

Spiritual Abuse and Masculinity Construction among African Adolescents

by

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Abstract

Spiritual abuse is a relatively new term but its practice is probably as old as civilization. In the last decade literature on spiritual abuse has been available, mainly from the United States of America. Also, in New Zealand, awareness and emerging evidence of this issue has occurred more recently. Spiritual abuse appears to be a significant problem facing modern society (Cochrane, 2004). Bhaktavatsala and Dhyanakunda-devi (1999) note that some people may see the term "spiritual abuse" as a theological oxymoron because something defined as spiritual is something pertaining to the flawless nature of God and something within the realm of divine love cannot be exploitative or abusive (Dhyanakunda-devi Dasi, 1999), yet it is an accepted term within the field of abuse counselling.

A new menace in modern Nigeria society is spiritual abuse. Within the Nigerian context, although there may exist counselling services, many adolescents do not ask for help. A growing adolescent seeks to establish a trusting relationship with people. Most spiritual leaders in Nigeria tend to have a negative and detrimental impact on the growing adolescent about some life issues. Adolescents are even made to feel that there is so much wrong with them, and that only spiritual exercises would relieve them of psychological issues such as shyness and low social competence. During identity formation--as the male adolescent matures-- he seeks to understand the concept of masculinity.

Since it is quite obvious that the adolescence stage is characterized by abstractual thinking, impressionistic tendencies, hero worship and experimentation, this paper applies current theories of identity formation and masculinity in the discussion of the link between adolescents, spiritual abuse and masculinity construction in Nigeria.

Introduction

Adolescence is the transitional stage of development between childhood and full adulthood, representing the period of time during which a person is biologically adult but emotionally not at full maturity. The age range of adolescence varies by culture. In the United States, it is generally considered to begin around age 13, and ends around 24. By contrast, the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2005) defines adolescence as the period of life between 10 and 20 years of age. In the African (and Nigerian) context it is relatively between 11 and 21 years.

The transition to adolescence is characterized as a time of dramatic change for youth (Larson and Richards, 1994, Orji and Anikweze, 1998). Uwakwe (1998), describes the adolescence period as the most challenging and tasking phase in the developmental process of the human organism. The challenges, which are often traumatic to most people, stem from the fact that the adolescents are faced with the task of biological, sexual and physical maturity. The challenges also include the adult society and culminate in induced demand for emotional stability. During this stage of the life cycle, youth experience puberty (Steinberg, 1993, Akinboye, 1987), expand their cognitive abilities (Lapsley, 1990), and develop a sense of self and identity (Hair, 1999; Harter, 1999). They may alter expectations from school and academic achievement (Eccles and Midgley, 1990; Hoffman, Levy-Shiff, Ushpiz, and Schlatter, 1993).

With the onset of adolescence, there is an increase of elements that affect the shaping of goals and goal-oriented behaviours (Jarvinen and Nicholls, 1996). It is at this time that an individual begins to spend less time with their family and more time with their peers. The satisfaction with the latter peer relationship is important to the development of a good self-concept. Adolescents are more likely to have higher levels of self-esteem and academic achievement if they are accepted by their peers. Those who are less accepted tend to be at greater risk for problems in later social and psychological functioning (Parker and Asher, 1987). Academic performance and educational aspirations have also been shown to have an effect on self-concept (Richman, Clark, and Brown, 1985).

For a very long time, humans have been known to be spiritually inclined. Although many reasons have been postulated as to why religion has become part of humans' life, the reality is that a person has to draw on invisible strength within or without to bear on the problem they perceive that they have. Thus Akinboye (1992) concludes that religious (or spiritual) value is one of the eight personality dimensions of humankind. In recent studies of the pattern and strength of religiosity among the world's peoples, out of the 76 countries investigated, Nigeria expressed the strongest level of religiosity by scoring 93 per cent (Razib, 2004; Inglehart and Norris, 2005).

The Malaise of Spiritual Abuse

Spiritual abuse is a relatively new term but its practice is probably as old as civilization. In the last decade literature on spiritual abuse has been available, mainly from the United States of America. Also, in New Zealand, awareness and emerging evidence of this issue has occurred more recently. Spiritual abuse appears to be a significant problem facing modern society (Cochrane, 2004). Bhaktavatsala and Dhyanakunda-devi (1999) note that some people may see the term "spiritual abuse" as a theological oxymoron because something defined as spiritual is something pertaining to the flawless nature of God and something within the realm of divine love cannot be exploitative or abusive (Dhyanakunda-devi Dasi, 1999), yet it is an accepted term within the field of abuse counselling.

Linn, Linn and Linn (1994) define spiritual abuse quite broadly as "denying other's spiritual freedom through claiming that only one's own way to God is valid" (The Linns, 1994, p. 12). Johnson and Van Vonderen are more direct in their definition of as spiritual abuse as "the mistreatment of a person who is in need of help, support or greater spiritual empowerment, with the result of weakening, undermining or decreasing that person's spiritual empowerment" (Johnson & Van Vonderen, 1991, p. 20). For Lorenz (2001) spiritual abuse is a selfish act of exploitation. A spiritually abusive act is: 1. An act of abuse directed at an individual's inner faculties that play a crucial role in spiritual development and spiritual experience. 2. It comes from persons whose role is to support and guide that individual's spiritual development. Oluwole (2005) notes that most, if not all, definitions of spiritual abuse in the literature involve the use of power, or authority to manipulate and control. The authority is often a leader, for example, from a church leader towards a member or members of a congregation. The authority could also be a system, a set of beliefs, or a way of doing things which inhibits or denies individual freedom. Gula (1986) explains that power can be used to control and dominate but it can also be used to liberate and empower others. In spiritual abuse, power is exercised in ways which restrict rather than develop an individual's freedom.

Bhaktavatsala and Dhyanakunda-devi (2001) are of the view that spiritual abuse is perpetrated when, in the name of spirituality or spiritual authority, the individual's dignity and right to advance through serving his/her God is violated. They assert that this definition is in the context of the theological and academic understanding that spiritual advancement as a product of sincere, loving, and service to God which is basic to all religions. This violation of the person's individuality and freedom could take place whereby the person seeking spiritual guidance; in need of information, dialogue, support, acceptance, or counsel, is made to feel that their spirituality was defective. This can impel such person to agree with a particular belief or to feel discouraged from asking legitimate (but potentially awkward) questions.

Spiritual abuse cannot exist on its own, even though it is a distinct form of abuse. However, it frequently occurs in conjunction with other forms of abuse such as physical, psychological, emotional and sexual abuse, when perpetrated within a spiritual community or society. Any form of abuse therefore, that takes place within a spiritual society which has a spiritual component is spiritual abuse (Bhaktavatsala, 2001).

Spiritual abuse is often hidden, overlooked, or ignored because it frequently occurs in conjunction with other abuses, and may be overshadowed by the other, more obvious, forms. Thus, it may happen that the spiritual component becomes minimized, although it is often this element that provides not only the environment, but the leverage, the platform of power, from which the abuse takes place. Bhaktavatsala and Dhyanakunda-devi (2001) concur that abuse may be condoned or supported by authority and power derived from a spiritual institution or teaching. They further claim that spiritual abuse does not refer to simple mistakes of judgement, but to concerted misuse of position or power.

According to Storr (1996), man derives and defines his sense of self largely in terms of his belief system; therefore, challenges that question man's belief system could scare him because they threaten to shake his self-identity which is fundamental to his sense of personal security. The abused are afraid of upsetting the apple cart of their own belief system by challenging its champions (their spiritual superiors). In an abusive system, one is told that one is 'the problem' for noticing the problem. Thus, it is very hard to expose the abuse, even after one has left the system (Johnson & Van Vonderen, 1991). The view points of Storr, Johnson and Van Vonderen could be said to be true because the long time contact of the abused with the abuser(s) would have negatively impacted on his/her behavior to an extent that the abused could still be imagining whether they are right after all while he/she is wrong in opting out. For instance, such could remember the quotations that "do not judge so that you will not be judged". This could make the abused to recoil from taking an objective look at his/her abused condition.

Bhaktavatsala and Dhyanakunda-devi (2001) formulate the following list of dynamics conducive to abuse:

1. *Unrealistic evaluation of spiritual acumen*
 - a) Position/external success = spiritual advancement

2. *Unrealistic expectations*
 - a) The myth of the infallible leader
 - b) The myth of the totally surrendered subordinate

3. *Misapplication of philosophy*
 - a) Twisting theology or interpreting scripture to suit personal or institutional agendas

4. *Coercion through shame and fear*

- a) Shaming people into submission and/or silence
- b) Criticising/humiliating anyone with a different opinion or who notices a problem
- c) Demonization, name-calling, and fear of ostracism as coercion methods

5. *Premature transcendence*

- a) Elitism and exclusivism as a justification for segregation and prejudice
- b) Ignoring physical, psychological, emotional, or social needs
- c) Encouraging renunciation far beyond a person's realisation

Spiritual Abuse in Nigeria: Examples

1. Mr. x is a 39 year old man from the south-south in Nigeria. He is currently a master degree student in the researcher's department. He is not happy with himself. The reason being that he is yet to have a lady he could marry. He belongs to one of the Pentecostal church movements who have Marriage Committee in their church. He has taken about three brides-to-be to the committee ratification. Unfortunately, the committee could not find any of them befitting him. To his chagrin, while he is still in limbo, one of the committee members deems it fit to arrange one of the girlfriends for his own son. He is frustrated, betrayed and helpless yet he could not break away from the religious system.

2. Miss M. relocates to a new town in the Northern part of Nigeria. After searching, she joins a religious group which she thinks would be a spiritual sanctuary for her. Members are so friendly, the worship so alive, that she feels invigorated by this newfound "fellowship". After two years, almost overnight, it all falls apart for her. Before then, Miss M. was oblivious to how she was being controlled. When she makes that decision to break free, the many ways in which she is being manipulated and abused are suddenly abundantly clear to her. She has become part of what could be called a "covenant relationship". These relationships encourage unhealthy closeness between the sexes. They impress on her the need to have amazing love for, and become one heart and mind with the new man. They are always together all the time, because she is taught to believe that God is more real when they are always together and that is the way to enjoy God's comfort. During the course of her involvement with this church, Miss M. is gradually discouraged from spending time with her own family. Her own daughter is perceived to be a "negative influence" on her. Also, she is cautioned and encouraged to stop spending so much time with her daughter. Her "covenant partner" is there every time she turns around; intruding on every other relationship in her life.

3. Lady T is a Muslim from western Nigeria. She grew up in a deeply Islamic family where Islamic culture and ethics are deeply rooted. She is brought up with the notion that the most acceptable dress code is monochrome with socks, sandals and *hijab* to match. For example, in some days, the dressing could be all brown or black. She could not make friends with those outside her enclave. Lady T is now at a stage when her religious leaders-- with support from her parents--want her to marry a man with little or no education. This dismays her but she is being warned not to ever think of going against the leaders' 'sensible' wish.

4. Chief L. is an industrialist in one of the most popular cities in the western Nigeria. As a result of his battle with an illness he turns to a popular oriental-like religion in the town. He suffers severe brainwashing and manipulation. As a result of this, he abandons his family, services the organisation with about 90% of his income, becomes a vegetarian, and turns his business office and home to a mini-sanctum for the religious leader. To him, nobody is good except that individual who believes in the "living master" (his religious leader). He is turned against his family and divorces his wife. Afterwards, most of the religious devotees are encouraged to stay with him from time to time until his demise.

5. Mrs. O is a businesswoman in Nigeria. She is happily married and blessed with several children. Her fortune turns sour when she meets a prophet from a "white garment" church who tells her that her husband--who was not all that rich--intends to ritually murder her so he can become rich. The prophet convinces her that the only way to avert this looming danger is to move to his own church for divine protection and intervention. After much pressure and persuasion, the woman agrees and moves in with the spiritual leader. When she realizes she is pregnant for the white garment prophet, this devastates her and she commits suicide.

6. Mr. E is a 50 year old stockbroker. He belongs to a particular Muslim sect. He is made to believe that he can hardly take any decision in life without consulting soothsayers or clairvoyants. Any decision he makes on his own is invalidated by these spiritual advisers or spiritual guardians. He divorces twice because he was made to believe that the wives were witches. He cannot go anywhere or undertake any business transaction without first seeking the approval of the spiritual guardians.

7. George (not his real name) is a 22 year old university student in the eastern part of the country. Upon admission to the university, he is confident that he would succeed academically with little difficulty. However, things change for the worse during his second year. He joins a cult that promises him several things—good grades, and connections with powerful and influential people in the society in order to have a better life. After his initiation, his fortunes change for the worse. All the cult's promises turn out to be empty. He is dissatisfied with the cult system but he cannot break free because of the oath he has sworn never to betray them. He thereafter lives in perpetual fear of being stalked and harmed by the group.

Components of Spiritual Abuse

In a study carried out in Nigeria, Oluwole (2007) observes the following obsessive behavioral tendencies in members of various religious organisations who have been victims of spiritual abuse. While what follows is not an exhaustive list, it does show what the abused may be compelled to get involved in, or do.

- Excessive personal hygiene--need to take holy bath before any major assignment;
- Hyper religiosity--need to fast and pray for days/weeks without food and water for any reason. Need to have marathon vigil on every issue of life.
- Body mutilation--body parts incised so as to release self from some bondages;
- Refusal to take appropriate medication during illness;
- Absolute and unquestioning veneration of and loyalty to spiritual guardian about all aspects of one's life.
- Avoidance of modern technology--computers, television, cars and others because these are perceived as satanic symbols;
- Fixation on a unique and sole dress code (color and style) for life, or days that make one unique from others;
- Need to live together in the community of other people with the same religious inclination;
- Excessive dependency on spiritual leaders for interpretations of every dream, or psychosomatic experience no matter how trivial or minor...
- Need to live in a particular area like mountain, riverside, valley, etc. Need to dwell in a house with very specific descriptions and measurements.
- Need to pin certain emblem on one's body, hair or clothing for life or number of years;
- Need to speak with members in coded language most of the time;
- Obsessive need for secrecy and privacy.
- Need to fix a picture, portrait or passport or paraphernalia of the religious leader on one's cloth, chest, pillow or home;
- Need to make room for, accept or entertain any member of the religious group no matter how inconvenient it may be;
- Need to treat other people outside the religious society as outcasts or contaminants;
- Need to have sexual relationships with members, a leader or somebody approved by the religious leader to enhance spirituality;
- Need to keep quiet and refrain from criticising or talking negative of the religious leader or 'the man of God' either discreetly or in the open.

The Role of Beliefs and Attitudes in Spiritual Abuse

Several doctrines are being spread in various religious circles in the Nigeria society. And those who are unwary fall victims of these daily. Some of these doctrines are rooted in African belief systems, cultures and superstitions. A few warrant discussion.

Generational curses

Many are being taught that demons can travel down the family line across generations. Therefore all the demons that their mother, father, grandma, grandpa, uncles and aunties had are now theirs too -- including of course any from their soul ties. It is not unusual for a person to be told that they have a demon, a curse, or some witchcraft from some unknown family source that follows them around and through their life--even if that person has no knowledge of these things taking place. With demons to contend with it is no surprise that people spent most of their existence living in morbid fear and mistrust of other people.

Forgiveness

People may be forced to say that they have forgiven their abuser and to ask for forgiveness for their part in what happened on several occasions. Forgiveness, however, is a personal choice and no one should ever be pressured to do it. It is only something one needs to consider if one feels that it would be helpful to their healing. One does not have to forgive but if one wants to forgive one must know that forgiveness is a process and not something that can be achieved instantaneously as the many spiritual leaders make one believes.

Counselling

There are several counsellors in various religious settings. Most of them are not qualified to counsel people, but are just considered to be the right person for that particular area. Several of them rather compound the problems of the clients. It is therefore necessary to ask for their qualifications before one opens up to them.

Faith

Another issue encountered in many religious systems in the aftermath of spiritual abuse issues is the idea that abuse is the result of one's faith, or lack thereof. Some believe that if the victim of some unpleasant event such as rape had had enough faith it would not have happened. Others believe that if one had enough faith then one would be healed from what happened. Being raped has little to do with a person's faith or lack of faith. It is unimaginable that any God would desire a person be raped for any reason.

Construction of Masculinity Among Nigeria/African Adolescents

The following report results from qualitative research efforts by the writer. KII and FGD are used to examine the perception and construction of masculinity concept among African adolescents. Specifically, the subjects are high school adolescents. The locale of the investigation is Lagos, Nigeria. Indicators of traditional African masculinity include what men own. Most African males are primarily agriculturalists, and Nigerians are no exception. Yams, maize, palm kernel and livestock are the primary means of exchange of goods and services. These also function as determinants of a man's material worth. Thus, during marriage transactions, these (together with official national currency) are used as bride price/dowry. Similarly, the size of a man's farm and harvest are often measures of a man's physical prowess as eloquently depicted in the novels of Chinua Achebe, especially *Things Fall Apart* (1958). It is also customary that in most African agrarian traditions--which are also mainly patriarchal, a man is expected to have more than one wife; this in turn implies that the women would bear him many children--further index of a man's virility. Thus, a big farmland, real estate, many wives, and several children, as well as the ability to feed and provide for the needs of a big family become important identity markers, especially as they relate to masculinity construction.

Research informants celebrated the foregoing ideal masculinity in reverential tones when discussing the past. But they also acknowledged that modernity (mainly through contact with western cultures) has brought change to their traditions and perceptions. A few respondents spoke about their fathers and uncles, but most described grandfathers and old clan heads as examples worthy of emulation asked to talk about their notions of masculinity. They also were aware that today a definition of manhood has expanded to encompass western ideals of status--largely gleaned from education and contacts with elements (both negative and positive) of Euro-American popular culture. Indeed one of the participants, in their response, stated: 'Being a man is having money, a good job and status in society, many girlfriends, and a car. We imitate other cultures we see on television but we only copy not the best of those cultures, but the worst'.

As migration moves people from their villages to urban areas, men move between the urban and rural life, at times with ease, and at time with apprehension and pressure. Men deemed successful often carry the burden of their own family in the city as well as that of the large, extended, family in the rural area. Thus for urban adolescents, current markers of masculinity include the possession of an array of modern possessions--diplomas, degrees, salaried jobs, real estate, electronic gadgets, cars, among others. In the words of one adolescent, 'I believe the times have changed. Today a mature man needs girlfriends and property, like your own business, a car, money. These are not always easy'. The difficulty of obtaining these markers of masculinity is noted by one adolescent: 'I think when I grow up I will buy a Toyota, but the problem is there is no hope of getting money so I just dream of it'.

Several informants noted that in modern Nigerian culture the road to marriage allows men the liberty to have several premarital sexual partners. Also, after marriage, polygamy permits men to have multiple sexual partners. An important element of contemporary masculinity, which may represent a reinterpretation of these traditional practices, is multiple and non-marital sexual partners. In the words of another informant: "Multiple sexual partners are part of tradition, and to have just one suggests poverty, low status, and weak manhood. If I can support many women I am seen as strong and rich".

Key informants and focus group participants agreed that most Nigerian adult men typically have mistresses outside their marital homes. Examples include teachers who have wives back in their home cities, and lovers in the community where they work. Similarly, men working in urban areas will have mistresses in the city while maintaining a home and a wife in their native communities. Participants agreed that having many girlfriends represents one way of achieving high status as a man. Again, in the words of a participant: "You need to have the ability to get girls and to have children. Perhaps you are handsome; then that is a good thing. Perhaps you have money. That is also good. The worst insult is to be afraid of the ladies, they call you a 'woman', or HIV positive". Adolescents seem to recognize the importance of multiple partners as a definite marker of masculinity. However, some expressed ambivalence and anger about this attitude, given the reality of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Furthermore, there was recognition among participants that traditional gender roles favor males. Most of the male adolescents generally agreed that they have and are free to exercise more power in sexual situations. This attitude creates a superiority complex among males. One said: "Men and boys strongly believe we are superior to women and girls and that we can show it in the sexual act. There is no secret about it. Being a man means to have sex" (Boy, single-sex FGD, Lagos).

The powerlessness of women may be exaggerated when individuals speak about what it means to be a man. Thus, the researcher looked for examples where women are not merely victims of male domination and oppression. The Yoruba people of Nigeria have a proverb that is often used to underscore the power of women: "Man sees a snake, woman kills it. What matters is that the snake is not allowed to survive". This is a recognition that women have their own ways of asserting power. They can at times be more sly and powerful than men perceive. Some of the male informants told stories about women's power to woo or rape men; although most women felt the stories were 'made up to even things out'.

Education is often seen as a potential solution to improving social conditions. The adolescent participants stressed education as the path to getting a job: "to have an education in this country is very good. A job might or might not follow but you are putting yourself in the position" (Boy, KI, Lagos). Indeed, education and a job are seen as indicators of positive masculinity, in part because they allow access to material goods. As one woman said, "men now, in the cities have many girlfriends, and education, and a job.

They may also have a traditional home in the village". In this way, education was associated with the 'urban lifestyle'. Perhaps because of this, focus groups and interviews with adolescent students are marked with tension about how education might affect ideas of masculinity. Teaching men to change behavior was identified as an important step by all women and a minority of men interviewed. But the role of education in this change was controversial because formal education further reinforced the current notions of masculinity.

Respondents also spoke of the value of religious education. Two adolescents offered ideas for change that are fuelled by religion. Religion is identified as a roadmap to follow in tough times, and referred to as the 'only hope' for cultural change in the face of rampant HIV. Religion was also discussed as "something for the women and children to do".

Prior research in sub-Saharan Africa identifies alcohol use or abuse as a crucial factor linked to the transmission of HIV (e.g., Mbulaiteye *et al.* 2000). The nexus between masculinity and alcohol is complex; perhaps because alcohol use/abuse has changed in recent times. Appropriate drinking and smoking behaviors in Lagos metropolis reflect rules about both what to drink or smoke, and who can drink or smoke. Traditional alcohol consumption had both age and gender rules associated with its use. However, these norms appear to be changing; leading to the identification of alcohol as a major social problem, and as a factor in masculinity construction. In general, male key informants identify alcohol as a symbol of masculinity, stating "if you are serious about your drink, you are a man". In addition, alcohol was seen by the respondents as unfettering sexual behaviors previously inhibited by traditional attitudes.

Brown, Sorrell and Raffaelli (2005) observe that cultural groups construct ideal notions of masculinity that represent models for behavior, even if not all individuals adhere to these notions. The research here in Nigeria corroborates this. When asked what it meant to be a man, respondents show widespread agreement on what constituted traditional and contemporary ideals of masculinity.

Scholars have criticized the categorization of constructs into 'traditional' and 'modern' (Dilger 2003). However, since participants characterize masculinity as having a 'traditional' and a 'contemporary' component, the researcher has chosen to report this dichotomy and examine which aspects of masculinity show continuity with the past, and which have changed.

In describing both traditional and contemporary notions of masculinity, participants identified having multiple sexual partners and fathering many children as critical attributes. Other indicators of masculinity are elements of material possessions. In the past, and currently, education, cars, and status were emphasized. However, modern markers of wealth have replaced, or been added to those traditionally associated with masculinity, particularly in urban areas.

Now, one must also have a car, money, education, and a job. Similarly in Zambia, a girl's ideal boyfriend has been reported as someone who has the 'four C's' (car, crib, cash, and a cell-phone) (Price and Hawkins 2002). As Waetjen (2004) argues that a rural and urban masculinity exists, our findings allude to markers of masculinity that are more salient depending on place of residence. Moreover, the potential role of education in stemming the HIV epidemic was emphasized by some participants, although respondents espoused contradictory views about the value of education. Some blamed the spread of HIV on educated men, whose education leads to high-paying jobs and access to the material possessions that allow them to attract sexual partners. A qualitative study of secondary school students in Botswana reveals that boys and girls are aware of the disparities in the opportunities for girls in the education system as well as in life (Commeyras and Montsi 2000). Similar to the narratives of participants in this study, Commeyras and Montsi conclude that education in Africa is both a place where gender equity is taught and a place where boys become more socialized to oppress women. Thus, despite inklings of change, the equation of masculinity with sexual prowess appears to be persistent.

Conclusions

In spite of the predominant and pre-eminent influence and power of religion, the extent of moral decadence and corruption is very alarming. It is especially alarming and debilitating to learn that religious or spiritual leaders are the main purveyors of most heinous practices (Johnson & VanVonderen, 1991). Thus, in the midst of a resurgence of interest in spirituality and religiosity is the prevalence of spiritual abuse. It often involves abusing the individuality and freedom of people-without regard to what will result in their living conditions, emotions or spiritual well-being.

One of the far-reaching effects of spiritual abuse is poor social competence. This writer postulates that since it is normal for adolescents to be precocious, abstract and impressionable in nature, spiritual abuse negatively impacts their cognitive and emotional development. It thereby affects their views and relationships with those of significant others.

According to Brawer, Handal, Fabricatore, Roberts and Wajda-Johnston (2002), future and current psychologists may find themselves baffled when confronted with the diversity of religious and spiritual backgrounds of their clients. A.O Aremu (2004) asserts that therapy given by a specialist to a distressed individual, especially in Africa, would fail if it does not address the client's religion; no matter the efficacy of that therapy. The same experts also contend that few psychologists have the professional training with regard to spirituality, despite the public's overwhelming interest. Currently, the topic of spirituality is sparingly being covered by experts in Nigeria. Several recommendations are made for training programs, which are encouraged to increase therapists' sensitivity to this matter.

This should provide more opportunities for adolescent growth in this area. Professional training is also designed to incorporate into course work psychological perspectives of religious and spiritual issues. Government at all levels is also being encouraged to give significant attention to school psychologists in the educational system, especially at the pre-college levels.

Ideals of masculinity also define avenues for achieving manhood. Scholars have proposed that men exaggerate elements of their masculinity to gain approval when they do not naturally fit the cultural ideal (Thompson & Pleck 1986, Courtenay 2000). Thus, the extent to which men are able to meet contemporary notions of masculinities may have an indirect impact on epidemics such as HIV. There is ample evidence that many male youths do not have access to the material possessions they associate with 'being a man'. In light of these barriers, alternative masculinities may gain increased importance (Wood and Jewkes 2001). In the absence of alternative pathways to masculinity, it would not be surprising if Nigerian adolescents increasingly turned to sexual activity and alcohol abuse as ways of expressing their manhood. Parents and the society at large could be part of the solution in resolving psychosocial conflicts and behavioral problems arising from masculinity construction that clinical intervention alone cannot adequately tackle. Poor social competence and deficit interpersonal skills are two that readily come to mind. Again, counseling and clinical psychologists should orient adolescent clients towards their self and spiritual development so that they can cope with stresses that accompany daily activities.

The current study also has implications for counselling, clinical and social psychologists. These psychologists should be able to use their skills to assist in managing cultural psychopathology among adolescents. Psychologists could also develop training and organize workshops to guide clients about the problems of religious addiction. The outcome would be a public that is more appreciative of the role of counseling in making people live a healthy life--thereby improving the quality of life in the country. Finally, there is need to set up a regulatory body for religious and spiritual affairs by various governments so as contain the excessive influence of religious leaders on the public.

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