

Original Paper

Impacts of Climatic Change, Information Governance and Moral Crisis in Nigeria Society: A Case of Moral Decadence in Lagos, Nigeria

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Abstract

Adapting to advancement in Information governance and climatic change affect morality and interpersonal relationships among Yoruba people in modern day Nigeria. Using the theory of J. Descartes on moral-culture for analysis which sees man as a rational being or a rational substance, this work looks at remarkable changes noted in the society. The concept of morality is entrenched in Yoruba traditional society. The moral standard has fallen in recent times due to climatic change which make human to decide what is best as far as moral is concern, and to dictate the action to adopt. A clear example is the idea which is common in Nigeria, “weather for two”, and this indicate that whenever there is cold, you can take law into your hands and decide to have sexual intercourse with anybody who is available. Also, the idea of “self-morality”, this simply mean, an individual can decide the standard of moral not the societal Laws. Critical and analytical methods based on ethnography collected on the street of Lagos and proceedings of the Lagos High Court in the case of an old man who molested a minor shall be the basis of analysis for this presentation.

Keyword

climatic change, crisis, governance information, morality

1. Introduction

Adapting to advancement in Information governance and climatic change affect morality and interpersonal relationships among Yoruba people in Nigeria. Human social existence has been based on three basic principles; law, ethics and responsibility. These principles are the basis of all human actions and activities during their life time. Though, climatic change and information governance suggest otherwise, due to the change in climatic conditions, situational ethics is in place in the western world. Together, they form the basis of ethics and values attached to ethical principles. Morality is the foundation of all human actions, not just actions, but reactions. This suggests that human beings live in a moral world where they are expected to act according to the laws, conventions and traditions, of the society. Human existence is therefore subject to sanctions and rewards for the progress and development of a good society that is premised on social order and good governance.

2. Methodology

The methodology adopted is critical and analytical methods, in tandem with J. Descartes theory on moral-culture, which sees man as a rational being or a rational substance, a rational being possesses the following: self-consciousness self-awareness. He is conscious of the fact that he is conscious. Descartes, in his second meditation, became conscious of himself as a thinker being; his consciousness became his existence; “*Cogito ergo sum*” (“I think therefore I am. So, I exist”). He argue further that there must be a being who reward morality, otherwise, morality will be useless in the world. This is totally different from 21st Century moral standard (Oguntola-Laguda & Talabi, 2022).

2.1 Statement of Problem

The nature of morality in information governance and climatic change in Nigeria has constituted a change in reasoning and action. The moral standard has fallen in recent times due to climatic change which make human to decide what is best as far as moral is concern, and to dictate the action to adopt. A clear example is the idea which is common in Nigeria, “weather for two”, and this indicate that whenever there is cold, you can break the moral barrier in order to have sexual intercourse with anybody who is available. Also, the idea of “self-morality”, this simply mean, an individual can decide the standard of moral not the societal Laws.

3.1 What is Morality?

The concept of morality can be examined in two senses: a descriptive sense and a normative sense. According to Gert and Gert (2020), morality can be used either:

- i. Descriptively refer to specific codes of conduct put forward by a society or a group (such as a religion), or accepted by an individual for her behaviour, or
- ii. Normatively to refer to a code of conduct that, given specified conditions, would be put forward by all rational people (p. 114).

For a moral philosopher, the definition of morality in its descriptive sense means that one will almost certainly deny a universal morality that applies to all human beings. As such, anthropologists often use

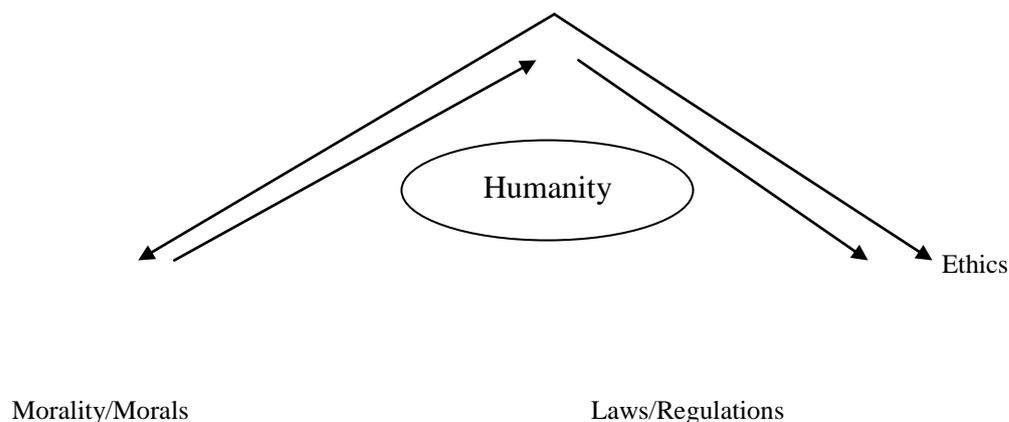
the descriptive sense when they report on the morality of the societies that they study. Therefore, in the context of this study, morality may be seen as a code of conduct that, given specific conditions, would be put forward by all rational people. In this regard, morality is the differentiation of decisions, actions, and intentions between the ones that are right or good and the ones that are wrong or bad. In the philosophical study, ethics is the philosophy of morality. Therefore, morality is the conformity to the proper conduct rules. A moral code refers to a particular system of morality in a specific religion, philosophy, culture, among others.

3.1 What Is Ethics?

Scholars have defined ethics in different ways, few of them shall be considered in this paper. William Barclays (2015) defines ethics as, “the science of human behaviour, a series of rules and principles by which we act and which tell us what to do, it clarifies and classifies words and actions into things which are good and things which are bad,” (p. 110). His definition of ethics suggests that ethics as a discipline in epistemological world. It is a normative science because it deals with human contents and morality. It is about rules the definition of what is wrong and write in the society, which provide moral guidance to humanity.

In the opinion of H. Child (2019), an ethicist, argues that ethics tries to find out not only what human beings actually do and why they do it, but much more: what they ought to do, what is the value of certain practices or actions and why standards, actions and conducts are to be judged. Child takes the understanding of ethics beyond academic studies and situates it within the social, economic, cultural and political engagements of human beings. He suggests that all humans’ actions come has one value or the other irrespective of how human sees it.

Both scholars above provides us with the value human carries, the reason they do what they do and the value human actions add to the society. It should be stated here that, we conscious of the etymological meaning of ethics which is derived from 3 Greek variables; *ethos* (custom), *mores* (morals) and *nomos* (law). These derivatives are the basis of ethics and its values in modern scholarship.



The diagram above explains in clear term, the meaning, implications and values of ethics to humanity and the society. If we abide by the morality (moral codes) which are derived from the legal principles and regulations of our societies and groups, humanity will be the best and development and progress shall be the purpose of our existence. Consequently, when we talk or discuss ethics, we refer to our moral duties, obligations and responsibilities as individuals, groups or societies (Oguntola-Laguda, 2005).

The main aim of ethics is to make humanity morally good at all times by doing what is good and not what is evil (bad). This will affect human relations. We can therefore argue that the primary concern of ethics is the promotion of good morals, justice and equity based on human social and economic interactions which are the matrix for development and progress of any nation or state. It should be stated that the values of ethics is subjective and relative to the culture, history and class of people involved. However, the Aristotelian school of thought posits that the basic goal of ethics is to perfect the progress of making man (humanity) to be himself and know himself. These are achievable through human intellectual activities and utilization of his natural talents (like what we are gathered here to do at this summit). To close this section of this presentation; permit me to say we have many sources of ethical norms/codes/regulations etc. These include religion, culture, traditions and profession.

3.2 Social Order and Nigerian Nation

Social order is best defined as institution, cultural elements, social relations and behaviours of the society. These institutions come with their own set values, norms, competitions, cooperation among other characteristics. In this regard, we are thinking that social and cultural institutions like marriage, family, customs with their attendant values are the basics of social order. It is arguably based on these features that Sanjay Misha (2019) explains social order as “a set of belief system prevalent in a particular society that is linked to social structure and institutions” (p. 45).

In our opinion, social order points to a social belief system in national/societal institutions which are derived through religion, traditions and culture. These institutions and their origin dominate political environment (like Nigeria and other nations) of nations which are linked to social structures and institutions such as politics, social and economic engagements. This will go to support Emile Durkheim’s position that “social order is a set of shared social norms” (White, 2021; Marx, 1915) posits that it is the relationship among production structure. In sum, we can argue that social order is the principles and institutions by which human societies and groups operate. Without social order therefore, society/nation becomes a jungle.

Social and economic contentment which used to be one of the derivative values of our culture and religions have been relegated to the back ground. The effects of the situation are the incessant increase in kidnapping, embezzlement, money rituals, cyber fraud, armed robbery, etc. Lack of commitment and loyalty of our leaders at all levels of governance leave much to desire. Employees no longer respect their oath of office and operational principles. The tragedy of our situation now is lack of morality among our children and youth; this will suggest that the future of our nation is bleak. How do we

reverse these trends? What can we do as a nation to arrest the downward slide of our ethics, morality and values to the betterment of our nation?

4. Informational Governance and Climatic Change: A Case of Moral Decadence in Lagos

Informational governance has been defined as the process of managing information so that it contributes to improved decision-making (Hinchman & Davenport, 2014). The story of a Nollywood actor in Lagos called James Olanrewaju Omiyinka popularly known by his stage name “Baba Ijesha” video clip showing popular sexually assaulting a minor went viral on social media on April 19, 2021. The 14-year-old is a foster daughter of actress and comedienne Damilola Adekoya (alias Princess). Princess reported a case of sexual assault of a minor to the Sabo Police Station, Yaba, Lagos State, Nigeria. She told the police that the crime took place at her residence. The case was transferred to the Gender Unit of the State Criminal Investigation Department, Panti, Yaba, for investigation. Baba Ijesha was, thus, arrested on April 22, 2021. The case attracted public attention from the time of his arraignment on June 24, 2021, until Thursday, July 14, 2022, when Justice Oluwatoyin Taiwo of an Ikeja Special Offences Court delivered judgment on the case. The judge convicted Baba Ijesha and sentenced him to 16 years in jail. He will, however, only spend five years in jail as the sentences will run concurrently.

4.1 The Trial of the Baba Ijesha by Lagos High Court

The guardian newspaper reported the trial had the prosecution team presenting six witnesses. The defence team presented four witnesses including Baba Ijesha. The actor’s defence teams of over 10 lawyers were led by two Senior Advocates of Nigeria (SAN), Babatunde Ogala and Dada Awosika. Lagos State Government arraigned Baba Ijesha before a Yaba Magistrates’ Court on charges of indecent treatment of a child, defilement of a child, sexual assault by penetration, attempted sexual assault by penetration and sexual assault. June 16, 2022, he pleaded not guilty to the charge but was remanded in custody by Magistrate P.E. Nwaka due to indications that the matter was before a Lagos High Court. Magistrate Nwaka ruled: “Since there are indications that the matter is before the high court and the defendant will appear before the court, no bail can be given.”

The prosecution presented its first witness, Princess, the foster mother of the minor. Led in evidence by Ms Adeyemi, the then DPP, Princess narrated how Baba Ijesha first raped her foster daughter in 2013, when the minor was seven years old. The witness said the first molestation occurred when Baba Ijesha paid her a visit while she was recuperating from an illness. She said it occurred when she left her apartment for approximately seven minutes to see off a visitor while the actor was alone with her then seven-year-old daughter who was watching cartoons. Princess told the court that the minor told her about the sexual molestation seven years after. She testified that in order to gather evidence and possibly catch the defendant in the act, she set up a ‘sting operation’ in her home. She narrated further how Baba Ijesha was caught in her home with the aid of Close Circuit Television (CCTV) on April 19, 2021, molesting her daughter. **Oct. 21, 2021.** A medical doctor, Aniekan Makanjuola, testified that medical examinations revealed that the minor had been penetrated. Our findings were that there was a blunt penetration of the

vagina which was consistent with the client's history," she said. On cross-examination by Mr. Ogala, she said, "The lacerations found in the genitalia were not recent, my lord."

On July 14, 2022, Justice Taiwo convicted Baba Ijesha and sentenced him to 16 years imprisonment consecutively for sexually assaulting a minor. She found him guilty on four of the six counts he faced. The judge did not find the actor guilty on count one (sexual assault by penetration) and count six (attempted sexual assault by penetration). The judge sentenced Baba Ijesha to five years imprisonment on count two (indecent treatment of a child), three years on count three (sexual assault), five years on count four (indecent treatment of a child) and three years on count five (sexual assault). Baba Ijesha will however serve five years in prison because the sentences are to run concurrently. The defendant took his acting too far. This is very sad. The behaviour of the defendant is appalling, as this shows the length people can go in exhibiting the animalistic urge in them," the judge said while convicting Baba Ijesha. On hearing the verdict, the actor broke down in tears. He was surrounded and comforted by his colleagues in the movie industry (Guardian Newspaper, 2022).

In line of this paper, climatic change in one of the defiant led him to defiles the minor, and which led to his imprisonment and convicted. Also, the information Governance as well helped to solve the problem in the court through close circuit television (CCTV). The remarkable lesson learnt is that moral judgment cuts across normative and meta-ethical moral judgment. Which are well spelt out in Agbo concept of moral judgment. He discussed the features of moral judgment, he made three assumptions:

- 1) Moral judgments are so crucial to ethics, that without it, it would be difficult to understand what all the great ethical theories have in common.
- 2) Morality can exist independent of religion.
- 3) Moral judgment can be seen as the central phenomenon of ethics (Agbo, 2014).

The above corroborate with the idea of J. Descartes who said in his second meditation that there must be an agent who rewards morality, definitely, morality must be rewarded and moral standard must be maintained in other to groom and trained the next generation, if not the generation after this century will be brutal and worst than the current one we are. This is where information governance and the trend of climatic change must be stressed in this century to properly sensor the new generation.

4.2 Ethics as a Basis for Greater Society

From our discussion so far it is clear that the basis of our moral and ethical actions is to promote better society and good humanity, this is a clear manifestation of the fact that human existence (including the values of such existence) are premised on ethical and moral actions. These help us to order our lives as we engage our global and local environment (Nancy et al., 1998). Ethics helps us to answer basic (fundamental) questions of existence. Questions such as:

- (i) What must I do?
- (ii) What kind of person do I want to become?
- (iii) How should I act in relationship to others in the society?
- (iv) How do I connect to the world to promote good humanity and greater society?

These questions suggest that morality, habits, values and codes (of human conducts) which are the matrix upon which ethical actions are based, which are developed individually and communally, help us to discern directions for our behaviour and relationships not only to other inhabitants of the world but to the society we live in. The point I am making here is that the way we respond to the questions that have been raised above and act in accordance with the ethical codes and values attached to them will determine the growth and development of our society. We can therefore submit that “Ethics and values are foundation for a greater society.” This submission will suggest that ethics and its moral values are socially constructed. This is debatable (Religion is also a good source of morality and the values, attached to it have mundane and metaphysical values). This implies our habits, feelings, values and codes of ethical actions are from our social realities and institutional circumstances in which we live (Nancy et al., 1998). This demonstrates our worldview (cosmology), the understanding of how things are and ought to be as it relates to our culture and traditions.

According to Nancy et al. (1998), “A European philosophical idea that has continued to influence our political and economic institutions posits freedom of individuals as the ultimate value of the societies; the right of individual to life, liberty and property are inalienable,” (p. 67). This view answers the question, “what should I do?” negatively, it however implies that we should do no harm/evil. Individuals and groups are free to do as they please so long as their actions do not cause harm or interfere with ability of others to do the same.

Historically, social and cultural anthropologists have observed the connection between human cosmology and our moral actions. Our worldviews not only serves as the basis for the ordering of our society (process) by helping us make sense of how things are to be done; they also direct us on how best to live our lives (How we ought to live our lives). This is a direct claim that our cosmologies are models of the world and models for the world which are both prescriptive and descriptive (Nancy et al., 1998). If you check Yoruba myths such examples are abound (Think of the tortoise and dog stories of our childhood). Based on these myths, ethical actions are developed in conformity to ethical codes generated by the community and reflected in the cosmology of the people. Therefore, when the question of “what I should do” is asked, the answer shall be “what are the relevant rules and principles that should guide my action(s)?”

In many African societies, including Lagos (Yoruba) children’s initial experience with ethical action is usually abiding by rules or facing the consequences of failure to do so. Therefore, families, schools, and religious organizations all socialize children to these codes. As the children grow and develop cognitive skills, parents introduce them to the rules of the house which are designed to respect persons, pets and property: no hitting, or biting, no playing with matches and no writing on the wall. In school, teachers introduce the children to similar set of rules that reflect the need for order in the broader social context. It is these set of ethical principles and values that we carry on to our engagement as adults and officials of government institutions, and agencies. It is based on this premise that I make bold to say that Ethical actions and the values derived from them are the pivot of our daily engagements. “They

exist before us, we abide with them and they go on after us,” (Nancy, 1998). The question here is; Do government provide training for staffs of its parasternal and agencies? The hope we often have is that we shall internalize (make it part of our lives and activities) the ethical codes and values, make them our own, let them inform our choice of actions and become part of our moral conscience. This will go a long way to determine the progress we make as a society, state or nation. It is imperative to note that by the suggestion above, it is easy to accomplish in a heterogamous society with single worldview.

In a culturally pluralistic society like Nigeria and cosmopolitan state like Lagos; it is difficult if not impossible. In such environment, moral ambiguity and conflicts cannot be avoided based on multiple cosmologies with its divergent ethics and values. It is not difficult to manage as the rule of law will take precedence over the rule of love. ALARHOSPS is a good example in this regard. Moral conflicts and ambiguity may arise within us, but our laws and professional responsibilities should guide us to avoid the complications that may arise from such moral perplexity.

The issue of moral complexity, ambiguity and responsibility becomes more visible if we examine the issue of oath of secrecy often sworn to by civil servants during their engagement as officials of government and other private institutions. The moral perplexity we face in standing by the ethical codes and values of these actions in the line of duty arise from the competing values or obligations that social and institutional contexts place on us. They demand commitment and loyalty, for example, a permanent secretary, civil servant, who sworn to oath of secrecy but as a member of a religious, cultural group(s) feel obliges to provide information for the implementation and planning of a programme to his/her social groups. The question is; What will you do regardless of your position? You are likely conflicted or experience guilty. Therefore, there is always difficulty in resolving moral conflicts created by competing values and loyalties (Nancy et al., 1998). My question for us is; How much have your religion, professional and cultural background influenced your moral (morality) action(s). This will also help us to answer the question; “what we ought to do in specific situations?” In our professional engagements to the development and growth of a greater society” response to this question implies core values of ethics which are: obligation, obedience and loyalty to basic principles of our existence. These three (3) are derived from NORMS of ethical and moral actions for humanity.

This depicts the expectations that we all must abide with, in our conducts in relationship (quests) to moving the society forward. We must interpret the laws and principles of our professional engagements to the benefit of the society. The end of our ethical actions should not only be for professional development and progress, but also for the overall growth of the society within which we operate. We must be willing to take responsibilities for our actions and inactions as they come with reward and sanctions.

5. Conclusion

In this presentation, we have examined the meaning of morality, on the other end which is also ethic. Ethical values and the imperatives attached to them. We have been able to establish the value of moral

principles as a guide to our actions not only for professional reasons, but also for the growth and development of our society and family. We also established the fact that the basic reasons for ethics is to promote social justice, equity, social interactions and better humanity. These principles are only achievable if we take our ethical responsibilities seriously within the gamut of the laws to lead us to the ends that will make our society better.

The position of the paper is that the incapability of moral beliefs to be empirically confirmed does not rule out the fact that moral beliefs have independent existence which may not follow scientific or empirical procedures. The characteristics of scientific researches which are in the cognitive domain may not be appropriate in researching and concluding on moral beliefs which are basically in the affective domain. Information governance and climatic change should never bring anyone into moral crisis. Yet it should empower them to do the right at all time, and move to the point of adaptation to the rules and regulation of the society.

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