



COMPLEXITIES OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND VALUES SYSTEM: IMPLICATION FOR COUNSELLING

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the Complexities of Sexual Orientation and Values System with particular focus on religious, technological and traditional values. Sexual orientation is a person's mental, emotional, physical and sexual attraction to a particular gender. This often times is shaped or influenced by values system which is frequently understood as the ordering and prioritizing of a self-values that individuals or a society holds important or meaningful. Sexual orientation is a very complex and controversial issue and some individuals may feel uncomfortable talking about it. It is important to note that, individuals must create an environment full of respect and understanding for all people and that their personal views in terms of religious, technological and traditional values cannot prevent them from doing this. Sexual orientation is not about moral judgement, but about treating people equally, fairly and respecting other people's right to engage in mutually consensual relationship of their choice, as afforded them by the law. Therefore, this paper examined the complexities of sexual orientation in respect to religious, technological and traditional values: Implication for counselling.

INTRODUCTION

Firstly, marriage is the union of a man and woman as husband and wife. It is the foundation for a home and family, the bedrock of every society. The joining together of a man and woman in this special union has legal, social and spiritual importance and it forms the basis for a family (Likita, 2006). Every man or woman you see in the street, in an office or in the government, is surely from a home where he or she is a member of a family and a family is formed through marriage.

The mode of entering into marriage and its purposes may differ from one culture to another or from one person to another but the origin is God. However, it is worthy of note that marriage is made up of people who understand themselves and those who go into it have various levels of sexual orientation and values system.

Sexual orientation is about who you are attracted to and want to have relationship with or about who you feel drawn to romantically, emotionally and sexually.

It is different from gender identity. Gender identity is not about who you are attracted to, but about who you are (male or female). Also, it refers to our attitudes and commitment towards our sexual life. How we feel, think and act towards our sexuality and that of our love one(s). Furthermore, sexual orientation is an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to female or male or both (American Psychology Association, 2024).

However, according to Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA, 2024) there are a bunch of identities associated with sexual orientation:

- People who are attracted to a different gender (women who are attracted to men and vice versa) often call themselves straight or heterosexual.
- People who are attracted to people of the same gender often call themselves gay or homosexual. Gay women may prefer the term lesbian.

People whose attractions span across many different identities (male, female, transgender etc) may call themselves pansexual or queer.

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- People who are unsure about their sexual orientation may call themselves questioning or curious.
- People who don't experience any sexual attraction for anyone often call themselves asexual.

A value system frequently understood as the ordering and prioritization of a set of values that an individual or a society holds important or meaningful. Value system is a set of beliefs and attitudes that guide a person's actions and decisions and reflect their sense of right and wrong (Wikipedia, 2024). It is also, refers to as the principles of right and wrong that are accepted by individuals or social group (vocabulary.com, 2024). People develop their values system over a period of time, based on their experiences, family, friends, and culture. They can be moral, doctrinal, ideological, social, cultural or aesthetic. Values system is important in terms of providing a regulation role. For instance, regulation role can include assuring social cohesion to understand people's behaviour and to build performance indicators among individual's level of sexual orientation.

Therefore, the complexities of individuals, intended couples and married couple sexual orientation cannot be over emphasized. Complexity here, means "the quality of being intricate and compounded. The sexual orientation of people is complex and compounded and so for the purpose of this paper, we will narrow the write up to sexual orientation with particular reference to values systems such as religious, technological and traditional values.

Sexual orientation and religious values

Religion and spirituality give individuals the moral code or value system from which they function on daily basis. Since sexual behaviour is not just physical, like drinking a glass of water, your moral code is an active part of the sexual experience. Religion and spirituality can influence how people experience their sexuality. According to Wright (2010) many religions have teachings that prohibit certain sexual thoughts and behaviours, especially outside of monogamous heterosexual marriage. These can leave us with negative feelings about our bodies and sexuality. If people grow up in a religion in which spiritual goodness is associated with celibacy or the denial of sexual feelings, they may believe that sexuality and spirituality are unconnected. Some of us leave our religion of origin because of the sexual prohibitions. Some people seek liberal congregations within their own denominations, while others seek denominations that are more sex affirming. Our sense of spirituality may exist within an organized religion or separate from it. Spirituality can include tapping into one's deepest self, creating a sacred bond with a friend or lover, developing a personal relationship with the divine or higher power.

Some people focus on unifying sexuality and spirituality finding the integration of body, mind and spirit. Our bodies and sex can be sacred. Wright (2010) affirms that a recent study found that women in relationships with some degree of commitment connect sexuality with spirituality. This connection is facilitated by self-esteem, intense sensuality, being in love, and sharing deep feelings. Some women find wisdom and strength in connecting sexually with a partner and divine feminine energy. Others turn to tantra, an eastern, spiritual philosophy, to explore sexual practices that focus on the interconnectedness of life. By investigating sensations of touch and breathing, creating rituals, and paying attention to subtle energies, they create sacred connection with their partner(s) and higher power(s).

A recent survey reveals that men and women who are religious are more likely to have less permissive sexual attitudes, and they are influence by religion more than any other variable when it comes to their sexual choice (Wade, 2002). Moreso, individuals who attend religious services ore often are less likely to have a positive view of extramarital sexual relationships. Those with higher levels of religious commitment and who regularly attend religious services are much less likely to engage in premarital sex or extramarital affairs or to have multiple sexual partners. This to a larger extent confirms that religious values influence our sexual orientation and regulate our sexual attitude(s).

Religion can have a significant impact on attitudes towards sexual orientation with the intensity of religious belief being more important than the specific teachings of a region. In general, people who are highly religious are less accepting of homosexuality than those who are less religious.

According to Schwab (2024) it is no secret that the relationship between religion and sexual orientation has been contentious. For many conservative religious people sex may be seen as a dirty, sinful act that should only be engaged within the confines of heterosexual marriage. While there are a few religious that are more open-minded about sex orientation and the vast majority still view it as a taboo subject.

Schwab (2024) maintained that some religious, such as Christianity, views sex as a sacred act that should be reserved for marriage between a man and a woman, while others, such as Hinduism, sees it as a natural and normal part of life. Still others, such as Islam, have a more complex view of sexual orientation, viewing it as both a natural and normal part of life but also something that should be used for procreation between husband and wife in order to avoid sin.

Sexual orientation and technological values

Technology use has proliferated in family and sexual life. It has revolutionized our lives. From free text to dating and hook-up apps, technology and specifically smart phones, are transforming the dynamics of our sexuality in contemporary culture (Durham University, 2019). From an evolutionary stand point, life is about surviving and passing on genes and behaviours that allow for the next generation to experience life. So those who are more attentive, present, empathic, and sensitive with their partners will receive the positive reinforcements of intimacy and lasting love, which ultimately benefits the survival of their offspring. All of those empathic traits are jeopardized by a technological environment that demands us to disconnect from our present surrounding; love ones included.

However, technologies are central to contemporary romantic relationships, they are also a cause of stress and tension. These tensions can be subtle and complex, but have the potential to negatively impact on relationships if they are not dealt with. Daniel (2015) quoting Albert Einstein (n.d) asserted that "when technology surpasses human interaction I fear, we will have a generation of idiots". There is no way marriage and sex life will be enjoyed when you have a bunch of idiots involving in it. Most persons or couples give a larger part of their time to technological interference thereby relegating their love one to sexual stress and storm.

Here are three technological traps that are compromising your love and sexual life.

(1) Email, text, and social media notifications: Notification form your texts, emails, and social media will pull you away from human connection, and from the people that rely on you most. It is easy to see how we become dependent on the title dings and buzzes, because they usually signal that someone likes us, agrees with us, or in some way wants to be connected with us. But connection offered in the digital realm is a cheap and unfulfilling proxy compared to the amazing person who has signed up to be your life partner, and also to your children and friends.

(2) Porn: Porn is as much a part of the new wave of technology as any other industry. Through technology, men now have access to sexual content from their smartphones and laptops at every hour of the day. Porn is fast, easy, accessible, and it packs a punch of feel good chemicals unrivaled by most drugs known to man. But through its ease and accessibility, modern men are finding conflicts between porn and their lovers as well as their sexual life generally. Porn contradicts those relationship cornerstones and instead imposes in illusion that sexual gratification is evanescent and has no strings attached. Today, it is estimated that over 500,000 divorces a year are attributed to porn habits (Daniel, 2015). After taking a closer look at the issue, that figure is not at all surprising because the habit of porn is the opposite of

the habits required for long-term emotional and sexual connection with your spouse.

(3) Pharmaceutical technology: This has sabotaged our love and sexual orientation with the illusion that change can be bought and swallowed. It is inarguable that sexual connection is important to any relationship, to how does pharmaceutical technology interfere with it. The main components for an erotic and satisfying sexual experience are emotional connection and fully functional sexual organs.

Pharmaceutical technology covers the underlying issues behind sexual dysfunctions and instead promises to cure them with a magic pill. That pill has a side effect and it can only offer diminishing returns after your body gets use to it. A burning and passionate sex life requires a plenitude of sex hormones, and the fizzling of medication prescription. Our bodies require an ample substrate of nutrients and minerals as well as body movements in order to produce the sex hormones and healthy tissue systems require for sexual performance.

Sexual orientation and traditional values:

Traditional values are attitudes, beliefs and actions that are standards of behaviors by which society expects its members to abide. They guide human behaviour in interpersonal, group and intergroup communications and relationships. Traditional value influence spheres of social activity specifically sexual life and orientation of the people. In Africa, as elsewhere, values are dynamic and continuously interact with their internal and external environment that brings about a sense of identity, dignity, continuity, security and separation. This means that traditional values can either keep people together or apart even in our sexual life.

Many scholars are of the opinion that sexual orientation is at least partly influence by traditional norms, so that individuals are more likely to identify as heterosexual or homosexual and attracted to their same sex or opposite sex depending on the traditional perspectives of sexual orientation into which they are socialized as they group up. (University of Minnesota, 2015). No matter what the religion, there are strict rules about sex and sexual orientation. For instance, many religious believe that premarital sex is a sin, and that sex outside of marriage is an even bigger sin. There are also usually strict rules about who you can have sex with. For instance, many major religious forbid same-sex or same-gendered relationships.

The general view remains that African traditional practices have affected and continue to affect sexuality and health of women negatively and increased their susceptibility to certain diseases and vulnerability to male subordination (Maluleke, 2015). While acknowledge this fact, it is important to note that some African traditional practices are harmful. Practices such as female genital circumcision among others to a greater extent impact negatively on individual's sexual orientation.

Christian families today are confused as to what tradition they are to hold unto especially in Africa. The Christian couple found themselves in three different traditions that are appealing to them. These are the African tradition which is the background, the European tradition which is termed as civilization and the Biblical tradition which is seen as a duty to God. (Likita, 2006). The African norms in sex and marriages are not the same with that of the Europeans. What is acceptable in Africa may not be acceptable in Europe and vice versa. For instance, in Europe, the society accepts divorce and remarriage and if one is not satisfied, one can still change spouse further. But polygamy is not allowed. While in Africa, especially in Nigeria, one can have many sex partners or wives as one wish at the same time.

The Biblical tradition state that marriage must be one-man, one-wife, and it is meant for a lifetime. One is not allowed to divorce her husband or wife. Sexual relationship is limited to those who are married (a wife and a husband). In this direction, God has instructed married couple to remain committed for the consummation of their marital vows in love, in submissiveness and to leave their bed undefiled.

Implication for counselling

Counsellors are expected to provide adequate guidance and counselling to people so as to develop in themselves confidence and the effective skills of understanding and managing the complexities of sexual orientation (Denwigwe, Ogechukwudu and Unimna, 2024).

They should provide adequate support to intended couples in terms of premarital counselling so as to navigate successfully through the feeling storm that may come their way. Today's counsellors and indeed counselling profession have to purposefully, diligently appropriately and realistically plan for and respond to the realities of the complexities of sexual orientation in respect to religious, technological and traditional values (Unimna, Arop & Ameh, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Although sexual orientation is usually set early in life, and one start to become aware of who he/she is attracted to at a very young age. This does not mean that he/she had sexual feelings, but could identify people he/she found attractive or like. Research shows that sexual orientation is likely caused partly by biological factors that start before birth. It is a natural part of who you are, it is not a choice. Your sexual orientation can change over your life-time.

RECOMMENDATION

The Counsellors must let the individuals know that if they want to enhance emotional connection and improve their sexual orientation, with their spouses and keep the benefits of technology, they must take a step today and turn off all notifications, most of the time. This way they are free to check whatever they

need on their time, in ways, they are 100% present and undistracted from your their one(s).

Furthermore, if you want to enhance your sexual life with your living and breathing spouse, you get the opportunity to make sacrifices for your relationship. Give up porn in itself can seem a daunting challenge, but if you focus more on what you fill your time with, the transition to porn- free living can be smooth and entirely enjoyable.

Also, if you want to maintain and grow a deep sexual connection with your partner, put the prescription pills down and pick up foods and exercises that promote testosterone production. Testosterone booting food include nuts, cheese, eggs, spinach, greens, berries of all types, fish and red meat. Exercises that promote testosterone production include muscle-ups, pull-ups, jump squats, sprints squat and bench presses.

In addition, since we have three cultures/traditions that are fascinating to people in Nigeria, one can only help himself by synthesizing between religion and tradition or culture. Many at times, the western tradition is mixed with Christianity and one may accept it as inspired word of God. For instance, the wearing of wedding gown and the exchange of rings is misunderstood by many to be a duty to God. God says take your spouse to the altar, but culture/tradition says wear a particular dress and carry ring to the altar.

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