

Biblical and Yoruba Perspectives on Sex and Sexuality: Key to National Purity and Sustainable Development

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Abstract

Review Article

This study undertakes a critical comparative analysis of the Biblical and Yoruba constructs of sex and sexuality, interrogating their philosophical foundations, ethical dimensions and societal implications within the context of national renewal and sustainable development. Against the backdrop of rising moral relativism and socio-cultural erosion in contemporary Nigeria, the research situates sexuality not merely as a private concern but as a moral axis upon which societal stability turns. The Biblical worldview frames sexuality within divine intentionality, covenantal boundaries and spiritual discipline, while Yoruba traditional thought regards it as a sacred element of communal identity, spiritual harmony and ancestral continuity. Using a qualitative, interpretive methodology rooted in theological exegesis and African indigenous hermeneutics, the study draws on scriptural texts, oral traditions and historical-cultural practices to highlight convergences in moral emphasis, particularly in regard to purity, restraint and societal accountability. Findings suggest that both traditions, though theologically and ontologically distinct, offer robust ethical templates capable of confronting present-day moral crises. The paper contends that reclaiming these indigenous and scriptural moral frameworks can serve as a counter-cultural corrective to the permissive norms undermining national cohesion. Ultimately, the integration of these perspectives into moral education, public leadership and policy discourse may not only catalyze ethical reawakening but also sustain societal values essential for long-term national development. The study contributes meaningfully to intercultural ethics, African theology and applied religious studies in a time of urgent moral recalibration.

Keywords: Biblical worldview, Yoruba ethics, sexuality, cultural theology, moral reform, national sustainability, African spirituality.

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INTRODUCTION

Sex has been a source of great challenge for the human race since the beginning. One of the society's most difficult challenges is how to restrain and regulate the dynamism of this instinctual drive. Left unregulated and unrestrained, it wreaks havoc both personally and interpersonally. In fact, many of the sticky moral dilemmas confronting the society today are as a result of uncontrollable human sexual drive (Martin, 2010). Sexual violation on the other hand is, defined as any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's will. It is an act in which a person intentionally sexually touches another person without that person's consent, or coerces or physically forces a person to engage in a sexual act against her/his will (Feucht, 2012). From a biblical perspective, sexuality is a sacred gift designed by God for intimacy, procreation, and covenantal unity within marriage (Gen. 2:24; Heb. 13:4). Misuse of sexuality through rape, bestiality, lesbianism,

homosexuality or other distortion is consistently condemned, as it undermines personal integrity, desecrates the body as God's temple and erodes the purity of the community. Similarly, in Yoruba thought, sexuality is not treated as a mere biological act but as a deeply moral and spiritual reality. The Ifa corpus and Yoruba proverbs uphold (iwa) character and sexual moderation as virtues necessary for individual dignity, family honour, and societal harmony (Lawal, 2004). Sexual misconduct is viewed as a betrayal of both self and community, capable of bringing shame, brokenness, and even spiritual consequences. Traditional Yoruba ethics thus link sexual integrity to communal purity, generational continuity, and the balance between humans and the divine order.

By bringing the biblical and Yoruba perspectives into dialogue, this study underscores that national purity and sustainable development cannot be achieved merely through policies or economic growth, but must be rooted in moral virtues, particularly the proper understanding and practice of sex and sexuality. Upholding sexual integrity



safeguards the family, strengthens leadership accountability, and fosters the kind of moral environment in which development can truly flourish.

Sexuality in the Old and New Testament

The Old Testament suggests that bodily existence, marriage and sexual intercourse are all gifts of God. A major distinction between the Hebraic people and the pagan cultures about them was their refusal to overtly spiritualized sex by attributing genital sexuality to God, or to degrade the gift of sexuality in general by attributing its origins to Satan or the fall. While genital sexuality in marriage was affirmed in the Old Testament, harsh condemnation was expressed for extra marital genital sexuality (Epstein, 2002).

Leviticus 18 contains a series of commands primarily dealing with sexual prohibitions and violation. The chapter is the most complete and systematic treatment of these subjects in the Bible. The section begins with the standard divine announcement formula, "The LORD said to Moses, 'Speak to the Israelite and say to them'" (18:1-2). The chapter is a unit, as it is indicated by the references to pagan practices at the beginning (18:3) and the end of the chapter (18:24-30). Seven times in the introduction and conclusion, the Israelite were commanded not to act as the other nations (18:3, 24, 26, 27, 29, 30). Also at certain strategic moments in the chapter the identification formula "I am the LORD (your God)" occurs (18:4, 6, 21). This self-identifying formula accentuates the fact that these commandments come from God and God expects the Israelite to obey them with great care, since it is the Lord's authority that stands behind these instructions. The phrase may also be a reminder of all that God had done for Israel and how he had chosen them. Of the sexual sins mentioned in this chapter, incest and bestiality were generally condemned (with some exceptions) in Mesopotamian and Hittite civilizations. Brunner (2001) is certainly correct when he argues that it was in the sexual realm particularly that the Israelite were aware of their differences with the Canaanites.

Ògúntóyínbó-Atere (2006) opines that Yahweh's legitimate punishment of Israel for breach of covenant is figuratively described as threats of physical violence against the wife. This, absolutely in connection with Matthew 19:1-12. The answer of Jesus to the Pharisees was that nobody should maltreat nor divorce his wife except under issue of fornication and adultery. The statement of Jesus pointed out that Israelite were permitted to divorce their wives from Moses' instruction, based on the hardness of their heart, God who created them in the beginning, created them as husband and wife.

Akao (2006) further stresses that the God of Israel as the Creator of His people constitutes the source of sexuality and commands its use for the propagation and preservation of his people and the glory of His name. That man and woman were created in the image of God means maleness and femaleness of mankind reflect the image of God. Unlike the rest of Semitic world, the Jews believed that maleness and femaleness do not transcend God but stop with him (Gen. 1:27). Though, God did not need the action of male and female to create, yet man and woman created

derived their sexuality from him. Man and woman as they continue the process of extending the work of God's creation come together and become one with divine blessing. But when they use their sexuality outside this legitimate procreative process, they are condemned. In biblical theology, human sexuality finds legitimate expression only within marriage for procreation.

Ògúnkúnlé (2006) acknowledges that sex is a gift from God to humanity, which is only to be enjoyed in the purview of marriage. Marriage is a significant institution because it arises out of the divine programme for humanity. It was planned by God from the time of creation to meet the human need for companionship, love, mutual encouragement, practical help and sexual satisfaction. He further adds that God created the man and the woman for the purpose of sexual reproduction. However, this sex must be marital bond for it to be meaningful as God designed it to be. But when the act is engaged improperly, it simply becomes an expression of self-gratification, adultery, infidelity or exploitation. In the Mosaic Law, as opined by Ehioghae (2006), the requirements for virginity before the consummation of marriage were clearly prescribed for the woman, but cannot be said of the man (Exodus 22:16). The woman, therefore, is often made to bear alone the full brunt of the law in cases of infraction (cf. John 8:3ff). Can the sin of fornication be committed by one person alone, whether male or female?

From the view of Ògèdèngbè (2006), 'ahabh' in the Old Testament occasionally refers to sexual love as in marital relationship and as something giving at creation. Although, a different word 'yadha' is used for the act of sexual intercourse itself. In both P (Priestly) and J (Jahwist or Yahwist) creation stories, sex is the paramount issue. Genesis 1:28 seems to imply that both male and female bear the image of God and of the sexual relationship of man and woman, as we find in the statement: "Now Adam knew his wife" (Gen. 4:1). In several Old Testament narratives, we find love which is best described as romantic or the love at the first sight or of long intimacy. For example, Isaac is fond of Rebekah (Gen. 24:67), Jacob of Rachel (Gen. 29:18, 20,30), Samson of a Philistine woman (Judg. 14:16) and of Delilah (Judg. 16:4, 15). Accordingly, Eccl. 9:9 knows nothing better to recommend than the time which a man enjoys with the wife whom he loves.

Sexuality in all its forms was an intended part of the created order. Genesis 1:27 is viewed by some contemporary scholars as teaching that males and females were equally created in the image of God, and this gender differentiation and the institution of erotic and genital sexuality were hailed by God and man as very good. Genesis 2:24-25 persuasively refutes any notion that conjugal relations between husband and wife are in any way contrary to God's intended order. In summary, Old Testament precisely from the book of Leviticus emphasize on how Israelite were instructed to re-frame and withdraw from sexual violation such as incest, bestiality, homosexual, lesbian, rape among others and live a life of purity, different to their neighbouring nation because they were counted as a bride of Yahweh.

To understand the treatment of sexuality in the New

Testament, one must first realize that the scriptures do not attempt to give systematic attention to the topic in the same way in which they treat the great doctrines of human depravity. Some of Paul's writings that have been understood as anti-sexual are better understood as being rooted in this view of eschatology. His positive, Hebraic affirmation of the place of sexuality in human existence is more clearly presented in Ephesians 5. From verse 1 to 21 of Ephesians 5, Paul, admonished the church to do away with fornication, uncleanness and filthiness that can easily corrupt their good manner, while in verse 22 to 33, Paul distinguished the responsibilities of husband and wife at home. A critical look at these verses pinpoint that Paul prefers that wife should be absolutely submissive to her husband, which was also in line with the Yoruba belief.

From the angle of classical reformed theologians such as Hodge and Berkhof, the neo-orthodox theologian Barth views the gift of sexuality as fundamental to the image of God which humans reflect. Barth and others, suggest that human sexuality reflects the differentiation of persons within the Godhead and God's intimately relational nature. "God created man in his own image, in correspondence with His own being and essence ... God is in relationship, and so too is the man created by Him." (Brunner, 2001). Thus, our sexual natures reflect the nature of the Creator of the universe.

Amolo (2006) is of the opinion from Paul's concept on sexual union that sex within marriage is a divine design in order that the husband and the wife may appropriately complement one another. Any deviation from this norm draws stern condemnation from Paul. In Romans 1: 21-27, he talks of sexual perversion among the Gentiles, as a result of their mindset. He describes such acts as 'unnatural', dishonourable, shameless and 'an error' for which offenders will face the wrath of God. Sex within marriage is meant to be an expression of conjugal love between husband and wife. This brings us to the point that sex should be an exclusive relationship, which is expected to be performed within marriage and with only a single sex partner.

Sex is a marital obligation, the discharge of which must be reciprocal (1 Cor. 7:3, 4); it should be mutual and regular. Sex within marriage is mutual sharing of the entire personality with the partner (1Cor. 6:15, 16). It is a communion and act of communication which physically demonstrates the 'one flesh' union that exists between married couple. He strongly discourages abstinence within marriage except for a short period in order to concentrate on prayers (v.5ff). It has been argued that Paul conceives sexual intercourse and cult impurity, hence the indirect recommendation that couples should abstain from sexual intercourse during the period of prayers.

It is further stated that in Paul's mind is a strong link between sexual intercourse and cult defilement, and that sex and holiness are antithetical. Similar idea can be found in the Old Testament, where sexual intercourse does not only make the sexual partner unfit for cult participation (Lev. 15:18, Exod. 19:15), but also renders the male partner unsuitable to prosecute Yahweh's battle (2 Sam. 21:4-6) (Amolo, 2006). Despite the teaching in the Old Testament, it is believed that this idea ought to disappear

with the inception of the Christian faith. But Paul's recommendation for suspension of sexual intercourse for prayers has no cult undertone. It is only for a period of spiritual retreat. Judaism likewise accepted such exception. Paul affirms the positiveness of sex in marriage and he regards it as integral part of conjugal obligation; a debt, a worthy due of married life (1 Cor. 7:31). Seamand (2003) observes that men and women are the only creatures able to have sexual relations face to face. Sex communication is the highest and most intimate form of communication. It is psychosomatic-pneumatic notion. Sex in Paul is said to have a dialogistic character. Paul regards sexual relation in marriage as a means of fellowship that can cement and so stabilize the marriage.

In addition to the above view, Omowole (2006) adds that the New Testament teaches about sex in marriage which is indissoluble and honourable and that it has its basis and norm in God's act of creation. As recorded in the Gospels, "in the beginning of creation, he made them male and female, and the two shall become one flesh" (Mk. 10:6). The practical consequence is clear and is drawn by Jesus in a new word of institution: "Therefore, what God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (Mk. 10:9). Apart from different Biblical data presenting God as the author of the marriage institution with many mutual benefits to be enjoyed by the legitimate couples, HE still frowns at some forms of sexuality. Gwamna (2006) emphasizes unlawful sexual relations that are abhorred by God comprising incest, adultery, lesbianism, homosexuality and bestiality. He further states penal actions against sexual sins. These include cutting off from people, death, burning with fire and excommunication from the people of God.

The integral relationship between the physical and the spiritual dimensions of human existence also meant that what a person did "in the body" was important for his or her relationship to God. The Christian's body is a "temple of the Holy Spirit," Paul asserted. From this principle, "Honour God with your body," (1 Cor. 6:18-20). Augustine's (2007) writings were the central pillars of the thinking of the church until the reformation. He argued that the conjugal act in marriage was in itself sinless since it led to procreation, but paradoxically suggested that the pleasure attached to the act was a consequence of original sin and that erotic desire was a product of man's lower, fleshy nature. In summary, right from Jesus statement to Pharisee in Mathew 19:3-9 and statement of Paul the apostle from Corinthian and Ephesian, it could easily be denoted that that issue of sexual violation and immorality are not in the plan of God for his people. The tenets of the New Testament on sexuality is to run away from anything called immorality. New Testament speaks more of immorality, while Old Testament speak more of sexual violation. What both of Old and New Testament are emphasizing is living in a purity of life.

Sex and Sexuality among the Yorùbá

Yoruba people occupy six (6) states, namely, Lagos, Ògùn, Òyó, Òşun, Òhódó and Èkìtì, while Kwara and Kogì which were carved out of the formal Northern Region are partly Yoruba states. The Yorùbá, though culturally homogenous, are differentiated into regional

sub-groups, like the Ọyó, Ịjẹbú, Ifẹ, Èkiti, Ègbá, Ịjẹsà, Ọ̀ndó, Ịkálẹ̀, Ịlájẹ, Àkókó, Ọ̀wò, Ègbádò and others. To Yorùbá people, sexuality contains and constitutes so much of life, it is liable, by the same token, to be extremely destructive of life, if mishandled (Lawal, 2004). From an interview with Adéyemí, he cited that, some aspects of Yorùbá life are not openly discussed, and one of it is sex. Sexual activities are not discussed openly when children are around. Male and female are trained, in a right way from their youth to their marriageable age, within the training process or ages, from the period of infancy to late adolescent, and adulthood to old age. The training starts when a girl-child is growing up and started having meneche; she will be trained on how to sit down, how to dress, how to close legs whenever they sit down. If they dressed in a way that is against cultural norms, they will be corrected, when she reaches puberty age, and she will be taught on how to be tidy during menstruation. In Yoruba society, they do not allow careless interaction between male and female. Parents look out for suitors that they will later marry. They train them to maintain virtuous life through chants, riddles, folktale and oriki. Through folktale they know that sexual violation is wrong, they make them know that: (i) you cannot be involved in premarital sex; (ii) you cannot go to another man's house, they train them through do as I do, (practical) they don't set rules for (èèwò), there are not written rules but there are what they called taboos (èèwò) and everybody is open to this, right away from childhood. Sex is regulated, sex is meant for married couple, sex is not for enjoyment, sex is for procreation and marriage is compulsory not optional, but there are categories of people who turned to be goddess, and some people also get marry to gods, but to a normal person, marriage is essential.

He quoted more that:

Whiteness is the purity of teeth

Roundness portrayed good neck

Good breast gives honour to woman

According to Ifá corpus to èjì odì

Seeking for child bearing every day

Its on till male and female have intercourse

Before they gave birth to children.

Kisembo (2005) and his colleagues also explain that:

The generation of life was a matter of concern for the whole community, there were strong sanctions against those who indulged in sex for selfish, that is, destructive reasons. Sexuality and its powers were understood as permeating every level of human existence: interpersonally relationships and matters of rituals. Sexuality was looked upon as mysterious and sacred. If it were the misused, evil surely resulted. Initiation rites prepared the adolescent for the right use of his/her sexuality, to get married and raise a family.

In addition, sexual relation is a means to an end, and that end, once again, is procreation. However, to achieve this end, the use of sexuality must be "healthy" or life-promoting. It must not jeopardize the totality of the well-

being of the community (Magesa, 2003). And so, not surprisingly, sexual taboos must be strictly observed. Briefly put, however, and within prescribed limits, sexual relations in African Religion (where Nigeria, and South Western of the country are also paramount) enjoy wide leeway and with little attached shame.

In the Yorùbá in the contemporary society, morality occupied every facet of their life. First, Ifá corpus serves as veritable source of Yorùbá moral values. There are stories in the corpus that teach people about right and wrong conducts. Secondly, proverbs abound on Yorùbá moral values. Proverbs are described as "the poetry and the moral science of the Yorùbá nation." (Lawal, 2004). Thirdly, there are taboos called èèwò (things forbidden). Fourthly, pithy sayings, customs, stories, folktales and traditions of the people generally serve as sources of moral values which are used to guide the day-to-day affairs of the society. According to Ịdòwú (1998): "To the Yorùbá, man's character is of supreme importance and it is this which Olódùmarè judges." Thus, the demands which Olódùmarè lays upon man are purely ethical.

Human well-being on earth is understood to rest upon character. Among the Yoruba, morality is expressed through the concept of Iwa, often translated as "character." For the Yoruba, Iwa is the very essence that makes life meaningful and joyful, for it is pleasing to God. Good character, therefore, is regarded as the central quality that guide a person's life. Indeed, it is this quality that sets a human being apart from a mere brute. (Idowu, 1998). Ịwà (character) therefore is of great importance in Yorùbá morality. There is the belief that a person's character can affect his/her destiny for good or for bad. To the Yorùbá, a good destiny must be supported by one's character.

The Yorùbá society frowns at pre-marital sex. Sexual satisfaction is strictly reserved for married people. Even a betrothed wife is not expected to have sex with her fiance or anybody until her bridal night. Thus, it is usually a thing of pride for the bride and members of her family on the night of wedding if she is found to be a virgin. It is a sign of her faithfulness while with her parents. On the other hand, it is shameful for the bride and her parents if it is discovered that she had known a man prior to the wedding night (Fadipe, 1999).

To the Yorùbá, the primary purpose of marriage is sustaining the Yorùbá race through legitimate and responsible procreation. In the earliest times, great importance was attached to virginity (Fadipe, 1999). No sooner had modernity (literacy, colonialism, capitalism, individualism, among others) crept into the hitherto preliterate, subsistence agrarian, communal Yorùbá society than this great importance attached to virginity waned and almost disappeared. But it did not tamper with the aforementioned primary purpose of marriage among the people. Pre-marital sex became acceptable due to people discountenance to biblical injunctions (Awolalu, 2005). This shows the extent and level of atrociousness in our society.

Adéniyi (2006) observes that some sayings among the Yorùbá show their beliefs and attitudes towards sex. For example, a popular saying among contemporary Yorùbá

society is this: “Ojoojúmọ kọ lobinrin ní rí ọkọ rẹ” which literally means “it is not every day that a woman sees her husband”. This word ‘see’ is a euphemism for sexual intercourse. Thus, the meaning of the statement is that it is not possible for a woman to have sexual intercourse with her husband everyday. Sexual violation between Yorùbá husbands-to-be and wives-to-be in the olden days was not welcome since they were not encouraged to engage in sexual intercourse before marriage. They play occasionally by imitating adults: husband, wife, brother, sister in a fictitious married life. Èkún iyàwó, nuptial chants, among the Ọyọ, Ìbàdàn, Ọṣun sub-groups of the Yorùbá land address mainly the envisaged problems and prospects of wifhood and motherhood (Faniyi & Ladele, 2000).

Sexual violence was not common among the Yorùbá in the past, not like today. When it occurs, elders punish culprits accordingly. For instance, a married woman denies her husband intimacy, the elders will call her to order or appease her as the case may be. If a married man maltreats his wife, his elders will correct him firmly because they know that the wife belongs to the whole family; and alienating her may spell doom for the good image (name) of the family in particular, and their lineage in general (Lawal, 2004).

Rivalry among co-wives is a veritable source of sexual violence in the Yorùbá society. This is probably why Ifá (òtùrùpọn méjì), the Oracle divinity, advocates for the one man, one wife ideal situation because, according to the Ifá oracle: When they increase to two or more than that, they become envious, scatter the household, laugh decisively at one another, accuse one another of destroying their husband’s fortunes, become wicked, witch, blame one of their groups for bringing bad luck to their husband, accuse the eldest wife of using their husband’s wrapper-cloth and accuse one another of forcing herself upon their husband (Idowu, 1998).

Sexual intercourse and the methods of carrying it out are not discussed openly with children, but it is taught to them cautiously at the appropriate time, in closed groups. Married couples also discuss and express it purposefully for procreation mainly. Anxiety is not encouraged at all in this regard. That is why a bridegroom is usually politely kept out of the house while his newly wedded bride is being brought in. He would meet his wife after the ritual washing of her feet has been done. Illicit sexual intercourse is not encouraged at all by the Yorùbá culture. The pleasure in it is, insatiable (sex cannot satisfy human). Hence the aphorism, Ènu kò mọ mo-je-rí (The mouth does not know “I-have-eaten-once”). Therefore moderation, sexual discipline (continence), is the rule for a cultured Yorùbá person. Sexuality is central to Yorùbá life. Both in the olden days and in modern times, the Yorùbá culture emphasizes the necessity of experiencing and expressing this aspect of human nature legitimately. Illegitimate sexual relations are not condoned; but they occur as exceptions to the rule of sexual continence (Fadipe, 1999).

In the Yoruba worldview, sexual relations are a means to an end, and that end perhaps is procreation, because sexuality is considered healthy and life-promoting. Sexual relations in Yoruba religion per se enjoys wide leeway

with little attached shame. Within these confines, sex is a good thing, and it is a subject of much unabashed conversation. It is the most obvious and pragmatic way of transmitting and preserving the force of life (Scully, 2010). It is for the purpose of sexuality that humanity continues to perpetuate itself and the ancestors are assured of remembrance and honour. Sexuality is essential for the preservation and transmission of the vital force, therefore, it must be strictly protected from any kind of abuse.

Sexual Phenomenon in Ifá Corpus

As contained in Ifá corpus, human sexuality is an issue which, at least for religious people are believed to have been crowned creative act of God and set in motion, the process of procreation through secondary means. It is perhaps the most difficult issue confronting man in all history due to issues which emerge from man. Sex ought to be free from adultery, casual sex, flirting, prostitution, homosexuality, masturbation, seduction, rape, sexual harassment, pornography, bestiality and abortion, all of which are expressed in fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values and practices (Alaba, 2004). Sexuality in Ifá corpus has been defined variously to mean, the condition of interpersonally relationship between male and female which may be associated with or leading up to, genital union, which has nothing to do with lesbian, bestiality, homosexual, rape, to mention view. Therefore, expressing it outside union constitutes abuse. In Ifá corpus, humans are created as relational beings and sexual pleasure is the pinnacle of that relationship. Ifá teaches purity in sexual act and condemns immorality in marital commitment. Sex is a human problem as well as a gift of the creature to be seen as invitation to communion; its understanding pervades all ethics and understanding of spirituality (Atanda, 2002).

Human sexuality therefore, is everything that constitutes an individual to be identified as a man or a woman influencing their entire personality and life in many significant ways and conditions individual maturity and social integration. It should be noted that the actual differences between men and women in Yorùbá culture is not necessary inmate or immutable. They are due partly to social and cultural conditioning that apportions certain quality or characteristics has been typically masculine (strength, initiative, logical reasoning) or feminine (sensitivity, warmth and submissiveness) (Awoniyi, 2014). Apparently, from Ifá corpus, human sexuality is a means to express sexual sensation, related intimacy and fullness of love between a man and a woman and biological as the means through which a child is conceived and the lineage is passed from one generation to the next. Therefore, it is holistic, involving the body, mind and spirit.

From an interview with Chief Ọkánlàwọn, and Chief Prince Adífàlà Jókòtoyè, Yorùbá sex life is in stages. Sexuality in Yorùbá tradition is sacred. The type of work they do dictates their sex life. For example, a king cannot engage in sexual abuse, and also, most adherents of Ọbàtálá are married to the divinity and they may not involve in sexual relations for certain period. It gets to a stage that they don’t involve in sex again. In Yorùbá

setting, they may will a woman to you, in the same family, in as much the husband is no more alive. In Yorùbá society, with an example of Ìjèbù, Ìgbókòdá (Ìkálè), they prefer to give their daughter out in marriage with virginity, they use it for checks and balances. Sex is not for pleasure, sex is based on tradition and procreation. During Egúngún festival, chants will be made to remind every family of their taboo/forbidden (Èèwò), because each family has its social mechanisms to make sex distinct, because every lineage has his/her protection and retreated their children from marrying outside. Yorùbá men marry many wives because of economic reasons and most of the time, their social mechanisms dictate if they will marry many wives and their lives are guided by their religion.

From an interview with Adéyemí, among the hunters, the worshipers of Ògùn divinity, it is a taboo as a hunter you cannot sit where the wife of your fellow hunter sits down, it means that you have evil intention towards her. You cannot watch a woman from the back, you cannot talk to a woman face to face. By doing this, it means you lust after her and it could be denote as sexual violation. This is in line with Jesus injunction on how to live a holy life, that if a man lost after a woman, he has already committed adultery with her.

Sexual Violations in Yorùbá Society

Sexual violation is a serious problem in Nigeria, most especially, South Western part of the nation. Sexual violation refers to sexual activity where consent is not obtained or not given freely. Sexual violation may be defined as erotic sex that is absolutely not in concord with order of sex of a particular society or nation. It could also be seen as a type of sex that propels an individual to work against what the order of nature, culture and norms of each particular nation demanded from her citizen (Kunhiyop, 2008). Aside that, it is a type of sex that can be very traumatic in experience because of the shock, self-blame, shame, depression, fear/anxiety among others. Anyone can experience sexual violation, but most victims are female. Sexual violation in Yorùbá Society has to do with walking against the laid down rules, cultural setting, taboo and norms (Yerokun, 2025). Meanwhile, this rule means to safeguard and direct behaviour, character and moral life of an individual, by inculcating discipline to an individual and liberate a particular society from an incurable diseases and furious attacks of deities.

Oláléyè (2015), asserts what Ifá says about homosexual and lesbian with Odù Eguntan-se, as a stepping stone. He reports that, homosexual and lesbian are very strange to Yorùbá society. Meanwhile, some scholars have not mentioned specifically about the view, action, reaction and belief of Yorùbá from Ifá perspective on incest, homosexual and lesbian (Odegbola, 2014). Visibly, the incident makes someone to be weak and makes one to think otherwise.

According to Roy (2003), family is the basis of human society. In other words, there is no society without family. It is the fundamental social group on which the conception of society rests. The family is not only the basis of social group; it is also viewed as an oldest institution of mankind. In Yorùbá society, apart from the family, expansion can

occur through marriage where husband and wife could be found. From Walter's views (2009), in Africa, before the 15th century, the predominant principle of social relations was that of family and kinship associated with communalism. Every member of an African society had his position defined in terms of relatives on his mother's side and on his father's side. Those things were crucial to the daily existence of a member of an African society.

Sanctions and Punishment in both Yoruba and Biblical Perspectives

Sexual misconduct has become increasingly prevalent in South-West Nigeria today. It is marked by causal and indiscriminate sexual relations, often involving men and women who are not bound together by marriage. Arówólò (2010) observes that the prevalence of promiscuity and sexual abuse can be attributed to numerous factors, including the influence of illicit films, the pressures of urbanization, the rise of individualism, among others. Òjó (2013), asserts that the problem of sexual violation is as old as human history itself. Acts such as adultery and licentiousness have appeared across successive generations since creation. In the Old Testament, Hebrew law explicitly forbids sexual violation, a principle that is also upheld in the New Testament. Similarly, in the Greco-Roman world, strict regulations existed against sexual misconduct, though they were applied primarily to married women. By contrast, it was not considered a crime for a husband to engage in sexual relations with a slave or an unmarried woman.

Adéwólé (1994) contends that sexual violation is a social problem that brings dishonour upon the offender. In Yoruba society, as in many other African cultures, it is regarded as a grave offense, often met with severe punishment. To curb such deviant behaviour, the Yoruba employ traditional mechanism such as Magun and Tesoo, which are believed to be highly potent in deterring and punishing acts of infidelity (Fabarebo, 1995).

From Adeyemi's point of view about mágùn and tésòò, he states that, the Yorùbá people do not just afflict sanction on sexual violations culprits with mágùn (don't climb charm, there are processes before sanction).

1. First stage – identification of the culprits through warning signals, observations and reports of people in the environment.
2. Warning stage in the grooves, shrines, meetings and during important festivals through songs and chants e.g. Ìkòrinjòni or orin èébù (singing songs that related to sexual violation). The culprit are warned to desist from anti-social behaviour such as sexual violation, incest, bestiality and other immoral acts.
3. Punishment stage –
 1. Placing of curse on the culprits at shrines and deity sites
 2. Beating of the culprits
 3. Spiritual attacks and afflicting with mágùn and tésòò

4. Ritual/sacrifice for cleansing of the land.

In Yoruba society, Magun and Tesoo are considered the ultimate deterrents against sexual misconduct, as both charms are believed to possess lethal powers. A man who attempts intercourse with a woman under the spell of Tesoo will experience uncontrollable vomiting and extreme physical weakness, often lasting the entire day. In the case of Magun, however, the consequences are more severe: unless the man possesses a counter-charm, engaging in sexual relations with a woman laced with Magun typically results in instant death. These charms are usually prepared by imbuing power into objects such as a thread or a single broomstick, which is then placed at the entrance of a house or room for a debauched woman to cross. From that moment, she becomes “marked” by the charm. Importantly, Magun is associated with specific taboos (eewo) that activate its potency. For example, if groundnut is designated as the taboo, a man who unknowingly engages with such a woman will be compelled to eat groundnuts; once he does, the charm is triggered, causing him to collapse, foam at the mouth, sweat profusely, and ultimately die. Within Yoruba thought, Tesoo and Magun are regarded as instruments of justice, designed to punish sexual offenders and curb wantonness (Fadipe, 1990).

From biblical perspective, scholars across biblical studies, anthropology, and legal history agree that sanctions against sexual violations were central to the maintenance of moral order, family stability, and communal identity in ancient societies. Sexual misconduct was perceived not only as a private transgression but as a threat to the broader social fabric. Adultery was treated with severity in the Hebrew Bible because it violated the marriage covenant and endangered family inheritance. According to Milgrom (2000), the sanction of death (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22) served both as deterrence and as a means of preserving communal holiness. Modern scholars see this as reflective of a patriarchal context in which marriage was foundational to economic and social stability. In addition, Wright (2009) argue that prohibitions against fornication (1 Cor. 6:18-20) and prostitution (Deuteronomy 23:17-18) were linked to the biblical version of the body as idolatrous (Hosea 4:14), while in the New Testament, church discipline replaced corporal punishment, emphasizing the repentance and restoration. Moreover on the issue of rape and sexual violence, Westbrook (2006) observes in his study of ancient Near Eastern law, biblical punishments (Deuteronomy 22:25-29) reflect broader Mesopotamian parallels where sexual violation was seen as a crime against both the woman and her family’s honour. Severe penalties including death in some cases highlight the seriousness of the offense.

On the issue of incest and homosexuality, the Holiness Code (Leviticus 18:20) prescribes death for incestuous and homosexual relations. Scholars such as Wenham (2008) argue that these sanctions were theological as much as legal, rooted in Israel’s call to be distinct from surrounding nations. These prohibitions functioned to safeguard covenant identity. Theological sanctions beyond legal punishments, biblical thought emphasizes divine judgement as the ultimate sanction. As Barton (2003)

notes, Hebrew 13:4 illustrates how sexual violations were believed to invoke divine retribution, ensuring accountability beyond human courts. From a scholarly perspective, sanctions and punishments for sexual violations in the Bible reflect a combination of legal, social, and theological concerns. It was designed to protect the sanctity of marriage and family, preserve communal and covenantal purity, and serve as deterrents against destabilizing behaviors. While physical punishments such as death or restitution were dominant in the Old Testament, the New Testament shifts the focus toward spiritual accountability, repentance, and community discipline, yet the seriousness of sexual violations remains constant across the biblical tradition.

CONCLUSION

An examination of biblical and Yoruba perspectives reveals a striking convergence in their treatment of sex and sexuality as matters of sacred responsibility and social order. Within the biblical framework, sexuality is construed as a divine institution, regulated by covenantal principles and safeguarded through moral injunctions that link personal conduct to communal well-being. The Yoruba moral tradition, particularly as expressed in the Ifa corpus, similarly situates sexual behaviour within the broader context of *iwa pele* (good character), emphasizing that violations of sexual norms disrupt not only individual dignity but also family honour and societal harmony.

Taken together, these traditions demonstrate that sexual integrity extends beyond private morality to function as a cornerstone of collective stability. Both perspectives affirm that the regulation of sexual conduct is integral to the preservation of community purity, the strengthening of social institutions, and cultivation of trust necessary for leadership and governance. Consequently, national purity and sustainable development are inseparable from ethical discipline in matters of sexuality, making the cultivation of virtues such as fidelity, moderation, and responsibility indispensable to the moral and structural progress of society.

RECOMMENDATION

In light of biblical and Yoruba perspectives on sex and sexuality as a key to national purity and sustainable development, the following recommendations are proposed:

Educational curricula at all levels should integrate biblical and indigenous Yoruba ethical perspectives on sexuality, emphasizing virtues such as fidelity, moderation, and responsibility. This would help inculcate moral discipline and equip young people to make value-driven decisions about sexuality. In addition, families should be empowered through faith-based and community-based initiatives to serve as the first space for teaching sexual morality. Parents and guardians must actively model and transmit values of integrity, since both the Bible and Yoruba traditions regard the family as the nucleus of societal virtue. Religious and cultural synergy faith leaders and custodians of indigenous traditions should collaborate to

provide unified moral guidance on sexual ethics, drawing on both the Bible and Ifa/Yoruba wisdom, society can construct a culturally resonant and theologically sound framework for addressing sexual misconduct.

To boot more, Government and institutions should enact and enforce policies that discourage sexual immorality, abuse, and exploitation. Laws protecting against rape, child marriage, and sexual harassment should be strengthened, while promoting a culture that values purity and human dignity. Leadership accountability political, religious, and community must be held to high standards of sexual integrity, as their conduct shapes public morality. Both biblical teaching and Yoruba ethics emphasize that leaders who lack integrity jeopardize not only their credibility but also societal trust and stability. Furthermore, national campaigns should be organized to highlight the dangers of sexual immorality, such as, family breakdown, corruption, and public health crises. Sustainable development strategies should not be limited to economics and infrastructure but must also incorporate moral and ethical considerations. Sexual integrity should be recognized as a critical cultural resource for building cohesive, just, and progressive societies.

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