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Repositioning Biblical Teaching on Morality as a Cure for Societal Moral Decadence

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Abstract
Moral decadence is an enduring social problem across many modern societies, often expressed in corruption, violence, sexual immorality, substance abuse, and the breakdown of communal solidarity. Scholars and faith leaders have consistently argued that secular policies alone cannot reverse this trend without moral grounding. This paper examines the relevance of biblical teaching on morality as a resource for rebuilding ethical foundations. Drawing on scriptural principles, historical precedents, and contemporary applications, the study argues that repositioning biblical morality within families, schools, and governance can contribute to reshaping conscience, strengthening community values, and curbing moral decline. Recommendations are provided for integrating biblical ethical frameworks into education, public discourse, and civic leadership as a corrective to societal ills.

Keywords: Repositioning, Biblical Teaching, Morality, Cure, Societal Moral Decadence

Introduction
Our society is currently bedeviled with so much decay morally that it looked shameful to many that one is wondering what has happened to our societal values. This is reflected everywhere we go to, the reflection of Moral decadence glares us at the face both among the young and old. Moral decadence is characterized by a decline in ethical and virtuous behavior, leading to various societal problems and has several potential. Moral decadence is a decline in societies' or individual's ethical values, principles, and norms, leading to a rise in immoral behaviors like corruption, dishonesty, selfishness, and a disregard for fairness and empathy. It represents a departure from generally accepted moral standards and can be influenced by cultural shifts, media, and

economic factors. According to Njoku (2013), it can be defined as "failure to uphold sound morality in society". That is, moral decadence means failure. It also means decline, decay, and depravity. A common perception among different communities is that society's moral commitments quickly deteriorate. Morality is no longer the standard of excellence in society. The growing number of people acts and behaves as if moral standards and ethical principles do not exist. It does not matter if it is an ordinary worker or a government official – moral decay is a collective reality. That is, everyone has his or her stake in the process, and this process also affects everyone.

Signs and symptoms of moral decadence vary across communities. However, this phenomenon has several features depending on the community. For instance, there is the growing acceptance of corruption and violence in Nigeria. However, as a society we are becoming less sensitive to the pain and sorrows caused by violence. More people resort to violence, trying to solve their personal, social, economic, or emotional problems. The Consequences of moral depravity include increased crime, corruption, and social instability. Political and financial corruption is yet another sign of moral decadence. Politics in Nigeria at any level has become so dirty. Politicians and figures of authority would willingly give up even their core moral principles when such actions promise a more significant material gain, political, or social returns. Financial corruption is also an issue. The world knows dozens of cases when people invested their money in financial pyramids, explicitly created for manipulations and unlawful enrichment through deception and abuse. In a morally decadent society, violence, corruption, sexual harassment, and discrimination are also prevalent.

In a society full of moral compromise, even the most ethical and committed person feels the damaging effects of moral depravity. The person who stands on the correct moral standard is mockingly looked upon as a lonely voice in the wilderness. There is most serious and disheartening aspect of the whole matter is the growing acceptance of lower moral standards in society. People no longer care about violence, discrimination, harassment, or conflicts. They are just too busy doing their everyday work to show their commitment or try to defend higher moral ideals. Even when they fall victim to moral decadence, they may not be in a position to defend their interests or seek justice. It is not uncommon for violence and corruption to go unpunished. It is also common to treat victims as offenders, and vice versa. Moral decadence lowers standards of moral behavior and creates new but lower criteria for ethics and justice. Putting it simply, people are no longer required to act morally or ethically. Society no longer expects its members to preserve their commitment to the very basic moral norms. Moral decadence creates a general sense of cynicism. People no longer expect each other to be noble. They no longer expect each other to be honest.

In this morally decadent society, people have but to comply with new and lower standards and moral norms, and this is not the worst part of the story. Compliance and collectivism – people do not want to look different or stand out against the crowd, trying to defend their moral principles. They do not want to go against the moral tide, because it translates into joblessness, isolation, exclusion, and public shaming. They are not ready to fight against the system of

moral decadence and decay. As a result, a given society is choosing a path of moral self-destruction. At the end, it will be an immoral and deeply degenerated society, because only continuous moral development can keep societies flourishing.

Alemu (2019) further opines that "Moral decadence" is not a technical term in sociology, but Nigerian scholars typically use it to denote a patterned erosion of socially valued norms—hone sty, respect for life and property, sexual integrity, diligence, and civic responsibility—reflected in higher tolerance or prevalence of behaviors such as bribery, fraud, violent or sexual abuse, exam cheating, and antisocial substance use. Recent Nigerian literature associates the phenomenon with weak socialization, peer pressure, media influences, poverty and unemployment, and institutional failures in law enforcement and schooling. This paper therefore will see "moral decadence" as an umbrella for measurable outcomes that violate widely shared Nigerian legal-moral norms (e.g., the Constitution, criminal law, child-protection statutes, and education codes). This according to Adedini, S. O., & Folaranmi, B. A. (2025) allows triangulation using administrative data and surveys while acknowledging under-reporting.

This ugly cancer can be traced to the following conditions in Nigeria:

1. Social Disorganization & Institutional Anomaly: Rapid urbanization, economic shocks, and weak institutions dilute informal controls (family/community sanctions) while encouraging goal-achievement "by any means." This aligns with corruption and exam malpractice patterns clustered around high-stakes gatekeeping. This is where the family celebrates results without genuine labour and hard work and the society also do not really mind how money is made but celebrate and honour illicit money bags.
2. Strain & Relative Deprivation: Youth facing limited legitimate opportunities (jobs, quality education) are more susceptible to deviant adaptations (cultism, cyber-fraud, cheating, and transactional sex). The above point make the youth who wish to maintain sound morality a laughing stock and frustrated in some cases
3. Ecological Public Health: gender based violence (GBV), child marriage, and hard drug use driven by overlapping risk factors like conflict, poverty, harmful social norms, and poor access to services—requiring population-level prevention plus survivor-centered responses. The society that encourages the survival of the fittest will make every citizen to survive and make it by all means.
4. Economic and Governance Conditions: Perceptions of endemic corruption—both petty and grand—shape everyday moral calculations. Transparency International's 2024/2025 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) places Nigeria at score 26/100 and rank ~140/180, signaling entrenched governance problems despite periodic enforcement successes. The EFCC reported recovering nearly $500 million and securing 4,000+ convictions in the year to March 2025, yet public corruption perceptions remain poor—underscoring a legitimacy gap between enforcement outputs and lived experience.

5. Family, Schooling, and Media Empirical studies in Nigerian tertiary institutions repeatedly identify parental negligence, peer influence, and negative media content as proximate factors in youth misconduct—while also emphasizing that institutional controls (school discipline, exam security) substantially shape outcomes.
6. Corruption as a Moral and Institutional Crisis: The CPI trend (low scores, poor ranking) captures a persistent problem in public-sector integrity. Although enforcement agencies report recoveries and seizures, sustained improvements require preventive systems (transparent procurement, e-governance, audit capacity, whistleblower protections) that alter incentives—not just episodic crackdowns. Implications for moral order: When citizens routinely see rule-breaking rewarded, norm internalization erodes; "everybody is doing it" becomes a social proof cue that normalizes bribe-seeking and cutting corners.
7. Examination Malpractice and Academic Integrity: Examination malpractice is a bellwether of moral norms among youths. Credible media and agency reports indicate large numbers of withheld or cancelled results in recent years, ongoing blacklisting of exam centers called "magic/miracle centers and policy shifts (paper serialization, CBT adoption) to curb collusion and leakage: WAEC (WASSCE 2025): Results dipped by ~33.8% vs. 2024 after stricter anti-malpractice protocols; outlets report ~192,000 results flagged for malpractice in 2025. NECO (2024–2025): Blacklisted 14 exam centers; reported a 27.7% reduction in malpractice cases in the 2024 SSCE External (6,160 candidates booked, down from 8,518 in 2023).
8. Drug Use and the Normalization of Psychoactive Substances: The most comprehensive baseline remains the 2018 National Drug Use Survey (UNODC/Federal Ministry of Health/NBS), estimating 14.4% past-year prevalence (≈14.3 million adults 15–64)—far above the 2016 global average of 5.6%. Later academic syntheses continue to cite these magnitudes, with notable gendered patterns. Even if dynamics have evolved since 2018, the scale indicates a major social-health risk with attendant crime and productivity costs.

It is therefore very obvious that moral decadence is with us here in our society, because this concept of moral decadence has become a recurring theme in sociological, theological, and political discourse, particularly in Africa and Nigeria. According to (Ede, 2023) moral decadence denotes the erosion of moral values, resulting in widespread acceptance of dishonesty, corruption, and deviant behavior despite various governmental interventions, there remains a deepening moral crisis. Religion—particularly Christianity—has historically been central to ethical formation. The Bible, with its enduring moral teachings, continues to provide guidance on integrity, justice, and communal living. This paper at this juncture explores how biblical morality can be repositioned as a corrective cure to moral decline in contemporary society.

Biblical Foundations of Morality:

The Bible presents morality as rooted in divine law and the character of God. Key principles will include: these:

Decalogue (Exodus 20:1–17). The Ten Commandments establish prohibitions against theft, falsehood, adultery, and violence, forming a universal moral compass.

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). Jesus expands morality to include inner motives, emphasizing love, humility, forgiveness, and peacemaking.

Pauline Ethics and morality

The Apostle Paul links morality with transformed living in Christ, calling for honesty, sexual purity, and social responsibility (Romans 12:1–2; Galatians 5:19–23). Apostle Paul's teachings, applied to a Nigerian context, challenge the moral crises of corruption, social inequality, and materialism by advocating for inner transformation, integrity, communal responsibility, and hard work. However, some Pauline concepts face difficulty in translation to the Nigerian context due to cultural differences.

Some key Pauline moral teachings relevant to Nigerian society will include:

Inner transformation over outward religiosity, Pauline teachings emphasize that true morality is an internal transformation, not just outward religious observance. Some critics argue that despite the proliferation of churches in Nigeria, moral standards continue to decline. Religiosity is sometimes displayed through outward show, fasting, and media production, rather than through moral actions like honesty and integrity. Paul therefore calls for a "renewing of the mind" (*Romans* 12:2) that promotes ethical behavior and a commitment to the common good.

Pauline epistles explicitly condemn dishonesty, greed, and financial impropriety. Corruption is a major moral issue in Nigeria, affecting both the public and private sectors and undermining national development. These include embezzlement, bribery, and the manipulation of accounts. Applying Pauline ethics means rejecting dishonest practices and prioritizing accountability and integrity in all financial dealings. Studies suggest Christian ethics can be a tool in the fight against corruption. Paul's teachings present a strong ethic of work, emphasizing diligence and integrity in labor. Attitudes towards work in Nigeria are sometimes characterized by misconduct, apathy, and the stealing of public assets, colloquially known as "benefiting from the national cake". Paul encourages believers to work hard, be faithful, and to work as if they were serving God, not just men (*Colossians* 3:22−25). While Western societies often interpret Pauline teachings through an individualistic lens, many scholars note that Paul emphasizes the believer's responsibility to the community, especially to the weak and vulnerable. An excessive desire for materialism and personal wealth is prevalent in some Nigerian Christian circles, potentially overriding communal values and traditional African ethics of care. This has led to social inequality and neglect of the poor. Paul teaches that Christians should use their freedom responsibly to build up their community, not to satisfy selfish desires (2 Cor 5:14-15)

Prophetic – Traditions: Old Testament prophets denounced corruption, injustice, and oppression, framing morality as both personal virtue and social justice (Isaiah 1:17; Amos 5:24). The biblical prophetic tradition is a source of morality by offering divine commands, highlighting social injustices, promoting virtues like love and justice, and establishing a covenantal relationship with God as the basis for ethical conduct. Prophets addressed the social and moral failings of their time, urging a return to faithfulness to God through actions of charity, justice, and love for others. This tradition provides both revealed moral principles and a vision of a just society, influencing ethical systems through its emphasis on human dignity, God's law, and a covenantal relationship with Him. This prophetic tradition shapes the moral understanding of the society as it provides a framework for understanding right and wrong based on divine commands and the pursuit of justice and love. It further encourages a commitment to a moral life as a response to God's grace and the call to live in a manner that upholds human dignity. It offers moral patterns and principles that have shaped Western and global culture, providing a basis for understanding how to live in harmony and cooperation. All These texts provide a coherent framework for moral renewal that transcends cultures and eras.

The Relevance of Biblical Morality to Contemporary Society

Modern societies face diverse expressions of moral decline: corruption in governance, examination malpractice, gender-based violence, family breakdown, and drug abuse. (Adetayo, 2022), contends that secular ethics and laws, though necessary, often lack the transcendent authority and transformative power to inspire inner change. Biblical morality remains relevant because: It appeals to conscience. By grounding morality in divine authority, biblical ethics addresses both outward behavior and inward intention. It fosters community responsibility. Biblical teaching emphasizes love for neighbor, honesty, and service, values essential for rebuilding social trust. It provides hope and transformation. Christianity frames morality not merely as rule-keeping but as character transformation through grace and the Holy Spirit.

Repositioning Biblical Morality in Nigerian Society

1. Family as the First School of Morals: The Bible positions parents as moral instructors (Proverbs 22:6). Repositioning biblical morality begins with family devotion, teaching children integrity, respect, and compassion from an early age.
2. Education and Character Formation: Integrating biblical moral education into curricula can counter examination malpractice, cultism, and violence in schools. Beyond religious instruction, schools should use biblical narratives to teach honesty, fairness, and responsibility.
3. Governance and Leadership: Biblical morality emphasizes servant leadership (Mark 10:43–45). Leaders who embody justice, transparency, and compassion can inspire a

moral renaissance. Public policy infused with biblical ethics can promote accountability and protect human dignity.

4. Church as a Moral Vanguard: Churches must move beyond ritual and prosperity emphasis, reclaiming their prophetic role in confronting injustice, corruption, and immorality. Pastors and Christian leaders should be exemplars of integrity, modeling biblical virtues in public and private life.
5. Media and Public Discourse: Biblical morality can guide media content toward promoting truth, decency, and constructive narratives. Christian engagement with digital spaces can counteract harmful influences and normalize virtuous living.

Challenges to Repositioning Biblical Morality:

We must however observe that there will be some challenges in repositioning the biblical morality as cure for moral decadence in Nigerian society. Such challenges will include

1. Secularism and pluralism. Modern societies often resist religious influence in public policy.
2. Hypocrisy within religious institutions. Moral scandals among clergy weaken credibility.
3. Generational and cultural shifts. Younger populations may perceive biblical morality as outdated. These challenges require contextual application, genuine reform in religious institutions, and creative engagement with contemporary culture.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen family-based Christian moral education.
2. Introduce faith-informed civic ethics into schools.
3. Promote biblical servant leadership models in governance.
4. Empower churches to engage in social justice and anti-corruption campaigns.
5. Leverage media to communicate biblical moral values in culturally relevant forms.
6. Strengthen Integrity Systems: Institutions: Where rules are clear, credible, and consistently enforced (e.g., exam serialization; blacklisting), behavior adjusts quickly. Where enforcement is sporadic (anti-graft, GBV prosecution), cynicism and impunity flourish.
7. Education Integrity & Character Formation: Ethics across Curriculum: Embed ethics/civics with case-based learning tied to local dilemmas—bribery, plagiarism, online harassment, drug offers—supported by peer-led honor codes and restorative practices.
8. Social Protection & Youth Opportunity: Reduce Strain: Expand targeted cash transfers, apprenticeships, and youth enterprise financing linked to mentorship, to address the economic pressures that make deviance “rational.”

   Drug Use Response: Scale evidence-based prevention (school/family skills programs) and treatment (community-based psychosocial and MAT where indicated), guided by NBS/UNODC prevalence findings and updated surveillance.

9. Community, Faith, and Media Partnerships: Norm Change on GBV & Child Marriage: Support faith/community leaders to champion lawful age of marriage, consent, and non-violence; pair with keeping-girls-in-school incentives (scholarships, safe transport, and menstrual hygiene). UNICEF data justify focusing on high-burden states.

Conclusion

"Moral decadence" in Nigeria is best understood as a compound social problem: a convergence of frayed norms and malfunctioning institutions that together normalize corruption, educational cheating, GBV/child marriage, and risky substance use. The evidence indicates that smart system design (e.g., exam security, integrity infrastructure) produces rapid gains, while rhetoric without enforcement achieves little. Nigeria's pathway to renewal lies in aligning values education with credible, consistent, and transparent institutions—so that virtue is not merely preached, but rewarded, and vice is predictably costly.

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