The roles of Christian parents and the church in sustaining morality among youth in a post-modern age

Church-Hill Amadi-Nche Ph.D.
Crowther Graduate Theological Seminary Abeokuta
Ogun State, Nigeria
E-mail: camadinche@gmail.com
Cell: +2348064123289

Abstract
The 21st Century Christian parents, the church, government and the society is faced with lots of challenges. One of such prevailing challenges is the issue of moral decadence among the youth. The effects of moral decadence as observed in recent times are increase in societal vices such as armed robbery, prostitution, drug trafficking, cyber-crime, e-smoking, fraud, banditry, kidnapping etc. These effects associated with the age of technological advancement have continued to impinge on the development of the Nigerian nation. Thus, this paper centres on the roles of Christian parents and the church in sustaining morality among youth in a Post-modern age. In the face of myriads of societal vices orchestrated by youth with its adverse effects on the Nigerian society, what should the Christian parents and the church do to sustain morality? How can the virtues of integrity, humility, right societal etiquette and conduct be instilled among the youth in the Post-modern era? This is the thrust of this paper. The paper adopts the descriptive method and argues that morality could be sustained in this age of technological advancement if Christian parents and the church rise to their responsibility to teach the youth the place and value of morality in their early age. The paper maintains that through committed education of the youth by their Christian parents and the church, societal vices could be eschewed and virtues instilled. The paper recommends strict discipline, active participation of Christian parents in the upbringing of their youth, and organization of goal-oriented seminars and provision of rehabilitation centres by the church.

Keywords: Challenges, moral decadence, post-modern age, societal virtues, youth

Introduction
The 21st century Christian parents and the church witnessed the advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) devices and applications comprising of radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network, hardware and software, satellite systems as well as the various services and applications related to them such as video conferencing and distance learning. These devices and applications, which enable quick dissemination of information and communication locally and in the global community, have also been noted for their adverse effects. For instance, before the arrival of information and communication technology gadgets in the African traditional society, moral virtues such as humility, love, respect for the elderly and constituted power, mutual existence, chastity, non-violent disposition, cordiality, sense of decorum, cleanliness, truthfulness, harmony etc, were instilled in the young ones through traditional education and such virtues were societally accepted. However, with the introduction of information and communication technology devices and services, and the multiplication of churches and other religious institutions in the modern times, there is a sharp decline in morality among youth. Vices which are obnoxious to the society such as drug trafficking, armed robbery, human rituals, kidnapping, cyber-crime, homosexuals, lesbianism, rape, e-smoking etc. are on the rise. The increase in the rate of these societal vices among youth locally and globally poses a serious threat to Christian parents and the church.

Consequently, this paper examines the roles of Christian parents and the church in sustaining morality among youth in the Post-modern age. What should the Christian parents and the church do to sustain morality in the face of technological advancement and religious proliferation? How can the virtues of integrity, humility, right societal etiquette and conduct be instilled among the youth?
The roles of christian parents and the church in sustaining morality among youth in a post-modern age

in the Post-modern era? How can the once cherished societally accepted virtues be inculcated among today’s youth? Besides, what can the Christian parents and the church do to rid the society of these menace and restore the accepted norms? This is the burden of this paper.

Clarification of terms

The operative terms in this paper are ‘morality, youth, church and Post-modern age’. N.S.S. Iwe (2010) citing Fagothey defines morality as “the quality in human acts by which we call them right or wrong, good or evil. It is a common term covering the goodness or badness of a human act without specifying which of the two is meant” (8). Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy remarks that the term morality can be used in a descriptive or normative sense. Descriptively, morality refers to the most important code of conduct put forward and accepted by any group or even by an individual while normatively, morality refers to a code of conduct that, given specified conditions, would be put forward by all rational people. In the context of this paper, morality refers to the set of standards that enables people to live communally in groups. It is what the people and societies determine to be right and generally acceptable.

The term youth is difficult to define. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines a youth as one who is young. It is especially the phase before a child becomes an adult. This may mean a period between age fifteen and twenty-five, and it also includes young adults from twenty-five to thirty years (Della Summer, 2008). The United Nations Organization (UNO) defines youth as those persons who fall between the ages of 15 and 24. Dayilim Danfulani and Atowoju Ayo (2012) remark that the specific age range that constitutes youth varies from one culture or society to the other. Also, the Western definition does not support with non-Western definition. They maintain that in traditional African societies, youth includes younger ages up to 35. In the Nigerian context, the term youth may include young people whose age fall between 15 and 35 years (1-2).

The youthful stage is a period when critical decisions that affect the entire personality of a human being is made. It is the time of opportunities, demands, and foundation for future strength, aspiration, ambitions and character. Pope John Paul 11 asserts that “youth is the age of hope, of promise, of enthusiasm, of plans and ideal” (Ezeh Dorothy, 2007). It could also be an age of regrets. Youth are depositories of talents, potentials, skills and strength for society’s sustainability, development, productivity and posterity. Dayilim and Atowoju opine that “Enthusiasm, energy and physical strength are significant qualities of youth however for these natural endowments to be harnessed, they must be steered in the right course” (6).

The term church in the 21st Century could be understood as the individual believers, the congregation of people from different denominations or communities and the whole body of Christ in the global community. In this context, the church represents the people called out from the crowd, separated from sin and commissioned to declare the undiluted word to the entire nation. The term post-modern age refers to the period of more intellectual form of thinking associated with technology; it is the age of technological evolution. It is characterized with mega trends such as changing technology, migration and urbanization (Oso Florence Adetoun, 2020).

Causes of moral decadence in a post-modern age

As observed previously, Christian parents, the church and global community is witnessing more crimes today than ever. The perpetuators of these crimes cut across both the young and the old but mostly widespread among the youth. There is no
day the print and electronic media does not report on crimes masterminded by youth. What could be responsible for moral decadence in this age of technological advancement leading to high rate of crime is the focus of this sub-theme. The paper reveals that there are various factors responsible for moral decadence in a post-modern age. They include but are not limited to the following:

**Parental negligence**

The present moral decadence in this age of technological enlightenment could be attributed to the uncaring attitudes of most parents who neglect giving proper training to their young ones. Most parents these days are too busy to give attention and discipline where necessary to their children. Many parents are oftentimes not available for their children. They pay teachers, nannies and house helps to play their parental responsibilities while they spend long periods out of the home in the name of making ends meet for the family. As a result of these acts, parenting, which involves not only giving birth but also giving warmth and security to insure sound psychological adjustment, discipline for moral development, and stimulation for intellectual growth, is not achieved. Similarly, inactive participation of most parents in the day to day affairs of their children’s upbringing such as talking to them on delicate issues, supplying answers to their questions, going on site-seeing with them, telling stories with moral instructions and giving them a sense of security and confidence contributes to moral depravity in this age of technological evolution.

Deji Komolafe Hezekiah (2020) remarks that the most trying periods of a child’s life is the adolescent period, which is the time between childhood and adulthood. This period is characterized with growth and manifestation of some maturity traits in the physical and mental formation of the child. At this stage, the youth feels that they know all, can do all and should be left to make decision for themselves, thus, lack of attention and lack of adequate discipline by the parents at this stage could lead to waywardness (103). Buttressing this fact, Oso opines that intentional single parenting must be discouraged at all cost. This is because there is a limit to which a single parent can satisfactorily care for a child. Many single parents are often stressed up and battling with their own psychological problems which weakens them from giving attention to their offspring’s needs. The joint effort of the father, mother, extended family, school and the larger society is essential to make the formation of the youth reasonable (329).

**Failure of government to provide employments**

The inability of successive governments to fulfil the task of governance which includes protection of the lives and properties of its citizens, provision of basic amenities and also provision of employment opportunities for the young people in the society is another cause of moral decadence. Gbenda Joseph and Mwuese S. Patricia assert that the unemployed nature of the young people in the Nigeria nation has become a social as well as economic problem. They observe that every year, youth graduate from the universities without employment opportunities. In such conditions, there is every tendency that social vices such as violence, armed robbery, looting, prostitution, political thuggery, drug abuse will explode (113). Unemployment which is a state of not having a job or work to earn a living has bedevilled Nigeria for quite some-time. People who cannot earn a living are susceptible to social vices such as armed robbery, drug abuse, kidnapping for ransom, banditry, killing for ritual purposes, internet fraud, illicit sex, prostitution and so on. The state of unemployment can lead to unhappiness, low self-esteem, frustration and even death. Apart from these social vices,
unemployed young people look at themselves as second class citizens unable to contribute to the development of the society.

**Influx of ICT devices and services**
Information and communication technology devices, applications and services such as the internet, cell phones, computer, hardware, software etc. when used wrongly by the youth is another contributing factor leading to moral decadence in a Post-modern age. Through constant and unregulated viewing, these information and communication technology devices and applications have the capacity to expose and corrupt the unguarded minds. Young people could be encouraged to imitate crimes, wrong dressing and behaviour seen on the screen. Therefore, the continuous exposure and access of youth to pornographic internet and social media sites with their peers help to increase the rate of crime as well as moral depravity amongst them. This is adduced because some of the sites accessed in the internet have moral devaluating inclinations. Information and communication technology devices, applications and services while on one hand seem to bring people together, on the other hand create social isolation. Thus, social isolation could lead to a host of sensitive, mental and physical problems which include anxiety, depression, somatic complaints among many others.

**Peer group**
Peer group has been identified as a very effective medium of education among youth in the sense that youth seems to trust and confide in their peers more than any other person including their parents. Grenz S. (1967) remarks that the peer group serves as a first learning group after the family. He explains that the children relate with people of their age easily, that is why they are easily lured into several immorality by their peers (49). Youth learn a lot of things among their peers particularly things they do not have access to in their family. Peer group gives them the chance to become independent and it also offers free interaction in which at times they code words and use argot which are mostly understood by the young people alone. Peer group plays a prominent and influential role in the moral education of its peer. It regulates the behaviour of each member and makes them amendable to the opinion of the group.

**Roles of Christian parents in sustaining morality**
It is important to state that both the Christian parent and the church have their roles to play in the development and sustenance of morality among youth in this age of technological evolution. Oso notes that the basic roles of Christian parents towards their children could be classified into three categories, namely: academic, morals, and spiritual formation. She maintains that the role of Christian parents in educating their young ones is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate alternative (325). Christian parents must rise to play their roles as providers, protectors, progenitors and guardians in the family in order to sustain morality. As protectors, Christian parents are required to provide safety for their family, and ensure a serene atmosphere that will enhance the proper growth and wellbeing of their children. Moreover, as providers, Christian parents are required to meet the material needs as well as the spiritual and moral needs of their children (Oso, 326). In other to eschew social vices such as drug abuse, prostitution, and riot, drug trafficking, etc. Christian parents must begin early to instruct their young ones on the dangers of engaging in these and other social vices. Early education by the Christian parent will help stern the risk of participating in such activities. Granted that mothers are viewed as the first educator and care giver in every home, the fathers must also
understand that greater responsibility is required of them.

Similarly, in other to sustain morality in a post-modern age, Christian parents must exert some measures of discipline and firmness in the raising of their young ones. The scripture remarks “Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray” (Prov. 22: 6NRSV) and “Those who spare the rod hate their children, but those who love them are diligent to discipline them” (Prov. 13:24 NRSV). Consequently, firmness in the discipline of children such as faithfulness to family altar, obedience to Scriptural teachings, associating with morally descent friends and respect for the elderly must be emphasized and ensured. Christian parents must create time to relate with the members of their home, supervise them, give instructions, directions and governance always. Christian parents must be available and accessible to members of their family in other to express love, warmth and affection for and towards members of their household (Deji: 103-104).

Equally, Christian parents must strive to live exemplary lives towards their young ones in the family and members of the society. This is because once moral tenets are properly taught and learnt in the family in the childhood development of socialization, the youth would treasure, respect and acknowledge these social values from their adolescent to adulthood. Ekeopara Chike Augustine (2011) asserts that, the family is one of the strongest socio-political institutions from which all public life emerged. Life began and ended in the family (43). The family is the rudimentary social unit in the society. It is the centre for the transmission of basic cultural norms and societal values held by a given people from one generation to another. Thus, Christian parents must strive to guard their family as the family is the basic institution of socialization, where morals are taught and learnt. In doing this, Christian parents must be proactive to check and know the sites their youth visits on a regular basis. This is because, the role of Information and communication technology (media) in the society which is to inform, educate, entertain and serve as the watch-dog of the society, is gradually being defeated as music, videos, movies and some publications online, have successfully polluted the minds of most Nigerian youth, thereby, promoting indecent dressing, drinking of alcohol, e-smoking and other dangerous intoxicants.

Roles of the church in sustaining morality
In order to sustain morality in this age of enlightenment, the church has the obligation to primarily teach and emphasize the true gospel. The church must also emphasize right morals which include proper mode of living, right manner of acquiring wealth, honesty, love, perseverance in a just course, respect for the elderly, fidelity, forgiveness, love for oneself and neighbour. The church must not allow the quest for money and mundane things to take the place of religious beliefs, tenets and practices. The church must emphasize the need to eschew wrong practices such as corruption, sexual misconduct, ritual killing, fraud, embezzlement of public funds, divorce and remarriage etc. and maintain discipline irrespective of who is involved (1 Cor. 5:9-13). Similarly, the church could organize youth seminars geared towards refocusing the youth who have been overtaken by these social vices, thereby, enabling them to achieve their course in the right direction. The Church could also establish prison ministry with the aim of bringing youths who have been imprisoned into the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, supporting them spiritually, physically and materially, while in prison and after their release. This is in addition to offering legal counsel/ assistance to secure their release and establishment of
ventures, especially the repentant ones and also assisting in their medical upkeep.

**Conclusion**
In view of the negative effects of information and communication technology in modern time, this paper examined the roles of Christian parents and the church in sustaining morality in a post-modern age. Moral depravity among youth in a post-modern age is a serious issue that calls for the concern of all stakeholders. This paper maintains that morality could be sustained among youth in this age of technological advancement if Christian parents awake to their responsibilities as teachers of moral values in the early development of their young ones, educating them on the societally accepted norms and values. The paper also maintains that the church could achieve their aim of sustaining morality through teaching and preaching the whole counsel of God, seeking the lost rather than emphasizing personal gratification.

**Works cited**


The Holy Bible New Revised Standard Version