




Proverbs 28:19–22 and proliferation of sports betting amongst African youths



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Dates:

Received: 08 May 2021
 Accepted: 03 June 2021
 Published: 22 July 2021

How to cite this article:

Njoku, E.U., Chukwuma, O.G. & Obiorah, M.J., 2021, 'Proverbs 28:19–22 and proliferation of sports betting amongst African youths', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 42(1), a2282. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v42i1.2282>

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Work is integral to human existence, and a veritable means for both individual and societal development. Over time, human prosperity and societal advancement have been credited to application of both physical and mental abilities into resourceful ventures that resulted in wealth and prosperity. When this approach to wealth generation is negated and one resorts to shortcuts, the adverse implication is glaring on both the individual and society at large. The problem that necessitated this study is the quest for quick riches devoid of hard work amongst many African youths. In recent times, sports betting has high patronage amongst youths as it is considered a fast means to alleviate poverty. This research study analysed the importance of hard work as a panacea to poverty against the backdrop of sports betting proliferation amongst African youths. The study was carried out in the light of a Biblical wisdom literature text in Proverbs 28:19–22. This pericope was considered to be appropriate because it includes explicit sayings that extol hard work and bring to light the dangers of unrealistic ventures and haste to riches. The research design adopted was exegetical, whilst the methodology was rhetorical analysis. Exegesis refers to critical explanation or interpretation of a given biblical passage; rhetoric is the art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing. The data were collected from primary (Bible) and secondary sources (books, journals, online resources and Bible commentaries). This study beckoned on African youths to engage their physical and mental ability into resourceful enterprises and shun anti-work ventures.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: The article unequivocally challenges the involvement of African youths in worthless pursuits and the inordinate desire for quick riches, and thus, advocates youths to embrace hard work. The study contributes to Old Testament modern discourses on youths and sustainable wealth creation. Its related disciplines are exegesis or hermeneutics, entrepreneurial economics and practical theology.

Keywords: Proverbs 28:19–22; work; sports betting; African youths; diligence.

Introduction

The quest to alleviate poverty or upgrade one's economic status has led many African youths to resort to diverse means of achieving this goal. Some resort to resourceful ventures and others to alternative ventures devoid of hard work. The latter has *engineered* the mindset of effortless and quick acquisition of wealth. This development has created a decline in hard work and entrepreneurship amongst many African youths.

One of the themes prominent in the book of Proverbs is 'work', which is often used interchangeably with the word 'diligence'. It is noteworthy that the first chapter of this book introduced this theme, which runs through many chapters of the book. Proverbs 1:5 ('let the wise also hear and gain in learning, and the discerning acquire skill') reveals that the wise acquires skills. However, fools occupy their minds with ways of earning money with little or no work. The last chapter of Proverbs also emphasised the value of work. Proverbs 31:10–31 records an alphabetic acrostic poem in honour of a capable, hardworking and resourceful woman who is industrious both at home and outside.

The profuse emphasis on the theme 'work' by the sages draws attention to its value in the book of Proverbs and also in the entire Wisdom Literature. In this book, there are about 15 verses that directly relate to this theme and many others indirectly related to it (Herrick 2004). Work in these verses is often presented as a contrast to slothfulness. It is regarded as a noble human endeavour, a cure to poverty, a pathway to prosperity and a principal key to a prosperous society. Work encompasses all categories of business, industry, occupation and workmanship. Bruce (2004)

Note: Special Collection: African Hermeneutics.

stated that many of the texts in the book of Proverbs speak about workplace activities of the Ancient Near East, including agriculture, animal husbandry, textile and clothing, manufacturing, trade, transportation, law court, home making, education, construction and others. These activities engender personal and societal development.

Unfortunately, there is a decline in the dignity of labour, desire for resourceful enterprises and the virtue of patience in wealth acquisition amongst many youths in Africa. There is a shift from the mindset and attitude of hard work to quick and effortless pursuit for affluence. Consequently, the attention of youths is channelled towards instant money-generating ventures, such as kidnapping, internet fraud, human trafficking, hard drug business and the thriving sports betting, which, in turn, would have adverse impacts on them and the society.

In recent times, sports betting has topped the list of the quick money-making ventures. This business has been proliferated by a large percentage of youths who daily shun work with the hope of becoming instant millionaires effortlessly. In many African countries, sports betting has gained great popularity and has become the most promising of all gambling businesses, especially the youths, who bet on a daily basis. Youths' active participation in sports betting indicates the quest for financial reward without labour and patience. This undermines the dignity of labour, human capital development and social order amongst the youths.

The research article emphasises hard work as pivotal to prosperity in the light of Proverbs 28:19–22; the pericope elucidates the pitfalls of 'worthless pursuit' and 'haste to riches'. It emphasises the nobility of diligence in income generation. According to Swaggart (2013:1067). '[t]his proverb characterises one who works for what he gets and the other who tries to gain what he wants by illicit means'. In this study, Proverbs 28: 19–22 is exegetically analysed and applied as a panacea to the declining virtue of hard work amongst African youths. Hard work here connotes diligence, honesty, patience, commitment and dedication which contrast wishful thinking, endless desire for quick riches, worthless pursuit and dubious lifestyle. Hard work is characterised by assiduousness and painstaking commitment to a responsible task that is beneficial to both the worker and the surrounding environment. In this article, 'work' and 'hard work' are used interchangeably.

Meaning of the concept 'sports betting'

Sports betting comprises of two words: sports and betting. Sports refer to games played individually or in teams, and usually involve physical strength, skill and endurance (Hornby 2010). Similarly, Harper (2018) stated that sports include all forms of competitive physical activity or games being practised through casual or improved physical ability or skills, and provide entertainment to participants and spectators. The word 'betting' is from the verb 'bet', which entails risking a certain sum of money on the basis of the outcome of an unpredictable

event, such as a game (Hornby 2010). Sports betting can be simply defined as a category of gambling, which entails placing a wager on the outcome of a sporting event. According to Mari (2004), it is an act of risking money on predicting the result of sporting events in such a way that the bettor wins money if the outcome is as predicted and loses if not.

Effects of youths' involvement in sports betting

Sports betting is a common activity amongst African youths. One of the factors responsible for the proliferation of sports betting is that it is legalised in many African countries (Ekpendu 2020). It is a common topic of discussion amongst youths. On the internet and social media platforms, there are intense sports betting adverts, which have obviously increased the number of youths who actively participate in sports betting. Binde (2013) noted that such representation portrays gambling in a positive light and through explicit or implicit symbolic and methodological message, gambling is deeply rooted in the society. Youths' active participation in sports betting is usually associated with increased behavioural problems, delinquency, disruption of relationships, impaired academic performance and work activities, negligence to career or skill development, as well as psychological problems, such as low self-esteem, depression, violence, and suicidal ideations and attempts (Derevensky, Gupta & Winters 2003).

Although sports betting is generally perceived as a source of income and entertainment, it has very strong negative effects on the mindset and lifestyle of youths who participate in it. It creates a mindset of quick accumulation of wealth amongst youths, thereby encouraging greed, laziness and impatience. It distorts one's desire and ability to engage in substantial ventures, which requires work and diligence. It undermines the utilisation of one's talent, abilities and skills. It diminishes the interest of youths in capacity development (Dim 2020). The proliferation of sports betting amongst youths has led to the collapse of values, such as integrity, patience and discipline. According to Dim (2020:2), '[y]ouths who often participate in sports betting usually display unethical attitudes'. It has also affected the real social relationship amongst youths, given that many youths spend hours in-doors or in betting shops, analysing, predicting and staking games.

Deezia and Orji (2017) identified the behavioural implications of youths' participation in sports betting as fraud, theft and lies. They further noted that the employment costs include lost job productivity, lost work time and unemployment-related costs. Marshall (2013:8) added that 'gambling activities may interfere with an individual's ability for productive and selfless activities'. Sports betting is obviously time-consuming and could distract one from engaging in other daily activities. On a daily basis, various betting shops are overcrowded with youths who spend a great percentage of their time studying and predicting the winning possibilities, as well as wagering on the supposed winning numbers.

Derevensky et al. (2003:405) noted that 'youths' active participation in sports betting increases the rate of suicide

and suicidal attempts'. Sometimes, despondent bettors who have lost money to bets resort to ending their lives. This is usually the case with those who staked a huge sum of borrowed money or personal money. Similarly, Deezia and Orji (2017) submitted that consistent losing to bets stirs up anxiety and depression, which, in turn, instigates suicide tendencies. Other health-related effects include stress-related sicknesses, cardiovascular disorder, high blood pressure and cognitive disorders. Some youths who participate in sports betting are also associated with alcohol and drug abuse. In the case of a successful or failed prediction, bettors tend to resort to alcohol in order to celebrate their victory or combat depression.

Exegetical analysis of Proverbs 28:19–22

Exegesis is a critical interpretation of a specific text of scripture in order to properly understand its message. According to Stuart (1992), it is a study of biblical texts aimed at producing accurate and useful interpretations. The exegesis of Proverbs 28:19–22 is carried out under the following sections.

Translation of Proverbs 28:19–22

Ska (1990:1) noted that 'a close reading of the original text is an excellent start; but dialogue with a text begins with the translation which could be literal or literary'. The researchers' translation is provided in the Hebrew text.

Proverbs 28:19–22 (The Hebrew text)

¹⁹עֲבַד אֲדָמָתוֹ יִשְׁבַּע-לֶחֶם וּמְרֻדָּה רְלָיִם יִשְׁבַּע-רִישׁ:

²⁰אִישׁ אֲמוּנֹת רַב-בְּרָגוֹת וְאִזְן לְהַעֲשִׂיר לֹא יִנְקָה:

²¹הִזְכֵּר-פְּגָמִים לֹא-טוֹב וְעַל-פִּתְלָתָיִם יִפְשַׁע-גֹּבֵר:

²²הַהֲהִל לְהִיוֹן אִישׁ רַע יַעֲזֹב וְלֹא-יָדַע כִּי-תִקַּר יִבְאָנֶה:

Proverbs 28:19–22 (English text: Researchers' translation)

19 He who works in the land will be satisfied with bread, but he who pursues worthless things will be satisfied with poverty.

20 A faithful man will have many blessings, but he who is in a haste to be rich will not go unpunished.

21 To show partiality is not a good thing, but for a piece of bread a man may do wrong.

22 A man who is in a haste to get rich has an evil eye and does not know that poverty will come.

Delimitation of Proverbs 28:19–22

Mundele (2012:33) stated that 'to delimit the text that one wants to study is the first step the researcher has to do,

whatever the method or approach he applies'. This section examines why the researchers chose Prov 28:19–22 and not any other Old Testament passage as the study text.

In Proverbs 28, there is unity of thought that begins in verse 19 and terminates in verse 22. Carpenter (2000) restated that Proverbs 28 is arranged in two-line poetic couplets with the subject constantly changing; however, a distinct subject is identified in verses 19–22. The central subject observed in these four verses is 'approach to work and wealth acquisition'. This common idea explicitly flows within these verses and lacks connection with either the sayings in the previous verse (18) or the following verse (23). According to Douglas (1995:10), 'Proverbs 28:19–22 is a comparison between contentment and covetousness'. The text creates a distinction between greed and contentment.

Against that backdrop, in Proverbs 28, only verses 19–22 is considered appropriate for a study on the proliferation of sports betting amongst African youths because the text highlights that people engage in worthless ventures because they are in a haste to acquire money. The text also brings to light the right attitude towards sustainable financial income (Gray 2007; Trocino 2017). Many African youths participate in sports betting because of factors such as laziness, lack of skills, impatience, greed and an inordinate desire to be rich quickly. Sports betting is a game of chance, and as such, it is not a guaranteed pathway to wealth. It should never be considered as a source of income. The message of Proverbs 28:19–22 is that diligence leads to abundance, whilst worthless pursuits lead to impoverishment.

Theme of Proverbs 28:19–22

The primary theme expressed in Proverbs 28:19–22 is 'work/diligence'. The qal participle masculine singular verb עֲבַד [to work] derived from the qal perfect third person masculine singular verb עָבַד [he worked], which further refers to create, serve, till and perform task, conveys the thrust of the text. In verse 19, the Hebrew expression עֲבַד אֲדָמָתוֹ [he who works on land] captures the central message of the pericope. עֲבַד אֲדָמָתוֹ connotes physical strength, diligence, resourcefulness and capability. Specht (2015) stated that in the book of Proverbs, the verb עָבַד is usually used in the context of work, business, industry, occupation, workmanship and entrepreneurship. Hence, Proverbs 28:19–22 centres on the reward of diligent work, and the consequences of worthless pursuit and haste to riches.

Structure of Proverbs 28:19–22

Although Proverbs 28:19–22 has a central message, it consists of simple and coherent two structural parts that present slightly different messages, which are, however, connected to the central theme of the text. In the verses that make up each of these two parts, there is a unique flow of thought, which is distinct from the other. This section aims at presenting the structure of this pericope as delineated by the researchers.

Proverbs 28:19

This first part captures the central message of the entire pericope. It is the heart of the text. The qal participle masculine singular verb עֲבַד [to work] conveys the message of this part and that of the entire text. The verb connotes work, diligence and service.

Proverbs 28:20–22

The three verses of this structural part lay bare the consequences of being in a hurry to become rich. The Hebrew expression אִישׁ אֲמֹנִית רַב [he who is in a haste to be rich] connotes impatience, lack of skills and values. It also unequivocally records that those who are usually in a haste to be wealthy are evil men. Their evil hearts do not prick them; so, they can do anything to make money without any sense of guilt. The masculine singular adjective רַע [evil/bad] is also used when referring to one who is bad tempered or morally depraved. In the Old Testament, the term רַע also means unethical, envious, destructive spirit, discontented, contemptible, adverse and objectionable.

Close reading of Proverbs 28:19–22

The close reading of the text is performed according to its two-part structure. The titles given to these two parts reflect the core message of the verse or verses, which make up the parts.

Necessity of hard work (Proverbs 28:19)

The qal participle masculine singular verb עֲבַד [to work], which is derived from the qal perfect verb עָבַד [he worked], captures the central message of the pericope. This part brings to light the benefits of hard work and the consequences of vain pursuits. It emphasises that the reward of hard work is harvest, whilst the reward of laziness is insufficiency. According to Habtu (2006:809), 'in Proverbs 28:19, the one who works his land and the dreamer are contrasted. The former gets abundant food, while the latter has his fill of poverty'. Similarly, Hale and Thorson (2007) noted that:

[A] steady, diligent worker will have enough to eat while the person who chases fantasies- who schemes to get rich quickly- is likely to lose everything; such a person lacks judgement. (p. 944)

The Hebrew expression עֲבַד אֶדְמָתוֹ יִשְׂבַע-לֶחֶם [he who works the land will be satisfied with bread] denotes that work is a prerequisite for wealth creation. The expression also suggests that in the Old Testament times, agriculture is the major source of livelihood. Berry (1995) reiterated that the expression 'he who works the land' provides an understanding of the common occupation in the Ancient Near East and its surroundings. No wonder, the qal participle masculine singular verb עֲבַד is also translated 'to till'. Lands meant for agricultural purposes are tilled for planting. The process of tilling the land is usually a herculean task, which demands a lot of physical strength; however, the end result of tilling the land includes abundance of food. The expression יִשְׂבַע-לֶחֶם [will be satisfied with bread] does not connote that

the land is only tilled for the production of flour with which the bread is produced. In the expression יִשְׂבַע-לֶחֶם, the author employed symbolism to convey the message to his readers. Norman (1972) noted that symbolism is the practice of using an object or a word to represent an abstract idea. In the Old Testament times, לֶחֶם [bread] was a staple food; therefore, in many Old Testament passages, the term לֶחֶם is used to refer to all categories of food. Examples are presented in Genesis 3:19a (by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread) and in Deuteronomy 8:3c (one does not live by bread alone). Hence, the use of לֶחֶם in verse 19 connotes a totality of all farm products; it also underscores the output of both agricultural and other categories of labour.

The expression וּמְרַדֵּף רֵיקִים יִשְׂבַע-רֵישׁ [but he who pursues worthless things will be satisfied with poverty] is a contrast of עֲבַד אֶדְמָתוֹ יִשְׂבַע-לֶחֶם [he who works the land will be satisfied with bread]. מְרַדֵּף רֵיקִים [he who pursues worthless things] connotes the one who engages himself with vain and unworthy ventures. It signifies laziness and lack of skills. For the purpose of emphasis, in v. 19, the qal imperfect verb יִשְׂבַע [will be satisfied] is repeated. יִשְׂבַע also refers to a state of having enough or plenty of something. Plenty bread is the outcome of hard work, whilst plenty poverty is the outcome of vain pursuits. According to Thomas and McCreesh (2003:460), Proverbs 28:18–22 emphasise that 'poverty is not commended, but it is better than loss of integrity. The greed and injustice associated with wealth are condemned'. The text advocates one to engage in honest and responsible ventures that promote human and societal development.

Consequences of the quest for quick riches (Proverbs 28: 20–22)

These three verses mainly emphasizes the dangers associated with an inordinate desire for wealth. It emphatically brings to light the fate of anyone who is in a hurry to be rich. In the first line of verse 20, the expression אִישׁ אֲמֹנִית רַב-בְּרָכוֹת [a faithful man will have many blessings] is a follow up of the first line of the previous verse. Some synonyms of אִישׁ אֲמֹנִית include a firm man, a steadfast man, a reliable man, an honest man, a conscientious man, a committed man and a disciplined man. The masculine singular adjective רַב [many] qualifies the feminine plural noun בְּרָכוֹת [blessings]. Faithfulness bestows many blessings from God and men. It attracts the praises and kindness of men. More so, the use of the qal imperfect verb יִשְׂבַע [will be satisfied] in verse 19 is similar to that of רַב [many] in verse 20. Both יִשְׂבַע and רַב refer to a state of having an abundance of something whether positive or negative. A faithful man will have abundant blessings, whilst a man who is in a hurry to be rich will be severely punished.

In verse 20, the expression אִישׁ אֲמֹנִית לֹא יִנָּקָה [he who is in a haste to be rich will not go unpunished] captures the crux of this structural part. The negative particle לֹא [no, not] is employed to lay bare the consequences of having unbridled quest for wealth. יִנָּקָה לֹא also connotes a sense of guilt and emptiness. Clarke (1996) asserted that wealth obtained from dishonest business deals and wrong means is rarely permanent. Wealth acquired by speculation and game of luck

soon become dissipated because it is not acquired through providence. Such wealth does not have God's blessing, and therefore, not permanent.

Using the negative particle **לֹא**, Proverbs 28:21 condemn partiality and dishonesty in administration of justice. The expression **לֵחֶם יִפְשַׁע יִגְבֵּר** [for a piece of bread a man may do wrong] elucidates that one may willfully engage in the perversion of justice for a cheap gain or reward. According to Keil and Delitzsch (1996), the 'morsel of bread' is an example of a bribe, through which the favour of the judge is sought for. Barnes (1870) stated that a 'piece of bread' is proverbial and indicates an extreme point of poverty. Therefore, in Proverbs 28:21, the terms **פֶּת־לֵחֶם** [piece of bread] is used to refer to something of a low value, a thing which is almost worthless. When one frequently administers unjust judgement at a big bribe, after sometime, one's conscience may gradually become depraved to the extent of accepting a disproportionate reward in order to tender a partial justice. Henry (1996) notes that partiality is an outright error in the administration of justice because it often leads men to abundance of transgression. It is an error to consider the parties involved more than the merits of the cause.

With the use of synonyms, the concluding verse (v. 22) of the text re-emphasises the message of the second line of Prov 28:20. Proverbs 28:22 lays bare the foolishness of those who want to become rich quickly. The subject **גִּבְרֵל לְהוֹן אִישׁ** [A man who is in a haste to become rich] is qualified with the adjectival noun **רַע עֵינָיו** [evil eye]. In the context of this study, the expression **רַע עֵינָיו** also implies bad and deceitful intentions, evil thoughts, wicked and covetous heart. An excessive quest for quick riches is often characterised by evil intentions resulting in evil actions. A man who is in a hurry to be rich rarely examines the outcome of his actions before embarking on them. He does not consider whether his actions will hurt anyone. Similarly, Spence and Exell (2006) wrote that the man with evil eyes is the envious and covetous man; such a one tries to improve his position and quickly raises himself to the other on whom he is envies, uses quite unscrupulous means for this purpose and keep all his gains selfishly to himself. The message of Proverbs 28:22 is that the fate of a man who is in a hurry to become rich is poverty, and that there is neither comfort nor assurance of continuity for hurriedly acquired riches.

Hermeneutics of Proverbs 28:19–22 in the context of sports betting amongst African youths

This article primarily aims at imbibing the dignity of work in African youths. It focuses on disengaging their minds from having an inordinate quest for quick riches. It exhorts them to acquire the necessary skills for income generation rather than depend on luck and vain pursuits. In the preceding sections, the biblical text for this discourse had been exegetically analysed. Therefore, this section borders on applying the lessons of Proverbs 28:19–22 as a panacea to the growing desire for quick riches amongst African youths. The pericope is applied in two perspectives.

Dignity of work and diligence

The primary message contained in Proverbs 28:19–22 borders on work. The pericope unequivocally asserts that hard work brings about abundant riches, whilst laziness results in poverty. Adei (2006) revealed that the Bible speaks harshly of those who are poor because they have not used their God-given mind, strength and resources, whilst laziness or slothfulness is condemned. Both work and the attitude towards work are vital because there are certain work ethics, which are paramount for financial sustainability. Work is fundamental to man and by design, and man is a worker and a creative being. Through work, man grows and develops. Work enables man to realise and appreciate the divine image within him and the humanity at large. According to Dempster (2003:4), 'work has an extremely wide scope, but the theological point is central: human beings are called to *imitatio Dei* [imitate God] through work'. In the creation events recorded in the book of Genesis, God displayed the dignity of work and also gave man the mandate to work. Ruffner (2013) added that rooted in the Trinitarian nature of God, work is inherent to the nature of man both in his constitution and in the mandate given to him at creation. Therefore, when man engages in work, it is a response to the divine will and attribute of God.

There are instances where work may not bring about an immediate and obvious change in one's financial state. The rewards of work may be a gradual process but undoubtedly, work is a noble and prestigious virtue that should be imbibed by all African youths. Baab (2005) reiterated that hard work is a noble responsibility for human development, not actually for toil and unbearable exertion. Whilst it is true that those who engage in sports betting activities expend some sort of mental work, the position of the recent researchers is that sports betting is basically a game of chance, and hence, not a guaranteed and esteemed source of income. Unfortunately, many youths have lost huge sums of money to sports betting. Many have sold their valuable properties and staked huge amounts in sports betting.

In the quest for quick riches, a young man sold his motorcycle (which he used for *okada* business) to bet on a match result. Unfortunately, the result was negative, and the aftermath was detrimental to the young man, having staked his only source of income to chance. Similar cases abound such as students betting with their school fees and youths betting with their business capital (Ngwu 2020:9). Often times, these lead to losing more than winning, which usually result in academic, business and other forms of setback.

There are numerous works or businesses through which African youths can successfully and nobly make a living; however unfortunately, most of them lack the courage and patience to develop their careers. Most of them are reluctant to put in the needed efforts in actualising their financial goals (Ndueze 2018). Some works require academic qualifications, whilst others require acquiring some skills through apprenticeship and training programmes. Hence, this article

advocates African youths to empower themselves through education and to acquire skills rather than involving themselves in worthless enterprises. Youths are encouraged to engage in both certificate and skilled jobs. For instance, one could be a schoolteacher or a nurse and also engage in catering services. Notwithstanding the category, the emphasis of this article is that youths should engage in works that are productive rather than depending on luck for survival. Whilst effortless ventures are never a guaranteed source of wealth, work often produces positive results, be it immediate or gradual.

The proverbs in Proverbs 28:19–22 advocate African youths to apply their talents and skills to work, rather than engage in unworthy enterprises in order to be quickly rich. The study of proverbs encourages African youths to eschew laziness and inordinate quest for riches but embrace hard work. Contrary to the common understanding, hard work does not necessarily mean involving in physical activities, which demand a lot of time and physical strength. In this context, hard work denotes activities, which require some concerted effort. It means diligence, industry and productiveness.

The effective pathway to financial emancipation is through hard work and diligence. According to Martin (2017:200), '[d]iligence means constancy, earnestness, application; devoted painstaking and effort to achieve an end'. Diligence connotes carefulness, expertise and urgency in job execution and delivery. It also connotes sacrifice and total commitment; humility and loyalty in human relationship. Diligence results in independence, royalty and respect. Diligence attracts dignitaries and kings, whilst slothfulness attracts common people. According to Chukwuma et al. (2020):

[A] diligent person knows when to sleep and when to be awake. He knows how to gainfully engage his time, ideas and skills in order to avert lack. It is considered that a person who always sleeps indirectly welcomes poverty to his bosom. (p. 5)

Youths should endeavour to put off lackadaisical attitudes from their careers and businesses. They should not hesitate to equip themselves with workshops and trainings related to their given careers and businesses in order to increase their productivity. Adei (2006) supported that:

[T]hose who work hard, learn a trade, improve their knowledge and skills, are entrepreneurial, learn to save and invest small amounts, and who are faithful to God are often able to improve their material conditions. (p. 788)

Hence, hard work and diligence should be the watchwords of every youth who desires to live above poverty.

Place of patience and discipline

The relevance of patience and discipline in acquiring sustainable riches cannot be overemphasised. Many youths have not attained a stable financial position because of lack of these virtues. According to Martin (2017), patience is the state or quality of being patient, bearing suffering, trouble, disappointment, waiting or trials with fortitude; uncomplaining

endurance of evils or wrongs. Patience implies self-possession and indicates a certain quietness and repose. The study observes that many youths have fully embraced sports betting because they are impatient to go through the right processes of making wealth. They lack the needed discipline to keep away from it. Many give out their valuables at a disproportionate rate with the aim of getting huge returns. Some borrow money and stake in sports with the hope of recovering a huge sum of money. Unfortunately, on a daily basis, many youths lose huge amount of money to sports betting, given that sports betting is a game of chance (Ekpendu 2020).

This study also observes that some youths have abandoned their skills, talents, jobs and businesses because of their quest for quick riches. Jidefor (2020) affirmed that:

[M]any youths lack the patience to develop their various careers/businesses. They are reluctant to acquire the mental and emotional capacity needed to pass through the developmental stages which are required in their given careers. (p. 8)

They want to become rich at the twinkling of an eye with little or no effort. Unfortunately, many youths exhibit lack of patience during their period of apprenticeship. In their dispositions, they display their unwillingness to learn the trade or skill, which they have enrolled for. Ndueze (2018) posited that:

[M]any youths are not humble to acquire the needed virtues and trainings which are demanded in their given careers. They rub shoulders with their masters; thereby making it difficult for their masters to teach them all they need to know. (p. 35)

Some youths abruptly terminate their apprenticeship programme because they feel that they have learnt everything even when it is obvious that they still have a long way to go. Some feel that they have grown too big to be under the tutelage of someone. These mindsets have produced half-baked hair dressers, seamstresses, caterers, motor mechanics, musicians, footballers, engineers and electricians.

Proverbs 28:19–22 strongly condemns the desire to become rich quickly, which emphatically results in poverty. Adei (2006) affirmed that there are biblically approved ways to earn money and create wealth. Gambling, stealing, exploiting workers and the poor, as well as all dishonest business deals are condemned by God. Money is to be acquired through diligent work, inheritance, wise, non-speculative savings and investment. The inordinate desire to be rich quickly usually makes it difficult for people to consider the credibility of business activities before they engage in them.

Through the lens of Proverbs 28:19–22, this research article beckons on youths to inculcate patience in their journey to financial liberty. The study of the text strongly advocates African youths to desist from worthless ventures, such as sports betting. Because it is a game of chance, sports betting can ruin someone's financial dreams. It can make one to lose all that he or she took many years to acquire. Building a successful and sustainable career or business is not performed in a hurry. It usually takes some developmental stages.

An English proverb quotes that '[a] patient dog eats the fattest bone'.

Recommendations

The crux of this research work is to explore the importance of hard work amongst African youths against the backdrop of unrealistic ventures, such as sports betting. For this purpose, these recommendations are put forward:

1. The researchers advocate for youths' reorientation on the dignity of work and the importance of diligence through seminars and workshops, which can be organised by various religious bodies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).
2. Both the family and the social system should discourage the get-rich-quick syndrome by educating youths on hard work and also by rewarding hard work.
3. Parents and guardians should endeavour to ascertain their children's and wards' source(s) of income for proper guidance.
4. Effective entrepreneurship and vocational education should be included in primary, secondary and university education curriculum to enable youths get early exposure on the dignity of work.
5. Government and NGOs should organise free skills acquisition programmes (especially in rural areas) in order to provide opportunities for indigent youths to empower themselves.
6. Governments of various African countries and NGOs should provide a short-term loan with little or no interest to youths who have credible and workable business plans in order to facilitate their financial goals.
7. Government and individuals should build more industries in various African countries in order to create more employment opportunities for the youths.
8. As sports betting business may not be banned in Africa countries, appropriate regulatory bodies should checkmate its level of proliferation. The participants' age limit should be 18-35 years. This will enable the youths to be focused in their various fields of endeavour.

Conclusion

This article unequivocally submits that hard work is pivotal to wealth generation, whilst worthless pursuit and desire for quick riches result in poverty. The place of hard work cannot be overemphasised, being the bedrock for both individual and societal sustainable development. God initiated work and mandated his human creatures through the first human parents (Adam and Eve) to embrace this divine attribute. Work builds character, promotes dignity and gives one control over one's life. Work culminates to success, promotes happiness and engenders prosperity. The reverse approach reduces confidence, promotes dependence, robs individuals of their personal dignity and results in poverty.

Unfortunately, youths' attention is shifted from the dignity of work to endless desire for becoming instant millionaire. Hence, many African youths have embraced sports betting as

a quick escape route from poverty to flamboyant living without recourse to the adverse implication associated with it. Sports betting preaches 'stake ₦1, 000 and become an instant millionaire' even when the chance of winning is very slim. This has heightened the passion for consistent staking and also increased the number of youths' patronage. Youths keep on staking money, which would have been used for realistic and profitable ventures. Apart from the financial losses associated with sports betting, it reduces passion for work and distorts the desire for human development.

The message of Proverb 28:19–22 contradicts the mentality of get-rich-quick and effortless acquisition of wealth portrayed by sports betting. The pericope upholds that poverty is the end result of worthless pursuits and inordinate desire to be rich. It teaches that any approach of acquiring wealth, which is inconsistent with patience and hard work, should be abhorred. Therefore, the study is a clarion call for African youths to shun fantasies and desire for effortless wealth and embrace hard work. Attention should be shifted from sports betting to resourceful entrepreneurship that will be of great benefit to them and to Africa as a continent. The rewards of hard work may be gradual but progressive; so, youths must be patient, focused and diligent in their desire for financial sustainability. Similarly, Proverb 13:11 reads '[w]ealth hastily gotten will dwindle, but those who gather little by little will increase it'.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank Prof. Dirk Human, who registered them as research associates in the Department of Old Testament and Hebrew Scriptures, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

E.U.N. (PhD) carried out the investigations and secondary data analysis of this research findings. He also provided the appropriate methodology for this study. O.G.C. (PhD) carried out the primary data analysis of the study and wrote the original draft. She also carried out the conceptualisation of the main terms used in this work. M.J.O. (PhD) supervised the research project and also reviewed and edited the article.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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