IJAAR PUBLISHING®

International Journal of Religion and Societal Development
July, 2024 | www.ijaar.org/ijrsd

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN THE SENSITIZATION AGAINST SOCIAL VICES: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

Religious institution is an agent of socialization responsible for molding social behaviour and providing informal control through preaching and sensitization of its members and the public. However, there is an increase in moral decadence, delinquency, and crime in Nigeria despite the existence of religious organizations. Hence this paper reviewed the role of religious organizations especially the church in their sensitization against social vices in Nigeria. The objectives of the paper includes to examine the prevalence of social vices as mitigated by religious organizations in Nigeria, identify the mechanisms used by religious organisation in their sensitization against social vices in Nigeria and to bring to light the challenges faced by religious organizations in the performance of their role(s) as agents of socialization. The paper adopted secondary sources of data collections and utilized Social Learning Theory to buttress the review. The paper revealed that religious organizations play significant and multifaceted roles in sensitizing against social vices in Nigeria, as their influence extends across various domains, including moral education, community outreach, advocacy, and collaboration with government and non-governmental entities. The paper likewise revealed cultism, ritual killing for money, indecent dressing, examination malpractice, cybercrime,

Arokoyo, E. J., Atoyebi, T. A., Yunusa, E. & Mejiyan, F. Y. (2024). The Role of Religious Organizations in the Sensitization against Social Vices: A Literature Review. *International Journal of Religion and Societal Development*. 1-22. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.12758659

sexual promiscuity/prostitution (hook up), drug abuse as some of the prevalent social vices in that religious organizations preach against in Nigeria. The paper also revealed some of the mechanisms adopted by religious organizations in their sensitization against social vices to include but not limited to religious education through sermons, evangelism and outreaches, interfaith collaborations, adoption of technology, research partnerships, provisions of job opportunities and sacred engagement. The paper further revealed factors such as security concerns, credibility and trust issues, media and communication challenges, inter religious tension, limited reach, potential for extremism, credibility among other issues as some of the challenges faced by religious organizations in their sensitization against social vices in Nigeria. The paper concluded that the widespread presence and moral authority of religious organizations position them as potentially powerful agents for social change. Therefore, the paper recommended among others that religious bodies should partner with academic institutions, non-profit organizations, government agencies and research organizations to develop and implement evidence-based interventions. Furthermore, to address credibility issues, religious organizations should implement robust transparency and accountability measures in their operations and leadership.

KEYWORDS: Social Vices, Socialization, Sensitization, Religion, Religious Organizations, Roles, Nigeria.

Introduction

The concept of socialization underpins many of sociology's major hypotheses about the nature of society and social interactions. Sociologists have used socialization to investigate the viability of society, the nature of social order, and the reproduction of social organization, the development of personal identities, social vices and social control in societies. Thus, any discourse concerning social vices and social problems often takes into account the process of internalizing the norms, beliefs, behaviours, and values that contributes or mitigates social vices as well as the social actors or agents involved. Individuals develop the skills required to interact successfully in society through the process of socialization (Ritzer, cited in Arokoyo et al., 2024). The most prevalent methods to do so are through the key socialization agents: family, schools, peers, and religion, (Rohall, 2023). The life-course perspective in sociology adds the understanding that historical and social forces can influence these basic social processes as well as the notion of agency.

By way of definition, Hoppner as cited in Arokoyo et al., (2024) sees the concept of socialization as what allows human beings to develop in their potential wholeness in as much as it is the development of language, thought and rationality that makes us persons, with the ability to interpret and act on the surrounding environment, while to Williams & McShane (2020), it is a process by which individuals acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes that make them effective members of the society." To Rohall (2023), it is the process through which the child learns how to become a member of society, internalizing the social world thus socialization indicates the systemic effects of the old to the new generation, in order to develop those characteristics that society deems necessary for the integration of young people. This line of thinking was summarized by Sociologist Jack Douglas in 1970 that concern for mitigating social vices in society is as serious as the very disorganizing factors that have historically laid the foundation for the birth of sociology as a discipline in the search for social order. Peer pressure is the major cause of youth involvement in social vices. Students spend more time with their friends in school or at home. Deviant behaviours, or

deviant acts in society refer to behaviour that violate social norms and expectations, (Ruwan et al., 2020). The Nigerian government, civil societies, and non-governmental organizations are constantly looking for ways to address various social vices, majority of which are perpetuated by our society's youth (Arokoyo et al., 2024).

Social vices among youth globally and those in Nigeria have become a behaviour pattern which has degenerated into a topical global issue (Nwokoro, 2022). Almost on a daily bases, Nigerian media is abashed with reports of different kinds of social vices among young adults, ranging from fraud (Yahoo-Yahoo), rituals killings for money, cultism, thuggery, sexual promiscuity, robbery, kidnapping, indulgence in drugs dealings and terrorism (Aliuna, 2022; Nwokoro, 2022).

Social vices according to Ojewola (2022), are actions that are contrary to societal norms and practices; they are typical of socially maladjusted individuals. Also Adeyemo (2009) asserts that social vices are bad traits, unhealthy and negative behaviour that are against a society's morality and are frowned upon by such societal members. Some of these social vices, according to Aramide (2006) have implications for communicable disease, lack of dignity, self-respect, lack of concentration in school, assault of moral sensitivity and promiscuous activities pervading the academics scenery and Illicit abortion resulting from teenage pregnancy. The consequences of these social vices and its continuous increasing rate are not just negatively undermining the quality of life of the people but are mostly undesirable and gradually sliding the societies into a state of normlessness.

Religion plays a significant role in socializing and sensitizing individuals and curbing social vices globally (Arokoyo et al., 2024). The influence of religion extends across various dimensions, including moral guidance, community cohesion, and behavioural regulation. Religion often serves as a primary agent of socialization, instilling moral values and norms from an early age. This process begins within families, where religious teachings shape the ethical and moral framework of children. As individuals engage with religious activities, these values are reinforced through communal worship, religious education, and participation in rituals. This socialization process is critical in forming individuals' worldviews and guiding their behaviour according to the ethical codes of their faith (Ojewola, 2022).

Religious organizations often explicitly condemn various social vices such as theft, dishonesty, substance abuse, and violence. By promoting virtues like honesty, integrity, and compassion, religious teachings aim to reduce incidences of such behaviours. Religious institutions also provide support systems that help individuals resist and overcome social vices. For instance, many religious groups offer counseling, community support, and rehabilitation programs for those struggling with addiction or criminal behavior (Vigliotti, 2020). Religion remains a powerful force in socializing and sensitizing individuals and curbing social vices worldwide. Its role extends beyond mere moral instruction to encompass community support, behavioral regulation, and social welfare. As contemporary research continues to explore these dynamics, it becomes increasingly clear that religious institutions will remain vital to promoting social cohesion and ethical behaviour in diverse global contexts (Arokoyo et al., 2024).

From a global perspective, the impact of religion on social behaviour and vice prevention is evident in various regions. In many parts of Africa and Latin America, religious institutions are integral to communal life and play a crucial role in social governance and moral education. In South Africa, for example, religious organizations have been pivotal in addressing social issues, including the HIV/AIDS crisis, by promoting safe behaviours and

providing care and support to those affected (Odey & Ashipu, 2019). Religion and religious organisations do not just encompass ethics, values and morality. All aspect of religion have from age-old been found to guide society through values standards and sanctions necessary for the existences of members of society (Odey & Ashipu, 2019). These authors further noted that the church for instance holds strongly to the beliefs that formation of members' personality and character of members of the society, thus engages in providing and advocating moral guidance. Similarly, (Okon, 2012) clearly states that religious bodies particularly provide authentic and time-honoured standards against which institutional norms can be measured, it also serve as a foundation and justification for criticizing social vices; it assigns itself the role of "watchdog," social umpire, and acknowledged custodian of human ideals and aspirations, providing a platform for social control. Thus, whether or not moral standard, norms and expectations are adhered to in traditional societies depends on the special role played by religious bodies, religious affiliation and religious upbringing. This review therefore, aimed at examining the roles of religious organizations especially the church in the socialization and sensitization against social vices in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

There is no gainsaying that social vices in its different forms are taking ground among youth across the globe including Nigerian societies (Amadi, et al, 2021). According to Jacob and Athanisus (2019), the involvement of youths in social vices have become a major source of concern in Nigerian communities because of the increase in the loss of human lives and properties and pollution of the environment as a result of this unacceptable activities by youths. This reflects the failure of internalizing sound cultural values and the deteriorating functions of traditional agents of socialization. While it appears to be a deliberate neglect by the primary agents of socialization in instilling proper values necessary for shaping accepted patterns of behaviours, the impacts of social media platforms and prosperity drives seems to be affecting family bonds, and religious bodies known for building morality in society. Maria (2019) assert that communities in Nigeria are faced with security and development challenges occasioned by the involvement of youths in social vices.

Particularly, the traditional pastoral interest of religious organizations which fundamentally is to build and instill moral code in society has gradually been forced to take interest in political and prosperity preaching, and which perhaps has given rise to the failure of members and associates to internalize and practice norms and expectations of societies. The malfunctioning and decline of social order especially in Christian dominated society for instance is caused by failure of the Church and mosques to function as expected. In other words, a contributing factor to the dysfunctional societal dynamics such as the existing social vices in Nigeria can be traced back to failure to instill moral value by religious organization or churches and mosques (Mueller as cited in Arokoyo et al., 2024).

Consequently, the contemporary structure and character of the Nigerian society inadvertently have not only been degraded, by the prevalence of social vices among youths of the current generation but they are beginning to take a normalcy. The social vices among youths such as thuggery, internet fraud, prostitution, gambling, drug addictions, hookup, kidnappings and ritual killings are just but a few social vices whose negative effects cannot be underestimated, (Ibia, 2006). These social vices are not just disturbing problems in themselves but they also underpin serious challenges to the stability of society. The impact of some of these social vices are reflected in the increasing rate of youth aggressiveness, death, public nuisance, mental health disorder, violence, daylight kidnapping, gang attacks, teenage pregnancy, robbery, civil disobedience, poor academic and productivity performance (Maria, 2019).

The challenges and impacts of social vices in our immediate communities remains a multifaceted problem detrimental to the survival and wellbeing of the members of the entire society. The negative impacts of social vices on the populace poses a serious threat to the labour workforce of the entire country and the future leaders that would determine the destiny of the country's future. Hence it is not out of place to interrogate the effectiveness of the primary agents of socialization in curbing social vices (Duke, 2014). Religion as an agent of socialization is precisely one of the realities that shapes the attitude of human beings and has a lot to do with regard to abating the menace of social vices in the society (Duke, 2014). Although, conservative roles of religion in perpetuating social and cultural values are often ignored and rarely studied (Okon, 2012). Among Christians, the church role(s) are significant to instilling morals and suppressing social vices. It is particularly the obligation and inherent right of the church and mosque to always and everywhere proclaim moral principles even in respect of social order. By so doing, it is believed that the religious bodies discharge its responsibility to God for the society by being shepherds of the sheep and a seeker of the lost. It is against this background that this paper sought to review the roles of religious organizations especially the church in sensitization against social vices in Nigerian society.

Aim and Objectives of the Paper

The general aim of this paper is to review the roles of religious organizations as agents of socialization in the sensitization against social voices in Nigeria. The specific objectives of the paper include the following:

i. To examine the prevalence of social vices in Nigerian societies.
ii. To identify the mechanisms used by religious organisations in the socialization and sensitization against social vices in Nigeria.
iii. To bring to light the challenges faced by religious organizations in the performance of their role(s) as agents of socialization and sensitization against social vices.

Methods

This paper utilizes secondary sources of data collection in which books, journal articles, documentaries, reports, newspapers among other internet based documented materials were used.

Literature Review

The review of relevant and related literature for this paper was done in accordance with the aim and objectives of the paper and under the following subheadings:

Conceptual Review

The following concepts are clarified in the context of this paper:

Social vices

According to Elujekwute, et al., (2021) the term vices are Latin word “vitium” meaning defect or failing, it connotes failing to adhere to moral principles or can be defined as a bad habit or immoral activities. In other words, social vices are simply the decadence of moral acts in the society. They are worldwide issues that cut across all demographics, not just in Nigeria, they include any immoral activities that are likely to lead to an unprofitable venture or activity, such as prostitution, gambling, hookup, pornography, drugs, and so on (Hassan & Abdulkareem, 2023). According to Makinde, et al. (2020), social vices are unhealthy negative behaviours that are against the society's morality and are frowned upon by members of the society. It refers to all forms of immoral attitudes or deviant behaviour that are criminal

or evil; they are acts that deviate from society's acceptable standards as a result of moral decadence. It includes cultism, drug abuse/alcoholism, indecent dressing, rape, examination malpractice, prostitution, kidnapping, ritual killing, robbery, cybercrime, gender violence, and jungle justice, among other things.

Sensitization

Sensitization is a non-associative learning process in which repeated administration of a stimulus results in the progressive amplification of a response (Shettleworth, 2010). Sensitization often is characterized by an enhancement of response to a whole class of stimuli in addition to the one that is repeated. For example, repetition of a painful stimulus may make one more responsive to a loud noise. But in this paper, sensitization will mean an act of process of enlightenment campaign for or against social phenomenon.

Socialization

Socialization refers to the developmental processes through which individuals acquire the values, behaviours, and motivations necessary to become competent members of a society. According to Maria (2019), socializing broadly means transforming an individual into a social being, instilling gradually different ways of thinking, feeling and then acting, accomplished through a psychosocial process of transmission, but also by assimilating attitudes, values, concepts or models specific to a group or community, for the formation, adaptation and social integration of a person. Socialization remains a central concept in psychology. It has undergone in-depth empirical investigation and discussion as a theoretical concept. It is a normative idea that distinguishes between typical and abnormal social behaviours.

The Roles of Religious Organizations in Socialization Processes

Religious organizations including the Church and Mosque are one of the key agents of socialization around the world. According to Ladd as cited in Arokoyo et al., (2024), the church are those who respond to the proclaimed word of God and who believe in Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord. Hence, the Church has a vital role to play in carrying out her preservative function as the salt and light of the world. This is done through the proclamation of the unadulterated gospel, as it is written the scriptures. Theological balance in the preaching of the Church is an imperative means of fighting corruption in Nigeria. The Church by nature frowns at evil by condemning it no matter who is involved. The Church is being referred to as instrument of righteousness and light and which has the potency of conscientizing the people of God. These are people that are separated by God to live a godly life in the world of sin. The Church has spiritual, social, political, and moral obligations to society (Daniel & Kierian, 2021).

Cone and Wilmore in Arokoyo et al., 2024) state the function of the Church thus: “The Church proclaims the reality of divine liberation. The Church actively shares in the liberation struggle. The Church lives on the basis of the gospel and makes the gospel message as social, economic and political reality.” (p.29). The Church is not the building as some may think rather people that are redeemed from the dark world. The Church, as the *laos* (people) of God, has a mandate to promote morality and sanctity in the world through the proclamation of the gospel. The Church's work in manifesting and promoting morality has led to a high rate of moral revival. As Copans (1990) observes: "The ideology machines of today are religious, and they assume, in many cases, the functions of the guidance of the public (moral) order, the platform of political conscience, and the refuge of a bruised and disarticulated sociability. … if there is an organized community, which now is part of the foundation of the democratic

field of tomorrow, it is the Church, in a generic rather than an institutional sense" (pp. 294–295).

The Church that is mentioned here is not just the Church as an institution, but the Church as God's people everywhere. Nwaomah (2006) observes that Church leadership must seek to reflect the high moral values enunciated in its sacred scriptures. The Church must proclaim against morally deviated actions by her members and condemn such even in the society wherein she is domiciled. It is pertinent to note that the Church is the backbone of morality. She must continue to condemn flamboyancy in every aspect of life by preaching holiness with contentment. To support, Obasanjo (2017) points out the Church role in restoring moral values and states that the Church must embark on a moral rearrangement for its members and the nation. Alexander as cited in Arokoyo, 2024) affirms that every individual is held accountable for his ideas and acts under Christian ethics and so is capable of choosing the good as received in Christ. Christian ethics instills fear of God, which is the foundation of morality and also enables Christians to resist the corrupt system of the world. It means that every individual is responsible for their actions.

In the words of Okai (2008), Christian ethics is founded on love. This implies that love is seen as the foundation of Christian ethics. As a result, the love displayed by Christians, enabled by the Holy Spirit, assists the Christian in fulfilling the Ten Commandments. This will serve as an antidote against corruption. In the times past, the Church had played significant roles in stopping the killing of twins, human sacrifice, and the fight against apartheid in South Africa. According to Ogbuagu in Orji (2011), the Church has an immemorial history of relevance in spiritual, socio-economic, political, and cultural affairs of the people.

The Prevalence of Social Vices in Nigeria

The rate of social vices is imminent across the globe including Nigeria in particular and according to Daniel and Kierian (2021), social vices contradict social norms and values, which include beliefs, attitudes, honesty, hard work, customs and traditions, ideals, skills, and taboos that a society values and passes down from generation to generation through formal and non-formal education. Mezieobi, et al., (2015) also noted that social vices are misbehaviours, wrong attitudes, and unacceptable characteristics that have hampered Nigeria's development. And in Nigerian society, these vices are illegal, null, and void. These social vices exist in both urban and rural Nigeria and are perpetuated by politicians, teachers, lecturers, students, educational leaders, religious leaders, policy makers, legislators, and all sort of people in the walks of life (Daniel & Kierian, 2021)

Understanding social vices also calls for one to have an idea of what morality entails, since it appears that social vices are opposite of morality or moral values (Arokoyo et al., 2024). Moral can be characterized as giving direction on the most proficient method to act modestly and honestly. It can likewise be viewed as connecting with issues of good and bad and to how people ought to act. It can also be viewed as something ethical, right, appropriate, fair, just, principled and so forth. Moral decadency implies the course of decline or rot in a general public leading to social problems. It is likewise a condition of unethical behaviour. From these meanings of morality, we can consequently extract what a social vice is all about. Social vices decline, rot and reprobate the virtues of people and society at large. In a society where there is decline in moral values, social vices become the order of the day (Afuye, 2013).

Makinde, et al, 2020) identifies some common social vices in Nigeria, especially among youths to include the followings; cultism, ritual killing for money, indecent dressing, examination malpractice, cybercrime, Sexual promiscuity/ prostitution (hook up), drug abuse etc.

The Roles of Religious Organizations in the Sensitization against Social Vices in Nigeria

Religious organizations play a significant role in Nigerian society, often serving as influential voices on social and moral issues. Their involvement in sensitization against social vices is multifaceted and has both positive and challenging aspects. Some of the key roles are as follows:

a). *Moral Education and Guidance*

Religious organizations in Nigeria often serve as primary sources of moral education for their followers. This role is particularly significant given the country's high religiosity. Churches and mosques regularly incorporate teachings against social vices into their sermons and religious education programs. For instance, The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), one of Nigeria's largest denominations, has a dedicated department for Christian Social Responsibility that addresses various social issues (RCCG, 2024). In the same manner, Islamic organizations like the Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria (MSSN) organize regular lectures and seminars on moral living for youth (MSSN, 2023).

b). *Community Outreach and Support Programs*

Many religious bodies run programs aimed at addressing root causes of social vices:
The Catholic Church operates numerous rehabilitation centers for drug addicts across Nigeria. For instance, the Padre Pio Rehabilitation Centre in Lagos has treated over 1,000 addicts since its establishment (This Day, 2023). The Nasrul-Lahi-l-Fatih Society (NASFAT) runs skills acquisition programs for unemployed youth to reduce vulnerability to crime and other vices (NASFAT, 2024).

c). *Advocacy and Public Awareness Campaigns*

Religious organizations often leverage their large followings to raise awareness about social issues. For instance, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) launched a nationwide campaign against human trafficking in 2023, utilizing church networks to spread information (The Guardian Nigeria, 2023). In the same manner, the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) has been vocal in condemning corruption, regularly issuing statements and organizing public lectures on the topic (Premium Times, 2024).

d). *Collaboration with Government and NGOs*

There's increasing recognition of the need for collaboration between religious bodies, government agencies, and NGOs. For instance, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has partnered with various religious organizations to expand its drug abuse prevention programs (NDLEA, 2023).Similarly, the Inter-Religious Council of Nigeria, comprising both Christian and Muslim leaders, works with the government on various social issues, including peacebuilding initiatives in conflict-prone areas (IRCN, 2024).

However, the effectiveness of religious organizations in these efforts can be controversial, as some scholars argue that while religious bodies have significant influence, their impact on reducing social vices is mixed (Onapajo, 2022).

Mechanisms used by Religious Organisations in the Sensitization against Social vices in Nigeria

Religious organizations in Nigeria play a significant role in sensitizing the public against social vices. They employ various mechanisms to reach out to their members and the wider community. The following are some of the key mechanisms used by religious organizations in Nigeria for this purpose:

- **Sermons and Religious Teachings:**

Religious leaders use their platforms during worship services to address social issues and discourage vices. This is one of the most direct and influential methods (Adebayo, 2015). This author noted that religious leaders use their pulpits to address social issues directly. For instance, Pastor E.A. Adeboye of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) among other notable religious leaders have been known to speak out against corruption during their sermons. Similarly, the Sultan of Sokoto, as the spiritual leader of Muslims in Nigeria, often uses Friday prayers to address issues like drug abuse and violence. Even during Ramadan in 2019, many Imams across Nigeria included messages against corruption and social vices in their daily tafsir (Quranic exegesis) sessions.

- **Youth Programs and Groups:**

Many religious organizations have youth-focused programs that aim to instill moral values and discourage involvement in social vices (Omolade, 2019). For example, organizations like the Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria (CYON) and the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN) among myriad of others run regular programs aimed at youth development and moral education. Similarly, the RCCG's Christ the Redeemer's Friends International (CRFI) organizes an annual "Excel" program, which includes teachings on moral values and avoiding social vices.

- **Community Outreach:**

Religious organizations often engage in community outreach programs to address social issues and provide support to those affected by social vices (Oguntola-Laguda, 2020). According to this author, many churches and mosques organize community services that address social issues. For instance, the Nasrul-Lahi-l-Fatih Society (NASFAT), an Islamic organization, runs programs on drug abuse prevention in various communities. Similarly, the Anglican Church of Nigeria has a prison outreach program that provides counseling and support to inmates, aiming to rehabilitate them and prevent recidivism.

- **Media Campaigns:**

Many religious organizations are leveraging technology for sensitization efforts. The Redeemed Christian Church of God launched a mobile app in 2024 that provides daily moral teachings and support resources (RCCG, 2024). Many other religious organizations use various media platforms, including radio, television, and social media, to spread their message against social vices (Chiluwa, 2012). Religious organizations leverage various media platforms to spread their message. The Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) has used radio jingles to campaign against electoral violence. Likewise, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many religious organizations used social media platforms to share messages about social responsibility and adhering to health guidelines.

- **Education and Literacy Programs:**

Some religious organizations establish schools or run educational programs that incorporate moral education as part of their curriculum (Adeniyi, 2018). Many religious organizations run schools that incorporate moral education. The Catholic Church, for instance, operates

numerous schools across Nigeria where religious and moral education is a key part of the curriculum. In the manner, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at runs several schools in Nigeria, including the Ahmadiyya College in Lagos, which emphasizes both academic excellence and moral uprightness.

- **Counseling Services:**

Many religious organizations offer counseling services to help individuals dealing with addiction or other social vices (Ajayi & Soyinka-Airewele, 2018). Many religious organizations offer counseling services. The Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM) is known for its deliverance sessions, which often involve counseling for those struggling with various addictions. The RCCG among other denominations run a counseling department called "The Wholeness Centre" that provides support for individuals dealing with various life challenges, including addiction and mental health issues.

- **Interfaith Collaborations:**

Religious organizations sometimes collaborate across faith lines to address social issues collectively (Sampson, 2012). The Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), co-chaired by the Sultan of Sokoto and the President of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), works to promote religious harmony and address social issues collectively. For example, in 2020, NIREC issued a joint statement calling for peace and condemning violence during the #EndSARS protests.

- **Advocacy and Policy Influence:**

Some religious organizations engage in advocacy efforts to influence public policy related to social vices (Onapajo, 2012). The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) often make public statements on national issues and engage with government on policy matters. In 2020 for instance, both CAN and NSCIA were involved in discussions with the government regarding the reopening of places of worship during the COVID-19 pandemic, advocating for their members while also emphasizing the need for safety.

- **Rehabilitation Centers:**

Some religious organizations establish rehabilitation centers to help individuals overcome addiction and other social vices (Adamson, et al., 2015). These authors opined that some religious organizations run rehabilitation centers. The Christ Against Drug Abuse Ministry (CADAM), an arm of the RCCG, operates a rehabilitation center for drug addicts. For instance, the Unification Church of Nigeria runs a rehabilitation program called "Youth for Peace" that focuses on reforming young people involved in cultism and other vices.

- **Provision of Work opportunity and Dignity of Labour:**

There is a saying that an idle mind is the devils workshop. The level of unemployment in Nigeria is staggering. The scripture sees God as the God that works. This is evident in the creation story of Genesis. The Genesis account of creation also mandates man to work as a being made in the image of God. "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work and take care of it" (Gen. 2:15). Therefore, in order to restore man to his initial mandate, the Church needs to emphatically speak against any unjust means of making wealth and place more emphasis on work and its dignity. Mackay (2018) notes three perspectives on work. These are as follow: 1. Life is not to be compartmentalized. 2. Work as a divine calling and 3. Work as a part of Christian Stewardship.

- **Religious Teachings: Contentment**

The kerygmatic voice of the Church is against making wealth by all means. The Apostle Paul points out the antidote against greed and corruption in 1 Timothy 6:6-10. *But godliness with contentment is a great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 9 Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap, as well as into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs (NIV).*

In light of the above scripture, one can rightly posit that as much as God wants his people to prosper, he does not want them to prosper to the detriment of their spiritual work with him, hence Paul's admonition to Timothy. Godliness should be the primary message of the Bible, not just prosperity. The Church's mission and message are de-emphasizing the concept of becoming rich by all means.

- **Formation of Good Character**

Formation of good character is fundamental in Christian moral education. It does not only recognize, but also require a discipline in a formation of character and points to self-discipline as an ideal norm (Wycliff Bible Encyclopaedia, 1975). For example, Christians are urged to live good and righteous life for the wellbeing of the society, "Seek good and not evil that you may live; Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate" (Amos 5:14:15). "Follow justice and justice alone". (Leviticus 19:35) while (Proverbs 14:34) writes: "Righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach".
The sixth commandment condemns stealing, hence, (Deuteronomy 5:19) says: "thou shall not steal". Dishonest acts and lying are also condemned: "if you have not been faithful in that which is another, who will give you that which is your own". On the danger and consequences of lying, the Bible says that: Everyone who has practiced falsehood have heir abode in hell fire. "Do not lie to one another, for he who pours out lie will perish" (Revelation 22:15; Rev. 21:8). A false witness will not go unpunished and he who litters lie will not escape (Proverbs 19:5)…."Do not swear at all let what you say be simply yes or no, anything more than this comes from the devil" (Matt 5:33-37).

This is done through religious education via sermons and outreaches as means through which religious institutions form the social imagination of people by moulding their characters. There is a close connection between social understanding and character formation (education). Religious education has the potential of helping pupils and students to acquire moral values and this process is equally known as socialization. In the process, they develop their identity as persons with a particular religious orientation (Duke, 2014).

For example, in the Victorian England, the social vice of drunkenness was pervasive. This vice destabilized many homes and the social effects of it were felt by the society here and there. Olsen explains how the clergy initiated the Temperance Movement to curb many vices with Teetotal Society attending to drunkenness (Duke, 2014). This evangelical and non-denominational initiative helped those affected: they were encouraged to imbibe the virtue of self-control, to drink tea rather than alcoholic drinks and some who lost their jobs were provided with another. At the end of the day, some families were saved because husbands, wives, and children who collaborated with Temperance Movement programme were given a new hope (Duke, 2014). There are many Non-Governmental Organizations set up by

religious bodies for the purpose of reversing the damaging effects of social problems in the society.

- **Focus on mental health:**

There's growing recognition of the link between mental health and social vices. The Islamic Medical Association of Nigeria initiated a nationwide mental health awareness campaign in 2023 (IMAN, 2024).

- **Research partnerships:**

Some religious organizations are partnering with academic institutions to conduct more rigorous studies on the effectiveness of their interventions. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Nigeria, for instance, collaborates with the University of Ibadan on a long-term study of youth behaviour (University of Ibadan, 2024).

These mechanisms demonstrate the multifaceted approach that religious organizations in Nigeria take in their efforts to sensitize against social vices. The effectiveness of these approaches can vary, and their impact often depends on factors such as the organization's resources, community acceptance, and the specific social context in which they operate. More so, the examples cited above demonstrate how religious organizations in Nigeria are actively involved in addressing social vices through various means. Their approaches often combine spiritual teachings with practical interventions, leveraging their influence and resources to make a positive impact on society. However, it's important to note that the effectiveness of these efforts can vary, and they sometimes face challenges such as limited resources or resistance from entrenched social norms among others emphasized below.

Challenges Faced by the Religious Organizations in the Sensitization against Social Vices in Nigeria.

Despite these efforts, the role of religious organizations in addressing social vices faces several challenges:

Credibility issues: Scandals involving religious leaders can undermine their moral authority. Adelakun's (2023) study found that public trust in religious institutions declined by 15% between 2020 and 2023 due to high-profile corruption cases.

Inter-religious tensions: Sectarian divisions can hinder collaborative efforts to address social problems. The International Crisis Group (2024) reported that religious polarization remains a significant obstacle to unified action against social vices.

Limited reach: Religious organizations may struggle to effectively engage non-religious or marginalized populations. Onapajo's (2023) research in African Affairs suggests that secular civil society organizations often have better outreach to these groups.

Potential for extremism: In some cases, religious rhetoric against social vices can veer into extremism. Higazi and Yusuf (2024) argue that some religious narratives on social issues have contributed to increased social divisions and intolerance.

Lack of evidence-based approaches: Oluwaniyi (2023) critiques the often anecdotal nature of religious organizations' interventions, calling for more rigorous evaluation of their impact.

Religious diversity and potential interfaith tensions: Nigeria is home to a diverse religious landscape, with large populations of Muslims (primarily in the north) and Christians (primarily in the south), as well as followers of traditional African religions. This diversity can lead to challenges in creating unified messaging on social issues. Different religious groups may have varying perspectives on topics like gender roles, education, or healthcare practices. Interfaith tensions can also make it difficult for religious organizations to collaborate on social initiatives (Oluwaniyi, 2023).

Conflicting traditional and modern values: Many religious organizations in Nigeria grapple with balancing traditional cultural values and modern social perspectives. This can be particularly challenging when addressing issues like women's rights, LGBTQ+ rights, or certain health practices. Religious leaders may face resistance from conservative members of their communities when advocating for changes that are seen as contradicting traditional beliefs or practices (Higazi & Yusuf, 2024).

Political interference or constraints: The relationship between religious organizations and the government in Nigeria can be complex. Some religious groups may face political pressure or constraints when addressing certain social issues, especially if their stance conflicts with government policies or powerful political interests. Additionally, the perception of political alignment can affect a religious organization's credibility among different segments of the population (Adeniyi, 2018).

Limited resources for outreach programs: Many religious organizations in Nigeria may lack the financial and human resources needed to implement large-scale social outreach programs. This can limit their ability to effectively communicate their messages or provide services related to social issues. The challenge of resource allocation may be particularly acute in rural or economically disadvantaged areas (Omolade, 2019).

Resistance to change from conservative elements: Within religious communities, there may be resistance to addressing certain social issues from more conservative members. This internal opposition can make it difficult for religious organizations to take progressive stances on topics like family planning, gender equality, or HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment (Adamson, et al., 2015).

Credibility and trust issues: Some religious organizations may face challenges related to public trust, especially if there have been instances of corruption or abuse within religious institutions. This can affect the receptiveness of the public to their messages on social issues (Mackay, 2018).

Navigating complex social issues: Certain social problems in Nigeria, such as poverty, unemployment, or ethnic conflicts, are deeply rooted and multifaceted. Religious organizations may struggle to address these complex issues effectively, especially when solutions require coordination with government agencies or other stakeholders (Ajayi & Soyinka Airewele, 2018).

Media and communication challenges: In an era of rapid information spread through social media and other digital platforms, religious organizations may face challenges in effectively communicating their messages and countering misinformation. They may need to adapt their communication strategies to reach younger, more digitally connected audiences (Ajayi & Soyinka-Airewele, 2018).

Balancing spiritual focus with social engagement: Some religious organizations may struggle to find the right balance between their spiritual missions and social engagement. There may be internal debates about the extent to which religious institutions should be involved in addressing societal issues versus focusing on spiritual matters (Omolade, 2019).

Security concerns: In some parts of Nigeria, particularly areas affected by groups like Boko Haram, religious organizations may face security risks when engaging in social outreach or advocacy. This can limit their ability to operate freely and address social issues in certain regions (Adamson, et al., 2015).

These challenges underscore the complex environment in which religious organizations in Nigeria operate when attempting to address social issues. However, effective strategies likely require a nuanced understanding of local contexts, collaboration with diverse stakeholders, and adaptive approaches to communication and outreach.

Empirical Review

Ruwan et al., (2020) appraised the role of religious institutions in curbing deviant behaviours in Nigeria. The study focused on religious attendance and religious commitment as predictors of deviant behaviours among adolescents. Fifty (N = 50) adolescents participated in this study. They included individuals between the ages of 13 to 19. The sample was selected using convenient sampling techniques. Their age ranged from 13 to 19, with a mean age of 15.2 and a standard deviation of 2.25. They comprised thirty- eight (38) males and twelve (12) females. Two instruments were used to obtain data: General deviance subscale of the Normative Deviance Scale and Religious Commitment Inventory (RCI-10). Step-Wise, Multiple Regression and cross-sectional design were used for the study and to analyse the data. The result showed that Religious attendance entered in step 2 of the equation significantly predicted deviant behaviours among adolescents ($\beta = .51$, $t = 4.023$, $p<.001$). Religious commitment entered in step 3 of the equation significantly predicted deviant behaviours among adolescents ($\beta = .39$, $t = -2.431$, $p<.001$). Both null hypotheses were rejected. The study recommended that parents should encourage their adolescent children to go to church as church attendance predicts less deviance.

Xiuhua and Sung (2018) examined the moral community thesis in the secular context of China. Using multilevel logistic regression, they tested (1) whether both individual-(measured by affiliation with Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity) and aggregate-level religiosity (measured by the number of mosques, Buddhist temples, and churches per 10,000 people in the province) are inversely related to law and rule violations at the individual level and (2) whether province-level religiosity enhances the inverse relationship between individual religiosity and deviant behaviours. Results from the 2010 China General Social Survey and the Spatial Explorer of Religions provide some support for the moral community proposition that contextual religiosity affects deviance at the individual level. Specifically, they found provincial as well as individual levels of Islam to be inversely related to the violation of the law and rules. However, they found that neither the provincial level of Christianity and Buddhism nor cross-level interaction is related to deviance. The only exception, cross-level interaction involving the individual and provincial level of Islam, is in the opposite direction (i.e., positive, not negative).

Xiuhua and Sung (2016) examined the religion–social vices relationship in China, analyzing the 2010 China General Social Survey data to estimate ordinary least squares, logistic, and negative binomial regression models. First, they found respondents who followed some form of religion to be no different from those without religion in law or rule violation. Second,

respondents of folk religion were more favourable to unconventional sex than those without religion, and those of organized religion were less so. Finally, respondents of organized religion were less likely to report daily drinking and smoking than their irreligious counterparts, whereas those of folk religion were not different from the religious ones.

Chukwunyere et al., (2020) on the other hand investigated the relationship between adolescent delinquency (crime and illegal drug use) and religiosity and spirituality. The study utilized data from the 2005 Transition to Adulthood supplement to the Panel Study of Income Dynamics. Using Probit analysis, results showed that attendance of religious services is negatively and significantly associated with arrest, "light" and "heavy" crime, and marijuana use. Religious affiliation, the importance of religion, and the importance of spirituality were all negatively and significantly affiliated with marijuana use as well.

DeCamp and Jesse (2019) explored the stance that religion, as a source of social support and moral guidance, can function to protect individuals, especially children, and adolescents, from a range of deviant and delinquent behaviours, using data from over 10,000 American middle school and high school youth to examine the relationship between religion, non-religion, and different forms of deviance. The results show that youth who identify with a religious (rather than nonreligious) label are not less likely to take part in deviant acts after controlling for protective factors. The effects of some of these protective factors are significant and stronger than the effects of religion.

Theoretical Framework: Social Learning Theory (SLT)

This paper was anchored on Social Learning Theory.

Social learning theory was propounded by Albert Bandura, and it emphasizes the importance of observing, modeling, and imitating the behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Individuals that are observed are called models. In society, children and young adults are surrounded by many influential models, such as parents within the family, pastor or Sunday school teachers, friends within their peer group, and bands instructors within the church. These models offer illustrations of conduct that can be seen and imitated, such as pr- and anti-social, masculine and feminine, etc. Some of these persons (models) catch the attention of kids, who then imitate their conduct. They might emulate (i.e., copy) the behaviour they have seen in the future. They might do this regardless of whether the behavior is considered "gender appropriate" or not, but there are a number of factors that increase the likelihood that a youngster will imitate the actions that are considered appropriate for their gender by society.

According to this theory, children learn and socialize into appropriate roles by observing and communicating with adults and modelling after the adult communication patterns (Edmund 2012). By inference, the behaviour and lifestyle of older children may change through observation, imitation and taking after their parents' communication pattern.

According to social learning theory, people learn social conduct through seeing and copying the actions of others. The social learning theory was created by psychologist Albert Bandura as an alternative to the earlier work of behaviourism-inspiring colleague B. F. Skinner. In contrast to behavioural psychology, which focuses on how the environment and rewards influence behaviour, Bandura argued that people can pick up behavioural skills through observation, Attention, Retention, Reproduction, and Motivation.

One of the major strengths of the social learning theory is that it is scientific in nature, it flows in a systematic manner that allows the imitation of strengths through socialization process. Another primary strength of social learning theory is its flexibility in explaining the differences in a person's behaviour and act of learning, i.e., when there is a change in a person's environment, the person's behaviour may change. It emphasizes that the environment plays a key role(s) in socializing against social vices in the society. The power dynamics implicit in bringing different knowledge holders together influence the subsequent learning outcomes (Wildemeersch, 2007).

Nevertheless, despite the strength of Social Learning Theory, it has its own pitfalls as it places too much emphasis on external social influences while potentially underestimating the role of individual cognitive processes and decision-making. This critique suggests that while SLT effectively explains how behaviour is learned through social interactions, it might not fully account for the internal cognitive mechanisms that also play a crucial role in behavior formation and modification.

Discussions of the Key Notes from the Reviews

This paper critically reviewed the roles of religious organizations in the sensitization against social vices in Nigeria. And according to the revelations from the submissions of The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) (2024), Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria (MSSN) (2023), The Nasrul-Lahi-l-Fatih Society (NASFAT) (2024), The Inter-Religious Council of Nigeria IRCN, (2024), Onapajo (2022), Adeboye (2023) and The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) (2023), some of the peculiar roles of religious organizations in Nigeria include but not limited to moral education and guidance, community outreaches and support programs, advocacy and public awareness campaigns, and collaborations with governments and non-profit organizations among others. These revealed roles in this regards can undoubtedly curb social vices in a highly religious country like Nigeria. This is because being an opium of the society, the influence of religion and religious education through religious organizations on the cultural, economic, socio-political and spiritual activities of individuals in the society cannot be undermined.

The paper likewise examined the prevalence of social vices in Nigerian society as submitted by Makinde, et al, (2020) especially among youths to include cultism, ritual killing for money, indecent dressing, examination malpractices, cybercrime (yahoo yahoo, yahoo plus), sexual promiscuity/ prostitution (hook up), drug abuse among others. The manifestation of these social menace though are as a result of the lack of proper home training, poverty, unemployment, peer influence and overall societal moral decadence occasioned by globalization and westernization.

The paper further identified the strategies adopted by religious organizations in the sensitization against social vices in Nigeria in views of authors such as Adebayo (2015), Oguntola-Laguda (2020), Chiluwa (2012), RCCG (2024), Adeniyi (2018), Ajayi & Soyinka-Airewele (2018) and Adamson et al., (2015) to include creation of rehabilitation centers, advocacy and policy influence, interfaith collaborations, education and literacy programs, counseling services, community outreach, carrying out media campaigns, community outreaches and evangelism, sermons and religious teachings and research partnerships with academic institutions among others. However, it is important to stress that the effectiveness of these approaches can vary, and their impact often depends on factors such as the organization's resources, community acceptance, and the specific social context in which they operate.

The paper lastly revealed some of the reasons why the efforts put in place by religious organizations in Nigeria to curb the menace of social vices through active sensitization and socialization appear to be ineffective are as opined by scholars like Higazi and Yusuf (2024), Ajayi and Soyinka-Airewele (2018), Mackay (2018), Adamson, et al., (2015), Omolade (2019) to include security concerns, credibility issues, balancing spiritual focus with social engagement, media and communication challenges, navigating complex social issues, resistance to change from conservative elements, limited resources for outreach programs, political interference or constraints, conflicting traditional and modern values, Inter-religious tensions and limited reach. As rightly analysed by these scholars however, these challenges underscore the complex environment in which religious organizations in Nigeria operate when attempting to address social issues within the social system.

Conclusions

Religious organizations play a significant and multifaceted role in sensitizing against social vices in Nigeria. Their influence extends across various domains, including moral education, community outreach, advocacy, and collaboration with government and non-governmental entities. The widespread presence and moral authority of these organizations position them as potentially powerful agents for social change.

However, the effectiveness of their efforts is often constrained by several factors. These include credibility issues stemming from scandals involving religious leaders, inter-religious tensions that hinder collaborative efforts, limited reach to non-religious or marginalized populations, and the occasional risk of extremist rhetoric. Additionally, the lack of evidence-based approaches in some interventions raises questions about their long-term impact. Recent trends indicate a shift towards more collaborative and technologically-driven approaches, as well as an increased focus on mental health and research partnerships. These developments suggest a growing recognition of the need for more comprehensive and nuanced strategies in addressing social vices.

Recommendations

Based on the revelations from the review above, the following recommendations were suggested:

Religious organizations should strengthen interfaith initiatives like the Interfaith Initiative Against Social Vices (IIASV). This can help overcome sectarian divisions and present a unified front against social vices. Likewise, religious bodies should partner with academic institutions and research organizations to develop and implement evidence-based interventions. This can improve the effectiveness of their programs and enhance their credibility.

Increased use of digital platforms and social media can help religious organizations reach younger demographics and disseminate information more effectively. Rather than solely addressing symptoms, religious organizations should emphasize programs that tackle the root causes of social vices, such as poverty, lack of education, and mental health issues.

To address credibility issues, religious organizations should implement robust transparency and accountability measures in their operations and leadership. Religious leaders and staff involved in social interventions should receive training in areas such as counseling, project management, and social work to improve the quality of their interventions. While maintaining their independence, religious organizations should seek more structured

collaborations with relevant government agencies and non-governmental organizations to enhance the reach and impact of their programs. Efforts should also be made to develop programs that can effectively engage non-religious and marginalized populations, possibly through partnerships with secular organizations.

Implement systematic monitoring and evaluation of interventions to measure their effectiveness and make data-driven improvements. Develop more robust youth-focused programs that combine moral education with practical skills and opportunities for civic engagement. Religious organizations must proactively address internal issues that undermine their moral authority, such as corruption or abuse scandals.

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