THE CHALLENGES OF IMMORALITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON THE GROWTH OF CHURCH: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED CHURCHES IN IKWO L.G.A, EBONYI STATE

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ABSTRACT

The Church of God today should prepare to separate herself from claws of immoral acts. God is not God of confusion that would want His Church to be wallowing in immorality and see herself as holy before God who does not play with sin. Such evil acts sink the good image of the Church in the mud when necessary steps to curb it are not put in place. The research work adopts library/field based approach; this includes the study of related materials, books and the use of questionnaire and oral interview. Data were collected and analyzed and finding observed among which were the lack of focus on the message on repentance in Churches has encouraged immorality. The researcher therefore recommended that Church should educate their members about various forms of immorality and its consequence and teaching them God's standard of holiness constantly. He further recommended that cases involving sexual immorality should be addressed head - long with strict discipline for offenders coupled with prayers as an essential factor to arrest the situation.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Morality today is increasingly on the decay. Ethics as a way of ordered living, which propagates ideal communal life and human relationship, is speedily waning. There is concern in several quarters at the rate immorality is making waves in the society; the likely tendency is that there might be serious breakdown of law and order, which might lead to anarchy. It is said that a lawless and immoral society is prone to chaotic situation and anarchy. An ideal society is that which is devoid of violence, civil disorder, with minimal rate of crime and immoral practices and unethical standards. This is why sound morals and ethical standard have been the concern of man's social institutions in recent years. Hence, many campaigns in the society today are geared towards curbing immorality and other such voices and drama is a major instrument used by various anti- immorality' and anti-corruption campaign agencies. In Nigeria, the Church has been taking one of the leading roles in the campaign against immorality.

Moral according to Webster's University Dictionary and Thesaurus is adjectival word that is "of or related to character, particularly as regards to right from wrong." Morality is to be seen as the right motive on which man is supposed to act, the good which one ought to follow or achieve, the discerning power of conscience with which one determines or knows right from wrong, the law of mutual living able to yield positive action otherwise known as freedom of will. Ethics in theology, especially when referred to as Christian Ethics is the same thing as moral theology. Manton thus explains Moral Theology as "the study of how people should act in the sight of God."

The prevalence of immorality among members of Churches in Nigeria cannot he emphasized. It has grown to a level that creates fear and tension in the heart of anyone who has concern for the future of Nigeria as a nation and that of the teeming Christian populates of Nigeria. The society is grappling with many behavioral problems of the church members and clergy/pastors alike, which include fraudulent acts, intimidation, and drug offenses, just to mention but a few. In addition to the above listed crimes are publicized behavioral problems, such as heterosexual and homosexual activities.

According to New Testament of the Holy Bible, jealousy, killing, lies, adultery, fornication, theft, heresies, pride and several immoral acts are against the will of God. However, the Church is guided by the word of God, which is against all forms of immorality, but there are still some levels of immorality in Churches today.

 Statement of the Problem

There is an increasingly low level of morality and ethical standard in the society today especially in the Church, many interest groups have laid blame on modernism and developments especially the advent of modern technology and the internet. One of the outstanding remarkable virtues of a good society should be sexual purity, which has received little or no attention from the society today. In addition, Sexual immorality has eaten deep into the fabric of the society; it has become the mainstay of people's behavior. Fraudulent accumulation of wealth has also been the order of the day in Churches.

Researches have shown that sexual immorality and corruption has thousands of destructive effects on the society. However, the researcher is examining the issues of immorality in Church with the hope of identifying the way forward.

Purpose of the Study

This research work is aimed at achieving the following objectives:

1) To examine the issue of immorality in the Churches.

2) To determine the way forward on the issue of Church immorality.

3) To identify the factors encouraging immorality in the Churches?

1.4 Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the research would be of help in the following ways:

The outcome of the study would educate the Church leaders and the public on the issues of immorality in the Church and identifying the way forward towards minimizing it.

The research would also serve as a resource base to other scholars and researcher interested in carrying out further research in this field.

Scope of the Study

This study was carried out among selected Churches in Ikwo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.

Limitation of the Study

 The project faced some constraints such as time, fund, gathering of' materials and co-operation from questionnaire respondents at the collection of data. There was also problem of getting the documentation of Churches in case study, which posed a delay in the compilation of the work.

Research Questions

The following are the questions involved in the research:

1) What is Immorality?

2) What are the Causes of Immorality

3) What are the various forms of Immorality?

4) What are the challenges of Immorality?

5) How does the Immorality affect the growth of the Church?

Definition of Terms

The following words shall be given a proper definition as to the way they are to be used in this research project to enhance more understanding among the readers.

Morality: This is human attempt to define what is right and wrong about our actions and thoughts, and what is good and bad about our being and who we are.

Immorality: The quality of not being in accord with standards of right of good conduct.

Church: The word church is the group of believers. The word "church" is used to refer to the building where people congregate with other Christians. Also, it is referred to a particular grouping of churches or denomination. Biblically, "Church" means either universal church or local church. The universal church refers to all members of the body of Christ in all places and all ages.

Growth: This can he defined as the positive increase in size over a period of time.

Church Growth: This is the process of the Church as a living organism to increase quantitatively and mature qualitatively in response to the great commission of the Lord Jesus Christ.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the presentation of the method used in this study to accomplish its purpose on "the challenges of immorality and its implication on the growth of Church". The following areas are taken into consideration, the research design, and area of the study, population of the study, sample and sampling technique, sources of data and method of data collection as well as method of data analysis.

Research Design

This research design is the framework that specifies the types of information to be collected, the sources of data and data collection technique, a good design always ensure that the information gathered is consistent with the study objectives and the data are collected through the most accurate procedure (Anyanwu, 1994). This research design is descriptive.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised of all the selected respondents in selected Churches in the area under study which was about 80 respondents.

Sampling Design and Procedures

Sample is the section of element got from the population, which was be considered for the research work. Sample size for this study was got using Taro Yamane formula and simple random technique was used in selecting the sample size to give a fair chance to everybody. The above Taro Yamane formula being applied to obtain the sample size as:

$n =$ N

$1+N(e)^2$

Where n = Sample Size

N = Population

e = Level of Significance

1 = Constant

$n =$ 80

$1+80(0.05)^2$

$=$ 80

$1+80(0.0025)$

$=$ 80

$1+0.2$

$=$ 80

1.2

∴ n = 67

Instrument for Data Collection

In the course of this research work, two types of data were used.

Primary Data: This is known as first class information obtained from the respondents through interview, personal observation and presentation of questionnaire to the respondents.

Secondary Data: These are information obtained from the existing work done by various authors such as textbooks; publish journals and information from internet.

Method of Data Collection

The method used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire, which was divided into two sections A and B, was prepared and administered to the respondents in Christ Apostolic Church Academy, Ibadan and the instruction was to tick the right answer from the boxes provided.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using simple percentages and tables to reveal the magnitude of the study and presents in a tabular form for consciousness and easy understanding. All data were coded using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS).

<div align="center">**PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA**</div>

Introduction

This chapter dwells on the systematic analysis and arrangement of data collected. The data collected was with questionnaire while the analysis was based on research questions and hypotheses stated earlier in chapter one of this study. Simple percentages and tables were used to analyze research questions. All data were coded using SPSS statistical package.

4.2 Presentation and Data Analysis

Table 1: Administration of Questionnaire

Variables		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Questionnaire filled and returned	63	94.0	94.0	94.0
	Questionnaire not returned	4	6.0	6.0	100.0
	Total	67	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

Table 1 above shows that out of 67 copies of questionnaire structured and distributed to the respondents in selected Churches in Ikwo Local Government Area, 63 respondents representing 94% of the returned questionnaire while 4 (6%) copies of questionnaire were not returned.

Question No 1: Sex

Table 2

Variables		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	52	82.5	82.5	82.5
	Female	11	17.5	17.5	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

Table 2 above shows that 52 respondents (82.5%) were male while 11 (11.5%) of the respondents were female in selected Churches in Ikwo Local Government Area.

Question No 2: Marital Status

Table 3

Variables		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Married	55	87.3	87.3	87.3
	Single	8	12.7	12.7	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

Table 3 above shows that 55 respondents representing 87.3% were married while 8 respondents representing 12.7% were single.

Question 3: Age

Table 4

Variables		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	20-30 years	7	11.1	11.1	11.1
	31-40 years	14	22.2	22.2	33.3
Valid	41-50 years	31	49.2	49.2	82.5
	51 and above	11	17.5	17.5	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

Table 4 above shows that 7 respondents representing 11.1% indicated 20-30 years, and 14 respondents representing 22.2% asserted 31-40 years. Also, 31 respondents representing 49.2% indicated 41-50 years while 11 (17.5%) of the respondents opted on 51 and above.

Question 4: How long have you worked in the Church academic?

Table 5

Variables		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-10yr	35	55.6	55.6	55.6
	20-30years	20	31.7	31.7	87.3

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	31 and above	8	12.7	12.7	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

Table 5 above shows that 35 respondents 55.6% worked for 1-10 years while 20 (31.7%) of the worked for 20-30 years and another 8 respondents (12.7%) worked for more than 31 years.

Question 5: What position do you occupy in the church?

Table 6

Variables		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Principal/VP	3	4.8	4.8	4.8
	Head teacher	35	55.5	55.5	60.3
	Teacher	25	39.7	39.7	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

Table 6 above shows that 5 respondents representing 7.9% were principal while 33 (52.4%) respondents were head teacher and another 25 respondents representing 39.7% were teacher in the academic.

Question 6: Educational Qualification

Table 7

Variables		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	WASSCE/GCE/NECO	20	31.7	31.7	31.7
	ND/HND/BSC	34	54.0	54.0	85.7
	MSC/PGD/PHD	4	6.3	6.3	92.1
	OTHERS	5	7.9	7.9	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

Table 7 above shows that 20 respondents representing 31.7% were WASSCE/GCE/NECO holders, 34(54%) respondents were ND/HND/BSC. While 4 respondents representing 6.3% were MSC/PGD/PHD and 5(7.9%) of the respondents hold other qualifications.

Question 7: Are there any causes of immorality in the growth of Church?

Table 8

Variables		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agreed	5	7.9	7.9	7.9
	Agreed	5	7.9	7.9	15.9
	Undecided	15	23.8	23.8	39.7
	Strongly Disagreed	28	44.4	44.4	84.1
	Disagreed	10	15.9	15.9	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

Table 7 above shows that 5 respondents representing 7.9% indicates strongly agreed and agreed respectively, 15 (23.8%) of the respondents opted undecided and another 28 and 10 respondents representing 44.4% and 15.9% asserted strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively on the question.

Question 8: Are there any various forms of immorality in the growth of church?

Table 9

Variables		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agreed	23	36.5	36.5	36.5
	Agreed	26	41.3	41.3	77.8
	Undecided	6	9.5	9.5	87.3
	Strongly Disagreed	5	7.9	7.9	95.2
	Disagreed	3	4.8	4.8	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Table 9 above shows that 23 respondents representing 36.5 pointed strongly agreed while 26 (41.3%) of the respondents agreed that there are various forms of immorality in the growth of church. Also, 6 (9.5%) opted undecided and 5 and 3 of the respondents representing 4.8% indicates strongly disagreed and disagreed on the question.

Question 9: Are there any challenges of immorality in the growth of church?

Table 10

Variables		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agreed	30	47.6	47.6	47.6
	Agreed	15	23.8	23.8	71.4
	Undecided	9	14.3	14.3	85.7
	Strongly Disagreed	5	7.9	7.9	93.7
	Disagreed	4	6.3	6.3	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Table 10 above shows that 30 respondents representing 47.6% indicated strong agreed and 15 (23.8%) respondents affirmed that there are challenges of immorality in the growth of church while 9 (14.3%) of the respondents pointed undecided. Also, another 5 and 4 respondents (7.9% and 6.3%) of the respondents opted strongly disagreed and disagreed on the question.

Question 10: Does the immorality affect the growth of the Church?

Table 11

Variables		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent

Valid					
	Strongly Agreed	16	25.4	25.4	25.4
	Agreed	16	25.4	25.4	50.8
	Undecided	20	31.7	31.7	82.5
	Strongly Disagreed	6	9.5	9.5	92.1
	Disagreed	5	7.9	7.9	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

The above table 11 shows that 16 respondents representing 25.4% indicated strongly agreed and agreed respectively while 20(31.7%) of the respondents opted undecided that the immorality affect the growth of the Church. In addition, 6, 5 respondents representing 9.5% and 7.9% were on strongly disagreed and disagreed opinion respectively.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations for further studied.

Summary of Findings

This study was carried out to examine the challenges of immorality and its implication on the growth of Church with a particular reference to selected Churches in Ikwo Local Government Area To achieve this objective, four research questions were stated to guide this study. A structured questionnaire was used as the main instrument to gather data from 67 respondents in selected Churches in Ikwo Local Government Area. Out of this number, 63 (94%) copies of questionnaire were appropriately completed and returned for data analysis while 4(6%) copies of questionnaire not completed and returned.

The data collected from the respondents were analyzed using simple percentage and tables to analyze the research questions. The findings revealed that;

a) There are causes of immorality in the growth of Church. Paramount among these causes are inordinate ambition for material things and sexual perversions.

b) There are various forms of immorality in the growth of church.

c) There are challenges of immorality in the growth of Church; among which are modernism and/or technological advancement.

d) The immorality affect the growth of the Church.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher made the following recommendations:
The Church should educate their members about various forms of immorality and its consequence and teach them Gods standard of holiness constantly.
Cases involving sexual immorality should be addressed head- long with strict discipline for offenders coupled with prayers as an essential factor to arrest the situation.
Church leaders should serve as role models both in the cases of wealth acquisition and sex.

Conclusion

This study was carried out to examine the challenges of immorality and its implication on the growth of church with a particular reference to selected Churches in Ikwo Local Government Area Chapter one is the introduction covering background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions and research procedure as well as significance of the study etc. Chapter two is the review of related literature covering theoretical framework, conceptual framework and is God moral? on the subject of the study.

Chapter three was research methodology which included research design, area of the study, population of the study and sample size and sampling techniques, sources of data and method of data analysis etc. In chapter four, the data collected were presented, analyzed and interpreted while the summary, conclusion and recommendations were made in chapter five.

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