



The effect of personality traits of people on the societal decadence of the new normal challenges and prospects

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Abstract

The issue of the effects of personality traits and its research into the new normal is essential to the establishment of healthy society. Decadence in the society is on the increase and it seems that the present society have accepted some of the societal evils as normal and cannot improve on it. In the religious society, the sermon by the Pastors, reverend fathers, Imams and Sheikh have not be able to have any meaningful impact, it only escalated the problem. It has been observed over the years with the support of many studies from different school of thoughts that the negativity of the effects of personality traits has led to living a pretense lifestyle at home, worship centre and workplace. Religion and the society are two straight line that can never meet. What a paradox! This has degenerated emotional development; the white society are disillusioned. The society is not healthy emotionally. The thinking, the feeling and the behaving of people has posed a big question of where is the society heading to. This paper employed primary and secondary sources to analyze the situation. There is a great neglect and ignorance of people both at home and the society in general either when there is commendation or condemnation in the way people behave in the society. They, been not satisfied resulted to every man to your own trait and this has made societal decadence prevalent. Individualism of the present age will continue to escalate societal decadence. There is the need for religious organization in this new norm to review our indigenous and cultural morality in order to meet up the challenges of moral decadence.



Key words: personality traits, healthy society, societal decadence, emotional, disillusion, orientation.

Introduction

Personality can be briefly described thus: .1.**Thinking** - Personality includes differences between people in how they typically think. Example: Do people tend to focus on the positive (optimists) or the negative (pessimists)? 2. **Feeling:** Personality includes difference between people in how they typically feel. Examples: Do people tend to be happy or unhappy? Do they experience intense emotions or not? Do they get easily angry? Are they especially sensitive to rejection? 3. **Behaving:** Personality includes differences between people and how they typically behave. Examples: Do they tend to talk a lot? Do they usually go along with what other people want or insist on doing things their way? Are they neat and tidy or sloppy and disorderly? Do they like to try new things or they always order the same thing when they go out to eat?

People differ from one another on behaviours related to traits. Using speech is not a personality trait, neither is walking on two feet. Virtually all individuals do these activities and there are almost no individual difference. But people differ on how frequently they talk and how active they are, and thus personality traits such as talkativeness and activity level do exist.

To have a personality trait, individuals must be somewhat consistent across situations in their behaviours related to the trait. For example, if someone is talkative at home, the individual tend also to be talkative at work. Societal decadence, has affected the values and moral character of Nigerians, especially the youths. Nigeria is not spared of the prevailing moral crises in the contemporary period. Many of these crises are however traceable to the new values ushered in during the colonization of Africa and any of which are in direct conflict with African values. Moral values are found in our religion, culture and traditions yet our youths, for one reason or the other are not that religious. Our indigenous culture and religion has been considered outdated and has been code named "barbaric". Nigerians now queue up to embrace westernization in its totality abandoning our indigenous culture and tradition entirely, thereby losing their identity. There are aspects of our culture that give credence to biblical injunctions of respect and morality. In the ancient Israelites, virginity was a thing of pride, and any act of infidelity carries death penalty. It is the duty of the parents and the priests to uphold fidelity in marriage, but the norm has changed whereas some religious organization will not join couple together without pregnancy. Homosexuality and



Lesbianism carry capital punishment. The civil right society has been clamouring for right of anybody to choose either for Adam to marry Steve and Eve to marry Evelyn instead of Adam to marry Eve and Eve to marry Everestus.

Moral decadence as a phenomenon, has been overlooked in our society nowadays, and it has led to a poor breed of youths in our society. The youths who are supposed to be leaders of tomorrow are getting themselves involved in vices capable of destroying their future. Religious organizations must rise to stem this. Character traits engendered by our social system that is, by our way of living are pathogenic which can affect an individual's personality as well as the society at large. In Nigeria today, there is widespread concern about the moral crises faced by the country. Moral decadence permeates all aspects of our public life and rampant corruption is noticeable. Personality traits is a characteristic pattern of thinking, feeling or behaving that tends to be consistent overtime and across rebrand situations. The most widely used system of traits is called the five factor model. This system includes five broad traits that can be remembered with the acronym OCEAN. Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism.

Openness to experience is most strongly associated with intellectual and creative outcomes. Highly open individuals tend to score higher on tests of creativity and intelligence, and to pursue scientific and artistic occupations. They are also more likely to hold liberal political and social attitudes, and to describe themselves as spiritual (but not necessarily religious).

Conscientiousness is an important predictor of achievement and health related outcomes. Highly conscientious students tend to earn higher grades, and conscientious workers tend to perform better in a variety of occupations. Highly conscientious individuals also tend to live longer, reflecting their tendency to engage in healthy behaviors (e.g., exercising, maintaining a healthy diet) and avoid risky behaviors (e.g., smoking, substance abuse, criminal behavior). They are also more likely to hold conservative political attitudes and religious beliefs.

Extraversion consistently predicts social outcomes. Highly extraverted individuals tend to have more friends and dating partners, and are seen by their peers as having higher social status. They generally prefer and perform better in social and enterprising occupations, and are more likely to adopt community leadership roles. Psychologically, extraverts tend to experience greater subjective well-being than introverts, especially in terms of the frequency and intensity of positive emotions.

Agreeableness is associated with a number of affiliative and prosocial outcomes. For example, highly agreeable individuals tend to be



better liked by their peers, and their close relationships tend to be more stable and satisfying. They generally prefer social occupations and are more likely to hold religious beliefs, perform volunteer work, and serve in community leadership roles. Agreeable individuals are also less likely to engage in criminal behavior.

Neuroticism is negatively associated with subjective well-being and psychological health. For example, highly neurotic individuals tend to experience lower levels of overall life satisfaction, as well as lower satisfaction in a number of specific life domains (e.g., job and relationship satisfaction). They are also at increased risk for various forms of psychopathology, including anxiety and mood disorder. Personality is a mirror of what you do and say. Essentially your personality defines who you are. Your behaviour reflects your personality and informs how different you are from others.

Personality: Culture, work and Health. When it comes to personality traits and societal decadence, there is the need to understand the impact of Culture, Work and Health. This write up will analyze one by one.: Culture has an important influence on how a person thinks and feel, potentially impacting the person's personal constructs and the way the person makes meaning out of his or her life. Culture also impacts a person's sense of self. One dimension along which Cultures differ is the continuum from individualistic Culture to collectivistic Culture.

What is individualist Culture?

(a) Individualistic Culture are seen as separate from one another, and independence is valued. A person's rights as an individual is often prioritized over obligations to others and Cultural traditions are relatively weak (b) Individualistic Culture tend to have higher levels of loneliness and depression, but on the other hand, they also tend to be more tolerant of individual quirks and idiosyncrasies, allowing for more diversity in lifestyles, preferences etc.

What is collectivistic Culture?

In collectivistic Culture, a person's obligation to their group (e.g. family) is prioritized over the person's own desires or personal goals. Social hierarchies and traditional Cultural traditions tend to be stronger. People tend to prefer privacy than being involved in joint activities. Collectivistic Cultures value groups harmony over personal desires or self advancement. Self-promotion is considered more acceptable in individualistic Cultures than collectivistic Cultures.

Personality at work. Personality has been shown to predict how well people do in school and at work. At work, job performances and success are related to different personality traits depending on the



job. One longitudinal study found that personality measured in adolescence predicted who was employed and how high the status of their job was 46 years later (Judge et al 1999). The people who were most successful at work as adults, as adolescence had been assessed as more extroverted, less neurotic, less agreeable and more conscientious than others.

Personality for health. Personality has been shown to predict how healthy a person is and how long a person lives (longevity). The traits most strongly associated with being healthy and living longer are high conscientiousness. High extroversion (especially the positive emotional aspect of extroversion) and low neuroticism. Some aspects of agreeableness (especially low hostility) have also been shown to predict longevity, but less strongly. Roberts et al. proposed three possible explanations why personality traits can predict health and longevity. First, there may be a biological link between some personality traits and physiological reactions that affect a person's health. Example: Hostility (a face of low). Second, personality may affect health – promoting or health damaging behaviours. Examples: People high in conscientiousness are more likely to get regular check ups and follow doctors' orders, and they are less likely to smoke. Third, personality may affect how a person reacts to sickness. Example: People high in neuroticism may be more likely to get especially stressed by the diagnosis of an illness.

Personality and relationship. In relationship, Personality has been shown to predict who is likely to have more satisfying romantic relationships, and more likely to get divorced. The personality traits most strongly associated with divorce are high neuroticism, low agreeableness, and low conscientiousness. The main reason personality can predict who gets divorced is that people with more pleasant personalities (low neuroticism, high agreeableness and high conscientiousness) have more pleasant relationships. However, Roberts and his co-authors provide three more specific possible explanations. Personality may predict who experiences more conflict and stress in their relationship.

Examples: People high in neuroticism may be more likely to create problems that could have been avoided. Personality may predict how people react to challenges in their relationship.

Example: People high in neuroticism may be more likely to see small obstacles as extremely difficult. Personality may affect the behavior of a person's partner.

Example: High disagreeable people may elicit more negative behaviors (e.g. criticism) from their partner. The Nigerian society is at a moral crossroads as the country is in a serious moral conflict. Right from the colonial invasion and conquest up to the present day, Nigeria has

witnessed progressive degeneration of morality. From one corner of the nation to the other, one can easily notice the fact that the erstwhile social order and character of the traditional Nigerian Society, which guaranteed honest living and maximum security of lives and property have dwindled and given way to a situation of suspicion and distrust. According to Iherue (2011), the interaction between modernity or western civilization and Nigerian precolonial culture has left a moral burden on the Nigerian Society. Today, the result is that the Nigerian society is in a serious moral dilemma. He observed that the texture of social life of contemporary Nigerian Society is riddled with family disorientation, divorce, marital infidelity, child abuse, high cost of living which have led to the escalation of other crimes such as ritual killings, child kidnapping, armed robbery, bribery and corruption which have become the order of the day (pp. 10-11). Similarly, Ugwu (2002) opined that "the Nigerian society is in a state of moral, social, political, economic, legal and educational decay" (p. 16). The brazen display of immoral behaviours in the society today is a clear indication of the high level of moral degradation in the society. To this end, the issue of moral degeneration in the Nigerian society requires an urgent attention.

Morality and Religion

The concept of morality appears very elusive to many. But its elusiveness does not consist in dearth of ideas concerning it, but in the fact that the concept has varying dimensions and perspectives (Okwueze, 2003). Morality just like ethics involves the idea of good or right conduct and it is utterly hostile to bad or wrong conduct. Morality involves a more or less clearly articulated set of beliefs about the nature and conduct of man. In his view on morality and religion, Agha (2010) posited that morality and religion have been closely connected in the history of human race. Traditional position holds that morality and religion are inseparable. According to this view, the one flows from the other, and morality has its sole basis and justification in religion. He further argued that both have emphasized personality in its relationships and have been concerned with conduct. It follows that the destruction of religion will automatically lead to the destruction of morality also. According to him, when men lose their hold on religion, nothing but moral confusion and decay will be expected. Hence, the confusion of our time in the schools and society. According to Gaukroger (2012), it was generally assumed in the 17th -19th centuries that religion provided the unique basis for morality, and without religion, there could be no morality. However, in furtherance of the discourse, Childress and Macquarie (1986) have this to say on the concept of morality and religion: Many religious people believe that morality and religion are the same and inseparable; for them either morality is part of religion or their religion is their morality. For others, especially for non-religious people, morality and religion are



distinct and separable; religion may be immoral or non-moral and morality may or should be non-religious. Even for some religious people, the two are different and separable. They may hold that religion should be moral and morality should be, but they agree that they may not be (pp. 400-401). Furthermore, other schools of thought like the secular humanists maintain that the decay of morality cannot bring about religious decline or vice versa. They assert that religion and morality are different entities that can be divorced from each other. They argued that the claim that religion and morality are twin brothers that cannot be separated, can hardly be substantiated. These secular humanists claim that moral duty is towards man not God (Agha, 2012). Be it as it may, no matter the swinging of the moral and religious pendulum, Agha (2012, p. 44) observed three main reasons that signify the connection of morality and religion thus: 1. The world religions give us actual examples of the age-long life's idea and goals. Traditional views see morality as an outflow from religion, indissolubly bound up with it. 2. The theories of philosophical morality are known and consciously followed by a comparatively small proportion of human race, while the world religious number their followers in tens and hundreds of millions. Without religion, there can be no effective morality since morality has its root in the supernatural, just like religion. 3. Moral philosophy must go hand in hand or side by side with religion. Therefore, moral decay is the logical consequence of religious decay. Again, religion as we all know is a major force in the lives of most Nigerians. Religion naturally speaks to its adherents about right and wrong, good and bad. For many Nigerians, the first and foremost moral guide is their own religion. While the theological doctrines of religion differ substantially, there is a great deal of overlap in moral theology. Broad area of consensus exist regarding concern for our fellow human beings: honesty, our dealings with one another, respect for property and host of other moral issues. It is therefore summarized here that sometimes there is no distinction made between a moral code and a code of conduct advocated by a religion. The religious people observe their moral code as worship to God and service to humanity while nonreligious people try to live morally right as an obligation to the society.

Causes of moral decay in Nigeria

Moral degeneration is a universal phenomenon which is negatively affecting many societies, including Nigeria. The Nigerian society, with specific reference to family, school and public life is experiencing serious moral crises. The media is constantly reporting cases of moral breakdowns which are evident in social ills such as a general lack of discipline, violence, promiscuity, vandalism, corruption, high crime waves and the likes. Here are some of the varied causes of moral degeneration in the Nigerian society.



1. **Decline in Parental Authority and Domestic Values:** The family is universally acknowledged as the fundamental and indispensable cell of all human societies. The family may be regarded as the cradle of civil society, and it is in great measure within the circle of family life that the destiny of the state is fostered. The larger society, the nation, derives its moral tone fundamentally from that of the family. Hence, the strategic importance of domestic life in the moral life of the nation cannot be overlooked. However, in recent times, the family and its traditional influence and values are under serious stress in Nigeria. According to Iwe (1987), the paterfamilias, the head of the family, is steadily losing ground and influence. His headship or authority is no longer unquestionable. The loyalty of his wife and the piety of his children are not easily taken for granted and assured nowadays. In many homes, many fathers have ceased to lead by exemplary lives. Some have become over-indulging and permissive towards their children, to whom they have unwittingly issued tickets of indiscipline and licentiousness. Today the weak, irresponsible and indiscipline paterfamilias have become a domestic liability of serious social concern. The materfamilias or house wives are traditionally and normally the corner-stone of domestic stability, the symbol of domestic loyalty, and patient serenity, the inspirer of domestic thrift and economy, industry and peace. Today in our midst, the opposite is fast becoming the case. These have created serious moral lapse in most families, thereby creating a state of moral decay in the society.

2. **Influence of Science and Technology:** The world has witnessed a giant leap in science and technology. Science and technology has contributed a lot towards making lives better and worth living, however, the rise in science and technology has negatively influenced human morality, especially in Nigeria. Despite other positive uses of internets in areas of research and communication, negative and immoral practices are also learnt from the internet. For example, many pornographic sites abound in the internet. A lot of Nigerian youths patronize these sites which glorify sex and sexual activities. Like the internet, increased access to electronic gadgets like televisions, compact discs, digital video discs and mobile phones, have also contributed to the cause of immoral behaviours among Nigerians today. Through these media, most Nigerians have learnt and embraced cultism, gangsterism, drug abuse, prostitution and violence. When people begin to practice what they learnt from the internet and those electronic gadgets, moral decay becomes the order of the day as we are witnessing in Nigeria today.

3. **Media Influence:** Media influence is used here to refer to both electronic and prints including information dissemination intermediaries. The influence of media just like technology has greatly and negatively impacted on the Nigerian moral standards. The electronic media for instance through the channels of Cable



Networks, foreign movies, nollywood home videos, has consistently debased sex and sexual activities, promoted cultism, rituals, kidnapping and other vices through their programmes. Music, other video chips and even some product adverts, have so much glorified sex, nudity and rascality and made it look like all-comers affairs. The effects and consequences are equal to moral degeneration in the society today. The print media, on the other hand, has flooded our nation with pornographic materials like photographs and other graphic arts designed to stimulate sexual activities. Such sexually explicit materials are sexually arousing to both adults and adolescents. Such materials are usually watched or read in the secret by the youths and thereby learning and exhibiting decayed moral behaviours on daily basis. Smith (2007) stated that; Teenagers are exposed to sexual materials on TV, in movies, magazines and other modern pornographic devices. Most sexual behavior on television takes place between unmarried adults and ignores the potential negative consequences of sexual intercourse. Thus exposure to sexual contents on media apparatus can lead to more permissive attitudes (p. 48). The media promote not only product, but moods and in a sense what is and is not important. This has really eroded the social morality the society is expected to exhibit and in turn enhanced more pre-marital and other negative sexual behaviors in the society.

4. Materialism: There is a tremendous negative change in the Nigerian economic spheres. Certainly, today the texture of the average Nigerian economic life is excessively materialistic. In the present dispensation, the only convincing logic that is significant and universally accepted to every Nigerian from North to South, East to West is that of excessive material acquisitions and consumerism. The mentality of making money and becoming somebody (the richest man) through corrupt means of acquisition of money and material wealth has invaded and permeated every aspect of Nigerians' moral life. Agha (2019) viewed Materialism as the acquisition of material wealth at the expense of others. He noted that it has been treated as an enemy by the church and the moralists. This singular factor explains the daily frantic race of the jobless in the town, the shouting of the double faced traders in their deceitful attempts to cheat their customers, the mounting of makeshift toll-gates by legitimate and illegitimate law enforcement agents, the attempts to steal votes from the electorates to seize political posts, the daily scouting for contracts by ghost contractors, the siphoning of public funds by those in power, the eager expectations of office clerks for a tip before they carry a file from one table to the other, and many more forms of immorality in our public and private lives in the society. The nation is embroiled with an excessive materialistic ideology that portends doom to our collective morality. The destructive acquisitive instinct of the western capitalism



has colonized the Nigerian mind such that the dominant philosophy is to acquire money by all means.

5. **Poverty:** There is a high rate of poverty in the society owing to lack of social justice, as a result, people tend to indulge in immoral activities, just to make the ends meet. Tutu (1999) asserted that people become poor due to oppression and injustice brought about by unjust social structures. Stott (1984) postulated that the poor are deprived of the opportunity of having access to food, clothing and shelter. He maintained that the poor constitute a group of powerless people who are socially and politically oppressed. O' Donovan (2000) said that poverty is responsible for the high rate of crime in the urban cities. Poverty is one of the major causes of stealing, prostitution, drug addiction, armed robbery, militancy, kidnapping and crisis in the society. As a result of poverty, some young girls have taken to prostitution as a means of livelihood. The after-effects of prostitution have resulted to some young girls contracting AIDS and other venereal diseases while others have met their premature deaths owing to abortion. This accounts for the rapid spread of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases in the society.

6. **The Collapse of Discipline in our Schools:** Discipline implies self-control, willingness to learn and function in an acceptable and ordered manner. Thus, an atmosphere of discipline is characterized by sense of duty and responsibility, and of self-control and loyalty. Formal teaching and learning as well as any other form of serious socialization require naturally and normally such an atmosphere. Unfortunately an atmosphere of discipline has been conspicuously lacking in many Nigerian primary and secondary schools. Although, the considerable increase in school enrolment and the gross inadequacy of material resources and personnel have contributed to indiscipline in schools, the most cardinal factor of indiscipline is in the area of administration, supervision and control. Indiscipline in schools manifests in the following forms: lateness to school, teacher absenteeism, poor environmental sanitation and dirty class rooms, shabbily dressed teachers, strained teacher-headmaster relationship, disrespect for school heads, poor pupil-teacher relationship, and lack of personal professional commitment to duty. These symptoms of indiscipline and disorder assume greater dimensions among the secondary schools, where financial and other exploitation of students, uncontrolled youthful passions, and insubordination abound.

4. **Effects of moral decadence on the Nigerian society**

The state of moral decay in Nigeria has some negative impacts on the country, families and individuals. The following are some of the effects of moral decadence on the Nigerian society:



1 Loss of integrity among international community: This is one of the major effects of moral degeneration in Nigeria. The involvement of Nigerian leaders in corruption and other immoral acts has dented the image of the country in the international community. Ituma, (2008) painted the picture thus: The image of the country in the international arena has become so battered that every Nigerian should psychologically feel a scorching hurt inflicted on his individual psyche. The dent has gone so far that everywhere in the world Nigerians are said to be generally dreaded like mad dogs and criminals, cautiously approached like dangerous snakes, and avoided like lepers (p. 37).

2 Socio-Economic Problems: Financial crimes harm both the nation and individuals. It is on record that about 90 percent of monies looted from public treasury are stashed away in private foreign accounts (Uko, 2007). Such lootings have become a recurring decimal in underdeveloped countries, Nigeria inclusive. These are monies that should have been used to build industries and create job opportunities for the teeming population. Instead, unemployment has become the order of the day and people are suffering in the midst of plenty. It has the dual effects of boosting the domestic economies of the custodian of the loot and worsening of the economies of the countries from where the money was stolen. The result of the practice is that the gap between the rich and the poor widens as it happens in Nigeria. Furthermore, vices negate progress in any life, system or organization but it becomes a thing of worry when the teeming population of youth is plagued with this predicament as they are the future leaders. Apart from that, the youthful stage is the most active stage in the life of any human being. The workforce of the youth is undoubtedly the driving force of any economy and nation. Any country whose workforce is characterized by a youthful population involved in social vices will amount to an erroneous, erratic, vain and corruption-ridden society (Achor, 2015). When the vast majority of youths are involved in vices, there exists a great probability that the leadership and governance will decline as so many find their way in these leadership positions and effect negative changes to suit their vicious appetite. This is exactly the case with Nigeria where the get rich quick syndrome is the guiding principle of average Nigerian. Again, the moral degeneration in the Nigerian society has undesirable effects on family, schools, politics and the economy. According to Louw (2009), moral decay inhibits the prosperous growth and development of the country. The implications of this moral decay include the collapse of family and community life, the collapse of a culture of learning and teaching in schools, negative attitudes of the new generation in thinking that they are entitled to success and riches without working for it, dishonesty and lack of integrity, lack of self-discipline, crime, violence and corruption.



Recommendation

The rate by which societal decadence is escalating calls for the review of our indigenous cultural and religious morality. If this is not done early enough by this generation, the future society is in danger and this can lead to uncontrollable civil disobedience.

Conclusion

It seems that this present generation's mindset and the situation in life has affected the thinking faculty of the society. The situation at home, school, etc. has fallen apart and the centre cannot hold again. Neuroticism traits has caused a lot of division. Hardly do children born from good parents either by default or neglect represent their parents. The rate of civil disobedience continue increasing at an astronomical rate. The religious society and family institution need to synegezize more than ever before to curb the trend. Unlike our culture of collectivism where in a polygamous home, it is a collective responsibility of the extended family. One Yoruba adage states ("Oju meji lo bi omo igba oju lo nto") meaning rearing a child is a collective responsibility. In the school today, teachers has no control over the student else the teacher will languish in jail. This time around, Individualism traits has not help us in African society religion and culture; Western religion has polarized our heritage. Colonial masters took the good away from us and gave the worst of their religion and culture. This informed the societal decadence we are witnessing in our society today.

Zoomorphism story that teaches morality in the society has given way for everybody into the internet and media tents with no control from the cultural collectivity. Acquisition of material wealth is at the expenses of good morality that has been the norm of our society in the past.

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