NIGERIAN MUSLIM YOUTH AND SOCIAL VICES: ISLAMIC WAY FORWARD

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Abstract
This paper critically examined the inclusion of Nigerian Muslim youth in relation to social vices in the present time. However, it aimed to examine the causes and effects of social vices and also to provide an Islamic way forward. The problems identified are the parental gap and cultural shift. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivational theories were adopted. The data were gathered through secondary sources and personal observations, while the data were critically, narratively, and descriptively analyzed. The findings showed some factors responsible for the involvement of Muslim youth in social vices such as poverty, unemployment, corruption, and others. The work created awareness of the evil of social vices and recommended that mosques should have standard rehabilitation centers, organize skill acquisition periodically, and that parents should give priority to the upbringing of their children.

Keywords: Islam, Youth, and social vices

Introduction
Islam literally means peace, surrender, or submission. Technically, it is the act of submitting to the will and commandments of Allah outrightly, without objection. While Muslim youth are considered one of the essential components of Islam, without which the future of the said religion is in jeopardy. In other words, social vices are the immoral acts identified as inimical to moral values, individuals, and society at large. However, Nigeria as a country accommodates different ethnic groups and religions. But it is in no way supports or encourages indulgence of her youth in social vices, rather, it promotes moral values and the reasons why they must be upheld by the youth.

Furthermore, Islam, as a religion, places youth on a sensitive position and, at the same time warns against anything that could be instrumental to their destruction. That is why history cannot forget the past outstanding Muslim youth who would continue to have a positive impact on the lives of contemporary youth. Also, the social vices that will be examined in this

paper are the bad behaviors Islam had already condemned and discouraged believers from indulging in them such as gambling, drug abuse, fornication, examination malpractice, and among others through Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). It is however, disheartening that today, Muslim youth are seen engaging in these vices, which are contradictory to the teachings of Qur'an and Sunnah. Be that as it may, this paper will give the general overview of youth, social vices, causes, consequences, and Islamic way forward.

Statement of the Problem

The problem identified in this work is the parental gap, cultural shift, and urbanization in the sense that some of the parents are not working together with their partners in upbringing their children. This may be as a result of their own negligence or children's attitudes. Also, cultural shift and urbanization mentioned here have to do with the loss of traditional support systems and counselling towards youth. This is because, the extended family structures and communal lives have been eroded by the rapid urbanization in Nigeria. Thereafter, different justifications are being given to the vices by youth such as stress relief, inspiration, quick rich, and among others. Though much has been said by the scholars of different background in respect of social vices, together with the efforts of Islamic organizations and mosques, but the narrative still remains the same. Hence, the present study aims at proffering solutions to the identified problem. While the objectives set to achieve are:

1. To analyze the factors responsible for social vices
2. To explain the major social vices affecting Nigerian Muslim youth
3. To evaluate the effects of these vices on individuals, family, and society
4. To examine the roles of Islamic organizations in addressing these vices among the Muslim youth
5. To recommend Islamic oriented solutions to curbing these vices among Nigerian Muslim youths.

Research Methodology

The method through which the data is gathered was the researchers' personal observations regarding the factors responsible for the Muslim youth involvement in social vices. This is because, the researchers took their time to observe and study the vices. Also, secondary sources like textbooks, journals, articles, and other relevant materials were adopted by the researcher. Additionally, Qur'anic verses and Prophetic traditions (*Ahadith*) were all used.

The data was however, analyzed critically, narratively, and descriptively. This is because, the researchers critically examined the factors responsible for these vices and their consequences among the Muslim youth in Nigeria. Additionally, the researchers, also narrated what is obtainable in the Qur'an, Hadith, opinions of scholars, Arab's ways of live before the advent of Islam, and modern approaches to the study of social vices among the Muslim youth in Nigeria, and Islamic way forward.

Theoretical Framework

According to Kivunja (2018), researchers conduct theoretical reviews in order to rely on the ideas of experts in the subject area and at the same time, get their own data analysis and interpretation of findings enriched. So, the theories adopted in this work are Intrinsic and Extrinsic Theory of Motivation:

i. Intrinsic Theory of Motivation: This is a psychological theory which posits that human beings engage in certain activities because they found it interesting and satisfying without any external forces. It is also known as self-driven theory which is characterized by feelings of enjoyment, interest, and satisfaction found in the act itself (Ryan & Deci, 2020). However, it is important to state that the theory is attributed to Edward Deci who formed it in 1970s.

The theory however connotes three basic psychological needs of human beings which are; autonomy, competence, and relatedness. It should be noted that when these needs are fulfilled, the motivation dragging human to these vices increases. That is even the reason why it is difficult for the perpetrators of these vices to desist easily because, it is a self-driven theory.

It is important to admit at this juncture, that the theory is relevant to the subject matter which is the Nigerian Muslim youth regarding their indulgence in social vices. This is because, some of them found themselves attached to these vices without being influenced by anybody. But because they claimed to be exposed, educated, or independent.

ii. Extrinsic Theory of Motivation: The theory posits that individuals carry out some actions as a result of the external factors, be it reward or pressures contrary to personal interest or the satisfaction derived therein. It is an externally driven theory courtesy of the factors like peer group, grades, money, praise, women, and among others, which serve as incentives (Ryan & Deci, 2020). It should be noted that the theory is also known as controlled motivation which is performed due to the reward or punishment. The theory however came into existence in 1950s courtesy of B.F. Skinner.

It is worthy of mentioning that the theory seems to capture the content of this paper totally. This is because, majority of the Muslim youth in Nigeria who are seen today to be the perpetrators of these vices engaged as a result of the aforementioned factors. And that is why it is a challenge for some of them to retract their ways while remembering the benefits attached to it or obstacles. So, through the theories adopted by the researchers, it is deduced that the causes of the social vices could be firstly traced to the individuals engaging in these acts, then, the external factors.

Conceptual Framework

According to Mohammed (2018), the word youth is a term, which connotes different meanings all over the world, but it is believed to be a period between an adolescent stage and adulthood. Therefore, in the view of Nigeria National Youth Policy, it is an individual with the ages between 18-35years. In the contrary opinions, the United Nation describes anyone within the age 15-24years as youth, while the Common Wealth of Nations recognizes those between 16-29years as youth.

Muslim youth is an individual between 18-40years and this is evidenced in Q46:15 where Allah says:

> And we have enjoined man to be good to his parents. His mother carried him with travail upon travail. And his pregnancy and weaning covered thirty months until

> when he is matured and reaches forty years, he says, my Lord, grant me that I offer gratitude for the favor you have bestowed on me and my parents, and I do righteous deeds that you are pleased with. And grant for my benefit goodness in my progeny. Of course, I repent to you and truly I am one of those who submit to you.

It is deduced from the above verse that the youth in Islam is an individual between age forty and above. This means that the definitions quoted above by various scholars are not in tandem with the one given by the Qur'an as far as Islam is concerned. But they can still be used in western approaches to the meaning of youth.

However, the Arabic word used for youth in the Qur'an is *Fata,* which appeared in fourteen places using four different words. The word *Fata* was used in respect of Prophet Yusuf (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when the women in the city of Egypt said to the wife of the Aziz:

"And women in the city said, the wife of the governor is seducing her youthful slave. The love for him has arrested her. Surely, we see her in open error". (Q12:30)

Also, *Fatayaan* was used to mean two young men who happened to enter prison with Prophet Yusuf. Allah says:

And two men entered the prison with him. (Q12:36)

Allah uses *Fityatu* which means the youth who isolated themselves to the cave. This is however mentioned in Q18:10:

When the young men took refuge in the Cave and said, our Lord, bless us with mercy from your own and provide us with guidance in our affairs.

Lastly, the word youth is used as *Fityatun* and it can be found in Q18:13:

"We narrate to you their story with truth. They were young men who believed in their Lord and we increased them in guidance".

The quoted verses are some of the places in the Qur'an where the term youth is employed with various connotations but mean the same thing (Mohammed, 2018).

The word can also be seen in the *Ahadith* of the Prophet as *Shabun*, singular of *Shabab* especially when he was addressing the Muslim youth on the essence of marriage for those who have the means, but if reverse is the case, they should fast in lieu in order to protect themselves from Zina (fornication). Also, the Prophet was categorical by mentioning the youth amongst the seven people Allah will specially honor under His shade on the day where there won't be any except that of His.

Uthaymeen (2011), opined that youthful age is a time of great change and hope for the future. It could be the happiest and most productive time of a person's life, yet this stage of development can also be fraught with numerous psychological, sociological, and spiritual crises. This is because, youth of any given society depict the future of their nation, so their

problems and troubles should be the concern of everyone around them, and solutions to these challenges should be practical and concrete. He stressed further and grouped youth into three categories concluding that the first category is the symbols, prosperity, the pride of Islam. They are; the righteous youth, corrupt youth, and confused youth

The second category are regarded as calamity to themselves and catastrophe to their society. This is because, they have deviated from the dictates of Islam and behaviorally reckless. As such, they bring this *Ummah* (Islam) to the lowest of the low by obstructing its glory and honor. While the last category are the uncertain and irresolute individuals who are at a crossroad. They can however free themselves from this confusion, but must concentrate on learning the orthodox Islamic creed and ready to uphold Qur'an and Sunnah to the fullest (Uthaymeen, 2011).

Social vices in the view of (Makinde et al., 2020) are the acts believed to be contradictory to the societal norms and moral values. These vices however connote bad traits, unethical behaviors, and immoral acts condemned by the societal standards resulting from moral decadence.

In the same vein, (Sekh et al., 2020) defined social vices as the practices, behaviors, or habits generally regarded as immoral, sinful, taboo, rude, criminal, or degrading in the community. They further highlighted the factors responsible for these vices such as poverty, peer influence, unemployment, persistent strike action, broken home, bad behaviors from teachers, and among others.

It is worthy of mentioning that the factors mentioned above are the remote cause for social vices among the Muslim youth in Nigeria, but at the same the person indulging in them should also be held responsible. This is because, poverty and unemployment are not an excuse for the loss of integrity based on the personal experiences. In the sense that, there are a lot of people who are poor and unemployed, but still maintain their integrity by protecting themselves from these vices. While on the other hand, broken home and some parents nonchalant attitude towards their children are seen as the major factors responsible for the involvement of youth in social vices especially when the case of divorce is recorded.

That however made some men abandon their children indulged in these vices and attribute them to the mother even while they are still together, which is not fair. Also, some teachers' behaviors responsible for the involvement of desperate students in examination malpractice. In a way that some would be requesting for money from the student in lieu of good grading, which is harmful to the educational policy of a given country. This act is known as sorting in Nigerian tertiary institutions, while by extension to the secondary schools. Be that as it may, there is also a major factor called depression, which is instrumental to these vices based on ethnographical survey. Because, there is no culture or religion that support the vices selected in this paper.

Common Social Vices Among Muslim Youth in Nigeria

The term social is an English word, which means relating to the society, while vice is a Latin word which connotes defect or failing according to (Sekh et al., 2020). Therefore, social vices are the extremely bad habits constituting nuisance to the society. (Apase and Yawe, 2019) opined that social vices are fast becoming national and global trends cutting across ethnic groups,

races, and world religions. However, the rising tide among the Muslim youth in Nigeria is mostly lack of supervision from the instance of parents together with youthful exuberant.
It should be mentioned that the vices are not limited to a particular country or age. But the scope of this research is Nigerian Muslim youth. This means that it can be seen in other countries as well and also from the adult and old ones. So, the social vices selected for this paper are; drug abuse, cultism, examination malpractice, gambling, cyber-crime, political thuggery, and indecent dressing.

1. Drug Abuse according to (Alhassan, 2023) is any drugs, which when taken is either harmful or threatens to harm the physical or mental health, social well-being of individuals in particular, or society at large, which is however considered as illegal. In the same vein (Abdullahi, 2009) stated that drug abuse is the use of drugs to the level at which the health and social function of individual are being jeopardized. Also, it is an unlawful overdose in the use of drugs or arbitrary overdependence on one particular drug without or with a prior medical prescription from qualified pharmacist.

In the view of (Okafor, 2020), a person who allows him/herself to be controlled by a psychoactive substance is called a "drug abuser". He however, brings forth a condition called neurological functions and his/her moods, perception, consciousness and energy level change and the drugs can take over his/her normal functioning and well-being. While the negligent use of any substance, mostly the ones that have effects on one's consciousness like alcohol, cocaine, codeine and methamphetamines result to discomfort and malfunction. The following are some of the drugs being misused and abused by the Muslim youth. They are; stimulants, hallucinogens, sedatives, miscellaneous and tranquilizers.

It is important to state that drug abuse is one of the most rampant social vice among the Muslim youth in Nigeria. That is however part of the reasons why majority of the mad persons roaming around the streets are youth irrespective of their religion. This is because, the rationale behind their abuse of these drugs differs. Some take it under the platform of fun or in order to boost their energy, while some take it as an antidote to depression. Be that as it may, Islam prohibits all the intoxicant substances because they are injurious and harmful to the mental health of human, which is one core objective of Shari'ah (Islamic law).

2. Cultism is a group of individuals who completely conceal their rules, names, members, signs, and password for outsiders. They usually take oath of secrecy and often threatened of severe punishment in case of violation. Their rituals however consist swearing by deity, blood covenant, scarification, blindfolding, sacrifices, invocation of spirits, and other procedures witnessed only by members whose main reason could be to abolish convention, revive age long rivalry, and amongst others (Makinde et al., 2020)

Cultism is also one of the vices that is inimical to cultists' lives and the masses, because of the souls, rules and regulations involved. It is however, common among the students in tertiary institutions, and by extension secondary schools. Prior to this era, Muslim youth did not get involved in cultism as it is being experienced today, but that does not mean there was none. Though, it may be because of the verse that instructed them to always be in the company of

good people or because the need was not necessary then compared to this era. Also, it should be stated that adult too is involved in the cult, but the focus is Muslim youth.

3. Examination Malpractice is an unacceptable or unlawful behavior of someone who violates the examination rules at the time when he is being subjected to test of knowledge (Sekh et al., 2020). Also, it is a means through which the examination ethics and standard are being jeopardized either by the students or the examiners.

It is worthy of admitting that examination malpractice is one of the foremost social vices, which cut across almost all the educational institutions at all level in Nigeria. At the secondary level, it is now become a system of some schools, that whenever they are having external exams, they will instruct the student to pay certain amount of money allocated for malpractice. In other words, any student who fails to comply might face the consequence during the examination. While in tertiary institutions, sorting is the order of the day whereby students offer money to some lecturers in lieu of their grades. At times, lecturers might even be the ones to call the students for sorting.

It is paramount to state that Muslim youth are also involved in malpractice especially in Nigeria institutions, despite the fact that they have been warned by the Prophet, who is reported to have said; whoever cheats is not one of the Muslims. This means that Islam of a Muslim found cheating during the examination is questionable. Islam also forbids malpractice because it kills intelligence and leads to civil wrong.

4. Gambling is the act of risking money or valuable properties on uncertainty with the intention of winning more in return. The outcome is always based on chance or luck, and at the same time unpredictable. This includes betting, lotteries, card game, sports betting, online games of chance, and amongst others.

   Gambling is generally prohibited in the world religions because it encourages greedy, and unlawful accumulation of wealth. Also, it creates enmity among the people. It is however pathetic that today some Muslim youth are fond of gambling at different locations even during the month of Ramadan. The month that must be held by all Muslim with total respect and reverence. Also, some have become bankrupt as a result of gambling.

5. Cybercrime is the use of phone or computer as an instrument in order to dupe or decoy others electronically. Also, it is a criminal activity committed using a computer illegally to access, transmit, or manipulate data. The crime includes social engineering, cyber stalking, identify theft, attacks, illegal content, exploit kits, Yahoo, and online scams. It is however important to note that in Nigeria, youth have taken cybercrime to another level such as Yahoo+ (a situation whereby local charms are used to hypnotize clients).

Furthermore, there are various ways through which people perpetrate this evil depending on the perpetrator and victim. Again, it is unanimously agreed that the crime stands rejected by the people. This is because those who engaged in it are not confident of their action, and also restless whenever they come across task force or military personnel. Cybercrime is instrumental to the violation of human right, which Islam and other religions tend to prevent.

6. Political Thuggery is the prepared violence, blackmail, and pressure against a political rival in order to achieve a self-centered political goal. The use of thuggery in politics since independence has become widespread till the present time. Also, it is an act of violence aimed at compelling opponents to drop their political aspiration or to snatch ballot boxes (Sekh et al., 2020).

Political thuggery is one of the obstacles of politics whereby the life of an aspirant is being threatened by thugs. This evil now makes politics difficult for people because they believed their life is not saved the moment their ambition is declared. It is pertinent to state that some politicians have their standby thugs used in winning their elections and they are being properly treated. Be that as it may, Muslim youth are also seen as agent of thuggery used in order to threaten others. Islam however prohibits any form of violence and encourages free and fair election irrespective of the parties involved.

7. Indecent Dressing is a way of putting on an outfit considered to be socially, culturally, morally, and religiously inappropriate because it reveals human nakedness. Also, it is a dress, which does not conform with the accepted standards of modesty within a given community and religion.

The standard upon which indecent dressing is established is different from one locality to others. This is because, western culture might not see anything bad in it. But Islam and African communities highly emphasize on modesty and reason why people should shun indecent dressing. This social vice is mostly common among female to the extent that religious identity of an individual is difficult to determine while dressing indecently. Male too are also inclusive but in few cases. It is unfortunate that some Muslim youth are also dressing abnormally at the detriment of Islamic standard way of dressing.

Islamic Way Forward

Having examined the most common social vices amongst the Muslim youth in Nigeria, it is now paramount at this juncture to look at the Islamic way out from these vices. This is because, the vices must be revisited and addressed. The following are ways through which the vices mentioned can be prevented:

1. Parental Guidance

Islam charges Muslim parents to take a good care of their wards and also to bring them up in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah. This is because child is considered to be a trust and should not be left unguided. A typical example could be seen in the life of Prophet Lukman who consistently admonished his child on the importance of upholding moral values. Therefore, parents should take method used by the pious predecessors in upbringing their children in order to fill the said parental gap. Allah says in Q66:6:

"O you who believe, protect yourselves and your families from a fire, the fuel of which is human being and stones"

2. Religious and Moral Teachings

Muslim youth should be given a special section purposely on religious and moral talks and the reason why they should uphold moral values. The parents too should teach their children morals couple with religious ethics. The Prophet is reported to have said everybody is shepherd and will be questioned about his/her subject.

3. Law Enforcement

Muslim community should reinstate the teachings deduced from Q3:104 where a group of people would be charged to minimize evil and maximize good. This group is called *Hisbah* and it is being adopted in Kano state as an institution charged to curb social vices. Other states should try and follow the pattern. Also, the responsibility is not one person's work but every rational human being based on what the Prophet said in respect of effecting change in the society. While the group should subject anybody found wanting to punishment irrespective of his/her background.

4. Community Engagement

Muslim youth must be made to participate in community services such as war against drugs, prostitution, examination malpractice, and among others. So, as to serve as barrier for their engagement in social vices and also to send signal to other youth already engaged in those vices. They should also be asked to lead people in prayers and public lectures in their various mosques in order to feel the sense of belonging. It must be stated that majority of Muslim youth are not properly engaged in their communities, and for that, felt depressed and isolated. Allah says in Q9:119:

"O you who believe, fear Allah, and be in the company of the truthful people"

5. Exemplary Leader

Muslim communities should adopt any youth who happens to be a victim of social vices. The adoption mentioned here is a form of moral talks, counselling, and supervision. The counselling must however come from the instance of men of integrity. These people should also serve as role model, and whoever that is following the footstep of Prophet Muhammad is qualified to be copied. Allah says in Q33:21:

"Indeed, there is a model for you in the Messenger of Allah, for the one who has hope in meeting Allah, and last day, and remembers Allah profusely".

6. Early Marriage

Muslim youth should be encouraged to marry early so as to protect them from fornication. This is because some youths are not ready for marriage, but still can't hold their sexual urge. While others are financially, medically, socially, and physically fit, but still did not marry as early as possible based on the reasons best known to them. The latter need to be educated on the importance of marrying early by the Muslim communities, while the former should be

reminded of the evils attached to fornication. The Prophet is reported to have addressed the Muslim youth that whoever sees himself capable of marriage should marry.

7. Spirit of Hardworking

Islam emphasizes more on hardworking and always encourages its adherents to work harder so as to gain unprecedented achievements. It however pathetic that despite the encouragement, Muslim youth are still found in examination malpractice. Therefore, Muslims are advised to put in their best and be optimistic, because laziness is not an attribute of Muslim. Allah says in Q29:69:

"And those who strive in our way, we will surely guide them unto our paths, and indeed Allah is with righteous people".

8. Reliance (*Tawakul*)

Muslim youth should be taught the significance of *Tawakul* and the reason why they should always rely on Allah either in adversity or prosperity. This is because it has been designed by Allah that everybody would be subjected to trial, and if it comes, Muslim should not be seen taking intoxicant substances as a means of taking away the sorrow, but rather rely on Allah.

"And whoever places his trust in Allah, He is sufficient for him". (Q65:3)

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations for the Muslims in specific and Nigerians at large:

1. That mosques should establish rehabilitation centers
2. That mosques should be organizing skills acquisition for the youth periodically
3. That there must always be an awareness campaigns against social vices
4. That the education being acquired by the youth be based on ethics and moral values
5. That there must be a collaboration among the Muslim communities
6. That parents should devote their time for the upbringing of their children.

Conclusion

The vices discussed in this work are the ones common among the Muslim youth in Nigeria. Though, they are not the only people engaged in these vices, but the scope is Nigerian Muslim youth. Also, the vices are not limited to Islam or Nigeria alone, but cut across the world irrespective of age, religion, status, background, and, color. Islam as a religion did not create any chance for its youth to move closer to these vices talk less of engaging in them. So, the person perpetrating these evils should be the one to be blamed not his religion. It is however, observed from the findings that the social vices mentioned above did not only affect Muslim youth, but also adult. Therefore, the parental gap identified as one of the gaps in this research must be filled by the affected parents in order to disengage the youth from social vices as being witnessed today.

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