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**Socio-Ethical Implication of Contraception and Abortion:  
A Rising Paradigm of John Paul II's Culture of Death**

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**Abstract**

Contraception and abortion remains a global socio-ethical problem – more so to religious traditions like Christianity. John Paul II, the Pope (1918-2015) perceived the same problem as a culture of death because it diminishes human dignity and divine content. Against this backdrop, the study considers contraception and abortion from the insights of John Paul II, concerning the critical implications for humanity. The study is a qualitative research skewed in phenomenological method of inquiry and analysis of the Nigerian experience. Findings show that contraception and abortion are recurrent

practices among the single and the married. Even as the practice is not legalized, yet, it is common amongst the people. The individuality crisis, obscurity of the sense of the sacred and phony theories of morality in different ways offer alignment to understanding the Nigerian experience. The study identifies debasement of self-esteem, physical health hazards and mental-spiritual crisis as some of the consequences which build up to the culture of death. Towards reducing the rising culture of death there should be profound pedagogies on human life. Concerted enlightenment is also necessary.

**Key words:** Contraception, Abortion, Social Ethics, Culture of death, Nigeria

### Introduction

Focus on the recurrent death content in contraception and abortion is a global issue. Practically, every society whether secular or religious has codes of conduct that guides association, interaction and cravings. Every leadership, therefore, attempts to align its members with those ethical or moral standards as ways of enforcing adherence to law and order in the society. Nonetheless, some people may not follow the dictates of good thought and right actions. This has remained problematic for all world cultures. John Paul II (1995) argues that anti-life practices such as contraception and abortion are nothing but variables of death. In other words, contraception and abortion pose global socio-ethical problems, with serious implications for humanity. With recourse to Nigeria, this paper discusses the phenomena from the prism of social ethics, with special spotlight on John Paul II's pedagogy on contraception and abortion. The reality of contraception and abortion in Nigeria touches on the very heartbeat of the society and leaves behind devastating consequences.

Contraception and abortion take place in a variety of ways but this research identifies a number of methods used for contraception and procurement of abortion. Individuality crisis, obscurity of the sense of the sacred and phony theories of morality are used as frameworks applicable in Nigeria. Following the analytical mill of this theoretical frames the paper discusses the debasement of self-esteem, psychological trauma, physical health hazards, and mental-spiritual crisis as some of the emerging problems, *ipso facto* dimensions and abortion practices. Also, hosted in this paper are suggestions for reducing the problem as a socio-ethical issue plaguing the society.

### Conceptualising the Culture of Death in John Paul II's Socio-Ethical Pedagogy

Culture of death is a concept coined and developed by John Paul II, a Christian scholar and former pope. The concept stands for all thoughts, actions or theories that diminish or destroy human life – in a direct or an indirect manner. In other words, culture of death is a synonym for sin, crime, evil and the likes. Ever since its first usage by John Paul II in his works and pedagogical addresses, the concept has assumed global relevance and resonated with current scholarship.

John Paul II used the concept of culture of death very extensively in his writings and speeches especially during his pontificate (1978-2015). While one cannot divorce John Paul II's understanding and usage of the term from the above nuances, it is pertinent to observe his emphasis on some human intentions and acts as directly opposed to human values. Citing the story of Cain and Abel in the encyclical, *The Gospel of Life* (1995), John Paul II argues that there are many factors to be taken into account, such as the profound crisis of culture that generates scepticism in socio-ethical and psychological issues – ethics, rights, and duties; the interpersonal and existential problems that leave individuals, couples, and families alone; the situations of acute poverty, anxiety, frustration, pain, and especially violence against women. All these explain, at least in part, an “eclipse” of the value of life (1995, p. 1).

The late Pontiff identifies these threats in some actions and policies arising from economic, domestic and political factors. According to him, sin is the chief architect of the culture of death. The cloud of moral uncertainty can in some way be explained by the gravity of today's social problems, sometimes mitigating the responsibility of individuals, by a true structure of sin, which takes the form of a culture of death (John Paul II, 1995, p. 12).

Furthermore, culture of death is located within what he describes as the ‘Ideologies of Evil’ (2008). In his reflections, there is a conviction that the ideologies of evil are rooted in the European philosophical thought. European's dominant cultural trend has been adjudged as one of the causes of culture of death. In John Paul II's encyclical on the *Holy Spirit* he has fortright on this position, even though it was trailed by sharp negative reactions from certain quarters in Western Europe. He insists that what prompted those reactions was the so-called European Enlightenment, though that is not to exclude the English, German, Spanish and Italian versions. He, however remarks that the Enlightenment in Poland followed a path, all of its own (John Paul II, 2008, p. 8).

John Paul II argues that Rene Descartes' *cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am) has radically changed scholars' approach to philosophy. He notes that the writings of Descartes had and continues to have tremendous influence on the Western world's attitude to spirituality and even the human sciences and the arts. The same attitude also overflows into the general perception of human knowledge. Accordingly, he makes the following observations:

According to the logic of *cogito, ergo sum*, God was reduced to an element within human consciousness; no longer could he be considered the ultimate explanation of the human *sum*. Nor could he remain as *Ens subsistens*, of ‘Self-sufficiency Being’, as the Creator, the one who gives existence, and least of all as the one who gives

himself in the mystery of the Incarnation, the Redemption of and grace (John Paul II, 2008, pp. 10-11).

Thus, it is the tragedy of human ideology as far as the philosophy of Descartes that orients John Paul II's ethical pedagogy. Focusing on the self other than on God is the origin of the culture of death. It means that humankind is now claiming its "ownership" and could act according to such supposition. The culture of death is in the neighbourhood of 'what modern humanity is afraid of' and this aspect is discussed in John Paul II work *Redemption of Mankind* (1990). In that work, John Paul II analyses the conflict between humanity and its products, and contends that if humans read the 'sign of the times', one sees that people are afraid of the result of the work of their hands, and tendencies of their wills; consequently, people live increasingly in fear – afraid that part of what they produced can become instruments of self-destruction (1990, p.15).

Again, John Paul II identifies the structure of sin as another source of culture of death and he criticizes a system that divides humanity into blocs and also blames such for enthroning sins committed by individual persons, who introduced these structures and reinforced them again and again. Thus affirmed, one then blames selfishness, mistaken political decisions as being at the root of the evils that afflict the world and cause disorderliness in society (John Paul II, 1987, p. 36). To further explain the concept, McHugh (2001, pp. 441-452), states that the concept of the culture of death is better understood in the light of the encyclical's references to "social sin" or in "structures of sin," a theme that is developed in a number of John Paul II's documents.

By criticizing the culture of death from a religious perspective, especially its classification as a sin, John Paul II, therefore, maintains his grounds on assessing the human person from the breaking of divine positive law. Again, the moral norms are derivable not only from intellectually-proven sources but also from faith experience. Dwyer in his book *Foundations of Christian Ethics* (1987, p. 22) recognize the role of faith in the formation of ethical norms or its usage in counteracting such norms that fail to promote the essence of the human life. In corroboration, he contends that faith is a much misunderstood word. It is not a substitute for understanding and, it is not an irrational or unmotivated leap in the dark. More so, he shares John Paul II's position that faith is a supremely intelligent act, because it is the act of knowing God as he wants to be known, and as he really is. This is the basis of real knowledge of the world, of others, and of oneself.

Culture of death is a conspiracy against life. The act is done with an assumption that it is a mark of progress and a victory for freedom. In other words, the human freedom has been taken to another meaning other than its socio-ethical understanding. This attitude remains an integral aspect of the origin of the culture of death. Criticizing this false conception, John Paul II argues that allowing such freedom to prevail would

lead to distortion of the human and societal values. For, in his insights, humanity today offers one a truly alarming spectacle, if one considers the scientifically and systematically organized attacks on life, done with the approval of certain health-care personnel. Humanity is in fact faced by a ‘conspiracy against life.’ The Media are often implicated in this conspiracy, presenting contraception, sterilization, abortion, and even euthanasia as marks of progress and a victory of freedom, while describing those who are pro-life as enemies of progress and freedom (John Paul II, 1995, p.17).

### **Contraception in the Pedagogy of John Paul II**

John Paul II describes the culture of death is disastrous yet in the character of humans. He portrays the modern society as a spacewhere dereliction of cause and effect, has unfortunately assumed a frightening dimension. Humans are rational, ethical, religious and social beings, hence it follows that for one to be considered a true member of any society, there is a presupposition that such an individual should consider the cause and the effect of his/her action. Human beings are also as sexual species who are endowed with certain faculties and/or organs to help them engage in sexual relationship within the scope of married life. But wrong interpretation of this endowment, and rise promote evil machination in the practice of contraception, (John Paul 2008, p. 8).

Contraception is another act of the culture of death that takes place amongst married and single persons. It is the use of devices (condom, diaphragm, intrauterine, etc) or procedure (pills, douching, etc) to prevent conception. While this essay agrees with the common notion that contraception targets termination of a potentially viable human persons – foetus, for some reasons; however, it remains clear that indiscriminate sexual activities are accountable for use of contraceptives by the concerned individuals.

John Paul II sees contraception and abortion as different evils that are closely connected because they are fruits of the same tree (1995, p.13). Fundamentally, his convictions are that the various arguments for contraception stem from an irresponsible use of freedom for which contraception leads to the point of rejecting one another. Everyone else is an enemy from whom one has to defend oneself and, the state is no longer a “common home.” The society arrogates to itself the right to dispose of the life of the weakest and the most defenceless members, from unborn child to the elderly; in the name of a public interest that really is nothing but the interest of one part (1995: 20). The right to contraception and to recognize that right in law means to attribute to human freedom a perverse and evil significance: that of an absolute power over others and against others. For John Paul “it is the death of true freedom, (1995, p. 20). Here in Nigeria, married and single people use contraceptives, commonly sold in shops across the country. Different brands of contraceptives are retailed and patronized by married and single persons who for varied reasons spend money in purchasing them. These people, perhaps, obtain and use the products as exercise of their freedom to

sexuality, a freedom that is shrouded in secrecy. In Nigeria, the young people who use condoms or diaphragms seem to approach freedom from sensual perspective other than from the rational drive. In the midst of poverty and lack of basic social necessities the youth wittingly embrace sexuality as means of finding space and status in the society.

Christian teaching holds an unconditional respect for the right to life of every innocent person from conception to natural death, *ipso facto*, one of the pillars on which every civil society stands. Such respect is chosen as a way of promoting a human state – the recognition and defence of the fundamental rights of the person, especially of the weak. This position is a fundamental teaching upon which the fabrics of moral authority is built. Nooks and crannies in the country are replete with the penchant for the sensual pleasure especially among adolescents and youths who procure condoms and use same all in an attempt to ‘enjoy’ their youthful freedom. Observably, the practice is most common among students. It is an ephemeral venture which take valuable human and material resources away from humanity. Contraceptives seem to have emboldened the promiscuousness and ‘guarantee’ a path to illicit sex –that all is well with assumed protection from sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and other diseases such as HIV/AIDS. There is an emergence of a generation with profound interest in the enjoyment of things of the flesh. A peep into some of the Nigerian secondary schools, tertiary institutions and even homes is an image and tale of loose cravings for sensual pleasures – almost comparable to brothels. One wonders how such individuals would protect the dignity and ecology of humans.

Grabowski (1987, p. 15-16) has reviewed reflection of John Paul II on the human life as it affects human sexuality with different attitudes attributed to it. He (Grabowski) argue that the inherent and complete self-giving content of sexual intercourse in married life is contradicted in contraception – withholding or refusal measures, falsify the total offering which sexual intercourse is meant to express.

What is withheld or refused is fertility. It is not simply a superficial, biological component of the person which can be manipulated in the pursuit of other ends, but the human person as a whole. Contextually, an average Nigerian is drawn to the fantasy of sexual fulfilment through a number of ways. Having sexual urge is a normal human experience though an approach to actual fulfilment rests on structure and means of married institution. Fulfilling sexual passion by rampart use of contraceptives negates social and ethical order. Unfortunately, there is the erroneous conception by Nigeria’s young people of so-called modern age that chastity is an obsolete practice meant for *uninformed* members of the society.

The promoters of contraception lay claim to “rights of persons”, that is, the conscious experiencing subjects, to control birth by the use of contraceptives. Such people base their argument on the right to determine the fate of their prospective offspring’s chances of being conceived or not allowed to be conceived. Maguire (1973,

pp. 18-189) is a defender of contraception and in one of his essays, he laments that birth control was for a long time impeded by what he calls “physicalistic ethic” that has left human person at the mercy of his/her biological features. This is the basis of his act of ‘choice making’ in day-to-day human experience, as a way to justify his position on the abortion debate. Again, Fletcher, in his book, *Moral Responsibility: Situation Ethics at Work* (1967) holds similar position, though he supports the notion that the human person has power over what he designates as “biological and physical” plains. He insists that the discoveries of modern medicine have brought about fulfilment and protection to human values, without which persons would be like puppets.

Another argument usually expressed by defenders of contraception, is that the human capacity to procreation is a common feature with other non-human beings. This procreative power, according to them, is part of the human endowment of nature, over which the conscious human subject has been given dominion. It becomes personal and human if humans really and freely choose to exercise it, though it is a mere biological given. Putting up further justification, contraception proponents maintain that what is really human and personal about human sexuality is its relational character, that is, the ability to enable humanity to break out of prison of loneliness and enter into intimate union with another consciously experiencing individual. In furtherance of their argument, they aver that if continued flourishing of human productive power to procreation interferes with or inhibits the desire to enter into kindly fellowship with another person through sex, then it is a human right to suppress this biological given by means of contraceptive (Katchadourian, 1985; Montagu, 1969). Some people seem to subscribe to the notion in their approach to the opposite sex in the country. The situation plays out exploitatively on the part of young men who perceive the opposite sex as persons meant to be used as sex-toys other than persons whose presence should be respected. This is the death culture that has engulfed the young in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, for instance, the sale of contraceptives has impacted negatively on the understanding of true love by the young people. Having a male or female friend is construed for sex-partnership. True, reproductive organs are naturally endowed; nonetheless, they are to be used in concert with freedom of mutual donation of the self in married state. Some of the users of contraceptives are averse to that type of reasoning. For some of them, if one cannot resist sex, let him/her use contraceptives. Often such practices are rooted in a hedonistic mentality that is unwilling to accept responsibility in matters of sexuality. It is a self-centred concept of freedom that regards procreation as an obstacle to personal self-fulfilment (John Paul II, 1995, p. 13). Notably, some couples for the so-called overpopulation caveat orchestrated by government agencies do also employ contraceptives in their planned parenthood. The whole practice is steeped in secrecy which breeds abuse or counter fruits. These people rely more on their sensual instincts other than reasoned proactive plans empowered by



social and ethical insights. It becomes therefore a plethora of random procurement and usage of contraceptives at the expense of pastoralist approach to sexuality.

### **John Paul II's Abortion Pedagogy**

Abortion is a phenomenon that is traced back, through the history of mankind. In the present time it has assumed a frightening proportion. Recent studies have shown that up to 1.5 million abortions takes place every year in the United States, several hundreds of thousands in all major European countries, 40-60 million world-wide. Time and again, women believe that an abortion will ameliorate their plight (Peschke, 1996, p. 314). Abortion is seen as the removal of the non-viable human being from the mother's womb by human intervention, whether by killing the unborn before removal from the womb, or by exposing the unborn to a certain death outside the womb, through procedure or medication. Abortion is not a legal practice in Nigeria though there is active procurement of the act in the country.

Most religions in the country proscribe abortion and preach against its practice. In his argument against the practice of abortion, John Paul II invokes the phenomenological understanding of the human person as a being whose existence is unique and must not be diminished for any reason or for any end. In other words, humans shall never be used for any end. Instances abound in the country amongst procurers and sponsors of abortion who focus on their selfish gains at the expense of the unborn. Abortion clinics and centres exist in Nigeria towns and cities. Young people patronise them, even when such actions are illegal and undermine the nation's health system. Nigerians seem to have been influenced by the cravings for being free from the natural results of every consummated sexual relationship. It is not whether they judge such actions as evil; rather, they need be informed against direct abortion. That is to say, abortion willed either as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law which legislates that one shall not kill the embryo by abortion and shall not cause the newborn to perish (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994, p. 2271). Abortionists in the country are driven by selfish agenda as well as pecuniary interest which will never dismiss the gravity of the practice or undo irreparable harm done to the innocent who is put to death, and also harm done to the parents and the whole of society.

Many people who promote abortion argue that membership in the human species is not a sufficient criterion for personhood, because only some members of the human species possess the property or set of properties necessary of an entity is to be regarded as a "person" and the bearer of rights. Again, they profess that all the members of the human species are certainly *biologically alive*, but they cannot be considered to be persons because membership in the human species has no *moral* significance. Singer (1994, p. 173) belongs to that School of thought which asserts that it is illogical to regard every human being as a person to the exclusion of other non-humans or what he calls *speciesism*. Tooley (1983) supports abortion on the grounds that not every human



being could be given a place among mankind for certain lacks or handicaps and, he insists on seeing the alleged members of the human species who do not meet their so-called criteria for personhood as fit for death in order to enhance the dignity and well-being of those persons who are to be regarded as persons because they possess the appropriate autonomy and exercisable cognitive capacities. It appears that some abortionists in the country are of the same view with the above thought. Contrary disposition could have played out on the part of abortionists in Nigeria, if the paradigm of empathy with the less privileged were reasonably considered. Africans have sympathy with the downtrodden in their communities and the unborn should also be categorized under the same group and receive the same treatment. Unfortunately, sponsors and procurers of abortion spare little or no thought about the whole issue.

John Paul II faults the positions of pro-abortion on the grounds that their hypotheses are contradiction of the total understanding of the human person as being endowed with indisputable freedom of existence. He points at their root causes as recognizing the rights only of those who enjoy full or incipient autonomy and who emerge from a state of total dependency on others. For him, this is an exaltation of inauthentic human freedom which has no value for the integral human development. Given this, one may subscribe to the thinking of John Paul II on abortion since its procurement does not have a value-oriented vision for improving on the quality of life.

#### **Discussion: Apologetics of Nigeria's Experience of Culture of Death in Contraception and Abortion**

The reality of contraception and abortion is an unethical practice which portends multiple and grave risks, both to the individual and the nation at large. Contraception and abortion remain a rising paradigm of culture of death in Nigerian society, and elsewhere. Some scholars like John Paul II argues that a proper understanding of the human sexuality, from the perspectives of ethics and spirituality of the human body, is the beginning of the fight against illicit sexuality in any society. A theology of the body or the ethics of the body implies that human body should be approached with all sense of innocence, esteem, and respect, hence human body ought to be seen and treated as a subject, other than an object. When one acknowledges these principles, there will be a new attitude towards pleasure and cases of contraception and abortion in society will be reduced. The ethics and spirituality of the human body bring about mutual respect, true love, friendship gender fraternity, among other ethics and values.

Christian ethics calls the society's attention to see the human gender as a gift to oneself and to others. Having such an attitude deepens one's sense of the sacred on one hand, and it directs both the psyche and senses to a healthy interpersonal relationships devoid of exploitation, on the other hand. The human gender offers friends, peer groups and communities an unsurpassed occasion to share experiences without fear of undue

advantage, or some other forms of sexual exploitations as played out in today's social space. Erosion of social and ethical values inherited from religious and cultural institutions in Nigeria reflects on abuse of gender as shown in cases of sexual promiscuity amongst the different classes of the society. This lack, no doubt, has impacted negatively on interpersonal relationship, thus raising a paradigm of culture of death in the country.

Aware of the role of the sacred scriptures in Judeo-Christian religion, Christianity upholds that God created everything including men and women. Christian faith and morals do not end only in performance of rites alone. The religion also prescribes certain norms for its members. Christians therefore ought to obey God in all matters including life of chastity. One who truly believes and profess any religious faith will not disobey God's commandments. Ethically, sexual relationship is an exclusive preserve of married couples (Onyiloha, 2004, p. 181). Sexuality finds its logic and meaning within the context and content of profundity of union and solidarity. In every society (literate or non-literate), sexual relations are exclusive reserve of the married, for intimate union as well as for procreative reasons. Young and adult persons should understand that mere friendship is not and shall not lead to any sexual relationship for whatever reasons. When sexual union is respected and deferred to one's marriage, such persons prove their ethical, social and cultural integrity and also prevent consequences arising from pre-marital or illicit sex. This is the fabric of wholesome Christian life.

Contraception is an irresponsible use of freedom which infringes upon human reproduction and, forecloses reproductive sources to emergence of new human life. It is an anti-life phenomenon, *ipso facto* un-Christian. There is a violation of the dignity of the human person by falsifying the total offering of the self which intercourse is meant to express, especially in marriage. By obstructing the natural flow of production via contraceptives, such individuals end up becoming instruments of hatred instead of lovers of new life they pretend to accomplish. More so, contraceptive is rooted in a hedonistic mentality that is unwilling to accept responsibility in matters of sexuality. Conversely, it is regarded as an obstacle to personal self-fulfilment (John Paul II, 1995, p. 13).

Viewed from the natural law theory, contraceptives are contrary to the tenets of natural law. Human beings by their constitution are rational creatures capable of understanding the laws of nature and one of which the creator assigned reproductive organs for procreation within marriage. There is no gainsaying that contraceptives encourage promiscuous lifestyle since the knowledge that the risk of pregnancy is low, they contribute to incessant and illegal sexual behaviour among Nigeria's young and married persons. Human beings should moderate their sexual appetites within the confines of reason and divine positive law. This is how best to destroy the structures of death inherent in sexual abuse.

Besides the moral implications of the use of contraceptives, one does not rule out negative side effects and loss of such values as true love, affection, solidarity, altruism, loyalty, togetherness and fidelity. Users of contraceptives, most often, are self-centred and resort to self-alienation. At the end, they understand that sexual urge is part of humanity and should be approached with dignity, openness, truth and fear of God. Most often, their understanding is too late having committed the immoral act.

Sex is a sacred phenomenon and it is intrinsically elevated to the domain of married life both as a self-donating act of love and for procreative purposes. Only persons who are bound in marital union can legitimately exercise genital sexual relationships in openness to the transmission of new lives. Even at that, married couples do not have any right(s), either to allow or obstruct pregnancy. They are allowed in law to follow Pauline guidelines on marital love, observing a natural family planning.

In the phenomenological understanding of the human person, as a being whose existence is unique, and must not be diminished for whatever reason, it follows that human beings are not to be used for any means or supplanted as an end. Procurement of abortion is an evil and a negation of the right of individual human rights – in this case, it is a violation of the rights of the individual still in the process of becoming a human being. This study sees procurement of abortion as a violation of human life – the same life that has over the ages of humanity been cherished, admired, loved and above all, a human life that has been adjudged the nature's greatest gift.

Embryos or fetuses have inalienable rights to existence, the same manner that fully grown persons enjoy their freedom in the society. Recognizing the rights of only of those who enjoy full or incipient autonomy founded on total dependency on other entity is an exaltation of inauthentic human freedom which has no value for the integral human development (John Paul II, 1995, p. 19). Willed abortion as an end or a means is gravely contrary to the moral law: "You shall not kill" and, it also refers to endangering of the embryo – the new life shall not perish. Those who procure abortion are fighting against divine positive and natural laws. Therefore, they are immoral by the intent and praxis.

Again, the mindset of the abortionist that foetus or embryo is not *biologically alive* lacks sufficient reason; in fact, no human being ever experiences pre-natal autonomous life outside a mother's womb. Every human person undergoes different conceptual stages before gaining autonomy after one's birth (toddler, infancy, adolescence or adult). The unborn are naturally considered vulnerable creatures on the path of becoming full grown human persons together with their natural gifts and missions in life. It is, therefore, wicked and unjust for someone to take it upon himself/herself to end evolving human lives simply because the unborn lack actual expression of rights to live.

Persons seeking an abortion have been found to smother their conscience in order to kill the unborn child and will never be able to erase what they have done from their memories – no matter the level of their irresponsibility. This kind of disposition lacks merit and triggers a set of criminal intent as well as criminal mind to graduate into other anti-live activities.

Recent findings abound in different fields especially in ethics, religion, sociology, philosophy, theology, etc, of testimonies of persons (especially women) who regret having killed their babies through procurement of abortion. ‘Pro-life Day’ rallies in Nigeria, United States of America (USA), Canada, and elsewhere have shown tens of thousands of women and men carrying and displaying boards with inscriptions such as “I regret killing my babies”, “I am ashamed for having killed my baby”, “I killed my conscience the moment I aborted my baby”, “I killed my first child”, among others. Expressly, those expressions show guilt of conscience and proofs that procurement of abortion is an evil act as well as a negation of the human existence.

Certainly, the unborn child is fully a human being and medical science has also given credence through the developmental phases of the child in the womb. As from ‘eighteen days after conception’, the baby’s heart is beating; within ‘two-and-half months’, the baby can squint, move its tongue, and is sensitive to touch; within ‘three months’, the baby can suck its thumb and recoil from pain; within ‘six months’, the baby can respond to light and sound, and may survive outside of the womb; within ‘seven months’, the baby’s nervous system becomes more complex, and from ‘eight to nine months’, the baby is basically fully developed.

The issue of women’s rights, that is, mother having the rights to remove a foetus that is growing in her womb as she pleases with her body is wrong. Theologically and ethically, the baby does not actually belong to its mother or its father but to its maker: the unborn child belongs (in the most ultimate sense) not to his parents, not to human society in general, nor to government, but to God.

There is no justifiable ground to deciding the existence of the unborn child on the part of parents or those involved in illicit sexual relationship. Even in the worst case scenario, certain theological and ethical principles ought to apply to individual case. Certain principles apply to indirect or spontaneous abortion, where four conditions must be met by concerned parties before the final decision is taken or completed. This is known as the “principle of double effects”. The principle of double effects states thus (a) The act itself must be morally good or at least indifferent; (b) the agent may not positively will the bad effect but may permit it. If he or she could attain the good effect without the bad effect, he or she should do so. The bad effect, is sometimes said to be indirectly voluntary; (c) the good effect must flow from the action at least as immediately (in the order of causality, though not necessarily in the order of time) as the bad effect. In other words, the good effect must be produced directly by the action,

not by the bad effect. Otherwise the agent would be using a bad means to a good end and which is never allowed; and d) the good effect must be sufficiently desirable to compensate for allowing of the bad effect.

### **Recommendations**

The study has approached the subject matter from theological and socio-ethical perspective, the following recommendations are therefore made to reduce rise culture of death in contraception and abortion.

- i. Religious group should encourage their members to embrace life of chastity through sacrifice, discipline and self-control. Practices of such virtues will help them to navigate maturely in all matters pertaining to sexuality.
- ii. Sponsored jingles and bill board enlightenment campaigns will go a long way in informing the populace about the evils of contraception and abortion. Government should discontinue from the promotion of contraceptives and enforce abstinence in its stead. Again, the evils of abortion should be made known to the public through the already mentioned means.

### **Conclusion**

Contraception and abortion have been identified and described by John Paul II as a rising paradigm of culture of death. Some causes of the problem are traced to a number of factors with micro and macro antecedents in the society. No matter their modes of operations, the problem threatens the human life and its future existence. The research approached the above problem from religious and socio-ethical perspective. A good number of Nigerians are involved in this rising culture of death. Following the various arguments against contraception and abortions, especially those of John Paul II, this study makes a number of recommendations aimed at discouraging the unwholesome practice in Nigeria and elsewhere.

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