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Common 21st-Century Social Vices Among the Youth

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ABSTRACT

This article looked at some prevalent social vices among young people in the twenty-first century. Social vices are a worldwide issue that cut across all demographics, not just in Nigeria. The counseling effects of social vices on children both inside and outside of the educational setting were covered in the paper. Prostitution, inappropriate dressing, robbery, cultism, pocket-picking, drug addiction, exam fraud, hooliganism, thuggery, betting, smoking, rape, and illegal substances are among the social vices. Among the causes of the rise in social vice are factors such as poverty, corruption, unemployment, peer pressure, inappropriate elder behavior, and broken homes. In general, all societal players have a role to play in finding a solution to this issue. To save the next generation from the aforementioned societal vices, intervention measures are crucial. Counseling efforts should include more of an emphasis on the effects that social vices have on young people both inside and outside of the educational setting. The amount of societal standards, culture, and traditions in every society in the 21st century has been declining but not being effectively monitored, it was determined. To save the future of the next generation, the following recommendation was made: Parents and guidance should teach their kids how to behave and conduct themselves appropriately in public. School counselors should plan workshops and seminars for teachers, students, and parents on how to encourage good behavior among the students both within and outside of the classroom with assistance from the government and school authorities.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The word "youth" is intrinsically related to the state of being young, particularly during the era between childhood and adulthood. The terms youth and young people are sometimes used interchangeably. Despite being commonly used in this context, the term "youth" is insufficient to describe young people. It mainly leads to unfavorable stereotypes about young people's behavior and character, both individually and collectively. Any person between the ages of 15 and 35 is considered a youngster, according to the African Youth Charter. According to [Igwe \(2014\)](#), social vices are antisocial behaviors that violate a variety of cultural norms and values. Provocative attire, sexual harassment, and prostitution, joining a cult, kidnapping, and infidelity are some of these behaviors. Socially dysfunctional people engage in socially negative ways, which leads to social vices. Almost everyone living in Nigerian societies is said to have engaged in at least one social vice, either directly or indirectly ([Okwu, 2016](#)). Several societal vices, such as drug use, Internet fraud, pool betting, test cheating, pornography, uncontrolled materialism, kidnapping, banditry, unemployment, and occultic practices, to name a few, pose a threat to the future of our children and the next generation.

The following are also included as prevalent social vices among young people: terrorism, gender and sex discrimination, the HIV/Aids pandemic, bribery, pornography, child abuse, exam cheating, cultism, drug abuse, and addiction. Social vices are pervasive in today's educational system among both sexes, especially among undergraduate students who are destined to become future leaders. Social vices are becoming more prevalent across the Nigerian system, but especially among young people. This encompasses moral decline, dishonest conduct, unrelenting terrorism, and dishonest business dealings. Massive societal difficulties that our young people must cope with will cause them to entirely fail unless we act immediately to save them. In Nigeria, young people are more likely to engage in social vices ([Kayode et al., 2014](#)). These individuals routinely engage in vices that are inappropriate for them, which leads to daily hangings from the gallows. These individuals can rule Nigeria in the future. Controlling teen involvement in social vices is essential to preventing the emergence of a generation of vipers and a corrupt society, as well as for the benefit of the world's future leaders and to maintain the expansion of our magnificent country ([Nwakanma & Igbe, 2020](#)).

2. METHODS

This study is a literature review. We took data from an internet source, including scientific articles in journals.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Concept of Youth and Social Vices

[Collins \(2017\)](#) stated that youth is the time between being dependent as a child and being free as an adult as well as accepting the ties that communities have to one another. According to Commonwealth, individuals between the ages of 15 and 29 are considered youth. According to Nigerian National Youngster Policy ([2009](#)), Youth is defined as a person between the ages of 15 and 35. The Nigerian National Youngster Policy however defines youth as anyone between the ages of 15 and 29 ([Dajo & Akor, 2021](#)). The English word "vices" has its roots in the Latin word "vitium," which refers to a flaw or imperfection. They refer to it as an unethical habit or behavior. Both young men and women frequently engage in the vices of prostitution, inappropriate clothing, robbery, cultism, pocket-picking, drug addiction, test fraud, hooliganism, and thuggery. Other vices include gambling, smoking, engaging in illicit

drug use, rape, having sex before getting married, and drinking. Social vices are abhorrent, damaging behaviors that the entire community disapproves of (Gomez-Bravo, 2020). Social vices are actions that stray from accepted moral norms. According to Asmau (2020), prostitution, indecent dressing, robbery, cultism, pocket-picking, drug addiction, exam fraud, hooliganism, thuggery, gambling, smoking, premarital sexual activity, and rape are vices that are common among young men and women. According to Omonijo *et al.* (2013), social vices are actions that transgress accepted cultural norms and codes of conduct in a particular community, under particular conditions, or in a particular location. The origin of social vices is bad behavior or socially awkward people. The word "social vices" in this article refers to improper behavior, negative attitudes, and unappealing personalities that have slowed the development of Nigeria's educational system.

3.2. Literature Review

Every culture abhors social vices because they are undesirable characteristics that are bad for peace, growth, and national development. The following conditions can lead to students engaging in social vices: lack of parental involvement, a dysfunctional family, poverty, peer pressure, unemployment, unhealthy imitation of the developed world, economic downturn, societal pressure, impatience or the desire to become rich quickly, indiscipline or ungodliness, laziness, and greed. Several comparable social vices, including cultism, exam-cheating, drug use, and sexual immorality, which affect both individuals and society as a whole, were found by Elujekwute *et al.* in 2021 among young people and students on several campuses. According to Obodoada *et al.* (2015), social vices also cause societal instability both within and outside of schools when innocent people, garages, market centers, and nearby towns are destroyed, which hinders national growth. According to Lukman (2021), social vices including rape, kidnapping, drug use, wearing provocative clothing, killings, and cultism on social media, radio, and newspapers are obvious indicators that the country has lost its pre-independence esteem with other countries. It makes sense that President Buhari of Nigeria would refer to the young people as "lazy youths" considering that they are supposed to be the backbone of the country. According to Apase and Fawe (2019), social vices span racial and even theological divisions to support the premise that they are universal. Despite worrying tendencies among young people, notably college students, and the inability of stakeholders to stop the threat in the Nigerian system, countless military and innocent civilian killings have lately happened in Nigeria.

3.3. Common Social Vices in Nigeria

3.3.1. Indecent dressing

In traditional African culture, modesty is linked to virtue and reverence (Lockhart, 2021). It's been suggested that how you dress affects how people speak to you. Sadly, this beloved tradition has been replaced with immoral wardrobe choices, even in religious situations. One's appearance can reveal the type of home one is from. As the culture stops perceiving anything wrong with men wearing bottom-grazing slacks or ladies displaying their body contours, this disgusting trend of societal vices is getting more and more accepted (yansh level). Girls frequently wear clothing that exposes their cleavage and other vulnerable body areas. Transparent materials, short or micro dresses, and fading denim are current trends. Nigerian youths enjoy wearing a variety of clothes, including apparel from other countries. They dress in British dresses, gowns, suits, German clothing, Chinese clothing, American pants, and suits. Social media and the internet hurt how our youth dress. On the streets and universities, it's common to see men and women who are only partially clothed or wearing

attire that exposes all of their vital bodily information. According to [Tamale \(2014\)](#), this pervasive vice has caused rape, pre-marital sex, unsupervised sex, low self-esteem, and terrible body image for many females, which can cause grief and rejection in later life for many. Sen. Eme Ufot-Ekaete, who in 2008 introduced a measure titled "An act to restrict and punish public nudity, sexual intimidation, and linked offenses," made a praiseworthy effort to lessen the uncomfortable threat. Under the proposed law, offenders would have been subject to a three-month punishment. The concept has generated controversy and criticism because it is likely to violate human rights.

3.3.2. Examination malpractice

To categorize people and place them in different social groups, the examination is used as the benchmark. It has the propensity to establish a meritocracy in which success determines position, power, and riches. Examining bodies including the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), National Tests Council (NECO), and West African Examinations Council (WAEC) undertook the search to pass public examinations to emphasize upon students the importance of tests. Cheating on an exam is when a candidate or other people conduct it improperly before, during, or after it to gain a good score. The issue of test malpractice, which includes things like exam leaks, cheating, impersonation, fake credentials, etc., has grown immensely wicked roots throughout the years, claims [Okurounmu \(2010\)](#). This allows candidates to get an unfair advantage over other applicants. Ghost centers, script substitution, bringing in unauthorized materials, copying, giraffe, writing on body parts, and collaboration with academics and invigilators/supervisors are further exam fraud strategies.

3.3.3. Cultism

The word "cult" in modern English refers to a social group that is identified by its peculiar religious, spiritual, or philosophical beliefs and rituals. Secret cults or societies, according to [Ogbonnaya \(2012\)](#), are groups whose members swear an oath of secrecy regarding their identities, signs, and passwords all of which are entirely hidden from the public—and who frequently threaten violators with severe repercussions. With potential primary objectives to defy convention, reignite a long-standing rivalry, swear by a deity with human blood, and engage in other actions that are only available to members. The choice to join may be voluntary (because of a need for recognition, poverty, the fear of failing or being rejected, or depression), influenced by peer pressure, or forced based on academic ability or family wealth and influence. Due to the extent of vice in the nation, they used to operate covertly but now mercilessly kill and maim their competitors and innocent bystanders in broad daylight without the permission of the authorities ([Igwe, 2014](#)).

3.3.4. Drug abuse/alcoholism

Substance abuse is characterized as drug use that significantly impairs a person's ability to function socially and physically. Peer pressure, poor parenting, parental influence, parental unemployment, despondency, and attention-seeking are a few elements that have an impact on drug misuse. [Okatachi \(2020\)](#) studied the risk variables for drug use in the Nigerian cities of Kano and Lagos using a sample of 144 people. The study examined how gender, family history, drug use, and expertise affected these outcomes. The study discovered that: males tend to abuse drugs more than females; children from unstable homes are more vulnerable to drug abuse than children from stable homes; children from families with low socioeconomic status are more likely to abuse drugs than children from families with high socioeconomic status; children from polygamous families are more likely to abuse drugs than

children from monogamous families; and children with single parents are more likely to engage in drug abuse than children with two parents. More people who responded (66.67%) did not know the risks of drug abuse before they started using. College students are increasingly becoming dependent on drugs and alcohol. Currently, hard drugs like Tramadol, Refnor, cocaine, marijuana, gegemu, madras, valium, tutoring, and many alcoholic beverages are frequently mixed with Coca-Cola. Reduced perception, memory loss, contempt for established authority, mania, aggressiveness, and untimely death are just a few of the side effects ([Colvin & Mermelstein, 2010](#)).

3.3.5. Terrorism/violence

The term "terrorism" is frequently used to describe acts of violence committed against people in the name of a political or ideological cause. By fostering xenophobia, decreasing tourism, and increasing insurance claims, terrorism has an indirect impact on the economy. Terrorism is defined as a planned act of violence against a specific target to destabilize a duly established government, instill terror among the public, and achieve certain social and political goals. Since 2003, this act has plagued Nigeria and had two negative effects on the country: a severe humanitarian crisis on the one hand, and difficulties with insecurity on the other. The Terrorism Provision Act of 2011 was passed to prosecute, punish, and ultimately deter Nigerian people from engaging in terrorism. Nevertheless, quite a few Nigerian citizens continued to commit terrorist acts. Due to their encouragement of the damage of property and the taking of human life during crimes that violate peace and security, these statements are now widely employed. Study on children and youth involved in organized armed conflict in Nigeria revealed that area boys and Al-majors have emerged as targets of the very society that alienated them due to youth dissatisfaction and frustration brought on by widespread poverty and unemployment.

3.3.6. Cyber crime

Cybercrime has gotten worse in our culture and is especially common among young people, to put it bluntly. It involves engaging in illegal activities like internet fraud, phone hacking, and bank information theft while using a computer as a tool. [Panda \(2018\)](#) asserts that cybercrime is the use of computers or networks to perpetrate crimes involving computers or networks to transmit malware, illicit data, or illicit images. Cybercriminals may utilize a device to disable it or gain access to a user's private information, critical company information, or government information. Internet users have experienced substantial problems as a result of cybercrime, which also poses a risk to national security or the victim's financial stability. Nigerian youths have escalated cybercrime to the point that victims are mesmerized by regional charms on Yahoo+ and used as props in rituals. [Panda \(2018\)](#), went on to state that the types, approaches, and levels of difficulty differed in each category. Cyberstalking, social engineering, attacks, potentially unwanted programs (PUPs), identity theft, phishing, unlawful or restricted online content, online scams, and exploit kits are a few of the categories that have been recognized.

3.3.7. Sexual promiscuity/prostitution

It denotes immoral behavior when engaging in sexual activity with the non-dominant sex, such as rape, extramarital sex, and any other sort of sexual aggression. According to [Okafor and Duru \(2010\)](#), sexual promiscuity is extremely common in our universities and there are typically multiple networks on each campus. Sexual promiscuity is the use of one's body for payment or recompense of any kind. Prostitution is another term for it. These are the kinds

of services provided by women who are after money or who are eager to reach particular degrees of success. Sexual promiscuity is pervasive in our universities and there are numerous networks in the average school. The majority of these students canvass for donations outside of their residence halls and dormitories. Virginity was previously highly valued in traditional African society, but it is now virtually extinct. Today, those who remain virgins are considered antisocial. Many people engage in it for financial gain, entertainment, to test their parents' power, as a social cue, to avoid long-term unemployment, or to achieve academic success. Some young individuals are unaware of how these illicit sexual behaviors can have detrimental impacts (Hussein, 2014). Many female students in tertiary schools, according to the study, engage in this behavior. They claim that because men are no longer frequent brothels and street prostitutes but instead choose students, it is more profitable to be a student today. At night, they boldly venture to adjacent cities, clubs, or other hotspots to conduct business with their customers directly to gain the most exposure to males who might want to use their services. Pupils who were given unrestricted liberty and freedom started to test the boundaries of proper conduct by abusing the freedom given to them as "adults." One of the factors is the neglect of parental duties.

3.3.8. Factors responsible for social vices among youth

Nigeria is a victim of high-level corruption, bad leadership, and political instability, all of which surely played a role in the social menace the country is currently facing. On the radio, there are many discussions on the primary causes of vices in Nigeria. One of the issues raised as one of the primary causes of societal vices is unemployment. Mentioning unemployment is appropriate given the frequency of young people living on the streets due to unemployment even though they are qualified and certified to work. Nowadays, young people engage in criminal activity that poses a significant threat to society as a whole, including kidnapping, robberies, fraud, violent protests, and dirty work. Due to a lack of employment, some young people have turned their resentment toward the public into acts like vandalizing oil pipelines, kidnapping foreigners and demanding a high ransom, and engaging in other actions that have a significant detrimental effect on the economy of the country and have unnerved the entire nation. Many households in the country are classified as having low socioeconomic status because they struggle to make ends meet each month. If only one family member works to support the other members' needs, the family cannot be financially stable.

The majority of the so-called youth are in this kind of predicament; many drop out of school because their parents can't afford the tuition; many were exposed to financial risks too early in life; and many felt there was no need for them to go back to school because they were aware of the country's unemployment situation. To stay with their buddies, they decided to engage in vices including child trafficking, auto theft, and even ritual homicide. According to Agbaegbu (2011), young people tend to trust their classmates who are close to them in age, an older friend who acts as a mentor, or the so-called school father or mother, with ease. Being born with a tabular rasa (blank slate), children have a strong desire to learn, have fun, and practice new skills. They consequently smoke, drink, and participate in a variety of criminal activities, which is in keeping with the adage that "bad communicators corrupt good manners." This illustrates the value of friendship and how people may influence one another either negatively or favorably depending on the type of relationship they had. The majority of young people from sad homes engage in social vices.

Youth may engage in a social vice for a variety of reasons, including parental neglect, inadequate supervision, a parent's lack of interest in their child, or a lack of guidance. Young people who are permissive will behave improperly because they think they can always obtain

what they want, no matter the cost. These adolescent groups are easily persuaded to commit violent acts and join cults to attract attention, direction, and care. Some abandoned ladies who needed a safe place to live and someone who could help them with their emotions ended up leading a couple's life on campus since their parents were too busy to help them. Through negligence and the attitude that they are too busy for their children, some separated parents have systematically destroyed the lives of their kids. Some parents even leave their kids in the care of housekeepers and family members, who subject the kids to social vices (Wollter, 2022).

3.4. Theoretical Model

The structural-functionalist perspective is based on the works of Talcott Parsons, Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, and Robert Merton. Societies, in the view of structural functionalists, are networks of interrelated parts that work together to maintain social stability and balance. The functionalist perspective that is widely held today is based on the writings of Durkheim and other traditional intellectuals of the nineteenth century. The human body is used as a metaphor for understanding society in this passage. The numerous organs and other biological components that make up the human body are essential to preserving our physical stability and well-being. Our eyes, ears, heart, and other sense organs assist us in seeing, hearing, and other bodily functions. Similar to how we can understand the body by describing and comprehending the roles that its components play in maintaining its health and stability, so too can we comprehend society by describing and comprehending the roles that its constituents—or, to be more precise, its social institutions—play in maintaining society's ongoing health and stability. Functionalism thus places a strong emphasis on the value of social institutions like the family, religion, and education in fostering societal stability. The structural-functionalist viewpoint gave rise to the two main theories of social problems: social pathology and social disorganization.

- (i) **Social Pathology:** The social pathology paradigm contends that societal issues are the outcome of a social "illness." Similar to how a person becomes unwell when their systems, organs, and cells stop working correctly, the society too becomes "ill" when its constituent pieces (i.e., elements of the structure and culture) stop working effectively. For instance, issues like crime, violence, poverty, and juvenile delinquency are frequently linked to the dissolution of the institution of the family, the collapse of the religious institution, and deficiencies in our economic, educational, and political institutions.
- (ii) **Social Disorganization:** The social disorganization theory of social problems contends that rapid social change disturbs societal norms. Societies experience anomie or normlessness when standards deteriorate or clash with one another. This point of view contends that social issues can be resolved by delaying social change and bolstering social norms. For instance, although it is against a social standard in our society for minors to use alcohol, this norm is lax (Elster, 1990). Consequently, from the standpoint of structural functionalist theory, it is obvious that the many participation of adolescents in various social vices is the cause of the poorer level of social institutions of the 21st century. The future generation will benefit greatly from early attention from parents' governments, religious leaders, and other stakeholders to derail the trend of societal sin.

3.5. Solutions to Social Vices

In this 21st-century era, several social vices are pervasive throughout all human communities. These cover societal and planetary levels in addition to interpersonal relationships. Insecurity, hostility, indiscipline, corruption, greed, communal, national, and

international wars everywhere, terrorism, kidnappings, murder, and plane crashes are just a few consequences of a very high level of societal decadence. Gambling, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, drug misuse, infidelity, and shamelessness have also resulted from it. All of the aforementioned social vices, as well as several others, might be cured, or rather eliminated from society, by enacting the steps listed below.

- (i) Morality and peaceful social coexistence: To attain these ends, one must accept and uphold all of the revelations found in the writings that were given to adherents of the great global religions.
- (ii) Cultural values: As a result of the taboo nature of the aforementioned vices in Nigerian society, there is a strong aversion to any behaviors that can compromise our cultural values.
- (iii) Constitutional punishment: To deter young people from engaging in vices both inside and outside of the classroom, the government and other constitutional bodies should enforce the appropriate consequences.
- (iv) Establishment of necessary workspaces and facilities: To keep youth from becoming idle, government and nonprofit groups should take all possible actions to support their proper functioning and appropriate engagement.

4. CONCLUSION

It is fair to say that social vices are on the rise among young people in the 21st century, based on the submissions to this study. Prostitution, inappropriate dress, robbery, cultism, pocket-picking, drug addiction, exam fraud, hooliganism, and thuggery are among the vices that young people frequently engage in. Both young men and women engage in these vices frequently. Betting, smoking, having sex before getting married, rape, drinking, and using illegal substances are among more vices. Among the various causes of the rise in social vice are variables such as poverty, corruption, unemployment, peer pressure, bad elder behavior, and broken homes. In general, all societal players have a role to play in finding a solution to this issue. With the rise in rape, suicide, drug abuse, corruption, robbery, cultism, pocket-picking, and kidnapping across the nation. The counseling center should assist the youth in defining and redefining their life objectives and aspirations to maximize their chances. The following locations require counseling services to be provided as a result. More attention should be placed in counseling activities on the effects of social vices on youths both inside and outside of the educational setting. Intervention programs are essential to combat the aforementioned societal vices and save the next generation.

The degree to which societal norms, cultures, and traditions have been eroding and not being effectively controlled in society in the twenty-first century has paved the way for the escalating flood of social vices. To save the future of the next generation, the following suggestions are made:

- (i) Children must be taught how to behave and conduct themselves appropriately by their parents and other adults to avoid becoming a burden on themselves and the wider community.
- (ii) Institutions should discipline learners to prevent lawlessness and blatant defiance of legitimate authority and to teach them how to follow rules and regulations in their society.
- (iii) School counselors should plan workshops and seminars for students and parents on how to encourage good behavior among the students both within and outside of the classroom with assistance from the government and school authorities.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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