Avarice and Socioeconomic Disparity in Òsun State, Nigeria: A Critical Reading of 1 Timothy 6:10

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Abstract

This paper explores the Socioeconomic and moral crises in Òsun State, Nigeria, through the exegetical lens of Pauline economic ethics in 1 Timothy 6:10. By analyzing five key Greek terms—philarguria, rhiza, kakōn, oregomai, and odynais—this study establishes a conceptual link between avarice and its destructive external manifestations within Òsun state. The study adopted the qualitative research design and the research methods were historical and exegetical. The sample population for the study was Òsun State. The sampling technique was purposeful sampling. Data were gathered through primary sources which were the oral interviews and participant observations, and the secondary sources, which were The UBS Greek New Testament Greek lexicons, exegetical tools, internet and journals. The findings reveal that the modern "love of money" is structurally manifested across certain distinct domains, such as extreme violent crimes, digital financial crimes, institutionalized public corruption. The study argues that these crises represent a deep-seated moral failure where avarice has supplanted ethical boundaries, resulting in severe communal fragmentation, public mistrust, and stunted regional development. As a remedy to this systemic rot, the paper proposes the Pauline models from the 1 Timothy 6:10 . Ultimately, the paper concludes that *"love of money"* (*philarguria*) not as a minor personal flaw but as a generative root (*rhiza*) of systemic evil (*kakōn*), the Pauline text accurately diagnoses how unchecked avarice externalizes into devastating societal pathologies in Òsun state.

Keywords: avarice, socioeconomic, Òsun state, Nigeria, 1 Tim. 6:10

Introduction

Avarice, is an inordinate desire for worldly possessions. It is therefore not only if he a man steals that he can be described as avaricious, but also if he covets the possessions of another or if inordinately attached to his own. The various demonstrations of avarice are betrayal, deceit, falsehood, vexation, perjury, violence, insensitivity, cruelty and hardness of heart (Scribd 2026).[1] Avarice commonly understood as excessive greed for wealth or material possessions, is a timeless vice that has plagued individuals and societies throughout history of which Òsun state, Nigeria is not exempted. This plague has eaten across religious, *philos*ophical, and moral traditions, and contributes hugely to undermining ethical behaviour and social harmony. In the Christian environment, one of the succinct and profound statement directed to avarice is 1 Timothy 6:10: "For the love of money is the root of all evil…" This verse serves as a stern warning from the Apostle Paul to Timothy, cautioning against the spiritual and moral dangers of allowing avarice eclipse godly living.

The relevance of this warning is especially apparent in Òsun state, Nigeria, where, just like other states, avarice appears to dominate political, corporate, religious sectors of the society. Òsun state is one of the states in Nigeria, abundantly blessed with natural resources and human capital, continues to grapple with severe Socioeconomic challenges such as homicide, fraud, cybercrime, armed robbery, banditry, corruption, poverty, etc. At the heart of many of these issues lies the unchecked pursuit of wealth, often at the expense of contentment, accountability, and the well-being of the populace.

Regretfully, the state's rich cultural legacy and human resources haven't made it any easier to deal with extreme socioeconomic inequality. Economic evaluations usually ignore the moral and ethical problems that underlie these structural failings, foremost among them being avarice, while attributing the disparities to macroeconomic instability, monocultural revenue dependency, and systemic governance flaws. A culture of corruption, misappropriation of public funds, and exploitation has been nurtured by the state's political elite and residents' unfettered desire of wealth and love of money. The scriptural caution in 1 Timothy 6:10 that "the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil" is explicitly reflected in this moral decline. Nonetheless, there is a crucial void in the current conversation. A large portion of the current literature on 1 Timothy 6:10 is still limited to homiletical, exclusively ecclesiastical, or abstract theological views that are disconnected from actual socioeconomic situations. On the other hand, secular sociological and economic research on Òsun State frequently ignores the spiritual and ethical aspects that drive homicide, fraud, banditry, robbery, and other crimes in favour of treating them as strictly mathematical or political problems. As a result, biblical-ethical frameworks are not used as a diagnostic instrument to analyse and deal with the particular material realities of avarice in the state. The church and the state remain socioeconomic, the ethical roots of avarice remain ignored, and the socioeconomic gap keeps growing in the absence of a critical, contextual interpretation that connects the text of 1 Timothy 6:10 with the socioeconomic environment of Òsun State.

A Critical Reading of 1 Timothy 6:10

In Greek: ῥίζα γὰρ πάντων τῶν κακῶν ἐστιν ἡ φιλαργυρία, ἧς τινες ὀρεγόμενοι ἀπεπλανήθησαν ἀπὸ τῆς πίστεως καὶ ἑαυτοὺς περιέπειραν ὀδύναις πολλαῖς (Newman 2007, 433).[2]

In English: For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (KJV).

Keywords Studies

Avarice (*Philarguria* – φιλαργυρία)

In the nominative case, *philarguria* (φιλαργυρία) is a feminine, single noun. It explains "love of money" and is formed from the root words *philos* (φίλος, "love") and *argurion* (ἀργύριον, "silver" or "money") (Wallace 1996, 265).[3] *Philarguria* is derogatory by tone, indicating an unhealthy, habitual devotion to material gain, in contrast to neutral terminology for riches. According to Fee, *philarguria* is an indication of a disproportionate avarice that results in financial ruin and spiritual deterioration (Fee 1988, 139).[4]

Root (*Rhiza* (ῥίζα)

The Greek word ῥίζα is a feminine noun, nominative singular. It appears in the verse

as the subject complement, indicating that the love of money is being described with a root. The word is used metaphorically, not to indicate a literal plant root, but rather a source, origin, or foundational cause (Louw and Eugene 1988, 585).[5] Fee emphasizes that *rhiza* is intentionally singular, suggesting that Paul views the love of money not as the sole root of evil, but as a significant one (Fee 1988, 139).[6] Keener, explains that the word "root" resonated with Greco-Roman audiences as well, particularly in moral *philos*ophy, where vices were often seen as having roots that must be cut off to ensure moral health (Keener 1993, 617),[7] as supported by Mounce (Mounce 2000, 348).[8]

Evil (*Kakōn* (κακῶν)

The word *κακῶν* is the genitive plural neuter form of the Greek adjective *kakos* (κακός), meaning "evil," "bad," or "harmful." In the statement, it appears as part of the phrase *ῥίζα γὰρ πάντων τῶν κακῶν* ("for the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils"), indicating that avarice gives rise to diverse forms of wickedness (Thayer 1995, 320).[9] Keener supports this interpretation, asserting that the phrase "all kinds of evils" reflects common Jewish wisdom literature, where avarice is viewed as a gateway to moral decay (Keener 1993, 617).[10]

Desire (Oregomenoi (ὀρεγόμενοι)

The Greek term ὀρεγόμενοι is the present participle, middle/passive, nominative masculine plural of the verb ὀρέγομαι, which means "to reach out," "to desire," or "to long for" (Strong 1890, 3713).[11] In this text, ὀρεγόμενοι describes individuals who actively and persistently crave wealth, a desire that leads them astray from faith and into spiritual ruin. The use of the present participle suggests a continuous and habitual action. The middle voice emphasizes a self-motivated yearning; an internal longing rooted in one's will and emotional attachment. Mounce interprets ὀρεγόμενοι as a compulsive, inward drive that becomes a destructive force (Mounce 2000, 344).[12]

Grief (Odunais (ὀδύναις)

The word ὀδύναις is the dative plural form of the feminine noun ὀδύνη (ὀδύνη), which denotes intense physical or emotional pain, often translated as "grief," "torment," or "agony." Paul uses this term as a grave spiritual and emotional consequence: "...and pierced themselves through with many griefs." The dative plural usage here expresses the result of the destructive craving for money: those who love money not only deviate from faith but end up surrounded by or suffering from many agonies (Thayer 1995, 200).[13] The noun ὀδύνη originally referred to physical pain or suffering, particularly in medical or battlefield. However, by New Testament usage, it had also come to signify mental anguish, distress, and deep emotional torment. The Septuagint (LXX) and other Hellenistic literature use it to express deep grief, such as that of a woman in childbirth or a person overwhelmed by sorrow. In 1 Timothy 6:10, ὀδύναις metaphorically describes the emotional and spiritual torment that follows the pursuit of wealth. It is not a mere sadness but a profound inner suffering resulting from self-inflicted wounds of the soul—moral collapse, loss of purpose, betrayal of faith, and ultimate regret.

Evaluation

In 1 Timothy 6:10, Paul offers a layered theological critique of greed, diagnosing the "love of money" (*philarguria*) not as a minor fault, but as a deep-seated root (*rhiza*) from which many manifestations of evil (*kakōn*) sprout. Through key Greek terms like *oregomai* and *odynais*, the text warns that the danger lies not in wealth itself, but in a

disordered, idolatrous affection for it that supplants God. Scholars like Mounce, Towner, and Keener emphasize that this obsession leads to spiritual disaster, soul-destroying obsession, and communal apostasy—a timeless warning highly relevant to the contemporary Òsun context.

Avarice and Socioeconomic Disparity in Òsun State

In Òsun state, Nigeria, avarice has permeated various levels of society, resulting in alarming rates of homicide, fraud, kidnapping for ritual or monetary purposes, cybercrime, armed robbery, banditry and corruption. These manifestations of greed not only affect individuals but also destabilize the economic and social fabric of the nation, contributing to the breakdown of security, trust, and economic growth.

1. **Economic cultism and political thuggery:** Cultism in Òsun State has transitioned from an academic subculture into an economic survival strategy. Youths join these gangs to secure scarce resources, extort local businesses, or act as mercenary political thugs for the elite (Oyewo and Agbonluai 2026).[14] This violent competition for patronage routinely results in fatalities, as seen in the recent killing of two undergraduates in Ede, and the arrest of 12 suspected cultists across Iree, Iragbiji, and Osogbo for violent extortion (Sahara 2025).[15]
2. **The depravity of ritual killings:** When unchecked avarice drives individuals completely beyond basic moral boundaries, it manifests as ritual killing—the ultimate depravity where human life is sacrificed for supernatural wealth. Fueled by a materialistic culture that glamorizes sudden riches, this trend disproportionately targets vulnerable women and children (Hanafi 2022).[16] Scholarly and journalistic reports highlight a growing crisis of greedy youths turning to money rituals, resulting in a trail of disappearances that tears families apart and erodes communal trust (Ajayi 2020, 77).[17]
3. **Judicial evidence of moral decay:** This modern idolatry of money is epitomized by high-profile criminal cases within the state. A definitive example is the conviction of hotel owner Rahmon Adedoyin and his staff for the ritual-associated murder of OAU postgraduate student Timothy Adegoke in Ile-Ife. Furthermore, Òsun State Police Command records consistently feature the arrest of syndicates caught in possession of human body parts (Bamigbola 2022).[18]
4. **Fraud:** Within the theological framework of 1 Timothy 6:10, fraud and institutional corruption serve as pervasive expressions of the "love of money" (*philarguria*), functioning as a toxic root (*rhiza*) that stunts national growth and breeds public mistrust. This greed-driven financial crime—which routinely places Nigeria on Transparency International's list of highly corrupt nations—is vividly illustrated by the high-profile case of Oba Joseph Olugbenga Oloyede, the Apetumodu of Ipetumodu in Òsun State. Driven by an insatiable craving (*oregomai*) for material wealth, the monarch was convicted in a United States federal court for masterminding a $4.2 million COVID-19 relief fraud and money laundering scheme (Bamigbola 2026).[19] Upon receiving the certified judgment, Òsun State Governor Ademola Adeleke formally deposed the monarch to protect the integrity of the traditional stool (Adeniji 2026).[20] This striking case offers empirical proof of Paul's ancient diagnostic: when individuals succumb to a disordered affection for riches, their unchecked avarice compromises sacred institutions, sacrifices ancestral honour, and plunges communities into systemic shame and moral decay.
5. **Youth cybercrime and societal decay:** Driven by systemic vulnerabilities like high youth unemployment and a culture that glamorizes overnight wealth, cybercrime (*Yahoo-Yahoo*) has become a rampant Socioeconomic crisis in Òsun State (Ojo 2025, 1-10).[21] This prevalent

internet fraud represents a modern manifestation of unchecked craving (*oregomai*), directly tarnishing Nigeria's international reputation and eroding societal morality.

6. **Enforcement and empirical impact:** To combat this epidemic, the EFCC (Ibadan Zone) routinely conducts high-profile raids in Òsun State hotbeds like Osogbo, Ile-Ife, and Ilesa. These operations consistently result in the conviction of dozens of young fraudsters and the asset forfeiture of millions in illicit funds, exotic cars, and properties. Ultimately, this widespread cybercrime compromises national security, destabilizes local small enterprises, and serves as empirical proof of the moral breakdown and societal unrest warned against in 1 Timothy 6:10 (Adebayo 2021, 45-63).[22]
7. **Avarice-driven armed robbery:** Driven by extreme Socioeconomic hardship and a destructive cultural pressure for rapid wealth accumulation, armed robbery has spiked significantly across Nigeria (NBS 2022, 88).[23] In Òsun State, this externalized avarice (*philarguria*) manifests as violent invasions of homes, banks, highways, and businesses, routinely resulting in homicides, trauma, and widespread community breakdown (Okonkwo 2021, 117).[24]
8. **Empirical arrests and economic toll:** The physical reality of this avarice is documented by the Òsun State Police Command; a notable example includes the dismantling of an interstate armed robbery syndicate whose arrested members explicitly confessed to being motivated by greed and wealth accumulation (Bamigbola 2024).[25] Ultimately, these violent crimes do not just claim innocent lives—they create a climate of fear that deters foreign investment and tourism, crippling the regional economy and validating the profound societal agony (*odynais*) warned against in 1 Timothy 6:10.
9. **Banditry:** The epidemic of banditry and kidnapping across Nigeria's northern and central regions offers a profound structural illustration of *ῥίζα* (root) as a generative source of societal evil (*kakōn*). Defying ideological or political motives, modern banditry has evolved from localized agitation into a highly coordinated, lucrative economic industry driven entirely by avarice (*philarguria*) (Adejuwon 2020, 102).[26] These criminal syndicates operate as profit-maximizing business ventures, exploiting rural vulnerabilities through strategic cattle rustling, highway robbery, arms trafficking, and strategic abductions for ransom (Chukwuma 2019, 57).[27]
10. **Institutionalized corruption and political avarice:** Within the framework of 1 Timothy 6:10, grand-scale public corruption is the direct behavioral consequence of *philarguria*, where a soul-destroying obsession with wealth drives leaders to subvert ethical boundaries. This is empirically evidenced by Nigeria's poor ranking on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (150 out of 180 in 2023) and local crises like the multi-billionnaira forensic audits into diverted infrastructure and borehole projects in Òsun State. This systematic looting sacrifices public trust, cripples' human development, and leaves critical sectors like healthcare and education collapsing (Achebe 1984, 1).[28]
11. **The politician-bandit nexus and structural agony:** Political avarice actively blurs the lines between statecraft and criminality. Some politicians and security personnel collude with or sponsor violent bandit syndicates through arms supply, immunity, and financial protection to secure vested interests (Usman 2021, 134).[29] This collusion creates a dangerous, compounding cycle where elite greed feeds grassroots violence, directly yielding the profound societal agony (*odynais*) of regional displacement and national insecurity.

Pauline Antidote from 1 Timothy 6:10 to Socioeconomic Disparity in Òsun

The economic ethics of 1 Timothy 6:10 provide a potent framework for addressing systemic Socioeconomic disparity in Òsun State by diagnosing systemic inequality as

a heart-level crisis of greed and insatiability (*philarguria*). While Paul's original letter addressed a first-century community where financial survival and social status were deeply intertwined, his ancient diagnostic remains intensely relevant to the modern Òsun context, which is defined by civil service dependency, severe youth unemployment, and a stark divide between the political elite and ordinary citizens. Consequently, the text establishes that the Pauline antidote to this disparity is not merely a call for personal piety, but an immediate, community-level framework for social equity that demands a radical shift from destructive material pursuit to active economic justice and contentment.

1. **Contentment:** Within the theological framework of 1 Timothy 6:10, contentment is weaponized not as a passive mindset, but as an active moral shield and the ultimate cure for avarice (*philarguria*) (Keener 1993, 617).[30] Drawing on Jewish wisdom literature, the text frames internal dispositions as roots (*rhiza*) that bear matching societal fruit; where a lack of satisfaction allows greed to mature into destructive crimes (*kakōn*), true contentment anchors the soul and suffocates avarice at its source (Keener 1993, 678).[31] By acting as a spiritual guardrail for human desire (*oregomai*), a satisfied, God-centered life safely redirects the heart away from the idolatrous trap of materialism, effectively neutralizing the cascading cycle of economic desperation, moral decay, and communal fracturing.
2. **Accountability:** Within the framework of 1 Timothy 6:10, systemic accountability functions as the primary institutional tool to dismantle the "love of money" (*philarguria*), which inherently thrives on financial secrecy and hidden agendas. Because avarice acts as a destructive root (*rhiza*) that suffocates transparency within leadership, individual spiritual discipline must be reinforced by rigorous external oversight across government, business, and religious institutions (Mann 2013).[32] Implementing radical clarity and reciprocal transparency forces financial dealings into the light, leaving no dark corners for private greed to grow unchecked (Keener 1993, 678).[33] Ultimately, accountability serves as the administrative mechanism that digs out this institutionalized root, safeguarding collective wealth from private hoarding and redirecting it toward genuine Socioeconomic development for the common good.
3. **Enhancing anticorruption measures:** Nigeria's legal frameworks for combating corruption, such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) must be empowered with autonomy, adequate funding, and legal backing to function without political interference. According to Ribadu, the fight against corruption in Nigeria must move beyond rhetoric and be institutionalized through robust legal enforcement (Ribadu 2006, 28).[34] This anti-corruption measures are critical deterrent against avarice in governance and societal relations. Government at all levels must implement transparent budgeting, procurement, and reporting systems. The adoption of technologies such as the Open Government Data (OGD) initiative and digital audit platforms can expose corrupt practices in real-time and empower citizens to demand accountability. Transparency reduces the opportunities for avarice-driven exploitation of public funds. Creating secure channels for whistleblowing and rewarding those who expose corruption are necessary for sustained anti-avarice campaigns. As noted by Chukwuemeka, whistleblower protection not only aids accountability but strengthens democracy by placing the power of reform in the hands of the people (Chukwuemeka 2014, 144).[35] Civil society organizations must be involved as watchdogs and partners in governance. Reducing corruption through anti-avarice reforms encourages foreign investments, ensures better allocation of resources, and improves national productivity. As the World Bank highlights,

countries with lower corruption levels attract more development funds and economic partnerships (World Bank 2000, 37).[36]

4. **Expanding economic horizons and workforce opportunities:** It is worthy of note that on a systemic scale, periods of high unemployment can force individuals and societies to re-evaluate the true value of wealth, shifting priorities from relentless accumulation toward collaboration, sustainability, and personal fulfilment (Petitions 2026).[37] This therefore can also reduce the allure of illicit wealth accumulation. Supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can further stimulate economic growth and reduce poverty. Nigeria's economy has for decades remained heavily dependent on oil exports, making it vulnerable to global price shocks. This mono-economy limits employment opportunities, restricts income distribution, and fuels desperation among the youth. According to Adebayo, the over-reliance on oil revenue has stunted the growth of other sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and services, thereby aggravating unemployment and economic inequality (Adebayo 2013, 122).[38] A diversified economy reduces the concentration of wealth and power that often breeds avarice and corruption. Okonjo-Iweala states that a diversified economy fosters resilience, increases job opportunities, and reduces the pressure on individuals to accumulate wealth through illicit means (Okonjo-Iweala 2018, 89).[39]
5. **Active redirection:** The sobering climax of ὀδύναις demands more than passive agreement; it exposes the urgent need for an active redirection of human desire. Because the human heart naturally gravitates toward the cultural lie that wealth equals happiness, we must intentionally pivot away from this misplaced affection before avarice invites profound psychological and spiritual agony. In Òsun state, Nigerian context, this redirection must be aggressive and immediate. The catastrophic momentum of unchecked hunger for riches—which routinely overrides ethical values and drives individuals into political corruption, cybercrime, and ritual killings—will not slow down on its own. It requires a deliberate, forceful turning away from the destructive cycle of pain. For the Church and society at large, 1 Timothy 6:10 is a battlefield command to actively hijack our desires, forcefully redirecting our focus toward an ethic of contentment, spiritual integrity, and moral stability.
6. **Holistic redirection and moral reorientation:** Confronting this widespread moral and economic decay requires a structural and spiritual pivot. Combatting the systemic fallout of avarice—from cybercrime to state-level embezzlement—demands robust judicial accountability, equitable economic opportunities, and a deep ethical reorientation. Ultimately, resolving this crisis requires a practical return to the biblical principles of 1 Timothy 6:10, intentionally uprooting the idolatrous love of money to foster a culture that prioritizes integrity and contentment over destructive material pursuit.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the economic ethics of 1 Timothy 6:10 offer a profound theological and diagnostic framework for understanding the contemporary Socioeconomic crises plaguing Òsun State, Nigeria. By framing the "love of money" (*philarguria*) not as a minor personal flaw but as a generative root (*rhiza*) of systemic evil (*kakōn*), the Pauline text accurately diagnoses how unchecked avarice externalizes into devastating societal pathologies. The empirical evidence examined across Òsun—ranging from the violent depravity of ritual homicides and cultism to the systemic rot of youth cybercrime and grand-scale public corruption—validates this ancient warning. These crimes are not merely legal infractions; they represent a deep-seated moral crisis

where the idolatry of wealth has eroded communal trust, crippled infrastructural development, and fractured the nation's social fabric.

To heal these self-inflicted wounds (*odynais*) and uproot this destructive avarice, Òsun state must move beyond surface-level legalism toward a holistic transformation that is both structural and spiritual. The Pauline antidote demands a dual approach: the cultivation of inward contentment to safely redirect and guard human desire (*oregomai*), and the enforcement of radical, outward institutional accountability to strip away the secrecy upon which greed relies. Ultimately, confronting Òsun State's Socioeconomic disparities requires a sincere moral reorientation. Only by replacing the destructive glamorization of avarice with an ethical commitment to integrity, contentment, and the common good can the society dismantle the toxic root of avarice and foster sustainable, equitable development.

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