

A moral–theological analysis of unethical business practices in Warri through the lens of Proverbs 11:1–6

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Few studies have examined unethical business practices in Nigeria, and no study has examined unethical business practices in Warri local government area of Delta State from the lens of Proverbs 11:1–6. A reading of Proverbs 11, beginning from verse one, reveals that a false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight. It further mentions how God hates dishonesty and lack of integrity in whatever form, which in this context is the business environment. The rate of fraudulent business activities in markets across Warri is alarming. Indeed, promoters and culprits of counterfeit goods, such as food, pharmaceuticals, electrical appliances and wire are boldly counting their profits and laughing all the way to the bank in amusement at those who have decided not to join them. This study explores the consequences that await these promoters and culprits of unethical business practices. Literary analysis was used through a phenomenological approach in this context. The recommendations given, as expected, will shed light for the promoters on how to escape the consequences of their actions, and it also encourages those who are determined to maintain their integrity by refusing to engage in these unethical business practices.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: Proverbs 11 warns that those who engage in unethical business practices will eventually face the wrath of God, which may be expressed through their exposure to law enforcement agencies and the loss of all the riches that will not deliver them when they are caught.

Keywords: Proverbs 11; morality; Warri local government; business practices; markets.

Introduction

Business may well be the most common human activity, so God cares deeply about how we conduct our business. Many proverbs address honesty in all forms of business – buying, selling, negotiating, transacting and working. All of these depend on trust. Deceit in business causes many people to suffer. In fact, the world's economies and all our livelihoods depend in large measure on truthfulness, honesty and fair dealings in the market (Voice 2012:1). Many inhabitants of Warri believe that one cannot make it big in business without engaging in dishonest gains. Most business sectors in Warri have been strongly affected by using fakes for originals, so that much gain can be realised. Manufacturing, construction, health, oil, as well as information and communication technologies (ICT) have been affected. For example, someone who uses chalk, moulds it and sells it in the market may be making millions, or someone who sells fake products in the market at the price of an original product feeling satisfied with those unethical and dishonest business practices may be making millions. The Consumer Protection Council (2014) corroborates that these dishonest practices are exploitative and dangerous to human life, which impacts negatively the organisation, customer satisfaction and the economy as a whole.

Selling substandard goods or services or purchasing counterfeit materials for contracts for personal or group gain is against ethical norms and laws. When the concept of ethics is looked into, it connotes 'with the morality of human actions' (Omogbe 1993:3). For Ogechukwu, Ayozie and Ayozie (2011), ethics 'concerns itself with consideration of right and wrong conduct in the practical affairs of men'. When the wrong products are used to gain dishonest profit in whatever sector of livelihood in Warri, that connotes unethical business practices. On the other hand, when the original product is given for the price it was professed to be, that becomes an ethical business practice. Thus, business ethics involves the study of both moral evaluation of business and the

Note: Special Collection: African Hermeneutics.

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standard applied in judgement of business decisions, behaviour and instructions as morally right or wrong (Kotler 1991).

The consequences of fake products, such as the sale of fake medical drugs, fake foods, fake motor parts and fake building materials cannot be overstated. It has led to increased deaths because of poisoning, building collapses and even increased road accidents. The government has adopted many approaches to curbing this anomaly. For instance, the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) found injection water that had expired in 2011, Analgin and other injectables, some Pakistani unregistered products and other banned products in Warri shops, even Analgin products which were banned over 10 years ago by the federal government, and many people have died by using Analgin (Premium Times 2015). But this challenge has continued in Warri, with its attendant consequences for the people. The author felt that Proverbs 11:1–6 provides a moral–theological analysis of ethical and unethical business practices and the consequences for the aggressor. This study adopted the literal analysis of text through a phenomenological approach in the context.

Proverbs 11:1–6 discusses the right and wrong ethics in any business practice. The pericope warns against dishonest scales, referring to them as an abomination to the Lord. Also, to ‘the degree that God condemns the dishonest who defraud, to the same degree He has delight in just and fair business practices’ (Guzik 2020:1). The pericope sketches that God hates cheating in the marketplace; he loves it when business is above board. Thus, ‘virtue is its own reward; vice its own punishment’ (McCreesh 1990:458). God loves integrity. A person with ‘integrity behaves ethically and does the right thing, even behind closed doors’ (Waters 2021). Someone with integrity does not get involved in false weights and measures, and all fraudulent practices in commerce and dealing which are forbidden by the Lord and are abominable to him, as being injurious to the estates and properties of men (Salem Media Group 2022). It is this pericope that was used to shed light on the unethical business practices ravaging Warri in Delta State. Warri is one of the local government areas in Delta State, southern Nigeria. It lies along the Warri River in the western Niger River delta, 30 miles (48 km) upstream from the port of Forcados on the Bight of Benin (The Editors of Encyclopaedia 2011).

Firstly, this study first carried out a literal analysis of Proverbs 11:1–6. Secondly, the study explored the themes in the pericope. Thirdly, the contemporary unethical business practices in Warri are explored (see Table 1 for informants’ details), and thereafter, the themes in the pericope are used as a lens in confronting the challenges posed by these unethical business practices.

Understanding Proverbs 11

The book of Proverbs constitutes the earliest documentary deposit of Israel’s Wisdom Movement now extant, and it is the result of a long process of growth. The book seems to

contain at least eight documentary units (Rylaarsdam 1976:444). In the book of Proverbs, Chapters 10–22 encourage:

Ethical reflection not only because they are designed to do so, but also because they are so different from the proverbs we are used to. Chapters 1–9 set chs. 10–22 in the context of building our lives according to God’s wisdom by focusing on character development with the view to making that a bedrock for societal engagements. Each proverb shows us a facet of human action and divine sovereignty. (Clifford 2015:242)

Proverbs is the earliest literary deposit of Israel’s wisdom. It has companion volumes in Job and Ecclesiastes, and these books, together with a few Psalms (e.g. 1, 49, 73), are classified by scholars as wisdom literature (Aitken 1986:1). The ‘Proverbs of Solomon’:

[Form] a prologue to 10.1–22.16 and a statement such as that in the rest of 10.1 might have continued this introduction to the collection as a whole. It transpires, however, that several sub-collections of sayings in chapters 10–15 are introduced by an implicit exhortation to attentiveness of this kind, usually accompanied (as this one is) by sample sayings of other types. (Goldingay 1994:82)

Yuasa (1891) lamented that:

It is well known to most students of the Bible that the present arrangement of the collections of material in the Book of Proverbs is unsystematic and that many attempts have been made to discover an order for the two great collections of Solomonian proverbs. The two collections make up the body of the book: the first embraces chapters ten to twenty-two; the second, chapters twenty-five to twenty-nine. Only a very few are found outside of these two collections. (p. 147)

Proverbs – although of diverse origins – reflects a reasonably uniform picture of honour and shame. There is an inherent conservatism to any educational system and wisdom teaching is not excluded (Domeris 1995:151). Nouwen (1975:10) suggested that anyone who is striving to live a life in the Spirit faces three areas that need to be addressed: the relationship with ourselves, the relationship with others and the relationship with God.

Proverbs 11 explained that dishonesty in business disgusts the eternal, but fair dealing delights him (Voice Bible 2012). Proverbs 11 begins with an admonition that God is outraged over dishonest business and cheating. In fact, the word used for ‘disgusts’ in other translations is as follows: abhors, hates, is disgusted by, abominates or detests, and so on. God cannot stand dishonesty, cheating or false business practices. On the other hand, he takes delight in those who are honest and do business in a trustworthy manner (Slimm 2019). Integrity is built by defeating the temptation to be dishonest; humility grows when one refuses to be prideful and endurance develops every time one rejects the temptation to give up (Warren 2022).

Understanding the unethical business practices in Proverbs 11:1–6

The wisdom corpus was not silent on ethical and unethical business practices. Although the wisdom corpus has

aphorisms that connote honesty in business, Proverbs 11:1–6 provides a lucid roadmap. According to Rahman (2008), unethical business practices can destroy a business's reputation and possibly lead to legal troubles.

Honesty and dishonesty in business (v. 1)

Proverbs 11 indeed employs:

Types, usually antithetically paired, to describe behaviour and its consequences – the wise and the foolish, the righteous and the wicked, the lazy and the diligent, the rich and the poor. (Clifford 2015:246)

In verse 1, God hates fraud (מַרְמָה) any kind. Hebrew מַרְמָה means falsehood, fraud, dishonesty, deceit. In fact, anything gotten through dishonesty is an abomination to the Lord. The Lord loves שְׁלֵמָה [honest, just ways] (Davidson 1970:741). Proverbs 11:1 encourages honesty in business. In verse 1, God loves just (זָכוּת) weight. Hebrew שְׁלֵמָה could also mean accurate, whole, uncut, complete and full. Thus, a businessperson who is a child of God is called upon by the rhetor to ensure that they use accurate measures, without reducing anything. However, when a business owner reduces the content or quality of anything to make dishonest (מַרְמָה) gains, the Lord hates (תוֹעֵבָה) the action and the person. Hebrew תוֹעֵבָה means abomination, detestable thing, unclean. On the other hand, Hebrew מַרְמָה sees dishonest gains as deceit, treachery, falsehood, amongst others. Benson (2018) explained that 'the use of all false weights and measures in commerce is abomination to the Lord – Highly abominable to him, both because this wickedness is practised under a colour of justice and because it is destructive of human society and especially of the poor, whose patron the Lord declares himself to be'.

Integrity and unfaithfulness in business (v. 3)

The concept of reward cannot be removed from ethics. The 'heroic man is and must be blessed' (Cheyne & Black 1899:2454). The aphorist in verse 3 advises that the integrity (תְּהִלָּה) of the upright will guide them (תְּהַלֵּם). Hebrew תְּהִלָּה means innocent, upright, probity, good character, principled, ethical and even righteous. Integrity is 'the firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values, that is, incorruptibility' (Merriam-Webster 1994). Thus, someone who has integrity in his business dealings is not found wanting. He sells the right thing for the right price and not fake products for the price of the original. The aphorist insists that the man who displays integrity will be saved or guided from falling into misfortune. Hebrew תְּהַלֵּם is derived from the verb הָלַךְ which means to lead, attend, conduct, shepherd, direct, govern. This shows that God will be in charge of the day-to-day activities of a man with integrity. But the person who is unfaithful, is a fraud in any activity. To make fast gains, he hides the truth about an item or business deal. According to Ellicott (1890:n.p), fraudulent persons (literally, those who 'cover' a matter up) pervert the truth, thereby ruining their own characters (inasmuch as in time they can hardly distinguish right from wrong) and losing the favour of almighty God.

Consequences of dishonesty and unfaithfulness (vv. 4–6)

This structure mentions the consequences of dishonesty and unfaithfulness (vv. 4–6). In verse 4, riches attained through dishonest means will be gained (יִוָּצֵל) in full on the day of wrath. This type of gain is that of disgrace, destruction and bankruptcy. This entails that there is a day when evil and false business deals will be exposed, or one will face the consequences in one way or the other. It also indicates that dishonest financial gains may lead one to poverty when they are caught – because every day for the thief and one day for the owner of the house. Verse 11:4b calls the day that the person will be caught the day of wrath (עֲבָרָה), which is also a day of fury, anger, rage and outburst for the dishonest person involved. As for the faithful man, his righteousness (צְדָקָה) honesty, righteous acts) will deliver him from death (מָוֶת). Hebrew מָוֶת could also mean 'plague'. This entails that when repercussions start befalling those who engage in unrighteous and unethical acts, the righteous man is delivered (תִּצָּל). Hebrew תִּצָּל could also mean snatch away, escape, take away, rescue, spare and preserve. According to Gill (1980) 'riches profit not in the day of wrath for the fraudulent person may be the day when God takes away the soul, and summons to judgment and brings to it'. Whilst in Psalms, the righteous are often equated with the poor and oppressed, crying for deliverance. In Proverbs, the deliverance of the righteous is swift and sure (11:8, 21, 12:13). He will enjoy success, wealth and honour in this life (Rylaarsdam 1976:450).

In verse 5, the path of the person who does the right things is always straight (יָשָׁר – right, smooth, good, pleasing). Thus, the honest man does not engage in anything that will jeopardise the health and livelihood of others in the name of making a profit and gaining fame. In verse 5b, the wicked person will fall (יִפֹּל) because of his wickedness (רָעוּת). Wicked actions make one guilty and a partaker of evil-doing. It shows that the perpetrator has a fault. Hebrew יִפֹּל shows the final end of wicked people. Wicked people who engage in dishonest gain will be abandoned in the day of trouble. They may be attacked by victims. They will be inferior to their *a priori* personality. In fact, they will be wasted away. Dishonest people fail to be נְקִי [clean, blameless and innocent] (v. 21) (Kohlenberger 1987:529).

In verse 6, the conclusion of the whole matter is made. The righteous people who do not engage in dishonest business deals for dishonest gains will not fall into any predicament, but those who think they are wise but try to follow shortcuts in making wealth will soon realise that they were short-sighted and without wisdom. When the consequences of their actions start befalling them, the unfaithful will not find anyone to deliver them because they will be trapped (יִלְכְּדוּ) in their downfall and sorrows. Hebrew יִלְכְּדוּ is derived from לָכַד, which means to capture, seize, take into captivity and enslave. In verse 6, in times of trouble, the נְקִי shall deliver sincere people, but the unfaithful filled with deceit (בָּגַד) shall be exposed, caught, captured and seized. Any evil done

by anyone shall be exposed. The 'common message is that righteousness leads to success and wickedness to destruction' (Hildebrandt 1988:207).

Having given a sketch of the aphorisms contained in the pericope, the next section brings the context into discourse, so as to weave the text and context with an African hermeneutical framework.

Unethical business practices in Warri

Warri is a local government area located in Delta State, southern Nigeria. Warri is the second capital of Delta State after Asaba, and 'a key transportation and industrial spot. The population of the city is close to 0.5 million. There are a few large oil refinery stations located near the city' (Latlong 2022:1). It is a rich oil-producing region, which attracts many people from all over Nigeria, especially white men employed by oil companies such as Shell, Total, Mobil and Extravos, amongst others. Also, there is a lot of money in circulation in Warri. Thus, in order to maximise profit, many illicit activities are performed. Many fake products are sold and many fake materials are used. Fake electrical materials are used to wire buildings in Warri. In a personal communication with Irikefe (2022), these fake electrical materials sold for the price of the original may be responsible for the number of fire breaks caused by electrical faults in Warri. Thus, their business practices are highly unethical. This is in line with Kalusi's (1996:15–16) assertion that ethics deals with the goodness of human action.

Unfortunately, healthcare is not spared. People sell fake drugs in pharmacy shops. In a personal communication with Ogenemine (2022) moulded chalks are sold as drugs. People take these fake drugs and their sickness increases. This issue is highly troubling. Many fake appliances are sold in markets such as Effurun market, close to the airport road. In a personal communication with Eserovwe (2022), there are instances where an appliance will be bought and taken home only to discover that it was a fake, and when one comes back to report it, the customer cannot find that particular person again. There are situations where fake computers and their

accessories, televisions and phones are sold at the prices at which the originals should have been sold. These sellers have a way of deceiving buyers into believing that the products they are selling are original.

The issue of fake roads being built in the different parts of Warri cannot be underestimated. There are several contracts available and contractors go as far as simply pouring laterite on the road and running away. In a personal communication with Onogaganmue (2022), the author learned that the remaining money has been shared amongst those who know about the contract. Also, in a situation where the contractors even used tar, they used less tar simply to save money for themselves, and after one or two rains, potholes could be seen all over the road. Within days, the contractor boys or those privileged to know about the award of the contract could be seen driving expensive cars, which investigations reveal were gotten from the gains made from the usage of substandard materials in the construction of the road. Justina (2022), in a personal communication, reveals that it is the norm amongst contractors, especially those who serve as the link between the government and the executor of the contract.

There have also been cases of market traders' exploitation of customers. For example, a basin used to sell garri (cassava flour) is loaded with leather, then garri is poured on the top to make it look as if it is a full basin of garri. In a personal communication with Akpobume (2022), the author learned that he bought a bucket of garri, took it home and discovered he bought half a basin when he paid for a full basin. When the person returns to complain, he or she is tagged with all sorts of names and even beaten by this group of traders who used false balances to market their products.

Reasons for unethical business practices

Some reasons have been given why marketers and businesspeople exploit people in Warri. Firstly, it is the quest to make dishonest gain. Business owners usually say that the essence of their business is to make a profit. They see any available method to make a profit as acceptable. This is the reason some go as far as buying fake products from China and selling them in Warri. This is the reason that some private hospital owners administer expired drugs to their patients, all in the name of making a profit. In a personal communication with Edidjana (2022), the author learned that she was admitted to the hospital for complications because of the fake Panadol she bought from a pharmaceutical shop in Efurun. Also, there are cases where contractors use fake materials in the construction of roads, bridges and hospitals, which deteriorate within a few months. For instance, Akwaugo (2022) in a personal communication lamented that the road from Shagolo to Ekpan was given to a contractor who used fake materials and the result was a road with more potholes than it initially had. These are all methods of making dishonest gains.

TABLE 1: List of informants.

S/N	Name	Town	Sex	Occupation
1.	Ogenemine	Warri	Male	Business
2.	Eserovwe	Warri	Male	Business
3.	Onogaganmue	Warri	Male	Civil servant
4.	Justina	Warri	Female	Business
5.	Akpobume	Warri	Female	Business
6.	Edidjana	Warri	Female	Teacher
7.	Akwaugo	Warri	Male	Teacher
8.	Irikefe	Warri	Male	Business
9.	Sapele	Warri	Male	Business
10.	Uvo	Warri	Male	Civil servant
11.	Ighofovwe	Warri	Male	Business
12.	Fegiro	Warri	Female	Civil servant
13.	Samuel	Warri	Male	Civil servant

Secondly, lack of integrity pushes honest people into unethical business practices. Some people were honest in their dealings, but when they saw the prosperity of those who engaged in some of these unethical business practices, they were forced to rescind their decision to live a life of honesty and integrity. Irikefe (2022) in a personal communication, said that initially he was sincere and open in his business, but he discovered that he was poorer than his contemporaries. He further mentioned that his contemporaries told him that if he continued to maintain this honest lifestyle, he may die poor, with nothing to show for it.

Thirdly, the pressure on some people makes them engage in unethical business practices. Sometimes it can be family pressures, when one is obliged to take care of some members of the family. Another time is peer pressure, where one's friends usually ask him for money, knowing full well that he is a contractor. These issues are genuinely traumatising, both psychologically and emotionally.

Influence of Proverbs 11:1–6 on unethical business practices in Warri

The rhetor in Proverbs 11:1–6 lectures his son on many themes. However, these themes are underestimated in our present society. In the words of Newsom (2002:142), the 'privileged axis of communication' lies between father and son, whilst the reader may locate herself or himself in the character of the silent son (Newsom 2002:142). A translation of biblical proverbs for the Nigerian context could be 'useful for teaching students who do not read Hebrew how to recover the network of meanings within the biblical text' (Fox 2001:207).

Unethical business practices as a reality

Proverbs 11:1 mentions the reality of people who engage in unethical business practices. This is true of the situation in Warri. One would have thought that the existence of multinational oil companies would have ameliorated the issues of sharp business practices found in other states in Nigeria, but the reverse has been the case. In a personal communication with Uvo (2022), it was revealed that there is hardly any market one could go to in Warri without fake balances, that is, fake products sold for the price of the original. This is because it is very difficult to differentiate. The pericope specifically informs the audience that using a false balance and claiming a price for a true balance is unethical and God frowns on it. This shows that business owners who engage in unethical business conduct are incurring the anger of God. According to Ighofovwe (2022) in a personal communication, it is better to incur the wrath of God than to die poor in the name of integrity. He likes to feel that riches make a person human, forgetting that God's wrath could come at any time. For nature itself, which is God's creation, will fight at the right time. If one seeks evil in order to do evil, one shall also 'find' it – it will come to them. The evil a person plans will come back to him or her (Hale 2007).

Integrity and ethics in business

Proverbs 11:3 emphasises the importance of integrity. It has to be reckoned that integrity is a person's commitment to be honest and fair conduct in any walk of life and it describes a person's level of honesty, moral commitment and willingness to do what is right (White 2021:1). One who has integrity will never fall into the hands of law enforcement agencies, because they would hardly be found wanting. Their uprightness guides them. Business owners who engage in the right ethical practices in the long run receive more customers and make longer-lasting profits. This is because friends and associates will be recommending this business owner. On the other hand, Uvo (2022) in a personal communication relates that 'unfaithful people, that is, dishonest people, run into problems and challenges'. Businessmen and women who fraudulently sell expired drugs or fake products as originals usually have themselves to blame. They will be apprehended by government agencies tasked with tracking down people selling counterfeit or expired food, drugs or materials. Properties are confiscated and their shops closed, as well as the attendant consequences of liquidation of their accounts by the government or its agencies. According to Fegiro (2022) in a personal communication, his uncle, who was a rich man, engaged in the sale of fake drugs and was caught by NAFDAC; his goods were burnt, and he is in the village now. Even the righteous receive their due (their punishment) on earth; even Moses and David were punished (Nm 20:11–12; 2 Sm 12:10). How much more, then, will the ungodly be punished? (Hale 2007:943).

Consequences of unethical business practices

The rhetor in verse 4 lamented that the amount of money one has made from unethical business practices cannot exonerate him on the day that the long arm of the law catches up with him. These are the tenets of natural law. This is because God himself made the natural law. Natural law follows the law of karma. Karma is the spiritual principle of cause and effect (Encyclopedia Britannica 2012). Contributing further, the theory of karma includes both the action and the intent behind that action. Not only is one affected by past karma, one creates new karma whenever one acts with intent – good or bad (Reichenbach 1990). People who partake in unethical business practices in Warri, according to the law of karma, will surely meet their Waterloo someday, no matter how long it takes. The riches they have made through sharp practices will elude them. A personal communication with Irikefe (2022) revealed that some people in Warri who engaged in selling fake pharmaceuticals and fake electrical wires had their shops confiscated; their properties were towed to the bush and burnt, and their lives returned to zero. However, in verse 4b, there is considerable hope for business owners who do the right thing. A personal communication with Samuel (2022) explained that those people who were given the contract of making roads and used original materials were awarded more contracts in Warri. This includes contracts for the construction of airport road in Warri South and those close to the Shagolo areas of Warri local government areas.

The aphorist in verse 5 and verse 6 reiterated the importance of doing the right thing at the expense of the wrong thing. The aphorist admonished his audience, including business owners, to shun every wrong method of making dishonest gains, which he characterises as wickedness. In lamenting this anomaly as it relates to fake pharmaceuticals, Eserovwe (2022) in a personal communication adumbrates that 'it is wickedness because the fake drugs will be taken by a human being, which leads to more complications'. Some people in Warri who have taken these fake drugs have developed more troubling health challenges. In order for one to have dominion, to rule, be a prince and to make oneself a ruler tomorrow, the rhetor admonishes his audience to follow the right path that leads to life and avoid the wrong path that leads to destruction and punishment from God. Because of the people's covenantal violations, the Lord warned that judgement would come on them (Zuck 1991:309).

Having analysed the issue of false scales and balances going on in Warri town in Delta State, Nigeria, this study provides a roadmap as a probable solution to this anomaly in the light of the pericope under discourse.

Recommendations

The import of Proverbs 11:1–6 towards addressing the victors and the victims of unethical business practices in Warri local government area cannot be underestimated. From the aphorisms in the pericope, the following recommendations were made:

1. Proverbs 11 makes it clear that anyone who engages in unethical business practices is directly making himself an enemy of God. Business owners, contractors and sales personnel should understand that when one engages in fraudulent activities to make dishonest gains, the person becomes an enemy of God and should be prepared to face the consequences.
2. The pericope goes on to say that no matter how much money one makes from fraudulent business ventures, it will all vanish because law enforcement will eventually catch up with the person. Even if they are caught, death will visit everyone, and the person will reap what he has sown on earth.
3. Proverbs 11 mentions the value of avoiding cheating in business. People who decide not to join hands in carrying out fraudulent business activities are sure to get more customers and they will not be disgraced on the day that others who engage in ethical business practices are caught and their properties and money confiscated and frozen, respectively.
4. There is the need for government agencies to increase their level of supervision of business premises and markets in Warri. This will, at some point, scare promoters of fake or adulterated products from bringing the same to the market.
5. Furthermore, officers of agencies such as the Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON) and the NAFDAC should refuse bribes from those caught cutting corners in business. Also, officers who are caught should be disgraced so that others will be, at some point, afraid of joining them to commit the act.

Conclusion

Proverbs 11:1–6 practically informs the audience to strive to maintain good ethics in business engagement. It also warns against the act of using fake weights to make higher, dishonest gains. The consequences for engaging in ethical and unethical business practices were sketched. Those who engage in fraudulent business activities have made themselves enemies of God and will face the consequences that come with it, including the destruction of their finances and even life. The aphorisms in Proverbs 11:1–6 are important in providing a moral–theological analysis of the unethical business practices in Warri, a very rich oil region in Delta State, Nigeria. Warri is known for fake products and services to the extent that it has become the norm. The themes from the close reading of the pericope are sure to speak anew to the challenges bedevilling Warri.

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

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