


Sexually transmitted wealth: Proverbs 2:16–22



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A woman who engages in sex for money is referred to in Proverbs 2:16–22 as a forbidden woman or a prostitute. Anyone who engages in sex for wealth or advancement is shown as a loose and confused lady in the pericope. This describes the commercial sex workers in Nigeria's Edo State. In Edo State, some women and girls no doubt consider their bodies as the surest and easiest way of acquiring instant wealth, esteem and progress. This is seen in the number of brothels, motels, hotels and other prostitute homes and sanctuaries situated in different parts of the state. Some of these women who engage in sex for wealth do it for money, position, prestige and also jobs. As a sapiential-based intervention, this article argues that Proverbs 2:16–22 can offer stakeholders a unique approach to address the problems of an increasing spate of those who engage in sex for wealth, fame, and positions. A rhetoric-based pedagogy therapy is presented as an intervention in this looming crisis based on Proverbs 2:16–22. The rhetoric in Proverbs 2:16–22 emphasised that sex under any guise apart from marriage only leads to unhappiness, curses and poverty. It classifies sex for wealth as an immoral way and distinguished it from the moral way, which is a tradition among writers of sapiential literature.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: The research focuses on the current sexual promiscuity prevalent in Edo State. It was discovered that some women and girls pursue sex work for money, position and power. There are increasing HIV cases, rapes and the use of these women for rituals by their customers. Disciplines implicated are Old Testament studies and practical theology.

Keywords: Proverbs 2; wisdom; loose woman; prostitution; immorality; sex; AIDS.

Introduction

Sex for wealth and progress is an increasing phenomenon around the globe. However, the spate of sex for wealth going on in Edo State has eluded the government, non-governmental organisations, civil-based organisations and even community-based organisations. Some women and girls no doubt consider their bodies as the surest and easiest means of obtaining instant wealth and progress. It is also worth mentioning that the harsh realities of poverty, unemployment, social marginalisation, political upheavals and family pressures in Edo state have escalated the vast struggle for survival through prostitution among women, especially teenagers (Ezeh 2017). This is seen in the number of brothels, motels, hotels and other prostitute homes and sanctuaries situated in different parts of Edo State. Some of these women who engage in sex for wealth also do that for money, position, prestige and also jobs. For instance, Utomwen and Ipeye (2010) lamented that:

[T]hese prostitutes are products of a morally degenerated society which we can still check by doing the right thing because some of the prostitutes are university students who cannot afford to pay their school fees. (p. 1)

These women (commercial sex workers), including teenagers, 'milled around the quarters and hotels in the area from 9 pm till dawn ... Youths going naked, between the ages of 17 and 18' (Okere 2018:1). In Edo State, more promiscuous men patronise these sex workers, and sometimes they bring these women into their matrimonial homes. Barry (1984) believed that this form of sex work is a form of female sexual slavery. It can also be called bonded labour, debt bondage and involuntary servitude (Elezi 2011).

Prostitution is practised on the streets, in bars, restaurants, hotels and brothels in Edo State, and with the arrival of smart phones, many prostitutes now utilise apps to make agreements with clients (Kroone 2018). More disturbing is the fact that young girls below the age of 18 years are found in hotels and brothels in different areas of the state. For instance, on 16 February 2022, it was reported that eight teens were rescued from engaging in prostitution in brothels by the

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National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) (Oluokun 2022:1). According to section 17 of the *Trafficking in Persons Prohibition Law Enforcement 2015 Act*, their actions have contravened the act, hence their arrest. It is also worthy to mention that some of these prostitutes are married women with children, who used prostitution as their source of livelihood (Ahanor 2020:1) and some of them are single mothers who became pregnant and their aggressor had denied the pregnancy. This has really dealt a heavy blow to the place of women in the development of Edo State. This issue of the increasing spate of sexually transmitted wealth among Edo women has been approached from the point of view of sociology, psychology, geography and even economics, but the moral axioms in the Old Testament sapiential corpus have been sidelined. This research will be based on this deficiency as its lens.

Proverbs 2:16–22 is among the sapiential literature of the Old Testament. It projects women who engage in sex as undisciplined women without integrity, insisting that nothing but sorrow is the end of their immoral activities. Zaspel (2020) explains that the Book of Proverbs reminds human beings that to pursue sin is foolish and self-destructive. It also describes that righteousness leads to a blessed life, but unrighteousness is foolishness that brings regret. Also, Smith (2014) argues that a person who engages in sex for survival has:

[H]er abode, rather than a spiritual sanctuary for her family in the midst of the immoral morass of the world, has become a dark pit of sin and wickedness entrapping, enslaving and destroying the lives of men, their marriages and families. (p. 1)

The pericope also provides other themes that will be beneficial to the women in Edo State. Edo State is a state in the southern part of Nigeria known for high level of prostitution and other incidences of sexually transmitted wealth. Olubukola (2020:1) contends that the structure of a society like Edo state makes sex work to become a source of employment for some women in order to survive. Having defied other solutions, it is preferable to appeal to the wisdom corpus of the Old Testament for direction. This is in line with Johnson's (1998) summation that:

[I]f Scripture is ever again to be a living source for theology, those who practise theology must become less preoccupied with the world that produced Scripture and learn again how to live in the world Scripture produces. (p. 165)

The aim of this research is to examine the warning against sexually transmitted wealth in Proverbs 2:16–22 and its benefits to Edo women, girls and also the men that patronised them. Firstly, the pericope of Proverbs 2:16–22 is explored. Secondly, themes are drawn from the exegesis. Thirdly, the context and the text are woven within an African hermeneutical framework. This is done covertly and overtly. Finally, the recommendations are made as a strategy for policy implications for concerned individuals, societies and even the government of Edo State.

Revisiting the prologue of Proverbs 2 as wisdom literature

Scholars attribute Proverbs 2 to the wisdom corpus and the Solomonic corpus because of the traditional father-to-son rhetoric. Proverbs is a:

[S]lice of a tradition that preceded ancient Israel and continued beyond it. This tradition comprised the creation, reshaping, and transmission of wise sayings and teachings about how to live a righteous, productive, and happy life. (Fox 2000:11)

However, there are scholarly debates with regard to the dating of Proverbs 2. Some scholars have:

[L]ooked at theological developments within the book and outside it and have found the maturity of theological reflection in Proverbs 1–9 to belong to a period during or after the Israelite exile. (Dell 2006:19)

The first nine chapters were believed to have been composed sometime in the:

[S]econd Temple period as an introduction to the compilation as a whole, but unfortunately the text itself offers little help in coming up with a more precise date of composition. (Blenkinsopp 2017:159)

Through similar lens, Toy posits that it was written in the middle third-century BC with some Proverbs 6:1–19 and 9:7–12 written later than this period (Toy 1899:xxx).

Their social contexts, as in the tradition of wisdom literature, are geared toward advising their students on the good to do and the evil to avoid. According to Schneider (1990):

[I]n their canonical form and their translated form, Sapiential insights continue to be geared towards potential audiences, which have to be instructed, admonished and guided in the ways of Biblical wisdom by means of the text which witness to ancient Sapiential insights. (p. 60)

Lending more credence, the primary context of Proverbs 1–9 is educational that relates particularly to the instructions:

[W]hich clearly have the nature of teaching ostensibly from parents to son (although a teacher–pupil model has also been proposed), regarding how to make choices in life and find the right path of wisdom and 'life' rather than the path to folly and 'death'. (Dell 2006:22)

Throughout the book of Proverbs, the fear of God is encouraged to be followed and designated as the good path. Viljoen (2015) emphasised that:

[T]he good or bad moral behaviour of a person is here expressed with the metaphor of 'the way'; another enunciation of the proverb's view of the world as bifurcated in terms of the two courses that a person can take. Consequently, in the proverbial world a person can be found to be on either of two paths: in the fear of Yahweh going in straightness despising Yahweh going in wrong ways. (p. 1)

Also:

[T]he basic order of social reality is given in creation, and the wisdom teachers try to discern the structures of this order and to communicate them in their sayings and instructions. (Wittenberg 1986:41)

Wisdom pedagogy of Proverbs 2:16–22

The following themes were drawn from Proverbs 2:16–22 and are important in shedding light on sexual perversion and promiscuity.

Loose and confused man and woman (v. 16–17)

In verse 16a, a man with wisdom runs away from sex workers. In fact, it is the wise man that is נָצַל [delivered], but foolish men continue to patronise sex workers and are destroyed, because they are also destroying the life of their victims because of their patronage. In verse 16a, a woman who has sex with people who are not her husband is described as זוּר [immoral, loose, harlot]. Hebrew זוּר in ancient Israel is desperate to make wealth and progress. The harlot is seen as loose because she cannot understand herself and sees sex as ordinary. People also do not respect them. Unfortunately, married women also engage in harlotry. In verse 16b, נָקְרִי was used to describe the marriage status of the woman. Thus, Hebrew נָקְרִי means adulterous woman, adulteress, harlot and a foreigner because harlots were chiefly foreigners to the moral way of life. A foreigner in the context refers to an adulterous woman or prostitute. She is foreign in her behaviour, which is inappropriate for one of the covenant people of God (Habtu 2006:777). It does not imply that she is a foreigner, but rather that she is alienated from the community and its social and religious values (McKane 1965:285). In verse 17, the נָקְרִי leaves her husband and follows other men for money, pleasure and progress. She ignored the fact that her marriage was a בְּרִית [covenant, alliance, friendship], which makes the sexual promiscuity of the woman a covenant violation. She violated the covenant with her husband and Israel's covenant with God (Hale 2007:933).

Consequences for her and her victims (vv. 18–19)

In v.18, the house of a woman who gives her body for sexual gain is רַפְאִים. Hebrew רַפְאִים means dead, spirits of the dead, shades, perish, pestilence, which indicates that all the gains the immoral woman obtains are as good as nothing. The LXX reflects שָׂתָה (shatah, Qal perfect third person feminine singular of שָׂתָה [shith] 'to place; to put'): 'she established her house near death'. All the money, positions and benefits will not be used to do anything useful. She is the antithesis of wisdom, the embodiment of evil...tempting Israelites to apostasy as well as immorality' (Rylaarsdam 1976:446). Furthermore, verse 19 says that those that patronise these sexual perverts will suffer the same consequences as their hosts. No one that has sex with them remains the same (שׁוּב) because the spirit of sexual perversion and promiscuity moves from the host to the victim. Hebrew שׁוּב means return,

turn back, withdraw and it is used with אָל to indicate that no one that goes to her returns to his or her normal state morally, financially and even spiritually. In fact, in verse 19b, the ways of the woman who engages in sexual activities for sex and fame is described out of 'the paths of life' (דְּרֹת חַיִּים). Hebrew חַיִּים could also mean alive, living, prospering, happiness, blessed and strong. Thus, anyone in the path of the host (whore) lacks life, prosperity, happiness, blessing and strength.

There is a good path and a bad path (vv. 20–22)

Just as it is normal with the writers of the Book of Proverbs, in this structure, the good and bad paths are contrasted once again. Wicked is 'nearly always set over against upright or righteous; fools against the wise' (Rylaarsdam 1976:446). The prostitute is encouraged to change from her bad ways to the way of good men (טוֹבִים), because in Deuteronomy 21:9, the punishment was death by burning (Kennedy 1930:166). Hebrew טוֹבִים is derived from טוב, which means good, pleasant, agreeable, beautiful and better. Thus, the good path leads to a beautiful life, while the bad path leads to a sorrowful life. In v.20b, the prostitute and her victim are called upon to שָׁמַר the righteous way. Hebrew שָׁמַר means keep, watch, preserve, being careful, beware, bodyguard, diligently keep, among others. It shows that when a prostitute has changed from the bad to the good way, they should be careful to make sure that they do not return to their previous lifestyle. This is because the life of sexual perversion is difficult to completely stop (v. 18), except with diligence, discipline and carefulness. Human moral character from the lens of this structure disallows sexual promiscuity (Ortlund 2001:655).

Sexually transmitted wealth in Edo State

Edo State is one of the five states in the southern part of Nigeria. It is majorly a Christian state known for many things such as cultism, witchcraft and sexual perversion. This is not to say that the state is the only one bedevilled by these ills in Nigeria; however, the state is exceptionally susceptible to these. Shirbon (2007) lamented that it is because of the scarcity of jobs that this phenomenon is more pronounced in the state.

Sexually transmitted wealth, otherwise known as prostitution or commercial sex, is a lucrative business in Edo State. Women, single and married, secretly and openly offer sex for money, fame and positions that they believe to help them progress. This is the reason for the increasing spate of HIV in the state, the number of teenage girls who are single mothers and the number of rape cases. Exposing further, Bhunu, Mhlanga and Mushayabasa (2014) maintain that (1) increase in the levels of prostitution in a community enhances the chances of acquiring HIV if not infected and acquiring another HIV strain if already infected. (2) Antiretroviral therapy is more effective in communities with less prostitution as less prostitution corresponds to reduced chances of one getting

infected with different strains of HIV. These women, who engage in sexually transmitted wealth, dress half naked to display their business. Some of them open brothels as a centre for the sale of sex, while others situate themselves in different parts of the state for their hosts.

Some of these women follow government officials with the aim of getting jobs, positions, or for other monetary gains. Unfortunately, women from Edo State have gone international with their prostitution. They are so keen on this money that they flock to Italy for the sale of sex. Also:

[W]hen they are leaving their homes to go to overseas, what is waiting for them is often something altogether different, namely intimidation, blackmail, violence, nightmare, and slavery that strip them of all dignity and respect. (Ezeh 2017:1)

They even agree to be engaged in the services of pornography companies in Italy and other European countries to make fast wealth.

Causes and implications of commercial sex in Edo State

The causes of engagement in commercial sex by some women in Edo State are necessitated by pull and push factors. The pull and push factors are the root causes of commercial sex by some women. The factors include (but not limited to) poverty, frustration, depression, unemployment, lack of equal opportunities, gender-based violence, inequalities and social exclusion including lack of access to education (Sessou 2011:1) among others.

The causes of the increasing spate of sexually transmitted wealth in Edo State are hereunder described. Firstly, poverty has made some of the women to consider prostitution as the easiest path for survival in Edo. The August 2020 NBS report states that in the second quarter of 2020, Edo State had an unemployment rate of 19% (NBS 2020:53). The NBS report on poverty and inequality found that between September 2018 and October 2019, the poverty headcount ratio in Edo State was 12% (NBS 2020:15). Women constitute over 60% of the poorest people in Nigeria and going by the IMF statistics that Nigeria has over 87 million people in extreme poverty translates to approximately 52 million women in the clutches of extreme poverty (Onwuka, Nwadiub & Prisca 2019). Even though part of the blame goes to women involved in this act, the government has its own part of the blame. Money that would have been used for the improvement of the livelihood of indigenes of the state has been diverted to private pockets of politicians. Unfortunately, in poverty situations, women suffer the most because they are disturbed about the needs of their family members and siblings. They are prepared to do anything for survival. In fact, Olubukola (2020) calls it feminisation of poverty. It is also worthy to mention that stakeholders, including non-governmental organisations, traditional, religious and community leaders, women and youth groups, as well as civil society organisations, among others, have not commenced the process of developing a social protection

policy for the women in Edo State (Egebjule 2021). Unfortunately, some of these women are breadwinners of their respective families, and in order to meet up with the demands, they venture into sex for wealth.

A second cause of the increasing quest for wealth through sex in Edo State is the activities of government officials and stakeholders. Some government officials and those in politics are the main people enticing these prostitutes to remain as sex workers. They refuse to help these prostitutes obtain meaningful jobs. Utomwen and Ipaye (2010) reveal that:

[E]ven though their activities are immoral, they still provide services that are much needed. Government is just trying to exhibit a holier-than-thou attitude as many top government officials patronise them regularly. (p. 1)

They prefer to be giving the teenagers, adolescents and adult women sex workers money after every sex, than giving them jobs that in their understanding liberate them from their bondage. It is also worthy of note that Edo State is an oil producing state in Nigeria. Money circulation is at its peak, sustained by legislators, ministers, special aides, highly placed civil servants and their wealthy private sector cronies. Prostitutes stay at different corners of the city to get their own share of the money from these groups of individuals mentioned above (Utomwen & Ipaye 2010).

Thirdly, ignorance of what prostitution entails has pushed teen girls into this practice. Some of these girls were brought from the villages and they do not know the difference between right and wrong. Some of their parents in the village were deceived that their children were coming to the Edo cities for good employment. Unfortunately, these girls are then kept in brothels and baby factories. Lamenting on this situation, Ogundare (2019) wrote that:

We have a lot of brothels that harbour children who are brought from the villages to work as sex workers. these children are innocent, they do not know what they are doing. Prostitution is dehumanising, sex is a mutual activity between two people, but when children are forced to have sex with seven or eight men a day, it is no fun anymore. (p. 1)

These men sometimes pay the money for services of the teenage girls to their madams, who only give these girls meagre amount from the money.

Fourthly, greed, that is, the lust for money has driven some women in Edo State into prostitution. Unfortunately, they compare themselves with their peers, and this pushes them into prostitution in Edo State and beyond. Teenagers and adolescents no longer want to go to school because money occupies their minds. They want to use the newest iphone. Unfortunately, teenagers do not:

[M]easure self-esteem or self-worth against personal and scholastic achievements, however brilliant they are, but increasingly by how many people tell them they are 'hot' on the photo-sharing website Instagram or other forms of social media. (Sofola 2022:n.p)

Fifthly, desperation has led these women into this lifestyle. These women feel that they have many things that demand money, including family and personal needs, and they feel that engaging in small jobs will not give them that fast money needed to fulfil their needs. Guardian (2019:1) reveals that 'Women are increasingly forced to take up sex work to get money for food and rent after becoming desperate over financial hardship'. Sixthly, some of these women want to get jobs and government appointments, and they feel that using their bodies will accelerate their goals. Seventhly, women in Edo State spend beyond their means. They love to wear expensive clothes, use costly phones, wear costly shoes, move around with hard currency, and ride in flashy cars.

The implications of the sexually transmitted wealth cases in Edo State cannot be overemphasised. It has led to gender-based violence, increased sexually transmitted diseases among women, increased rape cases, more teenage mothers, increased ritual activities, increased marital instability and all-round immorality. Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to violence against women and girls. Gender-based violence is a serious violation of human rights and a life-threatening health and protection issue (UNHCR 2021). Some of these women and girls in Edo State are forced to have unprotected sex for increased payment by their customers. Some of these men who patronise them know well that they have some sexually transmitted diseases but they still insist on engaging in unprotected sex with women and girls in brothels, hotels and in their houses. Thus, in Edo State, sex workers are generally aware of the HIV risks of unprotected sex, but for many of them, the extra cash incentive clients often offer for sex without a condom is worth the risk (Mbura 2011).

Edo State is currently one of the states with the highest number of people living with HIV (NACA 2021). It spreads when the virus successfully enters host cells, and thus replication begins. According to the ministry of health, 173660 people are living with HIV/AIDS in the state, and only 25730 have access to antiretroviral treatment (Adebowale 2017). Maybe because of ignorance or an oversight, women and girls who engage in commercial sex render their sexual services without thinking of the health implications of their actions. Also, some of their customers demand sex without protection, and because of the greed and desperation for money and position, these prostitutes give in to the whims and caprices of their benefactor. When they contract these sexually transmitted diseases, they spread them during their subsequent sexual escapades. Some of these teenage girls and married women who engage in sex for wealth have been raped at different points in time by their aggressors. Some of them are raped on the streets, in their houses and eventually killed. Research conducted in Benin City, Edo State, reveals that 40% of respondents have been raped, and a majority, 55%, were less than 15 years old at the time of their rape. Another 28% were raped between the ages of 15–20 years, 12% between 21 and 25 years and 5% above 26 years old (Asowa-Omorodion 2000:340). This has led to the increasing number of teenage mothers on the streets of

Edo State. You will see a girl as young as 12 having a child with her education and future prospects greatly threatened. Sadly, some of these prostitutes have been killed in their hotel rooms for ritual purposes by their benefactors. Some of the boys, men and politicians patronise them and, after having sex with them, kill them. It is highly unfortunate that this challenge is not sending any signal to those interested in this sexually transmitted wealth to desist from it. Women do not have the patience to work hard in the right way to make their money; they want to engage in nefarious activities like their masculine counterparts. Unfortunately, there are increasing cases of marital instability in Edo State. Married women who felt their husbands are not helping matters have left their husband and state following politicians for good jobs and other political appointments. This has really dealt a big blow to the institution of marriage in Edo State. Also, men who engage the services of these prostitutes have at one time or another been caught by their wives, and the peace and tranquility in the home have been destroyed. Sexually transmitted wealth has enormous negative impacts on the lives of women in Edo State and also on the growth and development of the state in general. The increase in many immoral and amoral activities in Edo has a close relationship with the extreme quest for wealth and positions, especially in government.

Hermeneutical enquiry

The hermeneutical enquiry is a synthesis between Proverbs 2:16–22 and sexually transmitted wealth in Edo State. In Proverbs 2:16, those men who patronise sex workers are warned to desist because they are indirectly encouraging these women and girls to continue in sex work for wealth. These men are encouraged not to allow the sweet tongues of these girls and women to entice them into engaging their services. In the long run, when these girls and women see no one interested in them, they will be forced to rethink. Flattery is always connected to deception and lies and because the human heart is vain, it is easy to believe flattering remarks. Because we love to hear good things about ourselves, flattery is hard to resist (Kabel 2019). In fact, the pericope noted that it is only wise men who do not patronise these women. Bringing this to the Nigerian context, most people who patronise these sex workers are psychologically bereaved individuals, or people with little or no character to protect. A research institute, National Institute of Justice (2009), reveals that these men who the pericope classify as being without wisdom are likely to have a criminal past and also likely to have a history of violent offenses, rape and property crime. The politicians and government officials who engage the services of sex workers more often than people-oriented projects show that they have nothing to offer the people that placed them in that political seat or office. According to Dachen (2016:1), 'Some men do have an excessive sexual libido and no matter how hard the wife or girlfriend tries to satisfy him, he still seeks that extra pleasure elsewhere'.

In Proverbs 2:17, women who engage in prostitution of sex for wealth have no respect for themselves, and God and society

accord no respect to them. She enjoys tearing families, offers flattering speech that is made to manipulate rather than edify; she has no fear of God when it comes to the marriage bond and covenant, and thus its relevance to her decision-making is not considered. Her life is one leading to death and destruction, and those who choose to follow her path will find only pain and sorrow (Relevant Bible Teaching 2020). The rhetor informed his audience that it is not God's purpose for women or girls to engage in prostitution, and throughout the Old Testament, there is nowhere the LORD allowed prostitution. God is pleased when humans use the gift of sex according to the right way he has commanded, but he hates those who misuse it (Challies 2016:1). Using sex in God's ordained context is human beings' way of reflecting the glory of God ((Routledge 2008:141). There is a close relationship between the status of women in this structure and activities of women and girls in Edo state. Women and girls are made in the image of God and are expected to work in accordance to his dictates. Breaking the laws of God entails breaking his covenant and those who do so must be prepared to face the consequences that come with it (Pr 2:22).

This may be the reason why prostitutes in Edo State are easily raped and used for ritual activities. Also, in Proverbs 2:17, marriage is deemed a covenant, and any woman who pursues sex work for wealth and position contravenes a covenant. Thus, married women and men in Edo State should view prostitution as the breaking of a covenant instituted by God. Marriage 'as a covenant that establishes between husband and wife a partnership of the whole life in which they mutually hand over and accept each other' (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2022:1). Furthermore, Arthur (2017) reveals that a 'good marriage is not a contract between a man and a woman, but rather, a sacred covenant between three; the man, the woman and God'. Commercial sex workers in Edo State should acknowledge prostitution as an immoral lifestyle. Prostitution threatens the plan of God in the life of the prostitute. It also shows that the commercial sex worker has no true affection, nor any desire of his welfare, anymore than Delilah and of Samson. All the prostitutes are interested in is how to get more money into the pockets of their customers, because they know that men most often try to gratify their sexual lust for women (Henry 2006:959). McCreesh (2000:456) calls her a 'cultic fertility figure, tempting to idolatry as well as adultery...wife of another'.

Furthermore, Proverbs 2:18, 19, 22 emphasised that prostitutes have enormous consequences to face, both in the short and long term. It states that all her perceived progress is only short lived because it will be destroyed by problems. The:

[R]uin of those who are guilty of it is certain and unavoidable, if they do not repent... those that live in forbidden pleasure are dead while they live. (Henry 2006:959)

Thus, Edo women who engage in sex for wealth do so at their peril because they may be killed by their aggressors or may be used for ritual purposes. They may also contract HIV and use all of the money they have amassed from prostitution to treat themselves, and they may eventually die.

Accordingly, Osauzo (2021:1) reveals that on 28 December 2021, a boy by name Osas killed his girlfriend for suspected ritual purposes in Benin. The suspect is currently on the run. Proverbs 2:20 says that happiness and prosperity can only be sustained through the good path. In writing Proverbs 2:20, Solomon hoped that his readers would attain practical righteousness in all things and that we would do this by living our lives under the authority and direction of God and also it is based on the experiences that Solomon must have gone through (Ross 1994; Swindoll 2021). In this regard, Edo State women should note that the money they have acquired or the position they have obtained through sex work will be lost because these were obtained through illicit ways. The politician will throw them away and start chasing a new woman tomorrow, or even worse, the tenure of the politician may come to an end and nothing good may come from him again. Edo state women and girls are advised by Proverbs 2:16–21 to practise wisdom and discernment and think positively (Millar 2018:69).

Also, the way of sex for wealth is deemed an immoral way in Proverbs 2, while the way of diligence, hardwork and perseverance is deemed the moral way of life. Through this lens, Edo women called upon to understand that being a commercial sex worker is immoral and comes with its consequences. In fact, in Proverbs 2:21–21, women and girls are encouraged not to allow themselves to be deceived because of the instant wealth that is acquired by pursuing an immoral life. The reason why some of these women and girls refuse to stop their immoral lifestyle is because a day of prostitution can give them as much as 3837.19747 ZAR, so they are enticed by the money. However, Edo State women fail to recognise the fact that the moral way of life leads to happiness and a protected future. These women and girls who engage in sex for wealth in Edo State think that success can be acquired through commercial sex without considering the short and long-term consequences of their actions.

Conclusion and suggestion

The rhetor in Proverbs 2:16–22 emphasised that sex under any guise apart from marriage only leads to unhappiness, curses and poverty. It classifies sex for wealth as an immoral way and distinguishes it from the moral way, which is a traditional method in sapiential literature. Using Proverbs 2:16–22 as an equidistant lens, the church is encouraged to engage in mass sensitisation, beginning with their congregation, on the need to engage in legal and moral jobs, rather than prostitution. Thereafter, the church can carry out mass sensitisation, on the streets of Edo State, in brothels and hostels. This can also be made successful and more impactful through the use of hand bills, bill boards and other social media outlets. Most of those who engage in sex for wealth and position are Christians, and they bring tithes and offerings to their various pastors with no reprimand. Thus, pastors are called upon to start rejecting such money, instead teaching in love these prostitutes the need to shun the path they are treading, and the church can also go to the extent of giving soft loans and organising skill acquisition

programmes for these girls and women willing to change. Furthermore, teachers in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria should be telling their students the dangers of engaging in prostitution, using the wisdom corpus, specifically Proverbs 2:16–22. These teachers should tell them some of the implications of going into sex for wealth, such as contracting HIV, being raped or even being used for ritual activities. Also, governmental and non-governmental organisations should also conduct campaigns in market squares, schools, radio and television programmes, warning women, especially teenagers, on the need to choose the moral way of life that leads to happiness, rather than the immoral way of life that leads to unhappiness and eventual death.

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F.C.U. is the sole author of this article.

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