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CHURCH AS AN AGENT IN COMBATING SOCIAL VICES IN KARIM LAMIDO, TARABA STATE-NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Social vices refer to behaviours, practices or habits considered harmful, immoral, or detrimental to individuals, communities or society. These vices can negatively affect physical and mental health, relationships, education, economy, and overall well-being.This paper titled "church as an Agent in Combating Social Vices in Karim Lamido" examined the roles of the church in addressing social ills that we are grappling with in the area. These social vices were identified (indecent dressing, examination malpractice, cultism, drug abuse/alcoholism, terrorism/violence, cybercrime, and sexual promiscuity/prostitution). They were discussed alongside their root causes: poverty, corruption, unemployment, peer pressure, and broken homes. A qualitative research method was used, and primary and secondary materials were used in the research. The finding shows that the church's roles were to provide moral guidance and education (preaching and teaching), supported poor and vulnerable families, advocated for social justice and equity, stressing the need for entrepreneurship and training are some of the roles the church embarks upon to forestall social vices in Karim Lamido. Recommendations were drawn for concrete action to address the menace of social vices in Karim Lamido:- religious bodies are tasked to organize workshops, symposia, and seminars for youths annually on the dangers of social vices, spiritual leaders should serve as role models to the youths, CAN should partner with organizations like Drug Enforcement Agency and Correctional Service to rehabilitate youths and how to handle drug addiction, the church should partner with NGOs, and other organizations into poverty alleviation to give training in skills and empowerment program for youths.

Keywords: Church, Agent, Social Vices, Challenges, Solutions, Karim Lamido.

INTRODUCTION

Human beings are social animals and are considered higher than other creatures. they are created with the conscience of what is right and wrong and are regarded as rational beings with thinking faculty, possessing the highest moral standard on what ought to be done and what ought not to be done (Janet and Samuel, 2024). Contrary to the above, social vices continuously increase in different forms in our society at an alarming rate (Ojo, Ugochukwu, Olumuyiwa, & Oliver, 2013). The authors above maintained that the rate at which social vices have escalated in Nigeria is beyond expression. The rapid acculturation arising from

globalization has been identified as an important factor responsible for increased social vices in modern societies (Udebhulu, 2010). Individuals contend with these vices because they violate societal norms and values. In other words, they could be regarded as 'thorns in the flesh' of human peace and tranquility. These social vices are deviant behaviours in a disapproved direction of such a degree that exceeds the tolerance limit of the community (Omonijo and Nnedum, 2012). It may also be regarded as a condition that affects people adversely. It arises from the behaviours of maladjusted people (Okwu, 2012). The bulk of social vices escalating in society recently has to do with the level of illiteracy, mass unemployment, abject poverty, the prevalence of general indiscipline at all levels of society, incomplete socialization, and globalization which touches on economic, political, and social, cultural, technological and environmental facets of human life (Omonijo and Nnedum, 2012; Anho, 2011).

The incidents of social vices are common everywhere and are associated with the youth. All over the world, crimes have saturated the society in one way or the other. Every day seems to generate new crimes and atrocities, ranging from mild to hard. These crimes have out-grown proportion in such a way that they defy control In Nigeria, Omonijo and Nnedum (2012) observed that youths have been instrumental to the rising wave of social vices such as examination misconduct, drug abuse, gambling, indecent dressing, co-habiting, sexual abuse, rape, criminal or dysfunctional behaviours' like cheating, dishonesty, cultism, smuggling, prostitution, thugs and the riot of any kind, among others, probably for financial gain and other reasons best known to them.

The church as one of the savers of the community (Oladipo, 2011) and the provider of solutions to social problems (Angheluta, et al, 2010) has played the role of a religious institution trying to combat all these social vices. Pepper, Jackson, and Uzzell, (2011) described religion as a kind of social network that has the potential to shift people's behaviour in a more sustainable direction to environmental restrictions, promote social justice, and foster well-being. This means that religious organizations as the church serve as a social entity that helps people shift behaviour and identity. This shift in behaviour is usually a shift to a positive identity.The church has long been a major solution provider to socio-economic problems to the needy in Nigeria (Oladipo, 2011). The church's promotional activities like evangelism and distribution of tracts or handbills can be used to attract people to the church for them to have a turn-around in lifestyle. She provides messages in the form of sermons that help new believers change their mentality and mindset on social issues. In a world crippled by different social vices, she provides a moral compass in which the people use to navigate their world. This paper is thus, poised to investigate the church as an agent in fighting social vices in Karim Lamido.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

The Church

The Greek word "Ecclesia", which came to mean church, was originally applied in the Classical period to an official assembly of citizens. In the Septuagint (Greek) translation of the OldTestament (3rd–2nd century BCE), the term *ecclesia* is used for the general assembly of the Jewish people, especially when gathered for a religious purpose such as hearing the Law (e.g Deuteronomy 9:10, 18:16). In the New Testament it is used of the entire body of believing Christians throughout the world (e.g Matthew 16:18), of the believers in a particular area (e.g. Acts 5:11), and also of the congregation meeting in a particular house—the "house-church" (e.g Romans 16:5). Therefore, Chris (2024) sees the Church as a group of Christians who meet together regularly and who have some measure of a commitment to each other to

be the body of Christ together, which includes biblical leadership and biblical teaching and preaching and a proper celebration of the Lord's Supper and a right application of Christian discipline. However, Apostle Paul uses an agricultural metaphor for the church in 1 Corinthians 3, calling it "God's field" (v. 9). In that same chapter, he also refers to the church as "God's building" (v. 9) and "God's temple" (v. 16). All of these images teach us something about the church, and each metaphor brings out a different feature about the church and our responsibility as members of it.

AGENT

An agent is a representative who advises his/her client in a certain area of expertise. Agent represents athletes, writer's modules, action producers, performers, and celebrities. They help make their client's successes happen. If the clients don't do well, the agent doesn't survive. An agent is someone that is given permission (either explicitly or assumed) to act on in a individual's behalf and may do so in a variety of capacities. This could include selling a home. Executing a will manage a sports career, managing an acting career, being a business representative, and soon Kagan (2022)

FIGHTING

Fighting is displaying or engaging in violence, combat, or aggression.
To fight with or to struggle against, most especially to strive to reduce or eliminate. This paper defines Fighting to mean opposing, resisting, withstanding, and stopping something unpleasant or harmful from happening or increasing.

Social Vices

Vice is from the Latin word 'vitium' meaning defect or failing. It is defined as a bad habit or immoral activity. Vices are common among youths (male and female), examples include prostitution, indecent dressing, robbery, cultism, pocket-picking, drug addiction, examination malpractice, hooliganism, thuggery, gambling, smoking, pre-marital sexual activities, and rape.

Social vices are abhorrent, damaging behaviors that the entire community disapproves of (Gomez-Bravo, 2020). Social vices are actions that stray from accepted moral norms. According to Asmau (2020), prostitution, indecent dressing, robbery, cultism, pocket-picking, drug addiction, exam fraud, hooliganism, thuggery, gambling, smoking, premarital sexual activity, and rape are vices that are common among young men and women. For Omonijo et al. (2013), social vices are viewed as actions that transgress accepted cultural norms and codes of conduct in a particular community, under particular conditions, or in a particular location. The origin of social vices is bad behavior or socially awkward people. The word "social vices" in this paper thus refers to those bad traits, unhealthy and negative behaviors' that are against the morality of a society and frowned at by members of the society

COMMON SOCIAL VICES IN KARIM-LAMIDO

All the following are the most common social vices in Karim Lamido,which are presented and discussed below.

1. **Indecent dressing:** In traditional African culture, modesty is linked to virtue and reverence (Lockhart, 2021). It's been suggested that how you dress affects how people address you.

Sadly, this beloved tradition has been replaced with immoral wardrobe choices, even in religious situations. One's appearance can reveal the type of home one is from. As the culture stops perceiving anything wrong with men wearing bottom-grazing slacks or ladies displaying their body contours, this disgusting trend of societal vices is getting more and more accepted. Girls frequently wear clothing that exposes their cleavage and other vulnerable body areas. Transparent materials, short or mini dresses, and fading denim are current trends. Social media and the internet now determine how our youth dress. It's common on the streets to see men and women who are only partially clothed or wearing attire that exposes all of their vital bodily information. Consequently, this pervasive vice has caused rape, pre-marital sex, low self-esteem, and a terrible body for many females, which can cause grief and rejection in later life for many (Tamale 2014). Agreeing with Tamale 's views, the youths in Karim-Lamido have left their traditional dressing as in-Shirin in wurkum, Jon-Jo, and Karim-Jo culture to adopt some dressing that is not acceptable in their culture no religion. These dresses reveal their nakedness in public gatherings like churches, marriage ceremonies, and other social gatherings, which should have not been so.

2.

3. **Examination malpractice:** Categorizing people and placing them in different social groups, examination is used as the benchmark. It has the propensity to establish a meritocracy in which success determines position, power, and riches. Examining bodies including the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), National Examination Council (NECO), and West African Examinations Council (WAEC) undertook the search to pass public examinations to emphasize upon students the importance of tests. Cheating in an exam is when a candidate or other people conduct it improperly before, during, or after it to gain a good score. The issue of test malpractice, which includes things like exam leaks, cheating, impersonation, fake credentials, etc., has grown immensely wicked roots throughout the years, claims (Okurounmu, 2010). This allows candidates to get an unfair advantage over other applicants. Ghost centers, script substitution, bringing in unauthorized materials, copying, griffin, and writing on body parts, and collaboration with academics and invigilators/supervisors are further exam fraud strategies. The results of many secondary school students in Karim-Lamido reveal that the students themselves or some higher bodies were used to write the examinations for them. Those who got As and credits cannot read and write their names well by themselves, these are pieces of evidence that they were not the ones who wrote their exam themselves.

4. **Cultism:** The word "cult" in modern English refers to a social group that is identified by its peculiar religious, spiritual, or philosophical beliefs and rituals. Secret cults or societies, according to Ogbonnaya (2012), are groups whose members swear an oath of secrecy regarding their identities, signs, and passwords all of which are entirely hidden from the public—and who frequently threaten violators with severe repercussions. With potential primary objectives to defy convention, reignite a long-standing rivalry, swear by a deity with human blood, and engage in other actions that are only available to members. The choice to join may be voluntary (because of a need for recognition, poverty, the fear of failing or being rejected, or depression), influenced by peer pressure, or forced based on academic ability or family wealth and influence. Due to the extent of vice in the nation, they used to operate covertly but now mercilessly kill and maim their competitors and innocent bystanders in broad daylight without the permission of the authorities (Igwe, 2014).

5. **Drug abuse/alcoholism:** Substance abuse is characterized as drug use that significantly impairs a person's ability to function socially and physically. Peer pressure, poor parenting, parental influence, unemployment, despondency, and attention-seeking are a few elements that have an impact on drug misuse. Okatachi (2020) studied the risk variables for drug use in the Nigerian cities of Kano and Lagos using a sample of 144 people. The study examined how gender, family history, drug use, and expertise affected these outcomes. The study discovered that: males tend to abuse drugs more than females; children from unstable homes are more vulnerable to drug abuse than children from stable homes; children from families with low socioeconomic status are more likely to abuse drugs than children from families with high socioeconomic status; children from polygamous families are more likely to abuse drugs than children from monogamous families; and children with single parents are more likely to engage in drug abuse than children with two parents. Many did not know the risks of drug abuse before they started using it. Young men are increasingly becoming dependent on drugs and alcohol. Currently, hard drugs like Tramadol, Rohypnol, cocaine, marijuana, gagmen (DaturaStramonium), valium, totaling, and many alcoholic beverages are frequently mixed with Coca-Cola. Reduced perception, memory loss, contempt for established authority, mania, aggressiveness, and untimely death are just a few of the side effects (Colvin &Mermelstein, 2010).

6. **Terrorism/Violence:** The term "terrorism" is frequently used to describe acts of violence committed against people in the name of a political or ideological cause. Terrorism fosters xenophobia, decreases tourism, and increases insurance claims, it has an indirect impact on the economy. Terrorism is defined as a planned act of violence against a specific target to destabilize a duly established government, instill terror among the public, and achieve certain social and political goals. Since 2003, this act has plagued Nigeria and had two negative effects on the country: a severe humanitarian crisis on the one hand and difficulties with insecurity on the other. The Terrorism Provision Act of 2011 was passed to prosecute, punish, and ultimately deter Nigerian people from engaging in terrorism. Nevertheless, quite a few Nigerian citizens continued to commit terrorist acts. Due to their encouragement of the damage of property and the taking of human life during crimes, that violate peace and security.

7. **Cybercrime:** Cybercrime has gotten worse in our society and is especially common among young people. It involves engaging in illegal activities like internet fraud, phone hacking, and bank information theft while using a computer as a tool. Panda (2018) asserts that cybercrime is the use of computers or networks to perpetrate crimes involving computers or networks to transmit malware, illicit data, or illicit images. Cybercriminals may utilize a device to disable it or gain access to a user's private information, critical company information, or government information. Internet users have experienced substantial problems as a result of cybercrime, which also poses a risk to national security or the victim's financial stability. Nigerian youths have escalated cybercrime to the point that victims are mesmerized by regional charms on Yahoo+ and used as props in rituals. There are various categories of cybercrime, this includes: -. Cyberstalking, social engineering, attacks, potentially unwanted programs (PUPs), identity theft, phishing, unlawful or restricted online content, online scams, and exploit kits are a few of the categories that have been recognized (Panda, ibid).

8. **Sexual promiscuity/prostitution:** It denotes immoral behavior when engaging in sexual activity with the non-dominant sex, such as rape, extramarital sex, and any other sort of sexual aggression. This negative behavioris extremely common in our universities and there are typically multiple networks on each campus (Okafor and Duru, 2010). Sexual promiscuity is the use of one's body for payment or recompense of any kind. Prostitution is another term for it. These are the kinds of services provided by women who are after money or who are eager to reach particular degrees of success. It is a fact that sexual promiscuity is pervasive in our tertiary institutions and there are numerous networks within our communities. Virginity was previously highly valued in traditional African society, but it is now virtually extinct. Today, those who remain virgins are considered antisocial. Many people engage in it for financial gain, entertainment, to test their parents' power, as a social cue, to avoid long-term unemployment, or to achieve academic success. Some young individuals are unaware of how these illicit sexual behaviors can have detrimental impacts (Hussein, 2014). At night, they boldly venture to adjacent cities, clubs, or other hotspots to conduct business with their customers directly to gain the most exposure to males who might want to use their services. Young women who were given unrestricted liberty and freedom started to test the boundaries of proper conduct by abusing the freedom given to them as "adults." One of the factors responsible for this rampart campus prostitution is the neglect of parental duties.

THE ELEMENTS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIAL VICES

Poverty: Because their monthly income is insufficient to support them, a large number of families in the nation are classified as having a low socioeconomic status. A family cannot be considered economically sound if only one member works to support the other members of the family. Most people who indulge in social vices end up in this kind of predicament; many drop out of school because their parents can't afford their tuition, and many are exposed to financial hazards at a young age. To improve their financial standing, they so favoured engaging in vices like child trafficking, auto theft, and even ritual murder (Christiana, Veronica, and Oluwabunmi, 2020). The circumstances that Oluwabunmi outlined above do not apply to the youths and residents of Karim-Lamido. To enjoy an ideal existence, young people and others who turned into political thugs have grown too lazy to work the land. The few who work in agriculture and other businesses are unable to lift others out of poverty.

Corruption: Corruption is a type of dishonesty or criminal activity committed by an individual or group that has been given a position of authority to obtain illegal benefits or misuse power for personal benefit. Greed, a lack of moral principles, a leaky system, lax enforcement, social pressure, and mental impoverishment are the main causes of corruption. According to Fagbadebo (2017), political instability, poor governance, and widespread corruption have all contributed to Nigeria's current social problems. To continue their terrible behavior, which has caused the nation to descend into a condition of retardation, many young people now aspire to become politicians. The corruption of certain political elites and youth leaders is so great that anything intended to further the community through them will not reach the people.

Unemployment: People who are employable and actively looking for work but are unable to find one are referred to as unemployed. The reasons of vices in Nigeria have been the subject of numerous talks on the air recently. One of the topics mentioned as one of the main contributors to societal vices is unemployment. Given the number of young people who are

"on the street" because they are unemployed while having the necessary skills and credentials to work, it is acceptable to bring up unemployment.

The saying "the devil's workshop is the idle man's mind" is frequently used. Undergraduates now choose to commit cybercrime rather than concentrating on their future by reading avidly in order to graduate with strong grades that would qualify them for employment. As a result, they are easily accessible to corrupt politicians and negative social forces who are determined to undermine the current administration. Due to a lack of opportunities, some young people have turned their hostility toward the public by committing violent protests, robberies, fraud, kidnappings, destroying oil pipelines, and dirty tasks that have caused significant harm to society as a whole.

Peer Pressure/ Peer Group: This is the main reason why people engage in vices. Youths spend substantially more of their time with friends at school or at home. Because of their vulnerability and young age, these young people are readily swayed and are more likely to believe their older friends or peers. Since they are born with a blank slate, children are particularly curious about learning, having fun, and trying new things. This leads them to smoke, drink, and engage in many illegal activities, which supports the adage that "evil communication corrupts good manners" (Veronica, Oluwabunmi, and Christiana, 2020). This demonstrates the value of friendship and how people can affect themselves either favorably or unfavorably based on the type of relationship they have.

Broken Homes: According to research, the majority of young people from dysfunctional households engage in social vices. One can engage in social vice if their parents don't take care of them, monitor and supervise them too little, or provide them with the right advice or attention. A youngster who has a permissive will always misbehave because they think they can always have what they want, no matter what. Decisions about the child had never been made by both parents. They travel with the wrong people, nobody questions their whereabouts, and nobody is interested in their difficulties or advancement. Due to parental neglect, these groups of people are readily drawn to cults and violent crimes in an attempt to obtain love, guidance, care, and emotional support. Because their parents are too busy to support them, some abandoned women end up living a couple's life mostly on campus in an attempt to find safety and someone who might ease their emotional needs. These women experience rape, unintended pregnancies, psychological trauma, and emotional trauma, which can cause them to lose concentration and attention in life. By being careless and too preoccupied with their kids, some divorced parents have progressively wrecked their wards' lives. Some even entrust their kids' care to family members and housemaids, who then expose them to societal vices.

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN COMBATING SOCIAL VICES IN KARIM-LAMIDO

Therefore, by offering moral instruction and guidance to its members and the general public, the church plays a vital role in battling these social vices. The fight against evil and the restoration of sanctity in society are significantly impacted by church sermons. Churches have the chance to discourage societal vices and encourage moral values through media education and communication advocacy. The church helps people make better judgments and build a strong moral compass by offering moral instruction and direction. This can eventually lead to a more moral community free from social vices.

Additionally, churches help the weaker segments of society, such as the sick, the impoverished, and the disenfranchised. Financial hardship can result in a variety of social vices, as well as physical and mental health problems, for both individuals and households. High rates of poverty have the potential to impede economic progress at the society level and are linked to issues such as urban deterioration, unemployment, crime, low education, and bad public health, all of which eventually cause members to indulge in widespread social vices. Through advocacy for social justice and equity, counselling services, and humanitarian endeavours, the Church may help individuals in need. As a result, the church's social support programs greatly aid in the fight against these social vices that permeate society.

Another crucial part of churches' efforts to address social vices is their advocacy for fairness and social justice. The social doctrine of the church proposes a methodical approach to problem-solving, encompassing action, judgment, and insight. The Christian faith has a significant role in addressing perceptions of injustice and illegitimacy as well as in forming concepts of social justice and legitimacy. Consequently, social justice ought to be the church's ultimate goal, and new change models entail creative lobbying to influence public policy. The church can contribute to the development of a more just and equitable society, which in turn can serve to lessen social vices, by promoting social justice and equality.

Another important part of the church's efforts to address these societal vices is encouraging small enterprises and emphasizing the importance of entrepreneurship education and training for followers. This will undoubtedly contribute to our societies' economic revitalization. All of our religious organizations ought to offer courses in carpentry, mechanics, and bricklaying so that young people can receive training and start their businesses. By doing this, societal vices can be minimized and the government's efforts to revitalize and revitalize our wonderful country of Nigeria's economy can be complemented.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, social vices are becoming more prevalent in Nigeria every day. The country's socioeconomic, political, and security conditions will suffer greatly if this threat is not sufficiently addressed. To defeat this beast, everyone must be on the same page. To implement skill-building and poverty-reduction initiatives, the church must collaborate with other groups, including the NGOs, Drug Enforcement Agency, Correctional Service, government, EFCC, people, and other organizations. The church is urged to take immediate action against social vices in Nigeria, as they have the potential to devastate our political, social, religious, economic, and security structures. The sooner, the better.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The degree to which societal norms, cultures, and traditions have been eroding and become out of control in society in the twenty-first century paved the way for the escalating flood of social vices. To save the future of the next generation, the following recommendations are made for concrete action.

1. Religious bodies should organize workshops, talk shows, symposia, and seminars annually for youths in tertiary institutions, youth organizations, and youths in religious settings highlighting the dangers of social vices to serve as a deterrent to others.

2. Religious leaders should not involve themselves in any act of social vices, therefore, set good examples by living an honest and upright life. This would encourage the youths to uphold them as role models. By doing so, the youths who are considered leaders of tomorrow will grow in an honest and upright life making the society free from social vices.
3. The youth wing of CAN should organize an annual sensitization program on the dangers of social vices among the youth in the Karim Lamido local government area.
4. CAN should partner with organizations like the Drug Enforcement Agency and correctional service to rehabilitate and train the youths on how to handle drug addiction.
5. The church should partner with NGOs. PAWECA (Poverty Alleviation and Wealth Creation Agency) and other organizations into poverty alleviation to give training skills and empowerment programs for youths.
6. Religious leaders should ensure that all religious-owned schools enshrine carpentry, mechanics, bricklaying, and other vocational skills in their curriculum to empowerthe youths.
7.

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