

ETHICAL RELEVANCE OF SEXUAL RENUNCIATION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO *DINWANNA* IN IMERIENWE: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

Dinwanna is a culturally approved relationship among young bachelor and a spinster, which replicated marriage but not actually, a legally form of marriage. The practice is mainly found among the people of Imerienwe in Ngor-Okpala Local Government Area (LGA) of Imo State, who cherished this cultural heritage because of its socio-economic importance. The problem today is that, dinwanna, a form of sexual renunciation among the partners involved has lost almost its ethics. The misconception and abuse of dinwanna have caused more harm than good. The institution of marriage is at stake because of the gradual acceptance of the abuse of dinwanna as a short way to marriage. Thus, the marriage institution, is gradually losing its ethical and legal imports. The Imerienwe community is stigmatized because of the deviation from the rationale of dinwanna. This calls for an ethical appraisal of the phenomenon of dinwanna, which is tailored towards the reorientation and placing more value on cherished cultural heritage. The objective of the study is to assist most especially the contemporary youths to understand how dinwanna was practiced and also to cherish sexual renunciation. The study poised that ethics should be valued as the bedrock of human existence and development. Different eras of sexual renunciation were considered in the study. The research further postulated the merit and ethical relevance of sexual renunciation/dinwanna. In the course of the study, it was discovered that dinwanna was an ancestral heritage. It was practiced without dismay, until some factors contributed to the loss of its values. The study recommends making marriage easier for our young people and placing more interest in checking and disciplining of the young ones to ameliorate the abuse of sex. There is a need to emphasize more of good principle of life and personal determination to lay a good legacy, knowing full well that there is a consequence of every anomie.

Keywords: Sexual renunciation, *Dinwanna*, Christian ethics, Case study, Imerienwe, Nigeria.

Introduction

The problem of misunderstanding and misrepresentation of certain relationships with laudable ethical underpinnings in the society is alarming. This is due partly to the eroding of the cultural and moral guideposts in contemporary world, resulting into lack of proper guidance. Under the sledge hammer of modernity, ancient cultural heritages are astronomically capitulating with some of them metamorphosing into adulterated forms. Consequently, certain strange practices are carried out in the name of replicating cherished cultures. Cultural changes with their attendant consequences occur in all societies in Nigeria, particularly in Igbo nation.

In view of the above, one of such ancient cultural practices in Igbo society, precisely in Imerienwe, Ngor-Okpala, Imo State, South East, Nigeria, was *Dinwanna*. Dinwanna is basically a relationship between a bachelor and a spinster which is devoid of sexual relationship. Hence, the study focused on the understanding of ethics, sexual renunciation/dinwanna, and different eras of sexual renunciation mainly during the classical periods. The study ended with the merit and ethical relevance of sexual renunciation/dinwanna.

Understanding Ethics

Geisler & Feinberg (2008) posed that hardly a day goes by that we are not faced with questions of morality: Will I cheat or not? The issue of ethical theory is practical question, problem that touches everyday life. Many ethicists hold that ethics is also concerned with a normative inquiry into reality or phenomena. They claim that ethical theories recommend, appraise and justify the choice of certain actions; the same applies to goals and ultimate courses of life as morality is valuable. Here, the ethicist is concerned to do more than merely describing how people act, rather, he/she wants to prescribe, that is, he/she is interested in ascribing courses of action which ought to be followed or praised, (Geisler & Feinberg, 2008:25). Furthermore, Geisler & Feinberg (2008) opine that in theoretical character of ethics we do not mean to suggest that it has no relevance to the practical and immediate problem. The final test of any ethical theory is its ability to resolve the practical problems which give rise to the inquiry, (Geisler and Feinberg 2008:25).

Lopez (2022) defines ethics as a branch of philosophy that raises questions about morality. He further postulated two different ways of looking at the morality ethics of humanity: (a) consequential ethics, in which the outcome of action determines the morality of the act. What makes the act wrong is the consequence, for instance, if one lies to save life it is not wrong; and (b) non-consequential ethics that emphasizes the source of morality comes from the application of law, be it God's law, moral law, etc. Here, a consideration is built into

the act itself before you think of the consequences; before it makes it right or wrong, for example, a lie is a lie no matter how it saved life. It is a violation of the nature of speech (Lopez 2022). According to Ronhubbard (2007) in the basics of ethics, man has struggled with the issue of right and wrong including ethics and justice. Seeing ethics as a study of the general nature of moral is of the specific moral choices to be made by individual in his relation with others. Philosophies and Philosophers from time immemorial, have not solved it. The solution lies in the hands of ethicists.

The early Greek followers of Pythagoras in the 6th century BC, applied their mathematical theories to the human conduct and ethics. Sometime later, Socrates also continued on the subject by demonstrating that all those who were claimed to show people how to live were unable to defend their views, even define the terms they were using. He argued that we must know what courage, justice, law and government are before we can be brave or be good citizens, just or good rulers. He said that sin was ignorance but did not take the necessary actions turning man of his ignorance: “Socrates’ pupil, Plato (Greek philosopher, 427? 347), added to his matter’s theories but insisted that these definitions can only be defined by pure reason. Aristotle (Greek philosopher, 384-322 BC) also got involved in ethics. He explained unethical behaviour by saying that rationality became over ruled by his desire, (Ronhubbard, 2007:8)”.

In a nutshell, the chain continued down the ages even as philosophy tried to resolve the subjects of ethics; until now, there has been no workable evidence by the declining ethical level of society. He further opines that, “you can’t run pre-clear without ethics to technical fact”. With no available ethics officers to take potential trouble source (PTS) there will be no standard policy action, (Ronhubbard, 2007:5). Ethics is a protection; it protects all fields. “Ethics actions must parallel the purpose of scientology organizations” (Ronhubbard 2007:237).

Religious Ethics

Religions bear untold treasures of moral wisdom; that is practical guidance about how to live justly and well that include beliefs and practices about the nature of human existence, social life, what is good and righteous, and reality itself. The deposit of those beliefs and practices that transmit moral wisdom is a religion’s morality (Clairmont & Schweiker, 2020:2). Clairmont and Schweiker (2020) narrate the history of religious ethics as follows:

The ideas of religious ethics” is rather ancient. During the period of what has been called the “axial age” (800-200 BC), thinkers around the world, in China, India, Persia, and the West, developed patterns of thought, including “monotheism” or belief in one God, as well as paths to enlightenment that included moral

convictions. In each case there were criticisms of accepted ways of thinking and acting and proposals for new modes of thought and action. The Greek philosopher Socrates (C. 469-399 BC), for example, advanced ethical thinking by isolating basic moral standards and concepts but was condemned for supposedly corrupting the youth are creating new gods. The great Hebrew prophets, like Isaiah (8Hq BCE), challenged traditional religious cult and ritual with the demands for justice, as especially for the poor and outcast. Siddartha Gautama (the Buddha or Enlightened one" (c 563-483 BCE) taught, as explored in a later chapter of this book, the four Noble truths for attaining enlightenment and that the path to Nirvana (a state of liberation from suffering) included specifically moral traits and actions. In each of these cases and others could be noted, the validity and meaning of moral convictions were tested and even raised from within a religion and its way of life, (Clairmont Schweiker, 2020:12).

The Concept of Religious Ethics

Clairmont and Schweiker (2020) posed that there is long existing dispute about the meaning of "religion", morality", and "ethics". Some thinkers say ethics is the philosophical analysis of the codes of conduct and beliefs about what is good, just, and right in a society, that is, a "morality". Religious people have peculiar beliefs about gods, the afterlife, salvation or enlightenment. However, in that case, the religions with their rich and complex heritages of texts, symbols, rituals and practices do not provide novel and deep ways to sense, feel and think about ethics and ethical problems. In the other aspect, philosophical definitions of "morality" may want to put it in a way it should be well known, by saying morality is about "duty" (Kant) or it is about virtuous behaviour (Aristotle) or about consequences and utility (Jeremy Bentham 1748-18322CE). Ethics becomes one dimensional because of its tasks. The duty of ethics is to interpret, elaborate, assess, define and apply "morality". (Clairmont & Schweiker, 2020:15). Religious ethics bring about the expected moral.

Furthermore, Clairmont and Schweiker (2020), opine that every religion is a form of reflection on and practice or interpreting human existence, the nature of healthy, and how one should live. Religious ethics is a specific kind of reflection on that first-order reflection. It is a meta-reflection analogous to other kinds of reflection on religion, example, historical, anthropological, sociological, philosophical, psychological, and so on, (Clairmont & Schweiker, 2020: 17).

***Dinwanna*/Sexual Renunciation**

In his work, *The Body and Society*, Brown (2008), posed a type of relationship that is of permanent sexual renunciation; celibacy, life-long virginity as opposed to observance of temporary periods of sexual abstinence. This relationship was observed between 40 to 430 AD, among men and women in Christian circles, one of the historical figures of that era was the Paul the apostle around 40-50 AD and after the death of Saint Augustine 430 AD. Furthermore, Brown (2008) tried to clear the notions of the human person and of society as found in such renunciations, and to follow thoroughly the reflection and controversy which these notions instigated, among Christian scholars, most especially in the matters of sexuality, the men's and women's relationship, and the society.

In the second century AD, in a pagan world where Christianity has begun to gain grounds, many Christian movements renounced sexual activities (Brown, 2008: xiii). It was discovered then that complete sexual continence (self-restraint) was considered as an essential feature of the Christian life. Some of the early fathers like Origen dominated all accounts of the further development of notions on sexuality and human person in the then Greek world. In his time the changing form of the church was the role of continence in the relation between men and women. In the third century, the Christian ideal of virginity took over while the pagan notion of abstinence started fading. Subsequently, during the age of Saints Anthony and Constantine, there was a practice of sexual renunciation in the different regions of the Christian world, (Brown 2008: xii).

Brown (2008) recaptured the distinctive flavour of that period in the history of Christianity which distinguished it from all subsequent times. It became apparent that the notion of sexual renunciation is different from what the contemporary is accustomed with. For instance, clerical celibacy was practiced in a manner totally different from the current Catholic Church. Also, there was ascetic movement, associated with the Benedictine Monasticism of the Latin West and the notion of perpetual virginity. Nonetheless, the female chastity that was achieved in the ages of the pagan world and in later forms of Catholic Christianity was incomparable. He further, observed that the flavour of many Christian notions of sexual renunciation, both in their personal and social consequences, have been rendered insipid (weak or tasteless). Sexual renunciation has been explained away from what it was, as if it was a borrowed supposed pagan or Jewish practice (Brown, 2008: xvi).

Brown, 2008, postulated, in quote;

But an effort to do justice to the particularity of certain strains of Christian thought and practice should not be held to justify the systematic dismissal of the complex and resident ecology of moral notions that characterized the Mediterranean cultures

of the age; still less should it encourage us to ignore the profound changes in the structure of ancient society in this period.

The above author, further stated:

If renewed study of the actual sexual practices and attitudes of Judaism, in Palestine and the Diaspora, and of the changes in the family structure and moral tone of pagans, in the long centuries that stretch from Trajan to Theodosius II were to correct this book, render parts of its out of date, or set my narrative in a more cogent social framework, no one would be more delighted than myself (Brown, 2008: xvi).

In other word, Brown (2008) suggested that thorough work should be done on the matter of sexuality and its renunciation with the study of human.

Twentieth Century Scholarship on Sexual Renunciation in view of *Dinwanna*

The concept of *dinwanna* has its findings in the twentieth century scholarship. The word *dinwanna* may not be found, but sexual renunciation has been a practice among early religious bodies. In the twentieth century, the origins of Christian asceticism and sexual renunciation have been linked primarily to the emergence of monasticism in the early fourth century. Surveys of the history of asceticism generally acknowledged that an undeveloped and limited ascetic practice existed in isolated areas of Christianity prior to ca. 300 CE, at which time there seems to have been in explosion in the practice and extent of asceticism and celibacy across early Christianity as a whole. This ascetic lifestyle had their heroic founders in the persons of Anthony and Pachomius (Brown, 1988:115).

Moreover, it has been argued by scholars that after the year Emperor Constantine was converted and the starting of Christianity, the church conventionally welcomed asceticism and monasticism as an ideal expression of human sanctification and spirituality. It was at this time; virginity became a mark of a strong Christian. Most religious writings in the 4th century had virginity as the main subject. This made many men and women took vows to preserve their bodies for desert life- ascetic/ monastic life of *anachoresis* (withdrawal) *asepsis* (discipline), and *enkrateia* (self- mastery), (Brown, 1988:116-117).

Post Modern Scholarship of Asceticism as an aspect of *Dinwanna*

Asceticism as compared to the subject of *dinwanna* was in the areas of self-discipline and abstention from sexual immorality:

With the rise of post- modern criticism and new methodological perspectives in the 1980s, this historical picture of early Christian asceticism was criticized for being over simplifies in its presentation. In particular, a new emphasis on social theory and how it functions was critical of historical accounts of the development of

celibacy that did not account for the role of asceticism in social and cultural dynamics scholars of the 1980s and 1990s rightly emphasized that the practice of asceticism was more than just a spiritual discipline and that it encompassed a variety of social motivations and consequences (Brown, 1988:121).

Gleaned from the above, asceticism tended to be a linear progression reflecting in the growth of Christianity as the superior culture the time and the rise of virginity as a reflection of God's victory immorality. In many centuries ago, celibacy asceticism represented the culmination of God's work of salvation that transformed the Roman empire into the city of God. This notion of asceticism was believed to be pioneered by Authony and Pachominus. It was agreed that asceticism brought temporal human existence and closer to the eternal through the disciplines of desert and monastery. This appeared to be a miraculous movement of God planned to institute his kingdom on earth (Brown, 1988:113).

The Mid to the late Second Centuries of the Era of Sexual Renunciation

Progressively from the 140's CE through to the beginning of the third century, the writing of Hermas, Justin the Martyr, Irenaeus and some elements of Alexandria revealed that sexual renunciation was prominent they found in early Christianity of the second century till the time of Tertullian. Brown (1988) quotes Justin Martyr (ca.150- 65CE) on sexual renunciation:

The function of the womb is to become pregnant; and of the member of the male to impregnate. But as, though these members are destined to discharge such functions, it is not therefore necessary that they from the beginning discharge them (since we see many women who do not become pregnant, as those that are barrens even though they have wombs), so pregnancy is not the immediate and necessary consequences of having a womb; but those even who are not barren abstain from sexually intercourse, some being virgins from the first and others from a certain time. And we see men who are also keeping themselves virgins, some from the first and some from a certain time, so that by their means marriage made lawless through lust is destroyed. And our Lord Jesus was born of a virgin, for no other reason than that he might destroy the begetting by lawless desire, and might show the ruler that the formation of man was possible to God without human intervention (Brown, 1988:179).

To this end, men and women welcomed sexual renunciation while others did same at their younger age. They did this as a long-life practice in order to avoid lustful desire from the flesh. Notably and by the end of second century, Irenaeus and clement of Alexandria, had started being apologetic with respect to heresy. This included the correction of the effect of

the Gnostic teaching on sexuality in the early church. Obviously, it appeared to be that Gnostic teaching on sexually has made some Christians to adopt either excessive liberty on the matter of sexuality or much more too raw on rejecting God's given blessings such as sex and procreation.

Sexual Ethics in Greco-Roman World

It has established that ascetic practices in the early church were found in a prominent way up to the fourth century. Notably, in these days ethical behaviour was largely thought to be the most efficiently and reasonably means of attaining the telos of human existence. The examination of attitudes towards sexuality, which were rooted for the materialist and metaphysical school of thoughts in concept of body and soul, would depend upon a full understanding of the cosmology, teleology and ethics of each school. Plato speaks of the sexual appetites as a natural function of the body that ensures the perpetuation of the community. In this regard, the sexual appetites are similar to thirst, or hunger, driving by a natural desire to provide for an appropriate need. At the other times, he seems to speak of sexuality in terms of a dangerous appetite that has the potential to be imperiously irrational; often referred to it as an irrational function of the soul. Plato provides a variety of colourful imagery depicting sexual desire such as what of a mindless animal, a rebellious faction of a civil war and so on. The sexual appetite in these highly historical passages is depicted as a raving and beastly master of raging lusts that is intensely exposed to rational behaviours, often to such an extent that the irrational basis of sexual behaviour is the root of all other vices. Plato refers to the sexual appetite, as one of the facilities of soul that is both necessary kind of way.

Besides, there is need for check and balancing. If the reasoning faculty is not utilized to balance out the desiring faculty, then that desire can turn uncontrollable. For instance, food could become gluttony if the appetite is not controlled; likewise, sex could become licentiousness if not controlled. However, the faculty of the spirit is required to engage the reasoning faculty in order that good is obtained. Both the appetite and reasoning faculties can be disciplined; one needs to limit exposure to the physical pleasures as the first part of a double-sided set of safeguards. The "simple and the moderate" appetite of the soul is properly the natural impulse to reproduce. In this case, a limited and moderate engagement in sexual activity, purely for the sake of experiencing the physical pleasure, is harshly ridiculed and should be curbed.

Early Christian's Discourse on Sexual Ethics: The New Testament

According to Brown (1988) with regard to sexual behaviour, found in the New Testament, if it was to the obedience of God's law in the Old Testament that proceeded to the New Testament:

In regard to sexual behaviour, second temple Judaism both inherited Old Testament Law, and produced innovations that responded to contemporary pressures of Hellenization. More importantly, their attitudes towards sexuality reflected the same focus upon obedience that was apparent in their cosmological, anthropological and teleological perspectives and the same absence or ontological concern in regard to body and soul as well. In this way, it was obedience to God that directed Jewish sexual attitude, and from the Old Testament came both positive and negative commands in regards to sexual behaviour.

Also, it was discovered that the Septuagint intensified more on prohibition of sexual activity that threatens thorough devotion to the things of God. For instance, if sexual activity brings one to involve in pagan worship (temple prostitutes) then it was considered unethical and wrong. Also, sexual activity that was not dedicated for reproduction and obedience to God was also wrong. Any sexual activity that showed no honour to God was condemned, (Brown 1988:34).

General view on *Dinwanna*

Literally, *Dinwanna* corresponds to kinsman husband where *Di* is husband whereas *Nwanna* is kinsman. Technically, therefore, *Dinwanna* is a culturally approved and cherished relationship where a young bachelor has the responsibility of watching over a young spinster as though he was her husband. In this relationship, the young man acts as her husband to guide, protect and care for her without any coital attachments. This kind of relationship serves as a foretaste of what marriage relationship should be for both couples. It also affords them the opportunity to watch over each other as well as prevent molestation from other men. It is not a clandestine relationship unknown and unapproved by their parents and the society. There are virtually no strong unethical practices ascribed to it by the people. And in any event of sexual misconduct, there were sanctions strictly meted out to deter future occurrences. Therefore, the practice is a culturally accepted norm and heritage among the people, (Okere, 2022 Interview).

Today, *Dinwanna*, has been bastardized and has lost almost its morality and ethics. Misconception of this lifestyle has caused more harm than good and impinges on the fact that social behaviours must be put into checks and balances in order to protect the underlying morality. Morality or its cognate, ethics, has been a requirement from

humankind right from creation. It is an inborn feature (synderesis), implying that nobody is exonerated from moral demands and implications of actions. Ethics here implies knowing and doing what ought to be done. Thus, while humans are free moral beings, their actions are bound with implicit and explicit dos and don'ts; persons are to know the right and the wrong in regard to their actions and choices. There are ethical guideposts for every human engagement, including relationships, (Ekechi, 2023 Interview).

Dinwanna roughly corresponds to convenient type of cohabitation where the goal is to afford the parties involved to be of mutual assistance to one another without any permitted room for sexual intimacy. Thus, *Dinwanna*, as applied in this study, is considered a platform whereby those involved share things in common. In this type of cohabitation, there is temporary togetherness whereby both parties are allowed to visit each other's family; spend some time and then go back to their homes, (Ojo, 2019:12). Just like many other social relationships, abuse is inevitable even in a sane and ethically accepted relationship like *Dinwanna*. Cases abound where the practice was abused resulting into incest, unwanted pregnancy and abortion with its inherent religious, biological and economic implications.

A Case Study of Dinwanna/Sexual Renunciation in Imerienwe by A. Ekechi (A Royal Monarch)

Imerienwe is a name our ancestor called us. It comprises five villages Umuoye, Amafor, Umunam, Umunakara, Upe. These five villages make up Imerienwe, later, Upe separated and became autonomous along the line. The origin of the name emanated from a legend, that a couple in the ancient time went to farm and kept their child on the farm land. As they were farming and went a distance of about two poles, they heard the cry of their baby, and ran to the spot where the baby was lying. It was dreadful to see a heap of soldier ants, but could not see their baby. As they were furiously panting and looking for the child, they heard the monkeys chattering. As they looked up, behold the monkeys were carrying the baby and removing the ants from the body. After making sure that the child was safe, the monkeys dropped the child back to the spot safely. Then, the parents of the child reached home and narrated the incidence to the community. It was agreed that such animal must not be killed or eaten; the literal meaning was, "O nwe onye ime anyi ga eri enwe", "ime anyi ga eri enwe" (No one among us will eat monkey). Imerienwe is a loving place; it is a growing community with dynamic cultural heritage. The community has many educated fellows. The people of Imerienwe are productive. There are also bad people in the community.

In the land of Imerienwe, people like Dr. Nnanna Ukaegbu brought much development in the land and announce the community to the world. Through his effort, there came a hospital

in the land. He also built a secondary school Owerri Grammar School Imerienwe. Among many others, was the widening of foot-path roads and thereby invited the government to construct good roads.

Dinwanna

It was a special relationship. It was peculiar to what is observed today. *Dinwanna* was what our ancestors practiced and handed over to use. The process of contracting was as followed, when a boy saw a girl he liked, he would approach her. When the girl agreed, she would tell her mother. Thereafter, her mother would tell her father. As the father of the girl agreed, the boy would partially become a member of that family. Then they would be cautioned to behave well. *Dinwanna* was practiced among those who cannot intra-marry.

Origin

My father was one of those who practiced it. This was in the early 1900, and *Dinwanna* has the following significant values:

- i) Protection: Each time the girl wanted to travel she would inform her *Dinwanna*, who would escort her. Sometimes, when the girl wanted to come back her *Dinwanna* would go and bring her back home.
- ii) Domestic Help: The girl washed the cloth of the boy. Whatever a wife did for her husband was done him.
- iii) Mutual Help: When a *Dinwanna* was sick, the partner did all the caring. At that time, could even stay together until one recovered, without conjugal relationship.
- iv) Farm Work: The boy was responsible of cutting the bush of the parents of his *Dinwanna*. Every aspect of farm work mainly for boys was done by the *Dinwanna*; starting from clearing the bush, cultivating of the land, planting yam, staking of yam, cutting fire wood, preparing the barn for harvest and harvesting the yam itself.
- v) Preservation of Virginity: *Dinwanna* was a moral guidance and counsellor. We reported ourselves to our parents when anyone was about to deviate. In *dinwanna*, any type of help one could be rendered to each other. The only area that was prohibited was having a carnal knowledge of self.
- vi) Advocacy for the Girl-Child: *Dinwanna* was also important to safe-guard the girl. In those days, a girl would be disturbed by boys. Some girls were even beaten because of their beauty. At every moment of such disturbance, the girl's *Dinwanna* would fight for her. He could also call his friends to support him in saving his *Dinwanna*.

Dinwanna was a replica of how Virgin Mary was betrothed to Joseph. They lived without having conjugal relationship. Most of our cultural heritages were resemblance of what was practiced in Israel as recorded in the Judeo-Christian scriptures. *Dinwanna* was seen as husband and wife in quote. What a legal husband and wife did to each other was allowed in the relationship apart from sexual intercourse.

It was observed that, whenever any partner wanted to demand for intimate relationship, they would separate; though some violated this partly due to individual tendencies. There were few cases of violation of the relationship as a result of engaging in sexual/conjugal relationship; for instance, some people's *Dinwanna* were prepared and preserved for the sake of future marriage. When she got married, her husband would bring wine to the fathers-in-law, because they would protect the girls to remain virgins till marriage. Here, virginity was highly valued in the community.

Our relationship as *dinwanna* lasted for eight years. In these eight years, there was nothing like sexual relationship. The girl can undress herself in the presence of her *dinwanna* and there would not be any lust. This was done most especially during bathing or undressing after farming. Both *dinwanna* were seen as brother and sister. There was no fear or suspicious thought in such an act, unlike nowadays when such is done in order to lure a partner to sexual intercourse.

Dinwanna was mainly between people of the same kindred. There was danger of having *Dinwanna* with those village or community which can intra-marry. The danger was that there would be too much of lust, which may lead to sexual act. One who had a *Dinwanna* could also have a boyfriend or a girlfriend. Those *dinwanna* allowed this because they knew that they cannot marry themselves but could marry the boy/girlfriend. In those days, whoever that wanted to marry his/her legal husband or wife, took advice from his/her *Dinwanna*. Also, during the marriage ceremony, they took prominent role to support each other.

Dinwanna was abused when they started going to the university/higher institution; their orientation of *dinwanna* started to undergo worldview of cohabitation. The lady could come as often as possible, not to come back with her load and stay with her *Dinwanna*. Moreover, any day she felt to stay overnight, it was allowed. If anyone was sick, the days to stay together could be elongated. When marriage has taken place, the persons involved were still *dinwanna*. Up till now our *dinwanna*'s relationship continued to be. Our children were introduced to our own *ndi dinwanna*. Both *ndi dinwanna* (more than one by number) could continue to visit each other till death do them part.

The female folks enjoyed *dinwanna* so much, due to the protection they got from the relationship. The respondents could remember when a lady older than him would always take him along in order that boys would not harass her. Solution could be proffered in order not to abuse any *dinwanna*.

Dinwanna was an aspect of cohabitation but the conjugal relationship was not accepted. In 1979, the respondent went to a nearby town, Obibiezenna, during an inter house sports. He visited his friend's house, as they were entertained a beautiful girl just passed from the bedroom. The name of the girl was Ureh. The attention of his friends was highlighted. He responded that they saw themselves as the same; that the thought of a sexual relationship was farfetched in that situation. They lived in the same room, went to the same school and were in the same class, but did not involve in any marital union.

The respondent as the traditional king (royal majesty) of this community, it was postulated that *dinwanna* could continue, there were many importance in the relationship. *Dinwanna* promoted morals, like virginity. The male folks helped in training the girls and protecting them.

The effect on those who abuse *dinwanna* was banishment. There was a tendency for them to run away from the community. The shame was too much that the cohabitants could not stay in the community. *Dinwanna* is practiced today but you cannot get it exactly how it was practiced before the war. It could be 5% of those in the relationship who practice *dinwanna* exactly the way it should be. Today, even when children of 10-12 stay together, they would start to feel and practice immorality.

Parents of those involved are not regarded. The king said many years ago when he was invited by a Catholic church during the celebration of "Ezinne" honour to a Good mother, when he was called upon to cut the cake, behold one of the persons to be honoured as "Ezinne" was recognized by him. He asked the priest, what was the essence of the honour? The Eze disclosed that, one of the would-be celebrants was not qualified to be honoured. The reason was basically on the abuse of *dinwanna*. The daughter of the woman to be honoured was pregnant by a *Dinwanna*. Therefore, the woman was affected because of her daughter's abuse of *dinwanna*.

Another, family was training a seminarian, but in that family, there was an abuse of *dinwanna*. When investigation was carried, it was a reality. The family pleaded with the authority of the community not to forward their findings to the church. The seminarian would have been dropped just because of a family member who abused *dinwanna*.

Just as it was said, “Blessed are those whom their sins are forgiven, whom their transgressions are remembered no more” (Psalm 32:1). Some never disclosed their abuse cases, but those who were caught brought derogation to their families.

In other ways, some who are in this relationship could be suspected in our contemporary society, but not found guilty. There was a girl who was always cohabiting with his *dinwanna*, that is, sleeping in the same room. She was suspected and ridiculed however, when she was married, it was discovered that she was a virgin. Though the way it was done in the olden days was not attainable in world of today.

Currently, some children who left the house to the university cohabited in contrary to the culturally accepted way. The respondent’s son got admission to the university at age 15. Now, there was nothing he did not know. The world was at his palm through a cell phone. At most, what they watch were pornographic materials. Hence, the world of today made it difficult to practice *dinwanna*.

The Merit and Relevance of *Dinwanna*/Sexual Renunciation

The *Dinwanna* had deepened family ties and personal involvements. It is meant to be a social control tool whereby those involved could watch over each other as far as social behaviours and interactions are concerned. For instance, it is the duty of the young man to ensure that the lady does not indulge in illicit sexual activities or become disobedient to his parents. He provides the social care and platform needed for a life-lasting marriage in the future. He becomes her confidant and reliable ally as she battles with both social and biological realities. The young lady is to assist him in doing household chores for his parents while he does same to her family in farming and other services.

Economic Importance of *Dinwanna*

- a) The man helped the parents of his cohabitant in farm work, most especially during cutting of bush.
- b) The girl/woman helped her cohabitant’s parents to weed their farm, washing of clothes and cooking etc.
- c) The man helped to make the mud house of his *dinwanna*’s family, (Okere, 2022).
- d) Financial assistance was rendered to each other.
- e) It was a means of saving cost of paying labourers for any job, (Opara, 2023).

Social Importance of *Dinwanna*

- i) The man folk gave the woman confidence

- ii) It gave protection and guidance
- iii) It gave self-esteem, (Okere, 2022: n.p)
- iv) The girl/woman would not be harassed anyhow
- v) It gave security to the female folk
- vi) It prepared them to be better couples to their spouses
- vii) The man disciplined the girl in order to become a good wife to her husband, (Ekechi, 2023).

The moral outcome is the most expectation of humankind for a better society and development in all affairs of life. (Musa, 2014) postulated that morality as a bedrock in sustaining a society. He further opined; the maintenance of morality is the responsibility of all members of the society.

Dinwanna, a relationship between a male folk and a woman folk practiced in Imerienwe was solely for mutual support. The forebears of Imerienwe practiced it long time ago with sexual renunciation. This same practice was observed during the classical period, between the first century and fourth century A.D. Mbonu (2023) poised that the African forebears had a relationship between a male folk and a female folk, with sexual renunciation, which could be a seed of Christian relationship today. In other words, asceticism was already found in African culture. It was further stated that *dinwanna* was a replica of what happened in the classical period when sexual energy was channeled to writings and books. This was in days when the early fathers made inscription on stones and copying on scrolls. It would have not been possible for them to actualize this magnificent project of early documentation if the sexual energy was not channeled appropriately. The effort of these early people was as a result of self-discipline.

During the Byzantine period, sexual energy was celebrated. A period of A.D 330, when the Roman emperor Constantine I dedicated a new site in the ancient Greek colony of Byzantium. The western half of Roman Empire fell in A.D 476, while the eastern part survived for about 1000 years. At this time there was rich tradition of arts, literature and learning. Though the Byzantine Empire later collapsed in 1453 C.E, its sustainability was the rich culture of art, literature, and learning, which was the pivot of the early people who took the oath of celibacy, continence, and virginity, (Byzantine, 2023, np). Brown (1988) called some of this self-disciplined people, desert Fathers; people like Jerome, Ambrose, and Augustine. Most of them lived ascetic life, abstinence from any distracting lifestyle and lived in the desert. Enkrateia (self-mastery) was an important tool to achieve morals and ethical values.

Actually, there are some behaviours that emanate in the process of growth and development, as a person is exposed to many conflicting stimuli and life experiences. In this process, many sorts of behaviour were acquired, both at home and in the school. Nowadays, peer pressure and mass media exposure have a lot of changes and effect on the young ones. All these put a forceful influence on the child. The character trait of man is both learned and in born. Both the inborn character and learned behaviour, form a basic lifestyle of an individual, which make him unique (Uwaoma, 1999:92). It was further posed that there are laws and principles that guided the occurrence of behaviours. On the proper account of observation and explanation of behaviour, there was the possibility of control of unwanted, antisocial behaviours. If there was a comprehensive knowledge, the occurrence of a particular behaviour which was abnormal could be stopped.

Amadi (2023) suggested, though an old custom or tradition was not easily eradicated as long as communal living of kindred continues to exist. If the kinsmen will enact laws among themselves, prohibiting the practice or Marshalling stringent penalties, it can minimize the abuse.

Moreover, it was added that solution depends on education. Such education could include religious education, traditional education or enculturation. The reintroduction of riddles, myths/stories, parables, etc. should be considered as a solution. Most tenets of the culture stick when passed across through songs and stories, (Amadi 2023).

Apart from reorienting our young people to becoming religious devotees more emphasis on ethical adherence is highly needed. Imo, Onwochei & Okoro (2019), postulate that there is no human development worth calling human that is devoid of moral development. In other words, morality must be individual's quest if we need a principled society. It was further stated that if our society would witness growth in all spheres of life and quench the retro gradation it is experiencing at the moment, we cannot afford to joke with the issues of morality, (Imo, Onwochei, and Hellman 2019: 313).

It was suggested that parents should as a matter of urgency form the habit of checking on their children. If children know that their parents are visiting them without notice, the extent of misbehaving will be curtailed, (Ojo 2019:13).

Kasim & Folola (2017) opined that for those in school, there should be more provisions for hostel facilities that will accommodate the increasing number of students enrolling in our tertiary institutions. It was discovered that under the umbrella of *dinwanna* some kinsmen who found themselves in the same higher institution live together off campus with the excuse of lack of campus accommodation.

Recommendations

This research has discovered that a cherished cultural heritage, with highly placed value and importance was abused. On this note, the study is making some recommendations aimed at controlling the abuse on the subject under discussion. Below are such recommendations.

- i. The community should make bride price affordable in order to enhance quick marriage.
- ii. When those who are cohabiting for convenient purpose start noticing lust, let there be change of accommodation or preparation for marriage.
- iii. For those who could not intra-marry, determine to quit; knowing full well that every malpractice has its consequence.
- iv. The study recommends that parents could sometimes forfeit their marital benefit, in order to bid the cohabitants “let my people go”. Everything that could be done to settle them in marriage should be done.
- v. For those who abuse it at off campuses, government should build enough accommodation for them in order not to tempt those who cannot undergo sexual renunciation.
- vi. Students in tertiary institutions should be admitted base on facilities on ground.
- vii. The study recommends that *dinwanna* should continue, while sticking on guidance and sanctions must be applied. Enough of hiding under the umbrella of abuse of human right and pluralistic society, thereby closing eyes on evil.
- viii. Government, religions bodies, different institutions should go back to place value on good morals.

Conclusion

In conclusion, God has a purpose of creating man and women. The purpose should be ethically oriented. O'Donovan (2000) opines, the purpose of God in the creation of woman was directly related to the physical, mental and emotional needs of the man he created. The man needed a partner, a companion and a helper in life. The woman was created to be a helper, partner, companion and encourager. She was created to complete the man in every way, including the physical, mental, emotional and social parts of life. It is a basic fact of life that men need women visa-visa. God planned creation so that men and women would be dependent on one another for normal functions of life (O' Donovan, 2000:193-194).

The ancient practice of *dinwanna* was a replica of sexual renunciation that was practiced during the classical period. The same way the early Christians of first to fourth century AD

devoted their sexual energy to writings and promoted ascetic life, the people of Imerienwe did likewise. Morality and ethics were esteemed by the people of Imerienwe.

The study discovered the socio-economic importance of such relationship. Some of the benefits were economical, sociological and ethical. In the area of economical, it was discovered that those who are practicing it saved cost for their parents during farming season. For instance, the male folk transferred their sexual energy to cut farm bush and did other farm work without wages. In those days when mud house was the trending fashion, the *Dinwanna* gathered his friends to erect the building. The study further showed that it scared intimidation, most especially in the aspect of the female folk. The male folk protected the female from molestation. Then ethically, good counsels were given by each other involved in *dinwanna*. From some of the respondents it was discovered that the virginity of the female folk was safe-guarded until marriage, which brought promotion of ethics. It brought ethical preparation of life.

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