

Promiscuous Lifestyle in Nigeria: An Ethical Response

Chiedu A. Onyiloha, PhD
Department of Religious and Cultural Studies,
University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Abstract

The Nigeria's religious space is replete with fruits of the missionaries' (Islam and Christianity) accomplishments especially in the areas of ethics and values. Unfortunately, promiscuous lifestyle, indiscipline and allied phenomena have become prevalent and the trend has continued. There is a general concern if this problem had eluded any ethical thought or paradigm. Against this backdrop, this study considers the recurrent decimal of promiscuous lifestyle in Nigeria, as perhaps, a proper description of the ethical dilemma in the country due to the conflict between evil and good, and the dearth of the reflection of religious profession on the life of the nation. To this end, this paper examines promiscuous lifestyle and cites its viral nature with the aim of establishing the ethical implications for the Nigerian nation. It is a study carried out in the field of ethics and its scope covers some of the States though with equal representations of the fieldworks in the six (6) geo-political zones in Nigeria. This is a qualitative research and it depends on strict logical syllogism rather than statistical formulae in data collection, analysis and discussion. The study is also carried within the broad framework of ethics-religious phenomenology. This research creates awareness about the rising cases of the young and the old members of the society who indulge in acts of promiscuity. Furthermore, the paper presents the causes and consequences of promiscuous lifestyle and appraises the phenomenon as an unethical practice. At the end, it makes a case that significant number of citizens is accepting the phenomenon whereas a few of the people refrain from it. In response, the study makes some recommendations to discourage people from such unethical phenomenon.

Keywords: Promiscuity, Lifestyle, Immorality, Nigerian Society, Ethics.

1. Introduction

Promiscuous lifestyle is a global problem. The occurrence of various indices of promiscuous lifestyle is a key indicator of the meteoric rise of the problem both in the Nigerian society and elsewhere. Promiscuity has a global face with uncalculated negative implications for humanity. This paper approaches the phenomenon from an ethical perspective – the reality that promiscuous lifestyle in Nigeria touches on the very *soul* the society and leaves behind a dark *spot* on its trail. The promiscuous lifestyle in the country, like any other ethical problem, has spread its germanous tentacles to nearly all substrata of the national life, without any spared space. This is a worrisome situation and a national problem.

Promiscuous lifestyle takes place in a variety of ways but this research identifies adultery and fornication, rape and prostitution, contraception and abortion, and pornography and incest, as some of its frequent acts in today's world, including the Nigerian society. This study names and explains identity crisis, the eclipse of the sense of the sacred and false theories of morality as some of the causes of the phenomenon in Nigeria. Every cause has an effect and the same holds for promiscuous lifestyle in any society. Following the consideration and analysis of the causes of the problem, the study identifies the debasement of self-esteem, psychological trauma, physical health hazards, and mental and spiritual problems as some of the consequences of promiscuous lifestyle.

This researcher having identified some of the causes and consequences of promiscuous lifestyle in Nigeria took further step and applied some ethical principles to the problem. The said ethical principles serve as responses to promiscuity among some people in the country. Those responses, equally, qualify for the research's recommendations – with the aim of combating the problem in Nigeria. The paper concludes by affirming that promiscuous lifestyle is a big challenge to the teeming population of Nigerians.

2. Promiscuous Lifestyle: A General Consideration and Key Indicators

The word, 'promiscuous' is an adjectival form of the noun 'promiscuity', meaning "various disparate elements mixed together", "action or deed made without careful choice", "indiscriminate action", respectively. Evidently and relevantly too, the above definitions or explanations fall short of the description of the concept in reference to the context of this study. Promiscuous lifestyle, as used in this research refers to an "indiscriminate way or manner in choice of people to sexual partners" with total disregard to ethical and moral ethos in the society. It is instructive to note well, that the definition applies to all persons irrespective of state, status or means of the act, as long as such individuals engage

in illicit sexual relationship. Promiscuous lifestyle, therefore, is an approach, way, manner, technique or mode of indulging in indiscriminate sexual relationship.

Critically reviewed, some analysts are of the opinion that the above mentioned acts are not necessarily connected with being promiscuous but for other grave reasons. However, it is the informed observations of this study that for someone or some people to commit any of the mentioned enumerated acts, that person or those fellows must have been in the habit of indiscriminate sexual actions.

3. Promiscuous Lifestyle in Nigeria: An Overview

The high rate of immorality is almost perceived in every Nigerian city and town. In the observations of this paper, an average Nigerian exercised caution in the past in matters concerning sexual relations. But things have dramatically changed for the worst following what is now seen as “a new culture of the flesh” in disregard to core values inherited from component ethnic groups making up the Nigerian nation. Also, the “Bottom power” has become a trade-in-stock for some women (old or young) who use sexual enticements to circumvent due process or rule of law with regard to such opportunities or endeavours as education, job position, among others. Other persons interviewed concerning this subject matter also agree that some Nigerian women indulge in adultery in an attempt to secure job position, keep the job, or evade query for professional misconduct at work place. The women involved in this promiscuous lifestyle are often in their twenties (20s) and thirties (30s). It has to be recalled that indigenous and immigrant religions in Nigeria all condemn and regard fornication or adultery as an offence against the Supreme Being. It is a paradox that a nation with millions of religious adherents would be witnessing on a large scale occurrence of marital infidelity or sexual immorality.

The situation is not quite different when adultery is compared to fornication, by repetition and recurrence amongst the Nigerian populace. The population of Nigerians most prone to fornication comes from the youths, in other words, young people still in their teens (from fourteen and above) and early twenties (20s). The categories ages of youths are irresistibly and irredeemably attracted to sex and all that goes with it. From peer groups to circle of friends be they at school environment, parks, places of worship and social media, Nigerian youths are frenzied by and passionate about sex. Schools, markets, parks and even places of worship have been identified in Nigeria as some of the areas where fornication occurs. Some have faulted the current practice where male and female students live together in the same hostel or compound as enticing to sexual immorality and specifically to fornication. Even in a situation where there are separate

accommodations for these students, the rate of visits by either of the sex, does not leave one in doubt about the underlying motives.

Besides these, it is almost a 'norm' in most Nigerian schools for students to have their "husbands" and "wives" and they show them off as ways of "enhancing" their social relevance among their peers. There is nothing intrinsically wrong for students to have friends in their campuses but it becomes unethical if such friendships are tailored towards having sexual relations as real husbands and wives. Unfortunately, some students have abused friendships by indulging in fornication. It is no longer news and needless be-labouring the obvious: some students sell their bodies in exchange for good grades or another favour in the course of their education. Instances of sexual relations between students and lecturers on the one hand, and sexual relations between students and students on the other hand, are no longer hidden from the public glare. The meteoric rise in the cases of fornication has led some commentators into the thought that if the occurrence is unchecked, Nigerian universities might end up becoming citadel of brothels rather than citadel of learning. Far from trivializing the above observations, it has to be noted that what obtains in Nigerian tertiary institutions as regards incessant cases of fornication, might as well be said of other nations. The truth is that young persons of this generation see sex as gratifying and as a measure of adolescent. They also see it as an apex of one's social involvement in community of peers and/or group of peers.

When students and older persons are unable to control their sexual feelings, the obvious implication is a society replete with a life of promiscuity. Promiscuous lifestyle is a reflection of life of easy virtues and evidences have shown that Nigerian society is bedevilled with such malaise. Rape and prostitution have been identified, as perhaps, two immoral acts resulting from unchecked rates of fornication in any community or society. Addiction to fornication destroys self-esteem and pushes sexual pleasure beyond reasonableness. Rampant occurrences of rape in some of the Nigerian cities and towns are making news on a daily basis. Sex predators are roving around looking for unsuspecting victims to devour. Individual or gang raping is always making airwaves and the recent Indian case of a girl gang-raped to death means that the phenomenon is a global menace. At the heart of every ugly incidence of rape is an irrational drive to attain sexual pleasure at all times and in all places – unmistakable trait of promiscuous lifestyle. On daily counting and with many cases, most Nigerian families count their losses to rapists and such victims' conditions are better imagined than expressed.

From quiet rural communities to the bustling cities, sex predators are everywhere trying to satisfy their brute passions for sexual gratifications. The society becomes unsafe and everyone is restless until some measures are taken

to counter the menace. In 2016 alone, a total number of 150 reported cases of sexual and physical abuse were recorded in Lagos State for one year period as of April 27, 2016. Also, the Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation reported that 589 cases ranging from sexual abuse, physical abuse and child labour (*Punch*, August 9, 2016). While number of reported cases is on the increase, there are however, some setbacks in the prosecution of those incidents following reluctance on the part of the victims and it has been blamed on some cultural factors like stigmatization. Recent survey shows that 67 per cent did nothing after they were raped while 33 per cent made some kind of feeble report of being raped to their relations or friends (*Punch*, August 9, 2016). Some of the victims shy away from court litigations because of the social stigma usually associated with such an exercise. But, the latter does not exist in all cases; there have been some rape cases getting attention. Perhaps, the recently passed bill on adequate punishments for rapists and other related violence against women being sponsored by Abike Dabiri-Erewa in Nigeria's House of Representatives came from the background of incessant cases of rape.

Mixed reactions are some of the results of interviews this study conducted with regard to existence and/or perception of prostitution in Nigerian society. The varied responses are dependent on certain variables traceable to some cultural and religious orientations. Suffice it to state from the onset, prostitution exists and operates in different kinds and modes. Also affirmed, is the fact that practically, clients of prostitution cut across Nigerians from different walks of life. In other words, no group or class of people whether in the past or at present that did not or does not have the problem of prostitution. At the same time, it also follows, that prostitutes come from different parts of the country. Instructively, prostitution is as old as human society. There are numerous examples in old civilizations and even religions where prostitutes played some parts considered to be of local or national significance. Delilah (Judges 14: 6), Cult of male and female prostitutes (Deuteronomy 23: 17; 1 Kings 14, 15, 22), etc, are some citations concerning harlotry or prostitution in Judeo-Christian tradition. Apart from those ones, United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK), Belgium, and Netherland and among others have respective legislations legalizing or regulating prostitution in their countries. While one applauds the Nigerian government for not legalizing prostitution, nonetheless, it amounts to sheer naivety for one to think that Nigeria is better than the above mentioned countries. A cursory look and conscious observation show how some of the nation's highways are dotted with pockets of "shanty" or "modest" cubicles which serve as exclusive comfort zones where some people trade on sex for monetary gains.

This researcher's fieldwork indicates an existence of three informal classes of prostitution in Nigeria, namely: i) highways and streets prostitution, ii) school prostitution, and iii) professional prostitution. In either of the class, what one knows well is that prostitution drives its being from inappropriate sexual drives. Drivers of heavy duty trucks or machines, commuters (mostly middle-aged men), artisans, etc, are some of the regular clients of highways and streets prostitution. Prostitutes arrested by the Lagos State Task Force for hawking sex on the streets shows rising cases of prostitution among single or married middle-aged women and men in Nigeria (*The News*, October 8, 2012). School prostitution consists of students in secondary or tertiary institutions who sell their bodies to lecturers or senior non-academic staff for passing examinations or other favours. Professional prostitution usually made up of people who have been trained to choose their patrons from the ranks of politicians, business executives, religious leaders, etc.

According to this research, their clients are usually based on recommendations or requests through proxies. An avid observer would have seen this type of scenario played out in most recent films from the *Nollywood* (the official name of Nigerian film industry). Evidences show that prostitution goes unchecked in the country as a result of high patronage from promiscuous Nigerians. Due to social scourge, unethical nature and cultural anathema generally associated with prostitution, it has remained a nocturnal or secret practice in Nigeria, as both the practitioners and patrons avoid public or any public discourse

One of the intrinsic patterns of the presence of promiscuity in any society is a spiral and vicious cycle: inter-connection and inter-dependence of evils wrought by evil intention and wrong action of individuals or aggregate of persons. Characterized thus, contraception and abortion are typical illustrations of the cause and effect of the promiscuous lifestyle in today's society. Contraception and abortion portend ominous implications for the nation's general welfare; those using contraceptives and/or involved in procurement of abortion all contribute to the nation's burden, holistically considered. Young and adult Nigerians (married or single) in one way or the other are involved in the use of contraceptives. The motives of promoters of contraception and its means like condom, diaphragm, etc, might be varied but one fact underlines those reasons: a deliberate action to impede pregnancy after sexual relationships. Whatever reasons adduced to employ contraceptives, no one is left in doubt, about pick-and-choose judgmental frame of mind of those involved in the said act. The results from this study's field data reveal how some Nigerians are arbitrarily using contraceptives, as perhaps, safeguards against "unwanted" or "pre-marital" pregnancies. To their thinking, contraception has become a handy means to achieving "safe" sexual relationships without facing the ethical responsibilities.

According to responses of some select students from the six geo-political zones in Nigeria, whose confidentiality is maintained here, sex is perceived as a reflection of one's transition into adolescence or adulthood. Sex, for some Nigerian students, means an affectionate way of building and preserving friendships. But what the respondents fail to explain is the motive behind promotion of contraception among some Nigerian students. There are different brands of contraceptives currently being sold in the Nigerian markets or stores. Both the sellers and buyers are invariably involved in supporting promiscuous lifestyle among Nigerians. As already noted in the preceding section, promiscuity often is shrouded in secrecy and the same applies to sale and use of contraceptives in Nigeria. It is true that many advocates of contraception anchor their arguments on medical grounds: avoiding sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and the viral viruses like HIV/AIDS. However, abstinence has been acclaimed as the best attitude to sex for all, and in the case of married couples, fidelity. Monetary and personal efforts expended in contraception would have been channelled towards national development – especially provision of social structures and services, including social palliatives and social security.

Closely related to the above discussion is a consideration of abortion in Nigeria's current situation. That a good number in Nigeria procures abortion in no longer news; what comes as news is the percentage of concerned population reflecting cause and effect of the phenomenon and also its impact on national development. It is no longer a secret that some hospitals and medical officials are involved in facilitating and/or performing abortion. Their clients are drawn from single to married persons. The aim of every abortion (besides involuntary abortion) is a termination of foetus. Based on this study's findings, the major religions in Nigeria such as Islam, ATR and Christianity are against abortion, but some adherents of those religions still support or procure abortion. This is seen as a clash of interest and a negation of the tenets of one's religion.

However, there are general expectations that religious principles concerning abortion would have been observed to the letter, but unfortunately, the contrary is the case. The surge in number of Nigerians supporting, facilitating or procuring abortion draws its impetus from misdemeanour which influences promiscuity among the society. What is happening in Nigeria with respect to the above observation most probably takes place in other countries; the point here is that Nigerian population should have been proactive in making wise choice in tandem with the national values inherited from ethnic and religious foundations of the country. Thus, from north to south and from east to west, many have died as a result of abortion; families have been destabilized, and also chains of social ills

have remained unbroken – all because of promiscuous lifestyle leading to contraception and abortion.

Clearly, the spiral effects of the struggle between good and evil as manifested in promiscuity remain unresolved and troublesome, such that another percentage of the Nigerian population not involved in any of the above social ills is caught in the unwholesome web of pornography and incest. The latter situation is not peculiar to the Nigerian society alone; the menace has a global spread, leading to the same condemnation in other countries as well. Pornography as it exists in Nigeria reminds everyone about the abuse of the media. The creation, circulation or usage of pornographic materials simply takes one back to the informed earlier postulation: that quest for inordinate desire displaces ethical standard and implants a template of depravity that craves for sexual pleasure by all means and at all cost. An obvious dissipation of energy and wasting of monetary resources by a segment of the young and the old bring to the fore the reality of pornography in Nigeria.

Pornographic materials are practically found in the electronic and print media. Using computer, laptop, cell phones (smart, android, windows, iOS, etc) tens of thousands of Nigerians dedicate their time and spend fortunes to keep abreast with live streams of sexual images and motions. At times, some of those images are packaged for an offline use. In addition, dailies' stands witness a surge in human traffic – mostly young people and a handful of adults who scramble for dailies or periodicals known for pornographic contents. The trend raises a question about the moral character of the developers, promoters and users of pornographic materials not only in Nigeria, but also, in the larger society. Undoubtedly, indigenous (ATR) and immigrant (Islam, Christianity) religions in Nigeria propagate and teach that pornography is immoral and also warn their members to desist from the phenomenon. The latter takes its tolls on number of Nigerians desirous of promiscuous lifestyle as evidenced in the rise of the use of pornographic materials among different age brackets. The same inordinate sexual passion as shown in pornography, leads to arbitrary other sexual oddities: incest, bestiality and nudity.

There exists an inter-play “in which hierarchy of beings and cosmic forces are interlinked in a complex web of interrelationships and interactivity, much like what one has today in the cyber-cosmic network. Man is visualized at the centre of the African holistic world-view” (Ejizu, 2008: 27-28). The above view, though not in its entirety, demonstrates the rational, moral, spiritual and social expectations of the humans as distinct beings, persons contradistinguished from other lower species. It is a fact that humans are sex-seeking beings

For procreation or pleasure. But, unlike beasts, there are moral and ethical standards for men and women as far as sexual relationships are concerned. Rules must be obeyed in every sexual intercourse. Every society or religion has one rule or the other governing sexual activities in families or communities to avert abuse or a negation of legitimate public order.

Nonetheless, there is a growing awareness about the unfortunate cases of incest in different homes and communities in Nigeria. Nigerian culture abhors incest but the reality is that some men and women indulge in the act, perhaps, as a reflection of the conflict between the traditional value system and modernity which has gained some grounds in Nigerian society. Again, incest reminds everyone about the negative effects of promiscuous lifestyle among some Nigerians. Of the participants interviewed during the fieldwork, it is instructive to note, that many of the interviewees agree that their religions and cultures are against incest. They also argue that incest is as a result of erosion of morality and life of depravity. Needless, citing cases of incest in Nigeria, but it suffices to assert that concerned agencies receive an average of one or two cases on a weekly basis; those instances, perpetrators or victims of incest cut across gender, religion, ethnic group, or even professional backgrounds. Owing to stigmas associated with such a phenomenon, victims shy away from seeking legal action against their aggressors and those victims remain traumatized and hopeless. The increase in cases of incest and related crimes is a clear indication of the sexual pervasiveness in Nigerian society.

3.1 Causes of Promiscuous Lifestyle in Nigeria

The above exposition has shown the existence of promiscuity as reflected on a number of Nigerians who embrace promiscuous lifestyle. Some of the manifestations of the phenomenon have been discussed in details as well as types and its frequent acts in Nigeria. Identity crisis and the eclipse of the sense of the sacred and false theories of morality are some of the factors responsible for promiscuous lifestyle Nigeria.

3.1.1 Identity Crisis

As should now be evident, identity of any individual or nation is very important. But when there is crisis of identity, that individual or nation is almost faced with a fundamental problem of existence. The development is thus perceived as an erosion of ethics and values which leads to such moral problems as adultery, fornication, rape, prostitution, contraception, abortion, pornography, incest, etc. Ordinarily and when reference is made to identity crisis, one's mind immediately

compares what had been and what is, in the society or community. A true sense of history in this regard, helps one to evaluate circumstances leading to identity crisis with its attendant consequences on morality of a society like Nigeria. Fafunwa (1974: 13) has noted the significance of history: “History is to a people what memory is to the individual. Any people without a knowledge of their past would suffer from collective amnesia, groping blindly into the future without guide-posts of precedence to shape their course. Only thorough awareness of their heritage allows them to make their public decisions as they make their private ones.”

The difficulty in transferring ethnic or national values leads Nigerians to confusion and identity crisis. Identity is defined as “a sense of being at home with oneself as one grows and develops; and it means, at the same time, a sense of affinity with a community’s sense of being at one with its future as well as history” (Erickson, 1973: 27). An absence of the above definition ultimately leads to identity crisis. There seems to be a general understanding among scholars that Erikson (1995; 1974) is the one considered to have coined the term “identity crisis” and it connotes a time of intensive analysis and exploration of different ways of looking at oneself. Perhaps, the very location of the explanation of identity crisis is found in the following citation:

‘Identity’ and ‘Identity Crisis’ have in popular and scientific usage become terms which alternatively circumscribe something so large and so seemingly self-evident that to demand a definition would almost seem petty, while at the other times they designate something made so narrow for purposes of measurement that the over-all meaning is lost, and it could just as well be called something else. The quotation marks are as important as the term they bracket; everybody has heard of ‘identity crisis’ and it arouses a mixture of curiosity, mirth, and discomfort which yet promises by the very play on the word ‘crisis’, not to turn out to be something quite as fatal as it sounds. In other words, a suggestive term has begun to lend itself to ritualized usage (Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, 1995: 15-16).

The young and the old people in Nigeria are struggling to acquire identity. In the traditional society, people naturally acquire their identity from the culture, religion, family and by belonging to the community; being part and parcel of the community. The community proposes stable points of reference, a unifying system

of values, beliefs and philosophy of life. The significance of community in shaping and influencing individual identity and division of duties cannot be overemphasised. No one can succeed or exist independent of the other in any given society (Mbiti, 1979). On the contrary, the situation is different in Nigerian society. The micro and macro changes in the society brought about by formal education, urbanization, globalization and the media have diminished the influence of traditional lifestyle on the nation. Many people in the country are distancing themselves from the community thereby living alone to their wild thoughts and expectations – without recourse to community’s evaluation of their actions. Because of individualism, such immoral acts as fornication, adultery, use of contraceptives, abortion and pornography have taken centre stage in disregard to community and its values. The perpetrators and their cohorts because of sexual pleasures or fantasies, feign ignorance of such traditional values as chastity, sanctity of life, temperance, self-control, temperance, etc.

Faced by the same identity crisis, a good number of the Nigerian population seems to have been overwhelmed by the media. The media is an asset as well as a risk depending on how it is used. If used properly, it is a great asset, but if misused, it is a great risk. Quite unfortunately, most people involved in an inappropriate use of the media like pornography (pictures, films, games, text messages) are deliberately distancing themselves from cultural or religious values for the satisfaction of sexual pleasure. That the young and the old people could compromise their cultural and religious values due to inordinate use of the media, is a clear indication of lost of identity among the promiscuous persons. Instead of rising up to the occasion of condemning acts of sexual perverseness, promiscuous persons label their critics as either “timid” or “old fashioned” members of the society.

Another aspect of identity crisis with regard to sexual promiscuity is total and uncritical imitation of some foreign cultural patterns. Nigerians are known for their adulation of the exotic experience and an average Nigerian desires to travel abroad especially to America or Europe as a social status enhancement. The same is said of Nigerian’s penchant for foreign culture. Globalization has made culture-culture contact a reality through exchange of goods and services. One of the evident signs of identity crisis is a sense of inferiority or irrational imitation of other civilizations. Some Nigerian women and men are copying immodest and nude fashion styles of the so-called “celebrities” in America, Europe or Asia. As if these were not enough, the music and film industries in the country are full of explicit sexual lyrics and nude scenes, respectively. A trip to the nation’s

tertiary institutions portrays the fact that some of the female and the male students have not only lost their identities but also have raised the number of sexual seductions – leading to promiscuous a lifestyle.

3.1.2 The Eclipse of the Sense of the Sacred and False Theories of Morality

Most traditional societies are lauded for the sense of the sacred. Of significant note is the derivative of the sense of the sacred from a deposit of religious and social values preserved and handed down to the different generations. Maslow (1976) opines that the sense of the sacred traverses all human endeavours and by no means is it peculiar to only religious experience or worship. In other words, all peoples irrespective of their religious creeds or affiliations, reserve the right to recognize and use their sacred space and time for their individual or common good. The sense of the sacred is intrinsically related with the transcendental realities – not necessarily in the strict understanding of Supreme Being, but on the deeper insight into the fact that human life is not tied to materiality, as such. Viewed from that prism, human beings become conscious of their thoughts and actions vis-à-vis ethical and spiritual implications for men and women in the society.

Quite disturbing is the discovery that some men and women in Nigeria are no longer interested in the things of the ‘spirit’; they seem to favour ‘matter’ and regard it as an ultimate phenomenon in the scheme of human activities. The eclipse of the sense of the sacred is at the heart of the promiscuous lifestyle; the horizon of the spirit is relegated to the background and the passion for material or sensual pleasure is maximized. John Paul II (1995: 22) contends that the loss of the sacred is a misnomer and it places an undue emphasis on “having” instead of “being”. Beneath the development is a false impression that what one possesses – materially measured, counts more than just being alive. Material wealth is thus worshipped without asking about the sources of such riches. Such wealth attracts sycophants as well as men or women of easy virtues. Because some of those people believe that “money” can get everything, anything goes in the name of making money including prostitution, fornication, adultery, etc.

Within this context, John Paul II (1995: 23) further observes as follows: “So-called quality of life is primarily seen as economic efficiency, inordinate consumerism, physical beauty, and pleasure, to the neglect of the more profound interpersonal, spiritual, and religious dimensions of existence”. When people lose the sense of the sacred, false moral theories take the centre stage in the society. History has shown how false moral theories ruined ancient states in the past. Hedonism, utilitarianism, emotivism, moral situationism/situation ethics, self-interest morality/ moral egoism, etc, are some of the moral theories attempting

to make a personal pleasure the hallmark of the essence of human endeavours. These theories had followers in the past as well as in the present Nigerian society. John Paul II (1995: 23), remarks that for such people, “the body is reduced to a complex of organs, functions, and energies to be used for pleasure and efficiency.

Sexuality, too, is depersonalized and exploited. From being sign of love it becomes a means of self-assertion and the selfish satisfaction of personal desires and instincts. The unitive and procreative meanings inherent in the very nature of the conjugal act are distorted and falsified”. Promiscuous persons are not concerned about the values inherent in human sexuality; rather, their only concern is seeking pleasure. Such people cite some of the above false moral theories as basis for their actions. In Nigeria, for an instance, such false moral theories as ‘Use what you have to get what you don’t have’ and ‘If you can’t hold *bodi*, use condom’ (use condom when lacking self-control) embolden both the young and the old to see sex as “do or die” affair. A noticeable percentage of the population takes those moral theories as excuses for perpetrating sexual immorality or promoting the cause of immorality and/or unethical practice in the society.

3.2 Consequences of Promiscuous Lifestyle in Nigeria

Every cause has an effect and the same holds for promiscuous lifestyle in any society. The paper identifies debasement of self-esteem, psychological trauma, physical health hazards, and mental and spiritual problems as some of the consequences of promiscuous lifestyle in Nigeria.

3.2.1 Debasement of Self-Esteem

Humans are beings endowed with self-esteem through rationality, morality and spirituality. These characteristics are expected to bear on thoughts and actions of men and women at all times. However, such constitutive qualities are trivialized when sexual passions or appetites becloud the supposedly special characteristics that contradistinguish humans from non-human beings. Illicit sexual intercourse has been seen as of the vilest and most harmful vices human beings can indulge in. When such an immoral sexual act takes place, the perpetrators are thus humiliated and reduced themselves to the standards of the lower species whose sexual urge are not regulated by any ethical norms. Whether it is fornication, adultery, prostitution, abortion, incest or use of contraceptives, the sexually promiscuous person suffers from self-pity and at times, self-hatred (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2000). Depletion of self-worth could also trigger some other unimaginable cycle of reactions leading to an increase in social evils in the society, including psychological trauma.

3.2.2 Psychological Trauma

Sexual promiscuity brings about direct or indirect psychological trauma. It has brought about woes, miseries, pains, regrets and fears capable of breaking interpersonal and family ties. Take fornication and adultery as examples, these two unethical acts have far-reaching effects on families, relations and communities. Apart from shameful experiences, many families are torn apart and their expectations dashed when such immoral acts of their children or wards become public knowledge in the community. Again, sexual promiscuity stifles many visions and also destroys long years of respect, trust, prestige, honour and trust of friends, associates and family members. Worst still, promiscuous persons labour under the impediments of loyalty and confidence of the family or community.

Promiscuous sex is devoid of love. These make participants in this kind of sexual activity unfulfilled and frustrated. Depression may creep in leading to heavy smoking, excessive drinking of alcohol, and drug taking, whether narcotic or psychedelic, as a way of escaping reality of existence and accountability. Unfortunately, the latter worsens the situation to the point that such depressed persons end up becoming nuisance in the society. Worst still, the indices of hopelessness are increased through the new faces of social ills in the society.

3.2.3 Physical Health Hazards

Some have argued that sexuality is the exclusive concern of those involved in phenomenon. Holding of such an opinion is neither proper nor ethically plausible. As already emphasized, no person is an island unto himself or herself. Whether the sexual act is legal or illicit, it touches the other persons directly or indirectly. Promiscuity is a reflection of moral decays in the society and promiscuous persons are susceptible to health hazards.

Diseases that are contracted through sexual intercourse or similar intimate contacts are grouped by physicians as Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), or venereal diseases. These very contagious diseases such as syphilis, gonorrhoea and deadly ones like herpes simplex and Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). HIV is a lent virus (a member of the retrovirus member) that causes AIDS. Also AIDS is a condition in humans in which progressive failure of the immune system allows life-threatening infections to thrive. Promiscuous person can contract the above diseases and spreads them to his or her sexual partners, and from such infected persons the diseases assume a global scale of infection. However, it has to be noted that not all persons with STDs, HIV/AIDS are promiscuous. Evidence has shown that

some persons with venereal diseases might have contracted them through some sources other than promiscuous sex. People with STDS and HIV/AIDS undergo different and varied experiences which make them socially or economically incapacitated in the national development. Apart from heavy and perennial medical attention, such patients often end up in penury thereby becoming a burden to their families and relations (Kiura, 1993).

3.2.4 Mental and Spiritual Problems

The promiscuous lifestyle affects people's way of reasoning and acting in a very negative fashion. Pornographic resources corrupt and make the mind idle. An idle mind is subject to all kinds of weird notions and ideas. Usually, strange ideas lead to strange actions contrary to the good of the society. Addiction to pornography leads one into seeking for the actual sexual pleasure – of course, one does not rule out rape, fornication, adultery, masturbation, incest, etc. Each of these immoral acts is unethical and portends one evil or another. When one's mind is sick, evil intention reigns supreme, and any wrong act is tried out for selfish reasons. Reasoned from the Christian ethics, St. Paul describes the whole situation thus: "Their sense of right and wrong once dulled, they have abandoned all self-control and pursue to excess every kind of uncleanness" (Ephesians 4: 19).

Students and scholars of religion, ethics, theology, social work and psychology seem to have agreed that the soul is an integral part of a human being. The human soul is considered as the link between humans and Supreme Being. In other words, spirituality is derived from a person's possession of the soul. Nigeria's indigenous (ATR) and immigrant (Christianity, Islam) religions argue and profess that the Supreme Being infused souls into human beings. However, the above descriptions are lost when one becomes sexually promiscuous. One's spirituality like other faculties suffers a setback in its growth. The various religious activities like rites and rituals dwindle due to the fact that the promiscuous person is consumed by incessant plans for arriving at sexual pleasure. Aware of the immorality of such acts, there is no gainsaying the fact of inner-spiritual crisis and pricking of conscience. Serenity of the spirit is brought about by feeding it with appropriate edifying materials and not the immoral thoughts or deeds. When the spiritual health is sick, every other faculty risks the same frailty. This type of situation leads to increased indices of immorality in the Nigerian society.

4. Promiscuous Lifestyle in Nigeria: An Ethical Response

Promiscuous lifestyle is an unethical practice and it portends many risks both to the individual and the nation at large. Properly located, promiscuous lifestyle is an index of erosion of ethical, moral and cultural values in the Nigerian society. Be that as it may, such an act of immorality is countered by the ethical application of relevant theories through a plan of actions informed by current scholarship and insights. As earlier discussed, an array of illicit sexual activities abounds in Nigeria and elsewhere, but it suffices to mention adultery, fornication, rape, prostitution, abortion and contraception, as perhaps, some of the frequent sexual activities in the Nigerian society, which account for the recurrent decimal of promiscuous lifestyle in the country. Some of the responses are as follows:

4.1 The Human Body Seen as Spiritual and Ethical Good

John Paul II (1995, 2006) argues that a proper understanding of the human sexuality, from the perspectives of ethics and spirituality of the human body, is the beginning of the fight against illicit sexuality in any society. The ethics of the body implies that human body should be approached with all the sense of innocence, esteem, and respect and should also be treated as a subject other than an object to be exploited or manipulated for a mere sensual interest. The spirituality of the human person impresses upon the notion, those human beings though bound in space and time, they are transcendently oriented. When one acknowledges these notions, there will be a new attitude towards pleasure and cases of sexual promiscuity among the Nigerian population may be reduced. The ethics and spirituality of the human body bring about mutual respect, true love and friendship, gender fraternity, etc.

4.2 The Human Gender as a Gift

The ethical reasoning calls the society's attention to see the human gender that is, seeing sexual characteristics (male or female) as a gift to oneself and to others. Developing such an attitude or capacity deepens one's sense of the sacred and innocence on one hand, and of course, it directs both the psyche and other human senses to healthy interpersonal relationships devoid of sexual exploitation, on the other hand. Again, the human gender as a gift offers friends, peer groups and communities an unrivalled opportunity to share experiences without fear of undue advantage or some other forms of sexual exploitations.

4.3 The Human Person as a Bearer of Godliness

Most religions (Judaism, Christianity, African Traditional Religion, and Islam) uphold the doctrine that God created everything – including men and women. Religion does not end in rites alone; every religion prescribes certain norms for its members, and it follows then, that men and women who profess one faith or another ought to obey God in all matters including life of chastity. One who truly believes and professes any religious faith, will naturally, abstain from occasions of crime, criminality and immorality.

4.4 Sex is Prerogative of Married Couples

The sense of the sacred perceives sex or sexual relation as belonging exclusively to the married couples because of some causal and consequential factors. In every society (literate or illiterate), it is a known fact, that sexual relations are actions within the domain of the married persons for closer union as well as for procreative reasons. The young and the adult persons should understand that mere friendship is not and shall not lead to any sexual relationship for whatever reason. When sexual union is respected and deferred to one's marriage, such persons prove their ethical, moral and cultural integrity and also prevent consequences arising from pre-marital or illicit sex.

4.5 Abortion is a Violation of Human Life

In the phenomenological understanding of the human person, as a being whose existence is unique, and must not be diminished for whatever reasons, it follows that humans are not to be used for any means or supplanted as an end (John Paul II, 1995: 19). Procurement of abortion is an evil and a negation of the right of individual human rights – in this case, a violation of the rights of the individual still in the process of becoming a human being. The study sees procurement of abortion as a violation of human life; the same life that has over the genesis of humanity been cherished, admired, loved and above all, a human life that has been adjudged the nature's greatest gift. Abortion is a violation of the human life based on the following reasons:

First, embryos or foetuses have inalienable rights to existence the same manner that fully grown persons enjoy their freedom in the society. Recognizing the rights of “only of those who enjoy full or incipient autonomy and who emerge from a state of total dependency on others” is an exaltation of inauthentic human freedom which has no value for the integral human development (John Paul II, 1995: 19).

Second, abortion willed as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law: You shall not kill the embryo and shall not cause the new born to perish. Those who procure abortion are fighting against divine positive and natural laws and therefore are immoral by intent and praxis.

Third, the mindset of the abortionist that foetus or embryo is not *biologically alive* lacks sufficient reason; in fact, no human being ever experiences pre-natal autonomous life outside a mother's womb. Every human person undergoes different conceptual stages before gaining autonomy after one's birth (toddler, infancy, adolescence or adult).

Fourth, the unborn are naturally considered vulnerable creatures on the path of becoming full grown human persons together with their natural gifts and missions in life. It is, therefore, selfish and injustice for someone to take it upon himself or herself to end such evolving human lives.

Fifth, ultimately, persons seeking an abortion have been found to smother their conscience in order to kill the unborn child and will never be able to erase what they have done from their memories – no matter the level of their irresponsibility.

Sixth, findings abound in different fields especially in ethics, religion, sociology, philosophy, theology, etc, of testimonies of persons (men or women) who regret having killed their babies through procurement of abortion. 'Pro-life Day' rallies in Nigeria, Kenya, United States of America (USA), Canada, etc – have shown thousands of women carrying posters with inscriptions such as "I regret killing my babies", "I am ashamed for having killed my baby", "I killed my conscience the moment I aborted my baby", among others. No doubt, those expressions validate guilt of conscience and proofs that procurement of abortion is an unethical act as well as a negation of the human existence.

Seventh, the sense of the sacredness of life points at the issue of personhood by positing this bio-ethical question: "When does human life begin?" Certainly, the unborn child is fully a human being and medical science has also given credence through the developmental phases of the child in the womb. As from *eighteen days after conception*: the baby's heart is beating; within *two-and-half months*: the baby can squint, move its tongue, and is sensitive to touch; within *three months*: the baby can suck its thumb and recoil from pain; within *six months*: the baby can respond to light and sound, and may survive outside of the womb; within *seven months*: the baby's nervous system becomes more complex, and from *eight to nine months*: the baby is basically fully developed (John Paul II, 1995; Smith & Kaczor, 2007; Kunhiyop, 2008).

Eighth, the issue of women's rights, that is, mother having the rights to remove a foetus that is growing in her womb as she pleases with her body; value ethics counteracts this argument by stating categorically that the baby does not actually belong to its mother or its father but to its maker: the unborn child belongs (in the most ultimate sense) not to his parents, not to human society in general, nor to government, but to God (Kunhiyop, 2008; Frame, 1988).

Ninth, some parents and promoters of abortion cite the issue of unwanted children as an excuse for procuring abortion, but on the contrary, all reasonable persons will see every child (born or unborn) as wanted human persons whose birth should neither be obstructed nor denied by any human being. However, certain principles apply to indirect or spontaneous abortion, where four conditions must be met by concerned parties before final decision is taken or completed. This is known as the "principle of double effects". The principle of double effects states as follows: a) The act itself must be morally good or at least indifferent; b) the agent may not positively will the bad effect but may permit it. If he or she could attain the good effect without the bad effect, he or she should do so. The bad effect, is sometimes said to be indirectly voluntary; c) the good effect must flow from the action at least as immediately (in the order of causality, though not necessarily in the order of time) as the bad effect. In other words, the good effect must be produced directly by the action, not by the bad effect. Otherwise the agent would be using a bad means to a good end and which is never allowed; and d) the good effect must be sufficiently desirable to compensate for allowing of the bad effect.

4.6 Contraception: Instrument of Hatred of New Life

Contraception is an irresponsible use of freedom which infringes upon human reproduction; the use of contraceptives forecloses reproductive sources to emergence of new human life; and contraception is anti-life phenomenon by the following reasons:

First, contraception violates the dignity of the human person by falsifying the total offering of the self which intercourse is meant to express especially in marriage. By obstructing a natural flow of the process of conception with the use of contraceptives, such persons end up becoming instruments of hatred instead of lovers of new life.

Second, the use of contraceptives is "rooted in a hedonistic mentality that is unwilling to accept responsibility in matters of sexuality; it implies a self-centred concept of freedom that regards procreation as an obstacle to personal self-fulfilment" (John Paul II, 1995: 13).

Third, contraceptives are contrary to natural law. Human beings by their constitution are rational creatures capable of understanding the laws of nature and one of which is that God created reproductive organs for procreation and effective good of married couples. Thus natural law requires that every sexual intercourse must remain open to the transmission of life – it is therefore, most suitable within the domain of marriage.

Fourth, contraceptives encourage promiscuous lifestyle since the knowledge that the risk of pregnancy is low, they contribute to incessant and illegal sexual behaviour among young and married persons in the society.

Fifth, besides ethical implications of the use of contraceptives, one does not rule out negative side effects and also loss of such values as true love, affection, solidarity, altruism, loyalty, togetherness and fidelity. People using contraceptives, most often, are self-centred and resort to self-alienation.

And sixth, sex is a sacred phenomenon and it is intrinsically elevated to the domain of married life both as a self-donating act of love and for procreative purposes. Only persons who are bound in marital union can legitimately exercise genital sexual relationships in openness to the transmission of new lives and mutual enjoyment of the marital union in a profound manner.

5. Conclusion

The promiscuous lifestyle is a reality in Nigeria and it impacts negatively on the national development. This research has argued that the occurrence of the various indices of promiscuous lifestyle is a key indicator of the meteoric rise of the problem both in the Nigerian society and elsewhere. This paper approached the phenomenon from an ethical perspective by explaining its root causes in the country. Promiscuous lifestyle in the country, like any ethical problem, has spread its verminous tentacles to nearly all the substrata of the national life, without any spared space.

Promiscuous lifestyle is a multifaceted phenomenon; however, this researcher after field works, identified adultery and fornication, rape and prostitution, contraception and abortion, and pornography and incest, as some of frequent acts of promiscuity in the Nigerian society. The eclipse of the sense of the sacred and false theories of morality as some of the causes of the phenomenon in Nigeria; the study identifies the debasement of self-esteem, psychological trauma, physical health hazards, and mental and spiritual problems as some of the consequences of promiscuous lifestyle. This researcher having identified some of the causes and consequences of promiscuous lifestyle in Nigeria also applied some ethical principles to the problem with the aim of curbing the malaise from the nation's moral space.

At the end, this work argues that unless the Nigerians acknowledge the recurrent decimal of promiscuous lifestyle; fight against its causes with the attendant consequences; and apply the ethical recommendations (responses) to the phenomenal malaise, the Nigerian society faces ominous future and ethical crisis.

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