SOCIAL DEVIANT IN THE SOCIETY AND THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH: THE NIGERIAN SITUATION

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to answer the question regarding social deviant in the society and the roles the church can play to curb the menace. Both individual and the Church – have an influence on attitude towards deviant behaviour. Church members for example, do have a more condemning attitude towards deviant behaviour than non-church members. This result, however, differs for different denominations. This paper employs both historical and sociological methods of investigation. Deviant behaviour is seen as any behaviour that violates the norms of a society and attracts a negative sanction (formal or informal). The deviants share a variety of behaviour that run afoul of the demands and desires of the society to which they belong. Their activities include pick-pocketing, robbery, arson of different kinds, harassment of law-abiding citizens and so on. The Church should see themselves as stakeholders in the attempt to ameliorating the challenge of social deviants in the society.

Keywords: Social Deviant, Society, Church, and Role

Introduction

In sociology, deviance describes an action or behavior that violates social norms, including a formally enacted rule (e.g., crime), as well as informal violations of social norms (e.g., rejecting folkways and mores). Although deviance may have a negative connotation, the violation of social norms is not always a negative action;

positive deviation exists in some situations. Although a norm is violated, a behavior can still be classified as positive or acceptable.

Social norms differ throughout society and between cultures. Deviance is relative to the place where it was committed or to the time the act took place. Killing another human is generally considered wrong for example, except when governments permit it during warfare or for self-defense.

Becker (1963), a labeling theorist, identified four different types of deviant behavior labels which are given as:

1. "Falsely accusing" an individual - others perceive the individual to be obtaining obedient or deviant behaviors.
2. "Pure deviance", others perceive the individual as participating in deviant and rule-breaking behavior.
3. "Conforming ", others perceive the individual to be participating in the social norms that are distributed within societies.
4. "Secret deviance" which is when the individual is not perceived as deviant or participating in any rule-breaking behaviors.

Gobbs (1907), an English philosopher, thinking about the problem of sociogenesis, had formulated a question: 'How can a society exist if dog eats dog?' He presumed that in an evolutionary process people had lost a programmed natural prohibition on killing representatives of their own kind (as opposed to animals). So, killing is a natural characteristic of human. That is why a society can exist only under a tight control of human behavior.

This theme has got a wide development in social-philosophical and sociological proceedings. Here we can name O. Kont, H. Spencer, W. Sumner, G. Tarde, E. Durkheim, E. Ross, R. Park, M. Weber, P. Sorokin, T. Parsons and others. Social philosophers sorted out basic institutions of social control that are responsible for human integration into society. First of all, they are: family, religion and a state. To the basic means of social control were related folk customs, traditions, manners, laws, social regulations. And amongst the maintenance mechanisms of social order were specially marked out *imitation* in a socialization process; *obedience* in two forms – personally-in official (based on consent and carried out as an inside control) and impersonally-official (by means of outer control); *reactions on stable forms* of social behavior (punishment or award).

In the development of social control of deviant behavior that has been practiced in all Western countries we can sort out three periods. The first period until the end of

18th century: The control had a repressive character. Measures of punishment were aimed at the human body (death penalty, mutilation, monstrous anguishes) and through this at external behavior. In this period there was no clear separation of control into formal and informal. The second period from the end of 18th century: Ideas had particularly strengthened during the first decades of the 19th century. The human personality became the subject of control, his internal condition, soul. During several decades many countries refused to use corporal punishments. The meaning of formal institutions schools (control over children), factories (control over workers), psychiatric clinics (control over mentally ill), army (control over military men)) that controlled humans' behavior was understood. The origin of prisons dates from this period (the end of the 18th century). Despite the fact that, with the imposition of prisons, the ideal aim of transition from repressive control to deterrence control was not reached, closed institutions remained legitimate and even strengthened. It leads to unwarranted widening and toughening of formal control, and, on the other hand, to the decrease of efficiency.

The third period began approximately since 1950s. Social, economic and cultural changes became its prerequisites: economic and social expansion of youth (liberation from conservatism), reduction of the role of family and church (as socialization institutions), increasing level of consumption with growing demands in the material sphere, broadening of possibilities for creative self-realization not only in a labour sphere, but also in leisure, too. This washed out the standards and stereotypes of behavior, strengthening internal control and weakening of the external one. Another important prerequisite was the declining belief in the ability of criminal law to secure the decrease of criminality – "crisis of punishment".

In this phase offers of using alternative methods of punishment appeared (probation, intensive supervision, electronic oversight, community works, conciliation, conditional early discharge, tax, etc.), and also different patterns of *social control* started to be suggested. Social control became understood as a mechanism of establishing the social order, the mechanism that ensured the aspiration of the system (whole society and/or social groups) for self-preservation and functioning. It acts constantly and appears as a totality of technologies, means and methods of influence of all society and/or a social group upon undesirable forms, kinds of behavior and activity with a purpose of their total elimination or minimization of damage caused by their existence, bringing to the condition, that would afford them to exist without destroying the social order.

It is clear that divergences of opinion in assessments of actions made by representatives of different social groups may be essential. These differences are conditioned by various experiences and, correspondingly, various definitions of the vital situation. Different determinations of situations and their assessments (discourses) may in some parts cross with each other, creating possibilities for shaping tolerance in society or intervals of norm operation, establishing measures of punishment and development of steps by controlling instances.

Divergences of opinion in assessments have particular consequences for the society's life. So, if the social importance of an action is adequately reflected in total public opinion, but inadequately in law, then social-inadequately low norms emerge. And here official instances inevitably clash with *mass* in observance of established directions, because "imposed on norms are associated in an individual's mind with an external enemy, that causes hatred, animosity, while 'homemade' norms stimulate voluntary obeying to their directions, solidarity, absence of violence.

Confrontational Assessments of the Social Importance of Actions Lapses

This process is connected with political and economic concerns of different social groups, which undertake all possible means (lobbying, bribery, blackmailing, sub-standardization and contract murders of officials, who apply to the creation of regulatory acts), to assign legislatively these concerns as law and order. This is how laws, which conflict with common sense, bring damage to society, but maintained by ruling top-down, are born. And this way, at the same time new kinds of "crimes" and other "deviations" are also born, the quantity of imprisoned people grows, the interference of law in the natural process of society development expands, inadequate lay policy forms, and methods of social control over deviant behavior change.

The ideological and connecting basis for the realization of these functions could become the conception of social justice. Humanistic ideas which maintain people's aspiration for a happy life on Earth, for freedom, have been born in democracy and liberalism. And the formula for justice in democratic relations had always required for an accurate definition. Modern democrats focus definitions of social justice, which were introduced by K. Popper and J. Rawls. Karl Popper in his book, *"Open Society and its Enemies"* gives a widespread understanding of justice:
   a) an equal distribution of civil duties' burden (those restrictions of freedom, which are necessary in a public life);
   b) equality of citizens in the eye of law, surely on conditions that

c) laws are not prejudiced towards or against definite citizens, groups or classes;

d) fair trial and

e) an equal distribution of privileges (not only burdens) which may signify a membership in a definite state for citizens. (Popper, 1945).

Another definition is given by Rawls (1971). He argues that justice principles for the basic structure of a society are objects of an original agreement. On the basis of this statement, he had sorted out two aspects of justice:

1.   Justice as an ideal social order (theory of strict agreement is in line with it);

A real society's condition, where there is injustice with which the society must somehow get on. But how should we treat injustice? The theory of partial agreement can be the answer. It includes two principles of justice: a) everyone has an equal right for freedom, compatible in a fundamental way with the same freedom of others; b) economic and social inequality (for example, authority and wealth) is fair only if it brings common utility and compensates the losses of the most unprotected members of society. Without entering the contradiction with supposed definitions of social justice, we can give its integrative definition: it is a measure of social utility (social adequacy) of laws and other normative prescriptions (formal and informal), which establishes and maintains (on the basis on an agreement) a special kind of vital activity of people, organizations, physical and judicial persons, that favours the society's survival and development, and also ensures the integration and worthy existence of all members of a society.

Socially fair institutions, forms of government, norms and laws are those, which on the basis of an agreement between subjects of social interactions create and support bases of worthy life of people in society where the requital principle on merits is proclaimed, i.e. there is aspiration to provide everyone individual justice in his relations with the state and social institutions. In the given definition of social justice, it offers foreseeable reference points (or the purposes) the establishment of such an order of ability to live for people and the organizations which promotes survival and development of society; the maintenance of integration and a worthy existence of members of society, and also the means of their achievement utility measure, i.e., social adequacy of social norms.

Here the definition "worthy existence" is a generalization of all those blessings which are proclaimed as those of modern society: a measure of freedom, equality, social security, an educational level, inclusiveness in social networks, wide opportunities of a choice of legal kinds of activity etc. Social justice infringement

(social injustice) leads to the occurrence of various forms of protest, including deviant ways. The protest against injustice can be passive (short circuit in itself, alienation and leaving from the reality in fantastic dreams, in various kinds of mysticism, drunkenness and alcoholism, narcotic, virtual reality of the Internet etc.) or active (vandalism, hooliganism, thefts, robberies, murders, shadow enterprise activity etc.). Together they also form the uniform case of deviation. The main kinds of crimes against the person (murder and attempt at murders, deliberate causing of heavy harm to health, rapes and attempts at rapes, robberies, thefts) are connected to people having a low educational level, not having a constant source of income.

As the evidence of education and not learning fundamental ethical standards lead to low level and the most refined and cynical physical violence, numerous facts of unmotivated cruelty of teenage criminal groupings, growth of extremism among youth, violence in colonies for minors are also connected with it. There is data that the most severe kinds of violence (beating, rape, mockery), made sometimes with no reasons and with a refined sadism, occur in correctional facilities for minor criminals' institutions, and transfer to (an adult zone) of many minor prisoners is regarded as a blessing. Social injustice in the sphere of education lies in the fact that society cannot provide a *high-quality* education for all citizens that would allow them to be competitive in the labour market. This is caused by many problems of objective and subjective causes. As objective causes there should be labeled firstly great economical costs for schools, equipment, high pays for teachers and so on, and also the inability of some people to receive modern education in the full amount. Subjective causes are the unavailability and unwillingness of society to invest money in the education of those who cannot pay for this education by themselves.

From time to time in different countries there are attempts being undertaken to solve this problem. The conversation leads towards the special social programs, in example, the Program of preschool education of Perry town in USA. The main aim of it was to lower the risk of unlawful behavior. In the group were gathered children at the age of three from families with low socio-economic status for the period of two years. Almost half of these families were composed from one-parent families, and almost all of the parents had a low coefficient of intellectual development, a low educational level, poor employment sheets and lived in overpopulated dwellings. The program of preschool education included the drawing of the children into the planning of the work in group for the purpose of the improvement of their intellectual and social development. Over the years it was found out that children who took part in the

program of preschool education (in comparison with the control group) were better in school, as a rule they finished school and got a job. The level of teenage pregnancy was considerably lower (almost twice), and the level of arrests was lower by 40 percent. The analysis of financial costs of the project of Perry showed that it cost about 5000 dollars for one child in a year. Despite the great costs the program fully covers the expenses in the future.

The USA special committee on matters of children, youth and family has calculated that there is an income of above 4,000 dollars for every dollar invested in the programs of preschool education, which is a result of economy on the organization of special education, social assistance and combating crime. Uneducated or poorly educated people are imprisoned because of crimes more often than highly educated (it should be considered that in Russia high education diploma does not always correspond to the high level and quality of education). The reason for that could be on the one hand side that they get judged or imprisoned more often because of an unjust judicial system or on the other hand side – in an anomie explanation – because they are rather poor, belong to the lower stratum of society, so more often they feel the different displays of social injustice and accordingly more often protest against it. For people who haven't got sufficient education, on the one hand it is much harder to fight such vices as restraints, envy, aggression, injustice and so on, and thus deviance seems more often successful (Bello & Ogedegbe, 2019).

Here are interesting facts given by foreign researchers and showing the connection between   socialization in amoral environment with different displays of deviant behavior:

- About 65% of the children treated severely by family have a breach of behavior (39% in control group); these breaches often reveal as problems at school and also problems of integration to social environment
- Emotional violence or sexual assault leads to refusal to eat (21% of questioned adults, subjected to these forms of violence in childhood, in control group – 8%), damaging themselves (34% and 1% in control group, respectively), theft (26% and 6% in control group);
- Among the adults subjected to cruel treatment in childhood smoked 62% (16% – in control group), took alcoholic drinks 22% (5% – in control group), took drugs 18% (3% – in control group), attempted suicide – 16% (2% – in control group), had difficulties with sex 60% (15% – in control group);

- Women subjected to sexual abuse in childhood later far more often become victims of new sexual assaults and start to engage in prostitution. (Bello& Ogedegbe, 2019).

A question can arise: "How are different population diseases and deviant behavior correlated with each other?

1. Some mercenary crimes are committed to get money for a close acquaintances' operation, like in case of cancer or chronic diseases, especially if children have it.

2. For instance, a higher level of anxiety can lead to spontaneous aggression and/or violent behavior displays.

3. Experts in narcomania point out that more often drug addicts are people whose course of life was accompanied with the following occurrences: mother's pregnancy pathology (toxins, infections etc.); complicated birth; frequent, hard, chronic diseases in childhood; psychic diseases, psychical problems of one of the close relatives, etc.

4. Many violent crimes are committed by people, suffering from different types of mental diseases, which (given the normal functioning of public health services) could have been revealed and cured in the early stages.

From the above we can draw the following conclusion: without canceling the work with people with deviant behavior, it should be paid special attention to the reforming of social institutions, called to provide citizen's rights in education (schools, universities, and mass media), medical services, social protection and support and by that also to prevent deviant behavior.

Some Positive Benefits Churches Bring to Communities

The American founders viewed churches as a central institution within American life, because religion provided the moral foundation of self-restraint and community awareness necessary for the success of republican self-government. Many believed that the American experiment would not succeed without the moral training churches provided to citizens. Churches, surely, have contributed to the success of America by encouraging virtue, but social science research has also shown that churches provide direct and indirect economic and social benefits to communities. Churches provide valuable contributions to communities in the areas of direct economic contributions, social services and community volunteering, education and civic skills training, and reduced levels of deviance.

These benefits positively improve communities in direct and indirect manners, and they enhance political stability and the long-term health of communities. This paper will outline some examples of each cited by prominent social science researchers, developing the argument that churches bring benefits to communities that outweighs the loss of revenue from their tax-exempt status. In fact, if it were not for churches, government would have to expend public funds to replace the community benefits those churches provide. Overall, it is clear that churches bring positive benefits to communities, and their role in the community as a beneficial, nonprofit institution should be maintained.

Churches Provide Direct Economic Benefits

The presence of churches in the community brings direct economic benefits to the local area. Church organizations provide jobs for the community, and churches support a variety of local businesses. Churches bring individuals from surrounding areas to the community where the church is located, and these individuals provide economic support to local establishments. Thus, churches aid in bringing additional revenue to communities.

Churches are also an attractive component to local communities. Much like strong school systems, many families and individuals consider the presence of local religious organizations when making decisions about moving to communities and purchasing property. The presence of churches aids in families choosing to establish residence in a local community. This, in turn, helps support local businesses and contributes to property tax payments. Therefore, churches provide direct economic benefits to the community. Churches encourage community growth, job creation, and overall economic vitality.

Churches Provide Social Benefits

Beyond direct economic benefits, churches also provide social benefits that have economic value. Several researchers have identified the social benefits that churches bring to communities, including: providing help to poor and vulnerable individuals in the community, improving marriage relationships, decreasing violence among women, increasing moral community obligations, and promoting charitable contributions and volunteering. Social scientists consider it irrational to participate in moral and volunteer projects, because they have such a low personal benefit. However, being a member of a religious community increases one's duty to serve

others in the community, countering the "free rider" problem. Churches help communities complete vitally important social projects, for which the government would need to fund if churches did not provide such support.

A comprehensive study of religious congregations in six metropolitan communities found that 91 percent of religious congregations provided at least one social service (Cnaan *et al.,* 1999), and, similarly, 87 percent of the congregations in a Philadelphia survey provided at least one social service to the community (Boddie *et al.,* 2001). While some argue that this percentage of churches is overestimated because it overlooks smaller churches, even conservative estimates claim that larger congregations, representing approximately 75 percent of the religious population in America, provide at least one social service to the community (Chaves, 1999).

In a recent, detailed study of churches in Philadelphia, researchers found that churches do much more community aiding work, including helping the poor and making positive social inroads in the community, than previously realized by scholars. The authors declare, "If it were not for the impressive collective effort of some 2,120 local religious congregations, life in Philadelphia would have become extremely harsh" (Cnaan *et al.,* 2006 p.291). In a similar study in Philadelphia, congregations, on average, provided 2.33 different social programs (Boddie *et al,* 2001). Another study shows that a typical church provides financial support, volunteers, space, and in-kind donations to six community programs each year (Am-merman, 2001). In categorizing these community programs, am merman finds that congregations, on average, aid two direct service programs, two educational, health, or cultural programs, and one community development or political/social advocacy program (Am-merman, 2001).

The presence of churches in the community will also increase the religiosity of locals, and increased religiosity results in positive social contributions for the community. For example, religiosity influences individuals' obligations to perform non-religious moral acts. Individuals who are religious have been shown to have increased propensity to participate in community-building, moral projects, such as giving blood (Ortberg, Goruch&Kim, 2001). Additionally, church affiliation and religiosity increase community volunteering as well as intra-church volunteering (Park & Smith, 2000). One scholar finds that churches contribute volunteers to three organizations on average, though some churches provide dozens of volunteers to different projects (Am-merman, 2001). A 1990 national study finds that church members volunteer 56 million hours each year to organizations outside their local

congregations, aiding with human service projects, educational attainment, cultural awareness and training, and environmental improvement (Hodgkin, 1990).

Because it can be difficult to quantify the exact value of the volunteering and community building benefits churches provide to local areas, many scholars have sought to quantify the "replacement value" of the social and volunteering benefits that churches provide to communities. The replacement value calculates monetary donations and in-kind support, staff and congregant volunteer hours, utilities, and the value of space (Tirrito & Cascio, 2003). Cnaan valued those churches in large metropolitan communities provide support equal to one full-time social service employee (Cnaan, 1999), and in a comprehensive study of Philadelphia scholars valued community services at $115,009 per congregation and $230,018,400 for all the religious congregations in the city (Boddie, *et al.,*2001). The accuracy of this figure can be debated, but it is clear that by building up and sending out volunteers to the community, churches provide significant economic and social benefits, helping improve communities.

Churches Promote Education and Civic Engagement

Along with creating social programs and serving as a foundation for community volunteers, churches also improve the educational success of students and provide training and skills that promote civic engagement. For students, religious involvement is positively correlated with higher math and reading scores and greater educational aspirations (Regnerus, 2000; Regnerus, 2001). Students who frequently attend church have improved ability to allocate time and achieve goals (Freeman, 1985), and religiously connected students are five times less likely than their peers to skip school (Sloane & Potvin, 1986). Parents' involvement in churches also improves their children's educational capacities and achievements. Parents with higher levels of religiosity raise children who more consistently complete homework, attend class, and complete degree programs (Muller &Ellison, 2001). Churches provide educational, psychological, and moral training and resources, which result in positive present and future educational outcomes for students.

Several cross-national and community-based studies also show that churches help members obtain civic skills, such as public speaking, networking, organizing, and participating in politics (Schwadel, 2002). The church environment provides a training ground for individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds, affording individuals the skills to succeed in industry, business, education, and politics. In sum, the education and civic engagement training and motivation that church institutions foster has great

social and economic benefits to societies. As education and civic engagement increase, deviance and crime decrease and economic growth and political stability increase. Churches are important institutions in the development of educational, life, and social skills necessary to succeed in society.

Churches Help Decrease Crime and Deviance

In addition to providing social programs and community volunteers, churches decrease the occurrence of crime and deviance in communities and among local youth. Reduced levels of crime and deviance make communities more safe, stable, and productive. It should be noted that, safe and stable communities encourage economic growth, through business expansion and attracting new residents. Several studies find that churches decrease crime and deviance, helping promote these economic benefits of a safer community.

Being involved in a church consistently decreases levels of deviance and crime. Religious involvement decreases domestic violence among both men and women, according to a national study (Ellison &Anderson, 2001). Church attendance has also been associated with decreased levels of assault, burglary, and larceny (Bainbridge, 1989), and religiosity promotes decreased levels of violent crime both at the individual and the state level (Hummer*et al.,* 1999; Lester, 1987). Increased levels of religiosity also directly decrease deviant behavior, such as drug use, violence, and delinquency among the youth (Fagan, 2006). Decreased levels of deviance aid in bringing about social order, increase the likelihood that businesses will expand into local areas and bring economic opportunities, and decrease government expenditures into programs and institutions that reduce, punish, and compensate for deviance.

Churches Promote Mental and Physical Health

Churches also promote a variety of health benefits for the community, improving the vitality of the community and decreasing government expenditures. Studies have consistently shown that religiosity is related to increased longevity (Johnson, et al., 2002; Fagan, 2006). The average religious individual lives seven years longer than the average nonreligious individual, and this increases to fourteen years for African American individuals (Hummer *et al.*, 1999; Fagan, 2006). Research by John Hopkins scholars shows that nonreligious individuals have increased risks of dying from cirrhosis of the liver, emphysema, arteriosclerosis, cardiovascular diseases, and suicide (Comstock & Patridge, 1972; Fagan, 2006). Religious attendance has also been shown to decrease alcohol abuse and drug use (Fagan, 2006; Gartner *et*

al., 1991; Hasin, *et al*., 1985). A study in San Diego, California also shows that nearly two-thirds of all churches provide health promotion programs and participate in community health programs (Elder, *et al.,* 1989). Church programs and religious practices promote physical health, and a healthy community is more productive and less of a strain on local resources. By helping improve physical health, churches provide a significant benefit to the community.

In addition to physical health, church attendance also promotes mental health. In a comprehensive survey of mental health studies, 81 percent of 91 studies showed that religion is positively associated with mental well-being (Johnson *et al.* 2002; Fagan, 2006). Religious attendance has been shown to decrease stress, increase self-esteem, and give individuals hope and a greater sense of life purpose (Fagan, 2006; Johnson *et al.,* 2002). Increased religious practice also is associated with decreased levels of depression and suicide (Johnson *et al.*, 2002; Ellison, 1995). In sum, church involvement has been shown to improve mental health, and having strong mental health makes individuals more productive and less at risk for committing crimes. Churches provide mental health benefits to individuals, and improved mental health directly aids communities.

Churches Promote Outcomes that Improve Government Stability and Economic Growth

Community contributions such as volunteerism, mental and physical health, reduced deviance, increased education and civic awareness, and social networks are all components of social capital—a concept numerous social science researchers have identified as having a significant impact on successful communities and societies (Putnam, 2000). Social capital is the outcome of trust, social networks, and social health, and it encourages economic and social opportunities for communities. Scholars have frequently referenced the role of religion in creating social capital and developing the positive societal impacts of social capital (Fukuyama, 2001). Social capital, which churches promote, has been shown to increase economic growth (Zak & Knack, 2001), and it also improves government performance, according to an evaluation of the fifty states (Knack, 2002).

Conclusion

In total, Churches have diverse positive impacts on communities, ranging from increased trust, improved mental and physical health, decreased crime, and enhanced

levels of volunteering and community outreach. These attributes build norms and values that encourage political stability and economic performance. Churches contribute to vitally important components of successful societies, and their presence in communities provides many benefits that cannot be measured solely by direct revenue.

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