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GENDER AND SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES IN NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

Introduction

However, Stoller opines that:

Gender is a term that has psychological and cultural connotations; if the proper terms for sex are 'male' and 'female', the corresponding terms for gender are 'masculine' and 'feminine'; these latter might be quite independent of (biological) sex.¹

However, Kornblum defined gender "as a set of culturally conditioned traits associated with maleness or femaleness".² The attitude of men towards women and their neglect in most discussions of government politics are glaring. Nigerian women have long been excluded from the practice of politics on the grounds that they were too stupid, too frail, too emotional, and too irrational. However, the situation is finally beginning to change. It has come to a point where women are as interested and active in politics as men are and President Goodluck Jonathan's administration actually gave them place in every sphere of

¹ Stoller, *Gender and discrimination*, 2016, p.9

² Kornblum, G. (1991). *Problems of gender in Africa*, 1991, p. 332.

Nigerian politics as they now receive appointments and contest elections and win.

Nigeria has come of age where women are intellectually capable as men. In the year 1986, women had reached numerical parity with men in the professions, where educational achievement is so important. In Nigeria today, professionals – doctors, lawyers, accountants, teachers, research scientists, and others – about half are women. Statistical Abstract of United States states that the weekly earnings of professional women averaged \$419, while for male professionals the weekly average was \$581 and the gap between women's and men's earning is often greater in less prestigious occupations. Moreover, women are more likely to be found in less prestigious ones. Clearly, men and women are not yet equal, at least in terms of earnings and prestige or, as we see in power.³

Norms regarding gender are closely linked to the life course established by a society. Thus Aries states that the emergence of childhood revealed that ideas about the appropriate forms of play and education for boys and indeed the very concept of boyhood, developed at least a century before the concept of girlhood emerged. In eighteenth century, Africans more especially in Nigeria and the European societies, the male (boyhood) was conceived at a time when male children could play among themselves and receive education in the skills they would need as adults.⁴ The politics in our Nigerian society as it relates to gender places a serious discrepancy, where males are given prominence and priority over the females. Females (girls) in contrast, were treated as miniature women who were expected to work alongside their mothers and sisters. Through these childhood experiences, girls and boys learned the norms of gender, the society's definitions of what is "masculine" and "feminine."

Differences in the political opinions of men and women received more careful study, and a gender gap on certain issues – economics, social welfare, and foreign policy, in particular was revealed. Currently, more women are running for and being elected to public office and more are obtaining political appointments than ever before. Heterosexual women and men of color and lesbians and gay men are increasing their numbers in public office and educational institutions in Nigeria are making themselves known.

For Claire (2003), from the historical point of view, the exclusion of wo-

³ Statistical Abstract of the United States. *Bureau of the census*, 1989, p.45

⁴ Aries, P. *Centuries of childhood*, 1962, p. 77

men as well as other oppressed groups from elected or appointed political and military leadership roles was justified on the ground of Divine will – that it was part of God’s plan, in other words, and not “in the nature of things” for members of the groups to have authority over white, heterosexual men. Indeed, in the United States as well as Nigeria, despite the constitutionally established separation of Church and State, sociologists have long recognized that religion and politics are highly interactive.⁵ Today, the women in Nigeria are craving for 35% representation in Nigerian politics. It is an ongoing issue. However, women are becoming local Government Chairman, Deputy Governor, Senators, having their way in the House of Representative, appointed as Ministers and in the Banking sector are rising to Bank-managers and directors in so many areas of life.

Issues in Inequality of Gender and Age

After class and race, one important dimension of inequality in modern societies is gender. Gender roles are set behaviors that are considered appropriate for individuals of a particular gender. They are directly related to unequal treatment of men and women in a society especially Nigeria. When women’s roles are thought of to require male direction, as is the case in many households and organizations, the unequal treatment of men and women is directly related to gender roles. Similarly, age is a source of social inequality when people of different ages are treated differently or channeled into statuses and roles that carry differing degrees of prestige or power. All human societies are stratified by age and gender, meaning that males and females and younger and older people are channeled into specific statues and roles.

As humans advance through the life cycle, age and gender roles usually interact in patterning their behavior and consciousness. In addition, humans discover often that certain roles are not open to them because of their age or their gender: they may be forbidden to drive a car, not allowed to serve their country in military combat, forced to retire from job, restricted from marrying and so on. All societies differentiate among their members on the basis of gender age in that men and women of different ages are expected to behave in different ways. But the roles assigned to men and women of different ages are accorded

⁵ Claire, M. R. *Women, men and society*, 2003, p. 65

differing amounts of income, power or prestige and all these patterns of inequality contributed to the society's system of stratification⁶ as states by Donald.

To a great extent, religion and especially the Christian religion discriminate against women and ages inclusive as it relates to certain responsibility. Apostle Paul gave a clear instruction that women should be silent in the Church. Of course, this has always placed the men on top of leadership as priest and Bishops even Pope, Prelate or Primate. Even when religion seems to preach against discrimination and class system of inequality, indirectly and consciously or unconsciously, they manifest it. Women have never been given the opportunity to rise to such level. The same goes to age discrimination even in the Church. A little child is expected to be in the Sunday school and is not allowed to teach in the adult Church until they mature in faith.

Gender, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS in Nigerian Society and Schools

Nnachi (2011) observed that AIDS could be contracted in a number of ways. It can be transmitted through blood transfusion, use of razor blade already used by an AIDS victim or a needle used for an AIDS victim. However, AIDS is said to be a sexually transmitted disease because more than 90% of the cases occur through sex.⁷ He maintained that for more than thirty years after its emergence, no reliable drug has been found for its complete cure. Hence he suggested that individual should adopt the following measures⁸:

1. Stick to one sex partner
2. Use condom if you are not sure of the partner
3. Sterilize every operation equipment before they are used on the patients.
4. Screen blood before transfusion
5. Sterilize already used needle before using if for injection
6. Discourage prostitution in every form.

⁶ Donald, B. J. *The population of the United States: Historical trends and projections*, 1985, pp. 23-24.

⁷ Nnachi, R. O. *Explorations in sex and gender issues: A Psychological guide for critical learning*, 2011, p. 67

⁸ Ibidem, 68

Okoye (2006) states that AIDS is caused by a germ of virus origin known as HIV.⁹ The germ attacks and suppresses the human immune system, making the body susceptible in infections. Thus the disease produces many symptoms in line with other diseases such as diarrhea, pneumonia, cough, hepatitis, fever and rashes as stated by Unachukwu.¹⁰ Nnachi is of the view that AIDS started ravaging the world so seriously in the 1990s. The number identified in Nigeria with full blown AIDS in 1991 was 8,0000. But it was estimated that in every 1,000 Nigerians had full blown AIDS.¹¹

Radical feminists believe that women's disadvantages in the labor market stem from the exploitations of women by men and have little to do with the operations of capitalism. They concentrate in particular on how men exercise power over women at work protect their own interests by intimidating women and excluding women from senior positions. Radical feminists claim that one way that men do this is through the use of sexual harassment. Stanko defines sexual harassment as:

Unwanted sexual attention: Its behavioral forms are many and include visual (leering); verbal (sexual teasing, jokes comments or questions); unwanted pressures for sexual favors or dates; unwanted touching or pinching; unwanted pressures for sexual favors with implied threats of job-related consequences for non-cooperation; physical assault; sexual assault; rape.¹²

Haralambos and Holborn state that men back up these type of harassments with their power within organizations. They are usually in a position to hire or fire women and may take action against them if they complain.¹³ According to Stanko sexual harassment is a common occurrence at work. She refers to a number of British studies which found that over half of the women questioned had experienced sexual harassment.¹⁴

⁹ Okoye R. C. *The untold origin: facts and lies about HIV/AIDS and condoms with exclusive information on how to identify HIV Carriers*, 2006, p. 48

¹⁰ Unachukwu G. C. Awareness of the aetiology, clinical presentation and Epidemiology of HIV/AIDS among adolescents in Anambra. *The Educational Psychologist IV*, 2003, p. 27.

¹¹ Nnachi, R. O. *Sex education in Nigerian schools: A psychological position*, 2008, p. 34.

¹² Stanko, E. A. *Keeping women in and out of line: Sexual harassment and occupational segregation*. In S. Walby (Ed.). *Gender Segregation at Work*. 1988, p. 91.

¹³ Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. *Sociology, themes and perspectives*, 2008, p. 92.

¹⁴ Stanko, E. A. *Keeping women in and out of line: Sexual harassment and occupational segregation*. In S. Walby (Ed.). *Gender Segregation at Work*. 1988, p. 95.

Stanko believes that men use sexual harassment to intimidate women who seek to enter areas of traditionally male employment. Here, men talk about sport and about women. He maintained that:

Sexual jokes, comments, teasing or touching of women are part of the building and sustaining of male solidarity...women, if it is commonly assumed, by entering into men's territory, must expect and accept these displays of male hetero – sexuality.¹⁵

In jobs predominantly done by women, the situation is somewhat different. Here, sexualizing women who work in traditional occupations serves to eroticize women's subordinations. Waitresses and barmaids, for example, are expected to be sexually attractive and to accept that during their work; they may be the recipients of unwanted attention from males, secretaries 'to some extent become office wives.' Some leave their jobs if their male boss seeks to start an affair. Pringle saw the above view to be true. He said that if "secretaries are represented as women, they are represented almost exclusively in familial or sexual terms: as wives, mothers, spinster aunts, mistresses' and femmes fatales".¹⁶ They are seen sometimes doing little but sitting and gossiping, filing their nails or doing their knitting. Also they are often seen as the extension of their boss, loyal, trustworthy and devoted. The dominant images of secretaries make it very difficult for them to be regarded as skilled workers or considered as possible candidates for promotion into management.

In Nigeria some highly placed women in the society employ young men who are very handsome and sexually active to satisfy them whenever their services are needed as basis for employment. Some of the young men employed are always seen as Personal Assistants, Special Advisers and so on. They are always on tour with their boss under the cover-up of being her brother or close relation. In the high of the sexual misbehavior going on in many companies, corporations and government parastatals in the Nigerian society, it should be noted that so many have become victims of venereal diseases that is busy eating them up.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 97

¹⁶ Pringle, R. What is secretary? In M. McDowell & R. Pringle (Eds.). *Defining Women: Social Institutions and Gender Divisions*, 1992, p.66

The Bible and Christianity: A Critique of Gender Discrimination

In trying to analyze the view of Christian religion on the issue of the politics of Gender and power in Nigeria, Sapiro avers:

The same Bible has proven to some people that women and men are equal and should take full leadership roles in religions and society, and it has proven to others that women are inferior, periodically unclean, dangerous and subordinate to men.¹⁷

These contradictions are especially significant given that religious leaders cite scripture or other sacred texts as the source of their authority and as the foundation of Church doctrine. These reinterpretations are often the product of feminist religious scholarship. It is uncommon for Christian Church leaders and theologians to cite the teachings of St. Paul when delineating the proper roles of Christian women and men. In one frequently quoted passage, for example, Paul instructs the Christians of Ephesus:

Let the wives be subject to their husbands as to the Lord; because a husband is head of the wife, just as Christ is head of the Church, being himself Savior of the body. But just as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let wives be to their husbands in all things (Ephesians 5:22-24).

Elsewhere, Paul explains why women must cover their heads at religious gatherings, but men need not:

A man indeed ought not to cover his head, but he is the image and glory of God. But woman is the glory of man. For man is not for women, but women from man. For man was not created for woman, but woman for man (1 Corinthians 11:7-9).

The sexism in Paul's writings, although hotly debated, is perhaps less important than the fact that they have been repeatedly used by Church fathers and Christian theologians to legitimate and even promote the subordination of women. Lummis declared that there is considerable evidence that the leadership of

¹⁷ Sapiro, V. *Women in American society*, 1986, p. 191

the early Christian movement was shared by men and women. Both served as missionaries spreading the “good news of salvation.”¹⁸ Both sheltered the persecuted, studied and interpreted scriptures and prophesied.¹⁹

Carmody is of the view that within the first hundred years, however, an all-male hierarchical structure was firmly in place. Somewhere along the line, it seems, the example and teachings of their first leader, Jesus, was forgotten or ignored.²⁰ Feminist Biblical scholars and theologians emphasize that there is no evidence that Jesus was in any way sexist. Instead, there is considerable evidence that he rejected the sexist norms of the society in which he lived by, for example, holding men and women to the same standard of morality and by not dividing women’s nature or their abilities. It appears in fact that he related to women as he related to men: as individuals who needed his help, as colleagues and as friends.²¹

The rationale for the decision of male Church authorities later to exclude women from leadership roles remains open to speculation. What is clear at this point is the effect of their choice. Women in Nigeria are relegated to a second-class citizenship with Christianity and African traditional religion and as well as Islamic religion a status that persist in many religious (Christian) denominations to this day. However, Claire states that within the Christian tradition, both men and women have been characterized in contradictory ways. Men are supposed to be rational, authoritative, and in control, yet they are depicted as weak-willed when confronted with women’s feminine charms.²² McNamara states thus:

Indeed, women have often been portrayed as temptresses – “the devil’s gateway” according to one Church father – who cause men to sin much the same way Eve supposedly led Adam into the original sin in the Garden of Eden. At the same time, though, the virgin, pure of heart has been, extolled by Christianity, as has the good (i.e., docile, modest, and long-suffering) mother. Both are exemplified by

¹⁸ Lummis, A. T. Gender and religion. In J. S. Chafetz. (Ed.). *Handbook on the Sociology of Gender*, 1999, p.603.

¹⁹Schussler, F. E. *In Memory of her: A feminist theological reconstruction of Christian origins*, 2013, p. 96

²⁰ Carmody, D. L. *Women and world religions*, 1989, p. 55

²¹ Schussler, F. E. Women in the early Christian Movement. In C.P. Christ & J. Plaskow (Eds.). *Women-Spirit Rising*, 1979 p.84

²² Claire, M. R. *Women, men and society*, 2003, p 73

Mary, the mother of Jesus, who is said to have been both virgin and mother simultaneously.²³

Cowell holds that the Catholic Church has stood firm in its opposition to the ordination of women to the priesthood, with the Pope saying that the issue is not even open to debate among the faithful. Church authorities argue that priest act in the name of Jesus and represent him physically; therefore, they must be men. They also pointed out that Jesus called twelve men to be His apostles, not twelve women.²⁴ In line with the above view, Hilbert states that proponents of ordination to the priesthood counter with evident that, in fact, many of the disciples of Jesus were women who held central leadership roles in the early Christian Church.²⁵ Junia, for example, is referred to in Roman 16:7 as an apostle, and Phoebe was a missionary coworker with St. Paul. However, Steinfels (1995:34) categorically states that “a commission of biblical scholars appointed by the Pope more than two decades ago concluded that there is no scriptural prohibition of the ordination of women”.²⁶

Nevertheless, women ministers still confront sexism in their Churches and denominations. They may experience discrimination in access to leadership positions, ministerial assignments and responsibilities, and salary, even if they have higher degrees and more seminary training than most male ministers. This inequality that has characterized most Christian denominations leads one to wonder how Church leaders can reconcile this discrimination with their professed concern for social justice. It has also caused many believers to question the relevance of organized Christianity to their own lives and to the contemporary world. Consequently, some have abandoned the Christian faith altogether or at least have stopped practicing their religion in any formal sense²⁷ as stated by Hout and Greeley. To some Churches in Nigeria, it has made a lot to come out with challenging Church teachings and “depatriarchalizing” religious language, symbols, and ritual: these are of course Christian feminist.

²³ McNamara, J. A. K. (2009). *Sisters in arms*, 2009, p. 120

²⁴ Cowell, A. Pope rules out debate on making women priests. *New York Times*, 1994, May, 31, p. A8

²⁵ Hilbert, M. C. Women preaching the gospel. *Theological Digest*, 33, 1986, p. 432

²⁶ Steinfels, P. Vatican says the ban on women as priests is “infallible” doctrine. *New York Times*, 1, 1995, November, 19, p. 13.

²⁷ Hout, M., and Greeley, A. M. The center doesn’t hold: Church attendance in the United States. *American Sociological Review*, 52, 1987, p. 327.

It is very obvious that the prayer houses and most of the proliferation of Churches in Nigeria today have its root in gender discrimination. This has generated crisis over “women covering their head” while in service and disallowed to wear trousers while in African context it is viewed to be masculine appeal. The liberation theology and the feminist movement going on in our Churches and society today to a great extent is seen by women as placing them in bondage, hence their fight for liberation and freedom. So many African cultures which in practice subjugate women have been brought into the Church and few passages of the Bible has always been used against them “that wives should be subject to their husbands in all things.” The Christian Religion which people see to proffer solution to gender discrimination has not been seen in all totality to be innocent of this matter but a victim even if she preaches against oppression and hostility of humanity to fellow human person.

The Christian Response to Sexually Transmitted Diseases (HIV/AIDS) in Nigerian Educational Institutions

In the light of this paper, looking into sexually transmitted diseases, focus will be centered on human immunodeficiency virus (HIV, the virus that causes AIDS). AIDS is known as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. Risk of HIV infection is influenced by sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, and gender. HIV is carried out through blood, semen and virginal secretions, so one of the most common ways for the disease to be transmitted is by sexual contact with an infected person. Claire state that “the riskiest form of sexual contact is anal intercourse because it frequently causes tears in the rectal lining and blood vessels allowing the virus to pass from the semen of the infected partner into the blood of the other partner”.²⁸ Obinna opines that gay and bisexual men have accounted for about 25 percent of total AIDS cases reported, but the percentage has declined because of the stigma attached to homosexuality in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions which may prevent young gay men from acknowledging their sexual orientation and practicing safe sex.²⁹

There are so many factors that have aggravated the rise of sexually transmitted diseases in the Nigerian institution. There are:

²⁸ Claire, M. R. *Women, men and society*, 2003, p. 211.

²⁹ Obinna, I. T. *Homosexuality in Nigerian Universities*, 2016, p. 81.

Undue – pressure from Lecturers/Teachers:

It is an open secret that so many ladies, girls and women even “married ones” have been harassed by their lecturers or teachers to have sex with them. The pressure escalates to the point that those “lecturers” even fail them in their exams when they refuse to compromise.³⁰ But it is obvious that so many of the females resort to compromise and pass. The after effect of this unsanctified sexuality always end-up in a bitter way which is tragedy in nature. Some end up being pregnant and becoming school drop-outs, others abort and have deformities in their systems and even die in the process. Greater percentage of the female students is carriers of sexually transmitted diseases and of course, when they are aware, out of frustration they go about disseminating free sex on campus.³¹ This calls for the Christian bodies within the institution to rise and advocate for the helpless in this ugly situation. The Church can salvage this situation. Where then is morality in our educational system. The church should launch a serious campaign against this evil on campuses for proper sensitization.

Poverty or Economic Factor

Haralambos and Holborn state that “The negative effects of poverty on educational attainment are sometimes known as the poverty penalty”.³² Some cannot even get a Job as to run a part time program. Some students are even sponsoring themselves and are forced into prostitution just to attain some educational levels. They parade themselves hawking sex and appealing to male students and the well-to-do in the institution and within towns that they have sex for sale. This has grown into a chronic habit and desire³³ as averred by Gobari.

For some who do not have money to give to the lecturers in order to pass their exams due to poverty and a deliberate act of failing the students by the lecturer are compelled to pay their dues on the altar of sacrifice through sexual intercourse even with lecturers too old to be their great grandfather. If poverty can do this, then what is the place of the Church to salvage this situation? It is not enough to carry a big Bible and preach to victims without coming to their aids. How many Churches can place such members who are indigent on scholarship

³⁰ Akpan, A. U. *Sex in schools*, 2016, p.44.

³¹ Ibidem, p. 47.

³² Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. *Sociology, themes and perspectives*, 2008, p. 637.

³³ Gobari, O. G. *Commercializing sex in Nigerian universities*, 2015, p. 22.

just to save that soul from prostitution? Why are there serious quest for materialism and pastors and Churches buying private jets as a means of showing that they have arrived? The early Church was known as a caring Church. The Church need to stand up and rescue the perishing and care for the dying students in our institutions. For Nigeria to be a place where succor can be found in time of needs then the church need to sacrifice to take up responsibilities in training their students in our educational system as their contributions to human resource development.

Uncontrollable Sexual Habit

It is not an over statement that some of the students on campus especially the unserious ones have already made up their minds never to attend classes but to appease their lecturers with what they have which is offering them sex.³⁴ By the time they offer sex to over ten lecturers on campus and as well render it to the male students, you could imagine how high the level of sexually transmitted diseases in our institutions will be. Most times some of the male and female students do this without the use of condom.

Even the males are serious victims of this pandemic called AIDS. Since our Institutions of learning are places where all kinds of personalities are found, beautiful ones and the “ugly ones”. Most male students are easily carried away as they change “girl friends” or ‘lovers’ as if they are changing clothes. Through this process, they are entangled and are infested and even help to spread this disease to those they have contact with.

How about rape and cultism on in our institutions? For clarity, Jude has it that it is not only the female students that are being raped by the male or cult gangs on campuses; the female cult gangs also rape the males due to passion for uncontrollable sex. This source is a rapid way of being infested by AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.³⁵

In the spirit of training good morals in our educational system, there are so many Churches established on campus with so many fellowship centers all over. But it appears that the more fellowship centers are established, the more immorality increases in our educational institutions. So many students enter into school very healthy but they leave with shattered life filled with diseases and sicknesses. Even when some authorities in the Departments of our educational

³⁴ Paul, F. *Sex at the extreme*. 2015, p. 12.

³⁵ Jude, L. *Uncontrollable sex*, 2014, p. 39.

institutions are aware that some students are being failed by lecturers, what do they do? Discipline should be enforced on those found in the act of desecrating the students. When members of a particular fellowship are faced with this menace, they keep quiet because they cannot fight the lecturer. The Christian bodies or organizations in the Nigerian institutions should launch a serious protest and stand to speak out for the innocent students who have come to study but are subject to render sex in order to pass exam. And lecturers or teachers should be properly checked when they deliberately fail a student who refuses to compromise.

The World Council of Churches-WCC sees AIDS in our educational institutions thus:

A group of signs and symptoms or a combination of diseases caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which impairs the body's ability to fight infection, making it especially susceptible to opportunistic infections. Some of the students in the educational institutions are victims of this disease and its impact is disastrous.³⁶

World Council of Churches also said that:

1. Educational message must be clear and easy to comprehend, using appropriate media targeted specifically on the groups to be educated.
2. The most effective educators are people directly affected by HIV/AIDS
3. The Church must be involved in identifying the cultural and social practices which increase or decrease the risk of HIV transmission, and in formulating education programs appropriate for its situation.
4. Peer group: - persons from the same range who are acquainted with the social and cultural environment of the target groups are much more effective in education than people coming from 'outside'. Therefore, the Church should endeavor to group her member in this regard to actualize her aim.³⁷

Generally speaking, messages using fear and negative images of AIDS have not been effective in producing or sustaining changes of behavior.

According to Ede, now Archbishop of Enugu Archdiocese of the Methodist Church Nigeria:

³⁶ World Council of Churches. *Guide to HIV/AIDS: Pastoral Counseling*, 2002, p.21.

³⁷ World Council of Churches. *Facing AIDS: The challenge, the churches response*, 2001, p.108.

The Church must rise up against the latest killer disease (HIV/AIDS), the Church remains the most credible institution that can wage this war from many reasons; she is the one institution whose message clearly calls for attitudinal change in our sexual behavior. She is the one institution that still earn the confidentiality of the masses and our educational institutions. She receives on daily basis every week worshippers through whom the campaign can be carried and; she receives the greatest number of audience on weekly basis.³⁸

Psychological and Spiritual help for HIV/AIDS Victims

The student or teacher living with HIV/AIDS knows that he/she is going to die and needs to be helped to prepare for death. Garland states that:

The pastor can help the victim with this. He should be prepared to listen to the person's concerns with respect and non-judgmental attitude. That way the pastor is more likely to be able to minister the love of Christ to the person, and offer hope and forgiveness. He can lead the person to a true knowledge of God's grace, and to seeing death as a gateway to heaven. Reading God's word, prayer and answering the person's questions are important.³⁹

At a point, the student or lecturer involved having no money to care for his/her-self, may choose to commit suicide. Also, the stigmatization by colleagues is a challenge that the Church must help to save their lives. We often underestimate the power of prayer to bring change into the lives of suffering people. God is God of comfort and healing. If it is His will, God can use the prayers of God's people to bring healing to the person with AIDS.

The Pastor should gently and firmly guide them through this period of shock, denial and anger and accept their condition. The human brain and heart simply need time to absorb and process these drastic events. The Bible says that even when we suffer physically, there is no need to lose heart. God is renewing us inwardly day by day (2 Cor.14:16-18). The support of the Church to students and victim of our educational institutions should be taken seriously.

Jesus says in Matt.25:31-46 that if we help and care for those who are hungry, thirsty, sick, naked, homeless, or in prison, then we are actually caring for

³⁸ Ede C.N. *Caring for life*, 2004, p.15.

³⁹ Garland, C. J. *AIDS is real and it's in our church*, 2003, p. 195.

him. On the other hand, he condemns those who do not show this kind of love: "I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink..." However, McCain suggest that the Church should care for the victims and show them love. None can contract AIDS through shaking hands with a person infested with AIDS, none can get AIDS from drinking water from the same container with someone with AIDS.⁴⁰ He maintained that we cannot get AIDS from toilet seats or from caring for one who has AIDS. If this were so, all the doctors and nurses would be dead by now.⁴¹

Conclusion

The discrimination against women in Nigeria especially in our educational institutions, Churches and traditional society is very alarming and call for a change of attitude and character towards them. The development of the human person is equally applicable to women in our society. It is quite obvious that men in one way or the other have demonstrated a high level of high-handedness in handling women even in their homes (marriage) as a means to depict their power and headship thereby subjecting women into psychological trauma and getting a poor output from them. The way and manner which in which students and lecturers are swimming in the ocean of sexually transmitted diseases in pains, psychological problems and untimely death calls for urgent attention. The Bible and church response to gender slightly places them as the root cause of discrimination against women. Obviously, the Nigerian educational institutions are being infested by the killer disease called HIV/AIDS. The dignity of the human person should be respected and encouragement should be given to the victims of AIDS since in our society today.

Abstract

Commonsense views on difference between men and women tend to assume that there are distinct consistent and highly significant biological differences between sexes. Gender can majorly be classified as male or female according to their physical characteristics: external genitalia, internal genitalia, gonads (the organs which produce sex cells), hormonal States and secondary sex

⁴⁰ McCain, D. *Millennium Messages*, 2001, p. 56.

⁴¹ Ibidem, p.56.

characteristics. Because of these differences, women are capable of bearing suckling children, whereas men are not. These differences in physique between men and women usually depict men to be stronger and more muscular. Biological differences are widely believed to be responsible for the difference, in both the behavior of men and women and the roles that they play in society. Sexually transmitted diseases in Nigerian educational institutions are very alarming. This paper will address issues in equality of gender and age and how gender affects sexuality in Nigerian society. It will also look into the Bible and Christianity with particular reference to gender discrimination. To cap it up, the Christian response to sexually transmitted diseases with particular focus on (HIV/AIDS) in Nigerian educational system. Also, the psychological and spiritual assistance to the victims will be x-rayed with a logical conclusion.

Key words: gender, sexuality, differences, society, education, Christianity, Nigeria

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