behaviour over the time and stability of behaviour across situation. It may be unique, common to each person. Such unique qualities of an individual include attributes such as temperament, physique and intelligence. Carol Dweck (2021, 84) proposed what would of immense help psychologically approaching issues of sibling rivalry in the family citing that “We experience needs and pursue need fulfilling goals and as we do, we develop representations of our experiences, which come to play a major role in our motivation and in the formation of our personality”. From childhood to teenage life, parenting plays a major role in properly monitoring the traits that manifest from childhood in order to extensive needs, which ranges from the need for the following as (Dweck, 87-89) enumerated: A-Need for trust B- Need for self-coherence C- Need for self-esteem D- Need for self-worth E- Need for control.

Sociological Approach for Understanding Sibling Rivalry

Kathy Stolley (2005, 1) described sociology as a study that “Provides an understanding of social issues and patterns of behaviour, pointing to rules, which are made, maintained, and changed and in future becomes a tradition. Humans must understand the social system that governs their family lines which creates a social structure and social process”. The family becomes a platform where how siblings relate and operate are inculcated. Structural Functionalism as advanced by George Ritzer (2011, 372) cited Herbert Spencer, who viewed the society as similar to “human body and projected that the entire human body part function together to enhance the full functioning of the body system, so various parts of the human society function to ensure the functioning and regulation of the social system”. The theory of structural functionalism can serve as an analogy for the family like a healthy body, in which the different components function to maintain normal health of the system called family. These parts are interdependent yet all serve to

sustain the health, equilibrium, balance and stability of the family. Structural Functionalism also postulates that when the system is disturbed, its parts readjust and reorganises to restore the balance of the system (Ritzer, 372). Sibling rivalry is a factor for destabilization of the family balance because the parts are malfunctioning, hence the need for thorough understanding of the family values as virtues, as every part works in order to keep the harmony of the family.

In view of the above, the family serves as a social institution and structured in a way to meet the needs of its members. It is also an institution for inculcating established social position, behavioural expectations such as values; what the family holds as important, norms; which has to do with right behaviour irrespective of circumstance in order to maintain family ties, balance and stability. In addition, in the teaching of what a family represents which reiterates what Ritzer termed socialization, “A life-long social process of learning cultural patterns, behaviours and expectations through this we learn values, norms, roles and develop personality, which is our unique sense of who we are” (61). This responsibility is for every member of the family institution especially the parents, who are the first tutors of their children before personality development occurs.

Recommendations

Ken Ham and Steve Ham (2009, 60) observed, “If we don't transmit our knowledge of God to the next generation, it will be lost. Those that follow may not have any means of regaining it and they probably won't even be aware of the need to do so”. It is germane to understand that the family is the citadel for transmitting not only God's knowledge but also inculcate traditional family values of love, respect, interdependence and mutuality among siblings. According to Daniel Goleman (2009, 12) “An important part of maturing, is learning to manage our emotional process so that it works positively for us not against us”. In the same vein, Smith Blaine (2007, 35) reiterated, “Certain expectations affect peoples' behaviours and its outcome far more than they realize”. Behavioural maturity among siblings is a process that involves both the parents and children, as a

process it spans across different stages of development. Parents have a role to play by consciously and consistently helping to nurture and shape their children's psychological and sociological dispositions.

Consequent on the above quest, the writer interacted with Zygmunt Bauman and Tim May (2019, 15-20), insights as helpful in proactively arresting issues of sibling rivalry in the family. This awareness is recommended as follows:

A- Parents should early enough identify 'recognition seeking' children and guide them when conflicting feelings are observed.

B- Siblings need help to comprehend 'interrelatedness of action and self', how they behave informs how they are perceived and as such should be altruistic in their actions.

C- There should be rules to co-ordinate interaction with other siblings, which must project family values.

D- Parents should be meticulous in observing behavioural changes among siblings, and decipher body languages and actions capable of causing rivalry among siblings and proactively deal with them.

E- Siblings should understand 'freedom with boundaries' in the interactions, in order to foster mutual respect for one another with clear adherence to roles and responsibilities as assigned by parents based on the differences in age.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has put forward certain issues in sibling rivalry, factors that could trigger rivalry and how approaches from sociological and psychological insights will help proactively to forestall the menace. The entire family should function appropriately to maintain family balance and stability, issues that trigger inordinate relationship must not be swept under the carpet because sibling rivalry is capable of derailing the smooth running of a peaceful family. Hence, parents must be proper observers of the attitude and behaviours of their children from infancy to adulthood for symptoms of sociological and personality defects in sibling communications and interactions. The family is the foundation for peaceful society. So when family values collapse, the society readily loses her social and

mental values, the result is the decay in moral fabric of the society. So the mental state of the nation and its societal values reflect the value it has for the family institution. The family provides care for its members and remains a citadel for rightful inculcation mental attitude and social transmission, a fortress for protection and security of members.

Therefore, as sibling rivalry in the family is tearing homes apart with its adverse effects all hands must be on deck both from the experts in the academia and nonprofessionals like the writer, who genuinely desire balance and stability for the Twenty First Century family, to take seriously the case of sibling rivalry. In these wise, religious institutions, governmental and non-governmental organizations need to synergize towards ensuring that family values are maintained and siblings live, grow and attain maturity in their relationship.

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CONFLICT IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY, CAUSES AND REMEDIES FOR HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIP: A PASTORAL COUNSELLING APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Studies have shown clearly that conflict in marriage spurs social, mental, relational and emotional instability by aggravating the body chemistry towards the abnormal reaction of restlessness, erratic thinking, misbehaviour, and insensitivity to the divine plan for marriage and family. Most times, the attitude and behaviour of the parties involved resembles that of uncultured and uneducated. The study aimed to investigate the conflict in marriage and family, looking at the causes and remedies for harmonious relationships through a pastoral counselling approach. A descriptive method is employed to carry out the research. At the same time, the finding reveals that through conflict, the damage hurts the harmonious relationship of some loving couples, a breakdown in communication sets in, and living and interaction turn tense. The paper, therefore, recommends that solace for revamping the wrong orientation that engulfs and generates conflict in marriage and family is the antidote of pastoral counselling to delve into re-orientating couples into appropriate lifestyles, propping understanding in living and the need for refraining from unconventional practices that trigger conflict. In contrast, the effect of a dignified lifestyle in the family proposes harmonious relationships.

Keywords: Conflict, Marriage and Family, Causes and Remedies, Harmonious Relationship, Pastoral Counselling

Introduction

No one can deny the submission of old that human beings are gregarious creatures. Where people gather to relate, the possibility of getting across each other's way or stepping on one another's toes may manifest and result in conflict. Conflict is a common phenomenon wherever people congregate for relationships, where people believe in one another and accept doing business together. Moreover, where more than one person decides on a common purpose to live and share life in common, and where people decide to coexist to run significant affairs that will enhance living for good. Conflict becomes inevitable amidst people who see issues differently, co-workers whose thinking differs on ideologies, and friends whose desires vary on principles and strategies. Therefore, relations are people whose plan and focus are not the same most times, and family members whose temperament and emotion are not identical in life.

Moreover, conflict in marriage and family suggests a relationship between husband and wife that lacks checks and balances or mindful living requiring decisive discipline. Partners in love affairs have significant issues that might bind and knit them together for genuine interaction, cordial conversation, and harmonious coordination in moving responsibly. That living or sharing things in common reveals a continuum of undiluted discipline within the duo in a marriage that signifies having close commonalities, which glued the attitude and behaviour for a meaningful relationship. That possibly informs the submission drawn from Lateju (2013, 33) that discipline is a method of training the mind or body or controlling peoples' attitude, cognition and or behaviour in an area of activity where this is necessary. Discipline in marriage, therefore, is a way of denying the personal self from an antagonistic state involving unhealthy matters. More than that, sometimes it entails instructing other people to obey laid down rules to achieve maximum results, which is to unite or harmonise relationships.

Conflict in Christian marriage and family is focused on in this paper and therefore considered a terrible problem, which causes

confusion, division, broiling, discord, emotional breakdown, unhealthy relationship, disagreement, distrust and the like. For any Christian marriage to scale through the scourge of conflict and its ravaging implications, a pastoral counselling measure must provide remedies to resolve the tension and work out modalities for harmonious relationships among affected couples. To achieve the purpose and goal setting for the study, issues that the paper discusses sequentially include: an overview of the conflict in marriage, biblical perspective of conflict in marriage; causes of conflict in marriage; remedies for conflict for harmonious relationship; and pastoral counselling measure to handle conflict in Christian marriage.

Overview of Conflict in Marriage and Family

Conflict in marriage and family is a tussle between two individuals and one of the social crises that have a terrible impact on disrupting couples' homes through rising and calming like sea waves. Ojo (2010) asserts that conflict contains disintegrative force and components that are highly destructive and dangerous, with the power to crush family members, relatives, materials and the environment. It is a terrible monster that hibernates within humans seeking an opportunity to disrupt peaceful coexistence and tranquillity in the lives and relationships of couples. Conflict is one of the inward, subtle, and invisible warlords, which role and impact sometimes beat imagination for the unquantifiable harm and havoc it unleashed on husbands and wives. People underrate the effect of conflict; hence, they feel unconcern or wear a nonchalant attitude about it. Conflict is a global phenomenon because insurgence happens wherever couples have no care. Conflict is a common problem wherever people associate and relate with each other as family, friends, neighbours, co-workers, or cohabits within a society.

In the marital journey, Tolorunleke (2008) asserted that couples experience tension or stress between their marital partners as they try to work out the nitty-gritty surrounding living together and straightening issues concerning marital roles or responsibilities. It is essential to note that husbands and wives in marriage and family have

different expectations and hopes desired to be achieved, while some may remain unachievable. As humans, it is natural to expect that there will be differences in opinions, values, needs, desires and habits that are the stuff of everyday living. However, no human relationship is immune to making mistakes, having friction, misunderstanding, and heated experiences in living once in a while. But that does not necessarily mean such humans are not compatible as social beings who are designated to associate and regroup to forge ahead despite difficulties experienced in the affairs.

The disposition of people in closer relationships, such as marital affairs, rather than friendship or co-workers, may be different because the affected individual may hold on to the contradiction as the basis for misbehaving, which sometimes leads to conflict. In light of that, it would be appropriate to examine some issues that scholars have advanced to prove the inevitability of marital disputes in couples' relationships. In the view of Al-Nabi, Poor and Hassan, the attitudes and behaviours that result in marital disputes (<http://docsdrive.com/pdfs/medwelljournals/ibm/2016/2514-2519.pdf>) within relationships of spouses are multiple; however, few are gleaned and discussed as relevant to enhance a better understanding of the possibility of marital conflict within a married relationship. That is not a hunch or does not predetermine separation or divorce between couples, as some people may think. However, some elements that reveal the unavailability of conflict when social living is beyond an individual are discuss below.

The perceptual difference in Practices

This element focuses on how individuals perceive the attitudes and actions put up within a given situation of the marital relationship. People believe that conflict emerges from the difference in perception and understanding of an issue which reflects itself behaviourally and physically. Ogungbile (2004, 129) asserts that a woman who dresses in white apparel with a flowing scarf, which according to her, expresses her purity of life without the husband's suspicion, may cause misunderstanding. Since perception is a

cognitive process, an attitude or behaviour that tells differently can be misunderstood and result in conflict, as attitude and behaviour serve as the fundamental principle governing conduct.

Equity on Gender Equality

Gender equality upholds that in relationships, every individual who participates in an unfair relationship will probably become dissatisfied. The truth is that marital roles and responsibilities within a relationship require equity to determine the meaningful result. In the case of marriage and family, Adeniran (1995, 181) believes that interpersonal relationships between spouses need to base on sharing roles and responsibilities in the home to achieve maximum satisfaction in the relationship of both spouses. If one of them feels that the relationship has become unequal, such an individual may experience psychological tension, resulting in conflict(s). Perhaps, every affected individual feels useless or unaccomplished; such individuals may feel dissatisfied about being together. Hence, the affected individual may strongly contemplate ending the relationship due to the tension that arises inwardly.

Exchange Social Behaviour in Relationship

Cherry cited sociologist Homans, who asserts that social behaviour results from an exchange process. This exchange aims to maximise benefits and minimise costs, but people weigh social relationships' potential benefits and risks. People will terminate or abandon any relationship when the risks outweigh the rewards (<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-social-exchange-theory-2795882>). The teaching therein is that people usually seek situations where tips are higher than expenses and strive to avoid problems requiring higher costs. In other words, one person can affect another person's behaviour either positively or negatively to the extent that such an individual can control or determine the rewards and expenses of the other person. Moreso, what that individual receives in a relationship should be almost equal to what the other person has spent. The imbalance between rewards and costs can cause conflict

and dissatisfaction with the partner who has received a lesser share of prizes. That can jeopardise the motive and intention of any lover in marital affairs, no matter the number of years such ones have lived together as a couple.

Attribution within Intimate Relationship

The term attribution means ascribing something to somebody, whereas psychology reveals that it is a process of making judgments about the causes of one's behaviour and that of others. Hence, attribution shows a cause and effect that influences how perceptions of specific behaviours modify beliefs about one's spouse (<https://www.encyclopedia.com>). In other words, in a particular situation, how an individual would respond to a problem depends on the causal inferences of that problem. In a marriage setup, when a spouse attributes the origin of a problem to the other partner, claiming to be without any fault can be responsible for producing misgiving and grievance. Therefore, the partner proving innocent on any course gives a better feeling about oneself without working out the conflict. In situations of the home where a spouse is desperate to attribute negative behaviour or fault to the other partner as one who is not cooperating, as shown in other observable grounds, seeks to spur provocation and tension that would hinder the harmonious relationship. Wisdom to avoid conflict in a relationship requires pointing at the strengths and weaknesses of both parties to strike a balance that would necessitate rewarding and positive behaviour of their partners in internal affairs.

Behavioural Disorder in Relationship

The element of behaviour disorder in relationships breeds conflict between couples who are trying to understand their partner's actions and behaviour. The observant partner may strategise new approaches to checkmate and control the dispute. Collins (2007, 646) avers that a person with faulty sensation, emotions, and thinking is likely to act in odd or socially inappropriate ways. Whatever prompts

a spouse to display a particular behaviour resulting in conflict within a relationship, also demands an alternative approach to resolve the cause and make it beneficial. To have meaningful control and management of disputes in a partnership requires steps to clarify an individual's responsibilities and commitments; then, determining interpersonal borders would allow taking part in decision-making and employing open relationships.

Reluctance to allow Negotiation in Relationship

A scholar submits that "positive negotiation relationships are important not because they engender warm, fuzzy feelings, but because they engender trust, which is a vital means of securing desired actions from others" (<https://www.pon.harvard.edu>). In other words, negotiation suggests discussion that does not preclude reaching an agreement on an issue. Therefore, any spouse that feels adamant about negotiating for peaceful coexistence will cause conflict to boomerang within relationships. Parameters for resolving the tension in a relationship call for negotiation between parties involved to work out the friction resulting from failure in negotiation strategy. In other words, a lack of negotiation methods and displaying proper behaviours can be the cause of conflict instead of actual needs.

Growth Principles Enhance Mutual Relationship

Divine intention for marriage and family, according to Ogundipe (2015, 66 – 67), was to make life easy, better, enjoyable, peaceful and lively for couples. For couples to achieve that, an instrument that spells out the nitty-gritty of approach, the procedural line of action, and the mode of relational application was not only an oral expression but a defined and well-structured principle for couples' growth and development. As the marriage team pass through a growth stage and enter the next step, family development is under maximum pressure. The stresses and challenges couples experience are required for the successful compatibility of their new structure in the family. Suppose the couple's effort to follow the correct principles fails. In that case, it will affect family health negatively with the

prosperity and the ability to oppose other kinds of stress and eventually, it will significantly protract mutual family relationships.

Given the factors presented, according to Adeogun (2006), it is glaring that conflict is just a contradiction arising from differences in interest, ideas, ideologies, prescriptions and tendencies. The inconsistencies between husbands and wives usually affect emotion, mental coordination, temperament and interpersonal relations. In other words, conflict manifests an invisible force that allows collision or contradiction within human coexistence and relationship, often resulting in misunderstanding or disagreement. While opposing views between couples, conflict may arise to dismember the unity within family diversity. That means conflict from a psychological perspective is a tussle which usually occurs when there is a struggle between two or more alternatives that may have characteristics of approach and avoidance.

Collins (1988, 81) elaborate further that during the conflict, "to approach is to tend to do something or to move in a direction that will be pleasurable and satisfying. However, to avoid is to resist doing something perhaps because it will not be pleasurable and satisfying." In a marital relationship, a clash of interests may develop or stem from incompatible goals, ideas, views or visions on pursuing two or more individuals over something considered important but scarce. According to Kohlberg, cited by Holme (1972, 138), Couples in conflict state apply a sense of conventional moralities developed during childhood to adjudge the knowledge of what is right or wrong as an individual perceives it. That means what brings conflict is the perception of evaluating a performance which, when it disagrees with anything considered suitable, brings shock, tussle, frowning, dislike and striving against the act purposely to challenge the inappropriateness of an amendment.

In the process of interaction or inter-relationship, Adeogun upheld Imobighe's (2003) views that conflict presents "a condition of disharmony within an interaction process usually as a result of a clash of interest between the parties involved in some form of relationship. Such a clash of interest could occur because either they are pursuing

incompatible goals or using incompatible means to pursue their chosen goals." Conflict is inevitable in marriage and family, where various interests, views and mentalities exist. Therefore, it is evident that discord is natural, normal and advantageous wherever growth, development and change will occur; and not a bad omen within the human community but a necessary 'evil' that possesses positive rewards and outcomes when adequately handled.

Biblical Perspective of Conflict in Marriage

The scripture documents the interpersonal relationship between the divine and humans and involves a relation between persons. In the stream of relationships, however, it is evident that natural human tendencies often break out to disrupt the smoothness and cordiality expected amidst coexistence. Experience validates that, sometimes, an individual has trouble with self and talks less about having interpersonal problems while relating with people. Manifesting issues within a relationship originates from misunderstanding one another's views, communication breakdown, attitudinal disparity and behavioural fallouts, which the mind and perception disagree with, struggle with, analyse briefly but critically based on morality and step up with reaction, which results in conflict at the end (James 4: 1 – 3).

The irony of life within Christian marriage stems from an assumption surrounding the personalities involved in the marital relationship as couples. The logic is that married lovers have Christ as their Lord and personal saviour; they have an assurance of an endowment of inner peace. That produces internal stability over tension and turmoil, and they have access to communicate with the thrown of mercy for peace to guide the heart free from anxiety (John 14: 27) in the view of Milne (1993, 209). Christian couples are suitable to seek intervention for divine peace on issues that bothers their mind and life, as Stagg (1971, 213) asserts in the light of Phil. 4: 7. Couples are expected to live together without hatred, hitch or deceit, confusion, troubles and tough argument as husbands and wives. Therefore, a conflict would not be a problem to dismember couples in marriage and family relationships.

Causes of Conflict in Marriage

It is expedient to find out the root cause(s) of conflict between lovers in marriage and family who promise to live harmoniously together till death comes. But when they reach a point in the relationship and discover possibilities, they are no longer on good terms and cannot go along again. In the view of Collins (2007, 319 – 324), some causes of marital conflict include Satan's influence, personal attributes, attitudes, and actions; group attitudes and beliefs; conflict patterns, communication failure; and social irritants. Other variables which are germane realities that could bring conflict amidst the relationship of husbands and wives who are not careful enough to restrict, retreat, or revert the vices when they rear heads in living are shared hereafter.

Satanic Manifestation and Manipulating Influence

The scripture declares Satan as an agent of confusion in any environment people gather to relate and socialise; the target for being present among people with various antics is to disrupt, disorganise, confuse and disintegrate established plans by causing conflict. Being a deceiver, a liar who throws about deception, and disguises himself as an angel of light, he appears amidst people tempting and trying to disrupt and devour their good structure (John 8: 44; 1 Peter 5: 8; 1 Thess. 3: 5). In marriage and family this schema is dubious and influential, that is the reason behind the instruction given to Christians to resist the devil (James 4: 7); Collins cites the submission of Huggett (1984, 14) on Satan that he "takes an informed interest in all Christian relationships and schemes either to bring about their downfall or to pollute them." Couples need to take cognisance of this terrible being whenever the peaceful water of a relationship is stirred and causes conflict.

Manifestation of Unfaithfulness in handling money

Unfaithfulness in handling money is the most common conflict between couples nowadays. It is no surprise that financial pressure can disable dreams, wreck relationships, and cripple team

communication (<https://www.centerstone.org>). As essential as money is in funding lives, if there is not enough to take care of what is needed, it creates an incredible amount of stress for everyone involved. Couples turn red eyes when unfaithfulness shows up on finances, or either spouse is shady about expending it, profound distrust shows up as an attended effect to shake the foundation of the marriage.

Manifestation of Unfaithfulness in Intimacy

Bioku (2021, 211 – 212), citing Frankle, asserts that the life of married couples may lead to a crisis of discomfort, which is loaded with pain, anguish and struggle with distorted integrity when unfaithfulness becomes the disrupting factor of intimacy. It spurs erratic feeling on cloudy sex relation that becomes overt and obvious. Such encounters would cause restlessness, high fever and emotional imbalance in-between the spouses, which will lead to feelings of inadequacy and doubt of security to continue in the relationship.

Moving along with Undesirable Friends

There is a common saying that birds of the same feather flocks together. Keeping undesirable friends can create bad blood, tension, discomfort and conflict between couples. Paul decries that bad company corrupts good character (1 Cor. 15: 33). When a spouse is associated with undesirable friends, the other partner will not get along, creating enormous friction within the spouse's family. More importantly, where the dubious friends dictate the movement of the spouse to take precedence over the relationship, rumblings will persist. A few others listed are manipulation in handling marital roles, unfaithfulness in parenting responsibilities, pseudo-faithfulness to moral discipline, and ineffective communication in relationships.

Effect of Conflict in Marriage and Family

The effect of conflict in marriage and family is similar to a volcanic eruption, which "spews hot, hazardous gases, ash, lava, and rock that

are sturdily destructive ... Health concerns after a volcanic eruption include infectious disease, burns, respiratory illness, injuries from falls, and vehicle accidents related to the slippery, hazy conditions caused by ash" (<https://www.cdc.gov>). Most times, the attitude and behaviour of parties involved in conflict Ogundipe (2015, 64) signify and depict uncultured and uneducated in the context of marriage and family. The reason is that either party's temperament tends to affect their intimacy. At the same time, the couple had damaged the harmonious relationship of some loving couples, a breakdown in communication sets in, living and interaction turn tense, and emotional disorder hacks down cordiality. At the same time, a flair for coexistence translates into indecency and a reactionary attitude leading to fomenting havoc within the social system of family life.

Remedies on Conflict for Harmonious Relationship

The word remedy suggests things to handle a problem, medication that can be applied to an ailment and healed, or treatment one can give to relieve or cure a problem. A few remedies to handle conflict among Christian couples are highlighted here. Christian couples should allow genuine love to saturate their minds, as Ogundipe (2009, 44) proposes, because it is the greatest virtue of all attributes. They can sustain relationships, see burning issues with a gentle disposition, develop a change of attitude when circumstance proves naughty and dicey, submit to the will of Christ at the point of wrongdoing or mistake and try to examine the situation from a divine perspective. Paul's teaching reveals that love is a way of life for Christian couples (1 Cor. 13). It is a compass that leads them to handle serious issues lightly and overlook faults, attitudes and behaviours that can cause anger and aggression, which can result in chaos.

In odd situations, Christian couples need to learn how to evaluate themselves when a critical problem arises and results in misunderstanding. Moments of tension are gaining momentum, and during this period, emotions become tense; the appropriate step in a Christian relationship is to calm down, take an inward stock, and check if all the struggle is worth it in marriage and family

relationships. A realistic valuation of the situation will lead to sympathy for one another out of mercy. Asha (2021, 60) avers that such is an essential spiritual gift between husband-wife relationships in marriage and family.

It would not be out of place for Christian couples to understand conflict stages of short and long terms as they situate in the same manner; hence, they tend to resolve amicably. The five stages of conflict Palmer (1990) identified are summarised by Collins (2007, 326 – 327). They include the tension development stage, which affects individuals' sense of something different, followed by the role confusion stage, where participants are doubtful about what is taking place. In the injustice collecting stage, affected individuals will gather evidence to support their position and opinion about what people observe. The parties would enter into a confrontation stage, where each member would try to justify themselves and pass bulk on the other; the volatile nature of that stage can lead to an unexpected inward crisis within marital partners. The last stage is the adjustment stage, where the parties desire adjustment to eliminate the tension leading to conflict.

Pastoral Counselling Measure to Handle Conflict in Marriage

The solace for revamping the wrong orientation that engulfs and generates conflict between couples in marriage and family, according to Ogundipe (2014, 78), is in the antidote of pastoral counselling measures. That will be part of the discussion below; it possesses the propensity to delve into re-orientating couples into appropriate lifestyles, propping understanding in living and the need for refraining from unconventional practices that trigger conflict.

Guide Couples to Develop Meaningful Rapport in Relationship

In traditional morality, it is expected of husbands and wives to adhere to fundamental principles of relationship. That encapsulates genuine love that states, "thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself" (Mat. 22: 39). Moreover, it should be the starting point of a

relationship; a neighbour, in this context, means the marital partner should be treated with dignity in a relationship. Couples should respect and regard each other as rational beings and disallow anything that would bridge intimacy, provoke annoyance, disrespect rules guiding socialising, and unruly elements that can trigger discord. Donagan (1985) asserted that it is impermissible for couples in marital affairs not to respect each other as rational creatures. Therefore, teams must imbibe whatever is right, appropriate and permissible for each other irrespective of differences and diversity.

Educate Couples to be Open-minded in Relationship

Pastoral counsellors can educate couples to be open-minded by accepting one another without minding their opposing views, feelings, desires and goals. Ayandokun and Ayandokun (2021, 261) asserted that pastoral counsellors might employ biblical resolutions to tackle whatever virus that brings about the conflict amidst their relationship through open-mindedness and exercise patience with perseverance to uproot the stem of relational conflict. Through open-mindedness, Christian couples may decide to be at peace to checkmate and restrain them from issues that will repress being at peace with one another in the marriage and family (Prov. 16: 7). The open-mindedness may help the couples to decide to do good, express love of Christ to each other, pray for each other to seek divine directive, and follow Christ process of settling dispute and conflict (Romans 12: 21; Psa. 119: 165).

Nurture Couples to Cultivate Endurance in Relationships

Endurance is a virtue cultivated towards stomaching insult, disagreement, discord and wrong acts without revenge or retaliation when pastoral caregivers teach couples (1 Cor. 4: 12; 2 Tim. 2: 3). Endurance is the necessitating enabler of tolerance at the exasperating time(s). Tolerance is another virtue that should not be lacking in marriage, family, or interpersonal relationships if the

uproar of crisis subsides. Tolerance is the ability to endure hardship, tolerate somebody or something maximally, accept divergent or differing views of others, and remain unaffected. The virtue suggests accommodation of ideas, opinions and people (differences. Factually); people are not the same in terms of trait, assertion, sentiment and thought; this is the beauty of nature. The pastoral counsellors promote tolerance among couples for harmony, cordial relationship and peaceful coexistence. The word tolerance does not mean compromise for anything harmful or can jeopardise life or whatever is ethically wrong. Therefore, pastoral counsellors are at the forefront of teaching and encouraging couples to exemplify the learning of tolerance.

Empower Couples to Cultivate Sincere Dialogue in Tough Times

Empowering couples towards cultivating sincere dialogue during tough times, feuds, misunderstandings, disagreements and conflicts have become essential to revert the cause that polarises togetherness. Discussion is necessary to iron out issues causing division and war in marriage and family relationships. Oladapo (2012, 80) posited that couples must develop a disposition to initiate talking the problem over to promote mutual friendship. When teams adopt dialogue in seeking simple solutions over sensitive matters in the family, it leads participants to a better understanding of reasons to shift ground, adjust views or purpose, to reflect positively on why other positions are valuable to resolve. Ayandokun (2021, 22) submitted that couples require godly and time-tested strategies that could provide the opportunity to talk realistically about the area of affectedness, no matter how serious it may be, and resolve it amicably to ensure peace in the marriage and family system.

Encourage Redemptive Reconciliation at Crossroads

Nwaura (2010, 136) succinctly declares that Christian couples are responsible for following a peaceful lifestyle that contains dynamic potency that could transform marriage and family through an act of reconciliation. Peaceful coexistence requires that

people develop creative and redemptive ways of mitigating scenarios that provoke anger, grievance and conflict. Those potentially prone to a dispute need reorientation into this new approach of reconciliation relationship that would benefit everybody; if judiciously and religiously followed, the conflict crisis may cease. Therefore, couples should cultivate a modest lifestyle, stimulate listening ears, desire to keep calm and be ready for redemptive reconciliation at every cross-road of relationships in marriage and family.

Conclusion

This paper has established that conflict is one of the social vices that usually leads to a crisis that affects husbands and wives within marriage and family relationships. It is a complex problem that requires wisdom to contain, curb, control, conquer and eradicate any time it manifests in marriage and family. The paper stresses that the menace of conflict in marriage is inevitable. Still, Christian couples need divine consciousness to tackle the phenomenon that always pounces on teams to divide, ensure complication, disrupt peace, cause unrest and tarnish Christ's image. From the standpoint of this work, it becomes clear that conflict is not an attaché to marriage and family. Therefore, when it rears its head within a relationship, pastoral counselling measure is a veritable tool to deface and solve the problem which is not divinely made or approved by God. Conflict is a social problem that appears within the relationship. Couples should not be too spiritual to claim to be immune against its manifestation or pretend they cannot experience its insurgence but be conscious of being armed to fight and eradicate the force for mutual coexistence.

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CHRISTIAN PARENTING AS A TOOL FOR MITIGATING SOCIETAL VICES IN THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

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Abstract

The article examined Christian parenting to mitigate societal vices in contemporary times. Prevalence social vices include sexual harassment/assaults and promiscuity, pornography, prostitution, cultism, gambling, drugs, kidnapping, examination malpractice, pocket-picking, bribery, corruption, hooliganism, character assassination, impersonation, financial fraud, and rape are mentioned. The paper considered possible causes for the rise of these problems in society. It also discussed the concept of Christian parenting and suggested some strategies that can be employed to lessen social vices confronting humanity in contemporary times. The paper concludes that if Christian parents are dedicated to fulfilling their responsibilities and try to train their wards in the Christian way, social vices might diminish. The writer, through this article recommends that parents should help their children love God and see things or situations from in God's perspectives; they should build confidence and trust in their children which will help them develop their self-esteem so that people around them will not easily influence them.

Keywords: Christian parenting, societal vices, young people, contemporary time

Introduction

The contemporary time has become so challenging that young people of school age are becoming a severe threat to society. Most parents do not have time to train their wards because of their professional or

vocational commitment. As a result, these have affected many children as they are faced with developmental crises. Yet, the development of human life requires emotional, intellectual, social, spiritual and physical abilities, every individual is expected to grow in these aspects as creatures that can mobilise their activities to achieve their goals.

Child upbringing and parenting have been an age-long issue in the society. In contemporary times some parents are not concerned about how their children live. They do not attach much importance to nurturing and watching children as they develop in all aspects of life. Some parents concentrate more on the child's educational and physical development and are less concerned about other aspects of life that make the child a complete being.

When a child is well brought up, parents and society will enjoy peace, and the child will become helpful to him or herself, his parents and the community. Nevertheless, this writer cannot overemphasise the degree of diminution experienced in children's internalised behaviour in society in the present world. Due to inadequate parenting, young people have become criminals, thugs and are involved in all sorts of bad behaviour that can be considered evil today.

However, it is accurate that people are better trained and equipped to do most things, such as driving a car and pursuing a career, than raising a child. Parents often stray away without direction and compromise natural and good parenting values with minor concessions. Nevertheless, the busyness of life should never get in the way of the business of parenting (Burns 2007: 21-28). The scripture clarified that God's plan at creation is that everyone should be His representation on earth, but this plan was thwarted when man ate from the fruit God forbade them to eat. This writer opines that most problems in society today are due to inadequate parenting.

Thus, this work will discuss Christian parenting as a tool to reduce societal vices in the present time. This writer has set three objectives to be achieved through this paper. The paper will discuss societal evils and their causative factors among young people in the

contemporary world, examine the concept of Christian parenting, and discuss Christian parenting as a tool to mitigate social vices in recent times.

Concept of Christian Parenting

When the work of creation was completed, in the first account of creation, God blessed Adam and Eve and said to them, “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1: 28). By implication, God's blessing came along with some responsibilities for Adam and Eve because they must educate their children as parents. Child training or education is one of the most critical things in society (Ogunsola 2021: 130). Every community has a way of educating and training children for a good life. This act has been one of the persistent concerns of people throughout history (Fafunwa 1990: 15).

The task of parenting in the African context is enormous and often puts pressure on the mother, better still, parents, sometimes relatives and the rest of society (Simon and Edim 2013: 65). Parenting is a form of teaching. “Good teaching cannot be condensed to technique; good teaching comes from the integrity and identity of the teacher” (Palmer 1998: 10). Therefore, parenting has to be filled with tenderness and love when dealing with children to bring them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord (Ifeanyichukwu 2013). The above assertion implies that parents are stewards of young people who bear the image of God and whose lives will finally be directed by the choices they make before their creator (Seel 2000: 23).

Parenting seems simple, but indeed, it is demanding. It reveals the supreme case study of the state of parents' heart; no one knows it better than the children. The task of parenting is tells more about the parents' personality than what their children see them do. Human strengths or individual natural inclinations are not enough to accomplish. Unconditional love never originates in man but instead is channelled through relationships. Thus, as Christians, parenting begins with the transformation of parent's heart, who is an apprentice of Jesus. There is no other basis for influencing children than to live in the kingdom (Seel 2000: 92 citing Willard 1993).

Seel (2000: 37-38) assumes that Christian parenting is when parents themselves are living such a life that they desire their children to live. For example, parents who want their wards to learn humility will make their children cultivate humble attitudes through their relationship. This is important because no one can teach what they do not know, nor show what they do not live. Hence, godly parenting is all about who the parents are in their personality. Christian parenting must influence the source, the will, rather than impose the course and behaviour on young ones.

Subsequently, Christian parents are not to place children and family above God but are responsible for instructing their children in spiritual truth and discipline error (Seel 2000: 38). Christian parenting aims to train children to fulfil specific calling in the kingdom (Fleming 2006: 20), Christ-like parenting, therefore, involves treating the children as Jesus treats us. The truth is that authentic parenting cannot be accomplished through human wisdom or power, but it requires the grace and strength of God.

Parent's role in a child's upbringing is not just to mould but to unfold the child's potential. Parents should aim to find God-given purposes and train children to live them out. Christian parenting requires that parents recognise every child's uniqueness and help them fulfil it (Fleming 2006: 23). Strategic parenting is a kind of leadership that requires that parents become students of their children's world, especially when dealing with teenagers because to lead successfully demands that one becomes the student of those they seek to directly influence. Willard suggested that parents should study what their children believe in contrast to what they profess to believe. He stated, "what has to be done, instead of trying to drive people to do what we think they are supposed to do, is to be honest about what we and others believe" (Willard 1998: 308).

Parents must stop talking and start listening to their children to influence them effectively. Obviously, some parents are too busy to listen to their children in the modern world. They set rules telling them how to think and what they expect children to do. Sloan (1990:

155) asserts that listening is not the same as hearing; while hearing is physical, listening is more psychological. Nevertheless, talking and listening to children helps the child to speak and listen when parents are talking to him and encourages the child to talk to the parents. The child learns to discuss everything he sees, hears and thinks with the parents. Hence, Christian parenting demands that parents teach their children how to talk and listen by doing the same when they communicate (Ayanriola 2013: 117-122).

Parents should also enjoy what their children like, such as movies, music, magazines, and everything their children love. Practising this in love will help to control and guide children on the right path. If children are made to understand what parents mean to them, parents must try to understand their children's world (Ogunsola 2021: 133).

As identified by Smalley (1984: 49-57), there are four basic types of parenting. The dominant parent are parents who have a very high standard and expectations and tend to produce the most negative qualities in their children. Neglectful parents are those parents who lack loving support and control over their children. Permissive parents tend to be warm and supportive but weak in establishing and enforcing rules and limits for their children. Usually, loving and firm parents define clear directions and set boundaries and standards of living for their children. They also take time to train their children to understand these limits. The task of Christian parents is to love children as Jesus loves them. If parents can task their minds, they will stand out and be a good example to their children (Seel 2000: 100). Because of these discussions, the next topic explores some societal vices and their causes in contemporary time.

Societal Vices and their Causes in the Contemporary Time

Social vices are generally referred to as bad traits, unhealthy and negative conduct that are against the values and norms of society and frowned at by the people (Acquah, 2017: 1). According to Elujekwute, Danburam, Zakariah and James (2021: 218), the term

vices is derived from the Latin word *vitium*, meaning “defect or failing.” This word is defined as a bad habit or immoral activity. Social vices can also be considered anti-social acts and attitudes that breach a society's norms and values. Example of social vices, according to scholars, comprises indecent dressing, sexual harassment/assaults promiscuity, pornography, prostitution, cultism, and gambling. Other social vices include drug addiction, kidnapping, robbery, examination malpractice, pocket-picking, bribery, and corruption. Moreover, hooliganism, character assassination, impersonation, financial fraud, rape, and unhealthy lifestyle are inclusive (Acquah 2017: 1; Elujekwute et al., 2021: 218 and Umar 2020: 173).

According to Apase and Yawe (2019: 11-12), social vices are at the variance of social customs and values, which comprises beliefs, attitudes, honesty, hard work, and other businesses and traditions which society treasures passes on from one generation to another through the various forms of education; formal and informal. In the context of this paper, therefore, social vices stand to be misconduct, erroneous attitudes, and improper characters that have bedeviled contemporary society and are seen as a threat to people's well-being in the community.

Elujekwute et al. (2021: 218) discovered that young school-age people are more vulnerable to social vices. This implies that social evils are present in all centres of contemporary society, at home, school, work public places and so on (Elujekwute et al., 2021: 218). This writer believes that social vices have greatly contributed to issues of corruption experienced in Nigeria today. This claim is evident considering the increase in economic crisis, insecurity, kidnapping, robbery, internet fraud, ritual killings, and the likes. The recent escalation of youth's involvement in social vices calls for urgent attention. If the trend continues without a quick means of curbing it, social evils will seriously cause much damage to Nigeria, Africa, and the world at large. If youth who are supposed to be leaders of tomorrow are engaged in vices like this. Therefore, it is vital to find

a solution to these issues so as not to “produce a generation of vipers and corrupt society” (Elujekwute et al. 2021: 218).

Therefore, the above assertion poses a need to examine possible factors that necessitate societal vices among young people in the contemporary. Consequently, this section discusses some causative factors of societal wrongs. Many authors (George and Ukpon 2013; Acquah 2017; Umar 2020; Elujekwute et al. 2021; Oluwasanmi, Akande and Taiwo 2022) have identified that numerous factors are responsible for the rise of societal vices among youth. These factors include peer pressure, poverty, parental negligence, influence and home background, a quest for social identity, search for security, social media, and a quest for the satisfaction of personal aspirations and needs (Oluwasanmi, Akande, and Taiwo 2022: 338). These factors are discussed below.

Peer Influence/Pressure: Peer group can be referred to as a group comprising individuals who are equal in terms of age or have some things in common. Youths are sometimes involved in social vices because of peer pressure. Students at all levels of learning spend more time together. Due to the weak nature of young people, their friends easily influence them. For instance, being a virgin was once a thing of pride among women and has recently turned into object of ridicule to friends and students. As a result, innocent girls want to experience what their friends are doing, and such girls may end up being involved in sexual activities (Umar 2020: 173-174).

Poverty: George and Ukpho (2013: 169) describe poverty as “a state of complete lack of minimal means of livelihood.” The level of increase in poverty in contemporary times has given birth to the high involvement of young ones in criminal activities such as corruption, bribery and other forms of immorality. Those affected by poverty lack basic life needs and cannot afford three (3) square meals a day. The primary cause of poverty today may be unemployment. Amid poverty, some youth are frustrated and get involved in vices to survive.

Parental Negligence, Influence and Home Background:

Sometimes, young people are engaged in social vices due to parental failure or impact on the home background. Children who are from broken homes get themselves involved in sins. Lack of parental care, control, and responsiveness can make a child participate in social vices. For instance, children from homes where parents implement permissive and uninvolved parenting styles are primarily involved in societal evils. Similarly, parental negligence can make children look to their friends for affection and advice, which can lure them into deadly acts (Umar 2020: 174). Parents who leave out their responsibilities to people like a maid, neighbours, and others may mislead children into vices activities. Oluwasanmi et al. (2016: 338) add that unconducive learning facilities, environment, and inadequate welfare programs for undergraduates can encourage students to engage in cultism, and vague religious and moral instructions and education can lure undergraduates to embrace cult groups and cult activities.

Search for Security: Young people searching for protection from a sinister gang, especially female students, sometimes join cult groups to protect themselves (Oluwasanmi et al. 2022: 338).

Social Media: One of the major contributing factors to societal vices in contemporary times is social media or information communication technology (ICT). Omonijo, Nnedum, Fadugba, Uche, and Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2013: 3080) observe that children's exposure to social media and ICT in Nigeria has become an instrument to the hovering of social vices. In many contemporary homes, parents can no longer train their wards because they engage in various businesses. As a consequence, children's activities are not checked. They, therefore, reproduce whatever is watched in television programmes, videos, and internet webpages. The implication is that if parents do not have time to bring up their children properly at home, those manners they watch affect their conduct at home, school, and society.

The Pursuit for the Satisfaction of Personal Aspirations and Needs: Some students today engage in cults group for self-satisfaction, aspirations and needs. An example of this is when a student belongs to a cult group to ensure the success of their members in academic examinations. Likewise, some individual students join a cult group for popularity, making names and being regarded as influential persons. Thus, belonging to a cult group is a way of achieving prestige and greatness (Oluwasanmi et al. 2022: 338).

Hence from the above discussions, one will agree that dequate parenting is an important tool that can help curb social vices. Based on this assertion, the next topic explores some strategies Christian parents can adopt to fulfil their parental responsibilities, which can help curb societal vices in contemporary time.

Christian Parenting as a Remedy for Societal Vices in the Contemporary Times

A call is extended to Christian parents In Deuteronomy 6: 4-7, this call is to educate Christian parents on how they should train their children. This passage summoned parents to acknowledge God by loving Him “with all their hearts, souls and might, and faithfully obey the command of God and teach their children to do the same. However, there is no way children can be raised in the Christian way if their parents themselves are not saved. Because children can see, hear and perceive whatever is happening around them, they can easily see contradictions between what they are taught and what they see practised (Lateju 2007: 6).

Parents who desire to raise godly children in this contemporary time must endeavour to do away with all traces of the works of flesh immorality, impurity, dissension, envy, enmity and the likes (Galatians 5: 19-21). The home is described as the first point of socialisation of any child, which usually creates lasting educative measures to curb misconduct in children (George and Ukpong 2013: 168). Because of this assertion, Christian parents need to examine themselves and be conscious of what they do that can affect their

wards' conduct in society. They must be on the lookout for the interest of their children. Therefore, to curb the problem of societal vices in contemporary times, Christian parents, in particular, have an essential role to play.

Thus, Amoran (2021: 95-97) suggested ATTENTION as the strategy that parents could explore to gain the hearts of their wards and then mitigate societal vices in the contemporary time. This strategy is discussed below.

A – Acceptability and Availability: The first obligation of a Christian parent is to accept and be available for their children. According to Amoran (2021: 95) “in acceptance, availability is possible and love becomes expressive.” This affirmation means that when parents accept their children no matter the child's behaviour, and are available for their child, that is when the child feels loved and is interested to obey his or her parents.

T – Tolerance: No child is without excesses. Part of children's characteristics is unusual and unnecessary activeness requiring parents to demonstrate patience and empathy. Some of children misbehaviour are caused by what they see other children doing in school. Parents are meant to tolerate their children with a wide heart of love and never withhold discipline from them (Amoran 2021: 95).

T – Teaching: In his words to the Israelites, Moses gave a mandate for parents to teach their children diligently (Deuteronomy 6: 7). This implies that God expects parents to train their children in every aspect of livelihood. Parents have to teach their children to inculcate in them social norms and values, biblical culture, acceptable cultural heritage, moral standards, good conduct and imbibing the consciousness of the sanctity of life in them.

E – Exploration: Christian parents are obliged to intentionally explore the abilities of their children's interests with consciousness of understanding individual differences. It is essential for parents to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their children and avoid comparing their personalities.

N – Nurture: Christian parents are to nurture self-worth and self-esteem in their children (Amaran 2021: 96). Some parents unconsciously kill children's morale in the home. If care is not taken, such a child can develop rebellious attitudes in the house and later become a terror to both their parents and siblings. Their parents need to give children the freedom to express their minds, feelings and emotions without fear to help them build confidence.

T – Togetherness: Children love to be treated equally especially without preferment. Quinn (1999: 111) asserts that children love collaboration, association and friendship. Thus, parents are to provide an atmosphere in which children can work and play together in the home.

I – Involvement: African philosophers hold that children are to be involved in what their parents want them to become. Involvement helps children to feel wanted in the home. Parents, therefore, need to learn to involve children in decision-making, and other important things done in the home.

O – Openness: Parents need to be open to wards so that children can understand their parents altogether. For instance, if parents have been openly and adequately meeting their children's needs, in times of financial crisis in the home, children will understand their parents' status for their period. Meanwhile, openness to children is paramount in the Christian home.

N – Needs: The demands of all children include physical, spiritual, emotional, intellectual and social cravings (Amaran 2021: 97). Meeting these needs makes every child develop a feeling of being loved in the home and therefore, depend and trust parents for every of his or her needs. But when parents continuously fail to meet any this needs, the child may begin to feel inferior among his/her peer. An attempt to pursuit these needs him/herself may fall into wrong hands and get engaged in social vices.

As good as it is for parents to be available and accept their wards, tolerate, teach, nurture, be open and meet the needs of their children, it is imperative for Christian parents to understand that these things are not enough to help young people overcome the challenges in the contemporary time. Young people need to be raised so that they can make decisions not to be lured into being engaged in societal vices, no matter the tension.

A developed morally upright mind without godliness is not enough for young ones to stand in the face of challenges. Therefore, Christian parents need to be aware that it is only a godly mind that can help young ones not to compromise their faith in the face of challenges. Thus, young people must be helped to completely dedicate their lives to God by being safe and resisting all forms of temptation that may come to their ways. This writer recommends that parents should first love their children by making themselves available for them. As much as attention is paid to children's physical needs, parents should also help their children love God and see things or situations from in God's perspectives. Parents should also build confidence and trust in their children which will help them develop their self-esteem so that they will not be easily influenced by people around them.

Conclusion

The task of helping young ones not to be involved in societal vices is a challenging one. Still, Christian parents must understand that God has saddled them with the responsibility to guide young ones by leading them in decision-making. The challenges that societal vices have posed to the contemporary society as discussed in this paper cannot be easily eradicated, but Christian parents can help mitigate these challenges if they will rise up to fulfil their parental role as God has positioned them to. Therefore, Christian parents should understand the present time in which young people are into and how surrounded they are by these vices. Parents should help their children to love God and also see whatever situation in God's perspectives. They should build confidence and trust in their children which will help them

develop their self-esteem and not be easily influenced by people around them. Nevertheless, it is essential for parents to be sure about the salvation of their wards, which through God's grace, can help them stand in the face of temptations.

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THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF ONE-FLESH IN MARRIAGE AS A REMEDY FOR MARITAL CONFLICTS AMONG CHRISTIAN COUPLES

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Abstract

This study is informed by the rising rate of broken home in the contemporary society as many Christian homes are pierced with marital crises. Many families have disintegrated and some couples live as if they are strangers due to persistent and unresolved conflicts. Emergence of conflicts in marital homes is often occasioned by pervasive perception of marriage as an avenue for meeting some personal expectations, enjoyment, and curtailing sexual feelings, pressure, and loneliness. However, until marriage is understood from God's standpoint, conflicts will eventually break down the marriage. This study attempts to explore the Biblical concept of one-flesh in marriage to enhance understanding of God's idea of marriage and as a remedy for marital conflicts among young Christian Couples. A descriptive research method was used to qualitatively analyse and collect data from historical materials such as books, journals and internet sources to enrich the study. Findings indicated that marriage from a Biblical perspective is a union in which a man and a woman are regarded as one flesh, bone stuck and bound together in heart and affection. As such, love in this category is alive irrespective of disappointments, but because of the unity of flesh, bone, heart, and affection. The study concludes that understanding and application of Biblical concept of one-flesh in marriage will effectively reduce and curb marital conflicts among Christian couples. The study recommends that Christian couples should strive to become one in flesh, bone, heart and affection.

Keywords: Marriage, marital conflicts, Christian couple, cleave, and one-flesh.

Introduction

Conflict is often regarded as a product of interaction between or among people due to differences in interests, goals, needs, wants, and outcome of issues. It is an integral and inevitably part of an established relationships. Many homes have been ensnared in deteriorated conflicts which often leave either of the couple or both wounded. Many homes have been broken, leaving some children to wander about on the street. Also, the rate at which marital conflicts crippling couples has become alarming and prompted this study. The research question that guided this study are: If God is the creator and designer of marriage, why then do couples experience conflicts in marital union? Is marital conflicts part of God's design? Why can't couples enjoy the oneness, companionship and happiness of marriage?

The Bible traced the origin of marriage to creation after the first man was created followed by the creation of the woman. God brought them together for the purpose of companionship and procreation. Nevertheless, the fall truncated the perfect nature of marriage. In this case, Thomas (2000:67) posits that “we must never be naïve enough to think of marriages as a safe harbour from the fall. The deepest struggles of life will occur in the most primary relationship affected by the fall: marriage.” It appears that after the fall the marriage institution was perverted and this prompted persistent conflicts that is ravaging many Christian homes. Some of the pervasive preconceived notions that harms marital unions include differences in interests, desires, goals, and marriage as a measure to curtail loneliness, sexual feelings, pressures, economic and societal pressures. Practically, marriages contracted on these pervasive grounds will eventually resulted in conflict among couples.

Meanwhile, marriage is a sacred and intimate union ordained by God. It merges two personalities (a man and a woman) into an indivisible and unique union through covenant. In this union, a man enters a covenant with a woman considered a suitable companion and helper.

As a result, the woman becomes the man's flesh and bone, and their hearts are stuck and bound together, making them one. This covenant binds and unifies both the man and the woman in heart, affection, spirit and body. The thrust of this study is to explore the Biblical concept of one-flesh in marriage as a remedy for the ever increasing marital conflicts among young Christian couples. The term “Biblical” in this context mainly refers to the account of creation in Genesis regarding Adam and Eve and references drawn from other passages of the Bible. A descriptive research method was used to qualitatively analyse and collect data from historical materials such as books, journals and internet sources to enrich the study. The study intends to define Biblical concept of one-flesh in marriage, discuss marital conflicts and its causes among contemporary young Christian couples, and implications of biblical concept of one-flesh towards sustaining marital unions among Christian couples. This study will help Christian couples to have a better understanding of the factors responsible for marital conflicts. It will also help reduce marital conflict, which has contributed to the high rate of unfaithfulness, cohabitation without genuine love, and separation. Therefore, it is termed in this study that understanding and application of the biblical concept of one-flesh in marriage is necessary for sustainability, stability, and success in marriage.

Biblical Concept of One-flesh in Marriage

Marriage is a beautiful union initiated and ordained by God. It is a union of love, trust, and agreement between a man and a woman in which they live together as one for the rest of their lives. This section analyses and presents the biblical concept of one-flesh in marriage ranging from: Marriage as God's Design, One-flesh Companionship, One-flesh Relationship and One-flesh happiness.

A. Marriage as God's Design

In the book of Genesis, we saw the detailed account of the world's creation and God's purpose for creation. The idea and plan for

marriage were rooted in God's eternal plan and purpose for humanity. This was depicted and expressed in His creative act of making humanity in His image as male and female,

26. Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. 27. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God, he created him; male and female he created them (Gen. 1:26-27).

As a result, marriage as an institution is God's original intent and plan for humankind and not a product of perceived need or response to alleviate the loneliness that confronted Adam. Thus, to say that marriage is a divine response to the loneliness that confronted Adam is to insult the majesty of God as all-knowing. The reason is that it underscores that God did not know before, and as a result, He cannot be all-knowing.

Meanwhile, the majesty of God as the all-knowing demonstrated in Genesis 2:18, which revealed what is not suitable for man, accentuates that marriage is originally God's intent and plan for humanity before creation and not a product of a felt need or man invention. How did God know that marriage would solve the loneliness of Adam if He did not know anything about marriage before? Also, the biblical passage gives no evidence that Adam himself was aware of being alone or in need of a helper. It was God who knew marriage beforehand that took the initiative in creating a suitable human companion for the man. Therefore, it can indeed be said that marriage is God's original idea and a product of His sovereign will (Gen. 2:18-20).

Furthermore, Kostenberger and Jones (2010:23) opines that God's creation of Eve reveals His plan for Adam's marriage and all subsequent marriages, a monogamous heterosexual relationship. This is because God only made one "suitable helper" for Adam, and she was female. It was God who perceived Adam's aloneness and hence created the woman to serve as a suitable partner. This was due

to the fact that there was no one fit for that role. Humankind was created in such a way to enjoy the emotional, physical, and spiritual blessing of companionship in the marriage relationship (Noble, 2020:3).

B. One-flesh Companionship

Marriage is companionship. Companionship is a term that refers to an intimate relationship. It is a relationship that involves constant intimacy and commitment. Humankind was created as a social being needing companionship (Gen. 2:18). This was manifested in the creation of woman and institution of marriage union to provide companionship as expressed in Genesis 2:18: “The LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'” The directive to “cleave” and become “one flesh”, as stated in Genesis 2;24, is evidence of marriage's companionship. Adams (1983:34) explains the term companion in relation to commitment and intimacy thus:

Together, they speak of a bond in constant commitment and intimacy. Intimacy without commitment to remain together is not sufficient; commitment to remain in the relationship without intimacy is equally deficient. Both commitment and intimacy are necessary to defeat loneliness. Thus, marriage is companionship, one aspect of which involves mating. The intimacy of Biblical companionship extends to every aspect of human nature. There can be no intimate companionship between two persons when a third intervenes. Fornication, adultery, and polygamy vitiate true companionship because they destroy the intimacy of a constant and close relationship.

The carnal desires of many who are venturing into marriage to curtail loneliness, sexual feelings and pressures, economic and societal pressures have thwarted God's desires for companionship concerning intimacy and continuing commitment. Consequently, Christian couples must perceive marriage as a companionship of one-flesh fostering intimacy and commitment. Moreover, being a helper in this context does not connote that the woman is inferior to the man, but the idea of a partner and support. The woman's supportive responsibility

has been in existence right from creation and resulted from her nature. This responsibility is expressed in Adam's admiration: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gen. 2:23). Ephesians 5:23-24 concisely presents the supportive role of the woman. Right from the creation, God designed the woman's supportive role as companion and helpmate. The woman's supportive role depicted in the Bible includes conceiving, bringing forth and nursing children, and running the home under the husband's authority (Gen. 1:28; 3:16). This supportive role requires submission to the man.

However, the term submission does not connote inferiority; instead, it means that the woman puts all of her abilities, resources, energy, and talent at the man's disposal. Also, the woman plays her supportive role by yielding and using all that she possesses under her husband's management. This supportive role sustains and advances intimacy and commitment in marriage union (Mack, 1977:14). Likewise, the man is meant to be the loving leader in the marriage union. As the leader, the man must continue to demonstrate selfless love and behaviour towards the woman's well-being and betterment. This selfless behaviour will foster intimacy and commitment in the marriage. It will also enhance trust and security in the relationship.

Similarly, the word "suitable" implies that the woman is an equal partner to the man. While analysing the significance of the expression "suitable help", Kostenberger and Jones (2010:25) states that on the one hand, the woman is congenial to the man in a way that none of the animals is (Gen 2:19-20); she is bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh, and on the other hand, the woman is placed alongside the man as his associate or companion. Similarly, concerning God's mandate for humankind to be fruitful and multiply and to fill the earth and subdue it (Gen. 2:28), the woman is a suitable partner both in procreation (Gen.2: 24) and earth domestication (Gen. 1 28).

C. One-flesh Relationship

Marriage is a one-flesh relationship built on understanding each partner's needs, likes, and dislikes. Fogle asserts that marriage was ordained as a one-flesh covenant relationship. The One-flesh shall be discussed in light of the Old and New Testament Perspectives.

1. Old Testament Perspective

Adam and Eve were literally “one flesh”, as Eve was formed from Adam's physical flesh and bone. Becoming one flesh involves the absolute identification of personality couples have with each other in pursuits and interests (fogle, 2007:2). Thornton (1989:33) explains that the sexual bond of a man and woman in marriage enables the couple's oneness in other spheres of life to be joined. It is a means through which their mutual appreciation, feeling, and understanding flow. The sharing is physical but involves emotional, spiritual and intellectual.

Furthermore, White (1961:51) expresses that marriage is the divine joining of a man and a woman into an everlasting union of one. It is the two equal bisects of God's creation built together into its natural position. God's plan was for the man and woman to become united in love, working together, living together, sharing experience and becoming a natural complement to each other. Similarly, Ortlund (2016:31) reiterates that:

In the one-flesh union of marriage, all the limitations between a man and a woman de-escalate, and the couple comes together completely... The two learn to think like one unified one, building a new life together with one total everything: one story, one reputation, one bed, one suffering, one purpose, one subject, and one family... It is this all-inclusive unity that sets marriage apart. The idea and expression of oneness between a man and a woman in all aspects of life is an essential part of God's intent for marriage. This oneness comes across all their dealing and relationship as long as they both shall live. This oneness is based on the expression in Genesis 2:22-24:22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. 23 The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, for she was taken out of man.” 24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Based on the above passage, we discovered that the woman was formed from the rib of Adam; as a result, a man shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh in the physical, spiritual and emotional. The two cleave together to form one flesh in their personal identities and values.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that cleaving is what causes the two to become one flesh. Strauss (online) collaborates that the terms “cleave unto” shows the nature of the marriage relationship as God intended it to be. The idea seems to be that a man is to bond himself to his wife... When two people are bonded together, they become one. They are united in unique and profound biological and spiritual glue that reaches every depth of their souls. Similarly, Strauss (online), while discussing the term “cleave”, asserts that the man shall cleave unto his wife with a cordial affection, taking care of her, cherishing and nourishing her, continuing to live with her, providing all things comfortable for her and not depart from her as long as they live.

Similarly, it is necessary to note that this principle of cleaving is intended to apply to all people, including contemporary Christian couples. It is one of the first principles God gave to man to sustain and foster stability in marriage relationships. Therefore, marriage is a sacred one flesh relationship in which a man and a woman bond their lives together as one. As such biblical marriage involves “leaving,” “cleaving,” and “blending into one flesh”.

2. New Testament Perspectives

In Matthew 19:3-6, Jesus re-states and declares God's idea and nature of marriage as a one-flesh relationship that should never end in divorce. Similarly, in Ephesians 5:25-32, Paul also affirms God's idea of marriage as one flesh relationship and relates it to the manner in which believers are members of Christ's body.

Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 6:15-17, Paul reiterates that a sexual relationship with a prostitute creates a one-flesh love in the sight of God. However, the one-flesh bond goes beyond physical. Becoming one flesh is the ideal God's nature of marriage relationship, which

spreads across all spheres of their life, including body, spirit, soul, deeds, worship, purpose, and expectation. In this condition, White (1961:16) asserts that marriage is all about the unity of man and woman in their physical, spiritual and psychological. Some marriages fail today because they were not originally united in either one or all areas mentioned above. Therefore, the obedience to God's command to "cleave" and become "one flesh" is the premise upon which Christian couples can attain stability, happiness, fulfillment and accomplishment of God's intent in marriage. Christian couples, therefore, need to yield to God's command for one flesh in marriage to complement each other physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally. Thus God ordained marriage union to be a permanent one-flesh bond.

Furthermore, in Ephesians 5:28-29 Paul appeals that "28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no-one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church." These verses admonished one-flesh love among couples. The one-flesh love began with Adam and Eve. Adam did not only precede Eve, but he was the source from which Eve derived her body (Gen.2:21-23). The ribs that were used to form Eve was taken from Adam, covered with his own flesh and bones (Gen. 2:23). Adam expressed a tremendous excitement, a joyous astonishment when God brought the woman He had made to him, saying "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh..." In other words, when the Lord brought the woman to Adam, the man experienced a sense of amazement at the sight of Eve, He seemed genuinely awed by the creation of Eve who bear his flesh and bones and expressed his delightful feelings in words.

Causes of Marital Conflicts among Christian Couples

Conflicts are inevitable in every human relationship, including marriage. The term conflict refers to an active disagreement between people with opposing principles and opinions (McIntosh, 1995:45).

Marriage conflict is the state of disagreement between husband and wife concerning interests, values, ideas or beliefs. Tam and Lim (2008:97) describes the marital conflict as any significant or minor interpersonal interaction involving a difference of opinion between a couple, whether negative or mostly positive. No marriage relationship is devoid of conflict or dispute. However, the frequency of conflicts in marriage can be reduced and controlled if Christian couples understand and practice marriage according to God's design. The major causes of marital conflict among Christian couples include: infidelity, poor marital communication, financial issues, sexual Incompatibility, and lack of mutual respect.

1. Marital Infidelity: Marital infidelity is an act of unfaithfulness towards the mutual vows of an intimate relationship between husband and wife. It is one of the major causes of conflict in a marital relationship due to its damage to love and the harmony of the relationship. It is necessary to note that infidelity is not limited to a sexual affair with someone outside the marital union but include disloyalty, distrust, and lack of submission.

2. Sexual Incompatibility: poor sexual satisfaction in the marital relationship often constitutes conflict in the union, which, if not timely and properly managed, could lead to extramarital sexual affairs. Sexual conflict often emanates from less intimacy, stress, infidelity, lack of romantic play time, and low erection. However, the main issue in this conflict is due to failure on the part of couples in making sexual adjustments.

3. Poor communication: communication in marriage is transmitting information from one person to another. It is an essential value in the marriage relationship. Communication in marriage touches all aspects of marriage life, such as managing daily living, making plans and decisions, making needs and wants to be known, discussing and many others. Effective communication in marriage entails that couples discuss issues and respond to questions. Lack of communication in marriage can destroy the intimacy and stability of the marital union. In this condition, Aina (2004:83-91) observes that

inability of spouses to communicate effectively with each other is very unhealthy to the union and it is a common cause of marital conflict among young couples.

4. Financial Issues: financial problems and the inability to live up to domestic responsibility often triggers quarrels, misunderstanding, disunity, hostility, bitterness and deters love among couples. According to Agha (2003:109) poverty and the inability to save money, train children, build a house or solve some family financial problems on the part of the man could cause a problem in the family. In other words, lack of finance to access the necessities of life can jeopardise the harmony of the marital relationship. Respect for one's partner is essential for marital relationship sustenance and stability. The lack of it can ruin the intimacy and harmony of the marriage relationship. According to Aderinto (2004:52-55) the inability of the husband to live up to domestic responsibilities is a major cause of marital conflicts.

5. Lack of Mutual Respect: Mutual respect among couples is integral for marital relationship sustenance. The lack of such respect could result to conflict capable of rocking even the strongest marital substance of previously blissful homes. The Bible encourages the wives to respect their husbands who in turn should love their wives as they would their own body. Respect and love are reciprocal variables in marital relationship and as such, couples owe it an obligation to respect and love his/her marriage partner, failure which fans the embers of marital discord and discontent.

6. Differences in desires and aspirations: one of the panoramic causes of conflicts in the marital relationship is differences in conception, understanding, values, expectations, attitudes, practices, desires, aspirations and expectations of couples in the relationship. The differences in perception, desires, goals, expectation and attitude towards marriage often promote sexual incompatibility, lack of mutual respect, submission, infidelity, communication gap. In this case, Kelly and Thibaut, cites by Templeton (2001:45) identified different goals, interests, desires or expectations that are not compatible as causes of marital conflict. Therefore, real cohesion is

needed in marital unions. This cohesion is like two opposite magnetic poles that hold each other tightly and closely, making them one (Aderinto, 2004:27).

Implications of Biblical Concept of One-flesh in Marriage for Marital Conflicts

This section presents the Biblical concept of one-flesh in marriage as a response to the conflict in marital relationships. Christian couples can overcome marital conflicts by understanding and applying God's design of marriage. It is believed in this study that the stability of marriage depends mainly on the Christian couple's understanding and application of marriage in God's design. The reason is that no one can comprehend the institution of marriage than the one who designed and instituted it.

1. **Marriage as One-flesh Relationship:** God's plan for marriage is a lifelong one-flesh relationship. In Genesis 2:23-24, the verses show God's design for man and woman to unite as one organism. As God's design, marriage is an everlasting union characterised by companionship expressed in selfless love, intimacy, and commitment. If marriage is designed and ordained by God, it should be practised as God ordains through the rules He set forth and should not be revamped by personal desires and expectations. Marriage was designed to be a one-flesh relationship.

2. **Marriage as One-flesh Covenant:** in Genesis 2:24, the term cleave means to stick to or cling. Cleaving is a covenant term used to indicate God's relationship with His people (Duet. 10:20; 13:4; Josh. 22:5). Therefore, the term expresses a union in which the man and woman become one flesh (Fogle, 2007:3). The nature of the one-flesh union is indissoluble. The issue is not limited to the flesh but extends to other areas of life. The man and the woman must learn to become one-flesh in spirit, soul, body, purpose, expectation, desire, and reputation. This understanding and relationship are usually produced by the conscious awareness of each other, resulting from their understanding of needs, likes, desires, hates, and dislikes. Therefore, couples should put pride aside and be humble and willing to study

each other and make the necessary adjustment to yield to God and submit to one another. Les and Leslie Parrott (2006:36) asserts that the ultimate paradox of love is when two persons become one, yet remaining two. Thus, the marriage relationship is one where two separate individuals become one, cemented together for life.

3. **Marriage as One-flesh Foundation:** The foundation of marriage should be on one-flesh and everlasting union reflecting passion, intimacy and commitment. The Foundation of marital relationships should be rooted in the understanding of marriage as one flesh union designed by God. This one-flesh relationship joins the couple together until death. Therefore, Christian couples should work on any issue that may ruin their marriage and remain committed to the foundation of one flesh and one bone.

4. **Marriage as Image of God's nature:** the creation of human kind as male and female in the image of God, as stated in Genesis 1:27, has implications for the one-flesh nature of Biblical marriage. Although the focus of the verse was not on marriage, the image of God mentioned imply God's triune nature as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, yet one God. This speaks of the relational nature of God resulting and reflecting in the creation of humanity as male and female. While interpreting the above verse, Martin (2010:13) notes that the creation of humanity as male and female together in a relationship reflects the image of God. Therefore, Christian couples should relate their marital relationship to the relational nature of God in His nature as the Father, Son and Holy, yet one in Being, Purpose, will and action.

5. **Marriage as One-flesh Companionship:** the oneness of the man and the woman is the foundational component of a society. God designed the marriage relationship to be one man, and one woman bonded together into a personal relationship, united as companions and friends for life (Thompson, 2009:28). The joining together of a man and women form an entity that enables humanity to strengthen one another and fill the earth (Ibid,9). The design of marriage as a one-flesh companion relationship is fundamental and essential for a successful marriage and societal development. Therefore, couples

should submissively and respectfully relate to each other as one flesh and bone. They must demonstrate this oneness physically, spiritually, mentally, and in their desires, expectations, needs, likes, dislikes, hate, suffering, and all spheres of life. Similarly, this oneness must be shown in passion, intimacy, and commitment.

Conclusion

This paper examined the Biblical concept of one-flesh in marriage as a remedy for marital conflicts among young Christian Couples. It was discovered that conflicts in marriage often resulted from differences in expectations, desires, goals, aspirations among others. Likewise, marital conflicts often associated with poor marital communication, infidelity, financial issues, and lack of mutual respect. As such, understanding and application of God's design of marriage is necessary for sustaining marital union. Christian couples should not practice marriage as a joint project where individual have their interest and desire, ignoring or rejecting God's plan for marriage as one flesh, one interest, one desire and one expectation. Real cohesion is needed for stability in marital unions (White, 1961:17). Christian couples should serve as a helper to each other; they must be united physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Similarly, the remarks of White is worth mentioning thus: the same way a man is interested and concerned about his well-being, he must also have the same feelings towards his wife (Ibid, 18). Living as a suitable partner through intimacy, submission, passion, respect, and commitment will enable contemporary Christian couples to fulfil God's purpose and plan for marriage. Therefore, practising marriage in God's design as a one-flesh companion and relationship is significant for family and society development.

Recommendations

1. Christian couples should strive to become one in flesh, bone, heart and affection. The differences in values, expectations, attitudes, practices, desires, aspirations and expectations among couples can be overcome when both strive to become one-flesh and bone.

2. Christian Couples need to submissively and respectively relate to each other as one flesh and bone. They must demonstrate this oneness physically, spiritually, mentally, and in their desires, expectations, needs, likes, dislikes, hate, suffering, and all spheres of life.

3. Christian Couples should endeavour to follow God's principles for marriage. If marriage is designed and ordained by God, it should be practised as God ordains through the principles He set forth and should not be revamped by personal desires and expectations. Marriage was designed to be a one-flesh relationship.

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SOCIAL MEDIA CONTRIBUTIONS TO MARITAL CONFLICTS OF YOUNG CHRISTIAN COUPLES

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Abstract

The study looked into how social media affected the marital disputes of young Christian couples in Ekiti State. It was decided to use a descriptive research design of the survey type. The entire married population of Ekiti state makes up the study's population. Techniques for simple random sampling were employed for the analysis. 150 couples, each with 150 men and 150 women, made up the study's sample. For the study, pertinent information was gathered using the instrument tag Social Media Contributions to Marital Conflicts of Young Couples (ISMCMCYC). The test-retest procedure produced a reliability coefficient of 0.75. To test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance, the data were analyzed using inferential statistics that included Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The study's findings showed that young Christian couples frequently experience difficulty at home due to what they encounter on social media. On the other hand, social media significantly increased the marital dispute between young Christian couples in Ekiti State and contributed to their marital problems. The study's conclusions led to the recommendation that couples should spend more time together than they do on social media. Couples should avoid anything that might lead to arguments. Additionally, they should set a time limit for themselves and refrain from using social media to spend time with anyone or anything other than their spouse. The couple needs to use social media carefully.

KEY WORDS: Social Media, Young Couples, Marital, Conflict, Boundaries

Introduction

When a man and woman unite to become one, it is always a happy event because they create a platform for God to bless and multiply them formally and legally. Marriage is an institution that God established to end a man's loneliness in life. According to the Bible, marriage is a remedy God gave man to address his loneliness on the journey through life. God was the one who noticed that man was alone and He noted that it was not suitable for a man to be alone in Genesis 1:28, the first chapter of the Bible. Therefore, marriage was the answer God provided to man's loneliness. God made someone who would look like him, bringing the emergence of women into the world. Therefore, marriage came into existence to meet man's need for loneliness.

Technology can be both a blessing and a curse. The internet and mobile phones are inanimate objects that, when used properly, can strengthen a marriage, but when misused, they can doom it. According to studies, people mostly use social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Skype, and others to connect with loved ones, make friends, stay up with their life, and update others on their status (Sokoya, 2018). Nevertheless, technology is meant to strengthen marriage. Still, if it leads to pornography and reconnecting with ex-lovers on social media, it can ruin any wedding, no matter how solid.

God's plan for marriage is to meet all his creatures' needs. Man did not come up with the concept of marriage, nor did he start it. God himself saw man's desire for a companion and provided for it (Dag Heward Mill, 2011). Unfortunately, human attitudes and bad behaviour have redesigned what God created to bring people comfort, joy, and serenity. In certain circles, marriage nowadays is seen as "pandemonium and a scorching fire" and a "thorn in the flesh" (Ogundipe, 2015).

On the other hand, social media's advent has turned the globe upside down and transformed it into "a global village." However, this influence has positive and negative repercussions on society, including the institution of marriage. Many young marriages have collapsed as a result of social media abuse. Some young couples merely share a home, but they don't interact with one another too often. Some marriages have ended as a result, while others have already separated. Today's overuse of social media is a monster that has resulted in particular marital strife and crises.

This study looked inside the homes of a few young couples in Ekiti State to explore the tensions brought on by young Christian couples' excessive usage of social media. Marriages typically develop tight bonds between partners. The closer a pair gets to the wedding, the stronger this cord becomes. As a result, a spouse serves as a stable foundation from which a partner can explore the outside world and a safe sanctuary where a pair can find love, acceptance, and comfort. Of course, it is comforting to be close to your partner. However, there is necessary to look for admirable ways of reuniting when physical or emotional separation occurs.

Couples who do not feel connected, safe, or secure in their relationship are more likely to become angry, critical, defensive, and have withdrawal symptoms. Even though marriage is a process that involves two different genders, constantly evolving individuals, it is still possible to find a helpful common ground that allows couples to cooperate to reach a satisfying level of adjustment, which is the fundamental building block for a fruitful and dynamic marriage.

The researcher found that excessive social media use can negatively impact marriage. However, going too far can have negative consequences. Belle (2019) revealed that using Facebook excessively led to online disagreement that might have resulted in infidelity, divorce, or separation from one's partner. According to

Gull, Iqbal, Al Qahtan, Alassaf, and Kamaleldin (2019), one of the main reasons social media can hurt a relationship is the amount of time spent using it. Gull et al. (2019) discovered that when people use social media more frequently, it affects their relationships negatively in several ways.

Statement of the Problem

Many families are in unstable situations, and many young relationships are ending. Social media has been identified as the primary cause of issues in many homes since many couples find it challenging to spend quality time together. Many couples have been seen to spend more time on social media than in actual physical touch with one another. Observations have shown that some young married women opt to be single mothers due to what they have learned through social media. Single motherhood is found to have been so prevalent in society nowadays. In some circles, marriage has become a source of "pandemonium and scorching fire" and a pain in the flesh.

Research Questions

1. What contribution does social media has to marital conflicts of young Christian couples
2. Will the excessiveness of social media cause marriage conflicts of young couples

Research Hypotheses

- 1) Social media will not significantly contribute to the conflicts of young Christian couples
- 2) An excessiveness of social media will not significantly influence marriage of young couples in Ekiti State.

Concept of Marriage

Omojola (1993) asserts that marriage is the union of a man and a woman who is dedicated to a lifelong marital relationship to expand on the idea of marriage. Commitment is the primary feature of this partnership. It is the complete and unconditional dedication of one's entire self-body, money, emotion, property, intellect, ability, etc. to a lifetime connection from a biblical perspective. Ayo-Obiremi Mike states that, in his opinion, marriage is God's plan for companionship, procreation, protection against sexual immorality, and the maintenance of human social order.

A good marriage is one where "two persons have dedicated themselves to accept individual responsibility to work together for the fulfilment of each other," according to David (1986). Two people must be deeply committed to and interested in each other for a marriage to work. In Genesis 2:18, the Lord said it was not good for the man to be left alone and that he would make a suitable helper.

God understood from this verse that it is not a good idea for a man to be alone. Additionally, if a man is alone, his better qualities won't come out. The man was created to be social and have relationships with his wife and God. Marriage was God's design to help man fulfil his purpose on earth. Thus it will always be a blessing. However, even if God's desire for marriage is excellent, many things need to come together for it to happen. The marriage suffers if any of these elements are absent:

1. Time together
2. Spiritual emphasis
3. Negotiating ability
4. Maturity
5. Play and humor
6. Intimacy
7. Commitment

GENERAL ROLES OF A MAN TO THE SAFETY OF HIS MARRIAGE

1. Give leadership

Man as the head figure in the institution of marriage has been positioned to provide leadership role. He gives instructions and directives to the family in the right ways to go and right things to do. Marriage is likened to Jesus in Ephesians 5:28.

2. Express love

Man has responsibility to love his wife just as Christ loves the church and gave Himself to him. This type of love is “Agape”, unconditional love. The love that gives and keeps giving without expecting back. It is a love that is ready to die for his wife or family. According to (Greek Word Study) Agape is unconditional and sacrificial love. Agape love is the love of choice, the love of helping with humbleness, the highest kind of love, and the love of will (intentional) a choice, not motivated by superficial appearance, emotional attraction or sentimental relationship. Agape is volitional, not phileo that is emotional (1 John 4:8, 16). Husbands are enjoined to display this kind of (Agape) love towards their wife.

3. Make provision

A man is meant to provide for his household. God has given man this responsibility to provide financially for his family. Just as Christ the head of the church, a man must provide for his house. This is corroborated by the word of God in 1 Timothy 5:8, Ephesians 5:25. It is the responsibility of the husband to provide spiritually, physically and emotionally for his family. In short, a man must be strong for his family

GENERAL ROLES OF A WOMAN IN THE SAFETY OF HIS MARRIAGE

1. Support

The Bible places a special emphasis in a wife being a helper to her husband (Gen. 2:18). The Hebrew meaning of the word, "helper" in this verse refers only to God as He helps us. God has invested upon wives every help needed by her husband to be good and become what God wants him to become.

2. Respect (Eph. 5:33).

To respect means to reference, notice, regard, honour, prefer, esteem. That is, wife must respect and value his husband's opinion, appreciates him and consider the needs of her husband. A wife must be behind her husband, believe in him and cheer him.

3. Love

According to Francis Ewherido (2020) the wife must be a lover of the husband. This is the foundation of marriage. After a couple has been joined as husband and wife, the marriage is still not complete until it is consummated". Consummation of marriage means "Full sexual intercourse between married persons after their marriage by ejaculation. Her body does not belong to her alone but her to her husband".

Concept of Conflicts

Conflict happens when multiple things attempt to occupy the same space simultaneously. The word conflict is derived from the Latin word "fligere," which means to strike together (Wilmon 1994, P. 187). The "space" refers to the interrelatedness of the "objects," where their intentions or aims interact. The "objects" could be individuals, groups, or organizations (Lewis, 1981, p. 5).

The conflict was once described as a process, a way to achieve a goal, by certain authors. It relates the upheaval (chaos) of the established and old to the peace (resolution) of the new and unreconciled (Mickey & Wilson, 1973). Marriage will inevitably experience conflict, but the couple should know how to handle it well to prevent it from negatively affecting their union. Young couples are expected to try to work things out before they worsen and become out of control.

Social Media

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, social media are websites and computer programs that enable users to share information and connect online via a computer or mobile device. Social media is an online medium for communication that allows users to engage in discourse, disseminate knowledge, and produce content. Examples of social media platforms are blogs, microblogs, wikis, social networking sites, photo and video sharing platforms, instant messaging, podcasts, widgets, virtual worlds, and more. These days, social media has many advantages for young couples, including the ability to communicate with people in other countries and with friends worldwide, view movies and news, do business, and more. However, the benefits and drawbacks of social networking are numerous. Let's consider both:

Social Media's Benefits for Young Couples

1. It facilitates young couples' socialization.
2. Being in touch with someone whose contact information they've lost is helpful.
3. Catching up with old pals is helpful.
4. It facilitates a variety of transactions for them.
5. It enables them to stay current on various essential information.
6. It enables them to do less labour.
7. It adds interest to life.
8. It encourages them to share knowledge with someone nearby or close.
9. Empowerment.

Social Media's Negative Effects on Young Couples

1. It creates division within the family.
2. It interferes with couples' quality time spent together and talking.
3. It forces a pair to live in different realities.
4. It makes them aware of information that might endanger their homes.
5. It allows them to get in touch with their ex.
6. It results in addition.
7. It exposes kids to immoral websites.
8. It heightens scepticism, spying, and jealousy.
9. It allows internet affairs and infidelity.
10. Online teasing and harassment.

Methodology

Descriptive research design of the survey type formed the basis on which the research was anchored. The population of the study comprises all married Couples in Ekiti state. Simple random sampling techniques was used for the study. Simple random sampling techniques was used for the study. The sample of the study consisted of 150 couples comprises of 150 males and 150 females. The Instrument tag Social Media and Young Couples (SCMYC)) was used to collect relevant data for the study. A reliability coefficient of 0.75 was obtained using test re–test method. The data collected were analysed using inferential statistics involving Pearson Product moment correlation to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance

Results

Research Question 1: What contribution does social media has on marital conflicts of young Christian couples

Table 1: Contribution of social media on marital conflicts of young marriage couples in Ekiti State

	Descriptions	Mean	SD	Rank
1	Do you notice any changes in the behaviour of your spouse since you have been using social media?	1.48	0.501	6th
2	Do you feel any changes in your relationship as a result of social media	1.49	0.501	7th
3	Does your spouse know your usernames and passwords on social media?	1.64	0.481	1 st
4	Do you have enough time for your children after work?	1.52	0.501	5th
5	Do you have enough time for your spouse after work?	1.55	0.499	4th
6	Do you discuss together with your spouse?	1.43	0.596	
7	Do you change your status when you have a quarrel with your spouse?	1.59	0.493	2 nd
8	Do you hide things from your spouse on social media?	1.57	0.496	3 rd

Table 1 above showed that one of the variables that might cause major conflict among young couples is the hiding of usernames and passwords of social media accounts by either spouse, with a mean of 1.64. With a mean of 1.59, the second rank indicates that spouses alter their status whenever there is a conflict between them. The factor was the lack of openness between spouses, which came in third with a mean of 1.57. The table also displays additional variables with their mean scores ranked by strength.\

Research Question 2: Will the excessiveness of social media cause marriage conflicts of young couples in Ekiti Stater?

Table 2: Influence of Excessiveness of social media on marriage of young couples in Ekiti State

	Descriptions	N	Mean	SD	Rank
1	An excessive usage of social media can create misunderstanding among couples	200	1.48	0.501	4th
2	Excessive use of social media can lead to unfaithfulness	200	1.50	0.501	3rd
3	Excessive use of social media can lead to jealous				
3	Misuse of social media can lead to unhappy	200	1.60	0.492	2nd
4	relationship	200	1.46	0.500	5th
5	I spent much of my time on social media everyday				
5	Social media can lead to separation and divorce in a	200	1.73	0.448	1 st
6	family	200	1.46	0.500	5 th
7	Misuse of social media can lead to shambles of young marriages	200	1.45	0.499	6th

Table 2 above showed that with a mean of 1.73, spouses spent most of their daily time on social media instead of much time with the family. With a mean of 1.60, excessive social media usage that can cause jealousy came in second, and with a mean of 1.50, excessive social media use that can cause infidelity came in third. The table also displays other variables with their mean scores ranked by their strengths.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: Social media will not significantly contribute to the conflicts of young Christian couples

Social Media Influence on Marriage of young couples	
Chi-square	228.050
Df	6
Asymp. Sig	.000*

*P<0.05

From the above table, the hypothesis which stated that social media will not significantly influence marriage of young couples was rejected (P<0.00). the p-value is 0.000 at 0.5 level of significant.

Since P-value is less than level of significant, the hypothesis is significant.

Hypothesis 2: An excessiveness of social media will not significantly influence marriage of young couples in Ekiti State.

Excessiveness of social media Influence on marriage of young couples	
Chi-square	308.480
Df	7
Asymp. Sig	.000

*P<0.05

Table 2 indicated that p-value (0.000) is less significant level at 0.05 level of significant. However, the hypothesis is significant since the p-value is less than level of significant at 0.05. therefore, since 0.000 p-value is less than 0.05 level of significant, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. Hence, social media will significantly influence marriage of young couple in Ekiti State.

Discussion

The study found that social media significantly influenced young married couples' disagreements in Ekiti State. The survey demonstrates that due to their involvement in social media, many young couples do not have enough time at home with their wives. Many young couples access Facebook, Telegram, Instagram, and WhatsApp as their go-to social media platforms. The findings support Hina and Sardar's (2019) conclusion that social media significantly negatively impacts couples' lives.

According to the study, social media significantly impacts young couples' marriages and might lead to conflict between spouses. The results also showed that overuse of social media significantly affects young couples getting married in Ekiti State. This supports Belle's

(2019) conclusion that excessive social media use might hurt marriage and can potentially trigger unfavourable outcomes. The study by Sokoya (2018) supported the finding of the survey, technology is a plus and an enemy; internet and mobile phones are inanimate things, if they are rightly used, they can add to the marriage, but if you used them wrongly they can destroy the marriage.

Conclusion

Based on the study's findings, social media contribute to the marriage conflict among young couples in Ekiti State. At the same time, the study concluded that social media's excess influence on young couples' marriage in Ekiti State.

Recommendations

Based on the result of the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Regular concentration of couples on mobile phones and social media should be discouraged base on the agreement between the duo.
2. Couples should be careful about the sites to be visited and spend most of their time together by limiting their time with social media.
3. Spouses should be open to each other and avoid posting the video that can create suspicion or confusion. However, there should be a time to communicate with each other over every issue they are having difficulty with.
4. Couples should avoid anything that might lead to arguments.
5. They should set a time limit for themselves and refrain from using social media to spend time with anyone or anything other than their spouse.
6. The couple needs to use social media carefully.

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