

The Representation of Social Decay in Samuel Obikoya's *Imura*

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Abstract

Social decay remains a pressing issue in postcolonial African societies, manifesting in corruption, crime, moral depravity, drunkenness, and hypocrisy. Samuel Obikoya's Imura offers a critical examination of these societal flaws through a satirical yet realistic portrayal of urban life in Old Lagos. This study analyses the representation of social decay in Imura, focusing on key themes such as corruption, crime, moral and sexual depravity, drunkenness, and social hypocrisy. The objective is to uncover how these themes reflect broader societal dysfunctions and to evaluate the consequences of moral collapse on individuals and communities. The study employs a qualitative textual analysis of the play, extracting relevant dialogues and interactions that highlight its thematic concerns. The findings reveal that Imura critiques a society where unethical behaviors are not only widespread but also normalized. Corrupt leaders are blamed for societal failures, yet the ordinary citizens actively partake in dishonesty and self-destruction. Crime is rationalised, immorality is excused, and hypocrisy governs interpersonal relationships. The study concludes that the play serves as a moral mirror, urging individuals to confront their own complicity in societal decay. The unique contribution of this study lies in its in-depth exploration of Imura as a microcosm of African socio-political struggles, emphasizing that societal reform begins with personal responsibility. The key recommendation is the need for moral reawakening, ethical leadership, and a rejection of the culture of blame-shifting and escapism. Without such interventions, the cycle of social decay will persist.

Keywords: Social decay, corruption, hypocrisy, moral depravity, African literature

Introduction

The concept of social decay has been a recurring motif in literature, serving as a critical lens through which writers interrogate the gradual disintegration of moral, social, and political structures within society. Across different historical and cultural contexts, literary works have illuminated the consequences of corruption, crime, and moral degeneration, offering both reflections on and warnings against the dangers of societal decline. Social decay often manifests through the erosion

of ethical values, the breakdown of communal bonds, and the normalisation of deviant behaviours, all of which contribute to the destabilisation of society (Ziprebo & Obi, 2024). Literature not only documents these issues but also serves as a powerful tool for social critique and advocacy, calling for urgent reforms and a return to ethical principles. By exposing the realities of societal dysfunction, literature acts as a mirror through which societies confront their failures and seek pathways to renewal.

In African literature, particularly in postcolonial and contemporary narratives, the theme of social decay remains prominent as writers grapple with the harsh realities of political corruption, economic hardship, and urban degeneration. The disillusionment that followed the failure of post-independence governments has provided fertile ground for exploring how greed, hypocrisy, and power struggles perpetuate societal collapse. Lekubu & Sibanda (2021) contends that the primary impediment to African societies' progress is the moral bankruptcy of both leaders and citizens. This sentiment is vocally dismissed in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), where the pervasive corruption and selfishness of political elites are condemned as emblematic of the broader moral decay of society. Similarly, Soyinka's *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1964) satirizes religious hypocrisy, while *Madmen and Specialists* (1971) critiques the ethical disintegration that follows political violence and instability. These works illustrate how social decay permeates different spheres of life, from politics and religion to family and interpersonal relationships.

Moreover, the urban setting plays a significant role in the portrayal of social decay in African literature. The chaotic, overcrowded, and crime-ridden cities often symbolise the disintegration of communal values and the rise of individualistic, self-serving attitudes. Braga & Clarke (2017) describes contemporary African cities as sites of both economic opportunity and social dysfunction, where the quest for survival often overrides ethical considerations. This spatial representation highlights how poverty, corruption, and violence converge in urban spaces, accelerating the erosion of moral standards. The city becomes a microcosm of broader societal decay, reflecting both the structural failures of the state and the moral compromises of its citizens.

Within this literary discourse, Samuel Obikoya's play *Imura* presents a compelling dramatisation of social decay, offering a damning critique of a society where corruption, crime, hypocrisy, drunkenness, and moral depravity thrive unchecked. Set in Old Lagos, *Imura* captures the chaotic and morally bankrupt realities of urban life, where individuals struggle to navigate a system riddled with corruption and moral contradictions. The play exposes a society where individuals justify their immoral behaviours while simultaneously condemning others for similar or lesser offenses. This portrayal aligns with Soyinka's satirical

approach to societal ills but extends the critique to everyday citizens, not just the ruling elite. The objective of this study is to examine the representation of social decay in *Imura*, analysing how the play uses its characters and plot to depict the normalisation of theft, ritual killings, sexual promiscuity, excessive drinking, and self-righteousness. By focusing on the everyday manifestations of social decay, the play highlights how both systemic failures and individual choices contribute to the broader societal crisis.

This study is necessitated by the increasing prevalence of social decay in contemporary African societies, a reality also reflected in the play's thematic concern with corruption, moral laxity, and crime as obstacles to societal progress. Despite widespread acknowledgment of these issues, public discourse often focuses on political leaders and institutional failures, neglecting the role of individual complicity in perpetuating social decay. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring how *Imura* shifts the focus from leadership failure to the everyday actions and attitudes that sustain moral degeneration.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology to examine the representation of social decay in Samuel Obikoya's *Imura*. Qualitative research is particularly suited for literary analysis as it emphasises meanings, themes, and interpretations within texts (Aspers & Corte, 2019). The study employs textual analysis, focusing on dialogues, character interactions, and narrative structure to uncover portrayals of social decay. This method enables an in-depth examination of thematic concerns, highlighting aspects of moral degeneration such as corruption, hypocrisy, crime, drunkenness, and sexual immorality.

The analysis identifies recurring motifs, symbols, and character behaviours that reflect broader societal issues. Selected scenes and dialogues are critically examined to reveal how the playwright employs satire, irony, and dramatic conflict to expose moral contradictions. The socio-historical context of the play, particularly the urban setting of Old Lagos, is also considered in analysing the interplay between environment and moral decay.

This study is anchored on two key theoretical frameworks: Marxist Theory and Moral Criticism Theory. These theories provide a critical lens for understanding the dynamics of social decay in *Imura* and its broader implications for African societies. Marxist Theory, developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, examines the relationship between economic structures and social realities. It posits that corruption, crime, and moral decay stem from class struggles, economic exploitation, and power imbalances (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2021). In *Imura*, both the ruling class and ordinary citizens contribute to social decay. The characters' engagement in theft, ritual killings, and other immoral acts reflects the

harsh economic realities of urban life. However, the play challenges the notion that economic hardship alone is responsible for moral degeneration, emphasising individual agency in ethical decision-making.

Moral Criticism Theory, rooted in Aristotle and later developed by critics like Matthew Arnold, evaluates literature based on its ethical implications (Caufield, 2016). *Imura* functions as a moral mirror, exposing ethical failings and encouraging reflection on personal and societal morality. Through satire and critique of blame-shifting, the play underscores individual accountability as essential for societal reform. By combining Marxist theory and moral criticism, this study offers a comprehensive understanding of social decay in *Imura*, emphasising both systemic conditions and personal responsibility in fostering or challenging moral degeneration.

Synopsis of *Imura*

Samuel Obikoya's *Imura* is a satirical play that exposes the deep-rooted social decay in contemporary Nigerian society. Set in Old Lagos, the play follows the interactions of various characters whose lives reflect corruption, crime, hypocrisy, moral depravity, and irresponsibility. The story unfolds primarily in a barbing salon, which serves as a microcosm of the larger society, capturing the everyday struggles, conflicts, and moral contradictions of the characters.

At the centre of the play is Jayesimi, a young man who steals a phone but justifies his actions by arguing that stealing is better than committing murder. His self-righteousness is mirrored by Dasola, a rice peddler engaged in illicit relationships, who condemns others while failing to acknowledge her own immorality. Ijagbemi, an elder in the community, complains about political corruption but is rumoured to be involved in ritual killings. Fayedun, a notorious drunkard, spends his days intoxicated and stirring up trouble, reinforcing the theme of escapism and irresponsibility.

The play's climax occurs when a messenger from the Baale invites only the righteous to a grand feast, leaving the corrupt characters behind to reflect on their moral failings. Through humour and irony, *Imura* critiques a society where people condemn others while engaging in similar or worse acts.

Analysis and Discussion

The Theme of Corruption in *Imura*

Corruption is one of the most pervasive themes in Samuel Obikoya's *Imura*. It manifests in various forms, from political corruption to moral depravity and economic exploitation. The play presents corruption as a systemic issue deeply embedded in both leadership and everyday society, showing how it distorts governance, morality, and social interactions. Through characters such as

Ijagbemi, the Barber, Dasola, and Jayesimi, Obikoya critiques the erosion of ethical values, illustrating how corruption is both a cause and a consequence of societal decay.

The play strongly implicates the political elite as the root of corruption in society. Ijagbemi's outburst in the barbing salon underscores how the failure of governance pushes citizens into desperation:

IJAGBEMI: *"If not for the animal on Agbádá giving us maladministration, I know where I should be, and of course not in the midst of you these insane and jobless youths."* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 115).

The phrase "animal on Agbádá" is a thinly veiled metaphor for corrupt politicians who, despite wearing traditional or formal attire that symbolises leadership, behave like beasts, prioritising personal gain over public welfare. Ijagbemi's statement reflects a widely held sentiment in many African nations, where political leaders embezzle resources meant for development, leaving citizens to fend for themselves in an economy plagued by unemployment and poverty. His anger toward the political system is justified, yet it is ironic that he, too, participates in corruption rather than challenging it.

Ijagbemi is suspected of ritual killings, a form of corruption deeply tied to power and wealth acquisition. Jayesimi and Juwon expose his alleged involvement in human sacrifices:

JAYESIMI: *"You, fire? You mean the one Baba ewénjé muje muje gave you? Or do you think we don't know, or because we pretended like we don't know you?"*

JUWON: *"Mr. Ijagbemi, you think we don't know how you patronize Baba ewénjé muje muje with body parts of different sizes?"* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 116).

This exchange suggests that Ijagbemi, rather than being an innocent victim of political corruption, is himself complicit in a sinister system. Ritual killings for wealth and influence are an extreme form of corruption where individuals, in their desperation for power, exploit the lives of others. This mirrors real-world cases where politicians and business elites are accused of ritual murders, reinforcing the idea that corruption permeates multiple levels of society.

Economic corruption is another major focus in *Imura*. Due to economic hardship, individuals resort to theft and deception to survive. Jayesimi's theft of Fayedun's phone is emblematic of this reality:

JAYESIMI: *"How do we survive in this hard economy, how? At least, is stealing not better than killing innocent children all around?"* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 122).

Jayesimi's justification for theft highlights how corruption is normalised as a coping mechanism in a failing system. His rhetorical question suggests that because there are worse crimes, such as ritual killings, his own act of theft should be considered minor. This type of moral relativism is common in societies where corruption is endemic, where people rationalise their wrongdoings by comparing them to more heinous acts.

Fayedun, who is portrayed as a notorious drunkard, also engages in deceptive practices. When he arrives to reclaim his stolen phone, he is too intoxicated to recognize it:

FAYEDUN: *"No... This is not my phone jooo, this doesn't look like my phone. Though I can see that the body is colour red, yes, my phone is colour red. The screen is colour black, yes, my phone screen is colour black. This is me in the wallpaper, yes, I used my picture as the wallpaper but this does not look like my phone."* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 127).

Corruption in *Imura* is portrayed not merely as the abuse of public power for personal gain, but more broadly as a breakdown of ethical and moral standards across all levels of society. This includes political, economic, and social forms of corruption such as bribery, theft, moral hypocrisy, and the misuse of authority. The play foregrounds both systemic and interpersonal corruption, highlighting how it infiltrates everyday interactions and undermines accountability.

This is evident in a scene where a character is unable to identify his own phone. A comical moment that nevertheless reflects a deeper issue: the erosion of responsibility in a corrupt society. Fayedun's dependence on alcohol symbolises escapism, a psychological retreat common among those who feel powerless in the face of entrenched systemic rot. This form of corruption is not limited to political elites; it manifests in incompetence and a collective disregard for truth, even when it is self-evident.

One of the most striking manifestations of corruption in *Imura* is moral hypocrisy. Characters who vocally criticise corruption are themselves entangled in unethical behaviours. For example, Dasola, a local rice peddler, condemns Jayesimi for theft while secretly engaging in extramarital affairs:

BARBER: "So Dasola, you support this agbaya to burn my shop abi? I can't blame you now, I can't blame you, just know that if this shop goes down, then the five thousand naira you receive regularly at the motel has stopped."

DASOLA: "Well, there are many ways to the market. If you carry your mat, there are plenty rugs seeking Dasola's attention." (Obikoya, 2025, p. 125).

Dasola's statement, "there are many ways to the market," suggests that she is unbothered by the loss of one source of illicit income because she has multiple means of sustaining herself. This mindset epitomises the adaptability of corrupt individuals, that they always find alternative ways to exploit the system.

Similarly, the barber, who presents himself as a hardworking man, is also engaged in infidelity and deception. He criticises Dasola's promiscuity while failing to acknowledge his own moral failures. This type of double standard is common in corrupt societies where people selectively judge others while ignoring their own faults.

The failure of law enforcement is another aspect of corruption in *Imura*. When Fayedun calls for authorities to arrest Jayesimi for stealing his phone, he does not summon real police officers but rather his equally drunk friends:

FAYEDUN: "I am coming now with policemen, soldiers, and navy. They will know no one ever messes with Fayedun."

FAYEDUN: "Who... is that foo...lish foo...l that stole my extre...me.ly ex...pensive phone?"

DASOLA: "Ahh Fayedun, you are drunk already, where are the police men that you said you were bringing?"

FAYEDUN: "I said these are the police men, tell me who stole my phone and tell me who beat you we will arrest them and throw them into Kirikiri prison now." (Obikoya, 2025, pp. 124, 126).

This humorous yet tragic scene symbolically critiques societal mechanisms of justice. The reliance on drunken vigilantes in place of competent law enforcement serves as an allegory for the broader dysfunction within state institutions, highlighting how corruption and ineffectiveness leave citizens to fend for themselves in matters of justice.

The Theme of Crime in *Imura*

Crime is an ever-present theme in Samuel Obikoya's *Imura*, functioning as both a symptom and a consequence of societal decay. The play captures how individuals, driven by desperation, greed, and moral bankruptcy, resort to various forms of

criminal activities. From petty theft to ritual killings, from deception to lawlessness, *Imura* portrays crime as deeply entrenched in society, making it difficult to separate criminal behaviour from everyday survival. The setting of the play, Old Lagos, serves as an archetypal urban environment where economic hardship and societal failures push individuals into illegitimate means of sustenance.

The most explicit representation of crime in *Imura* is seen in the theft of Fayedun's phone by Jayesimi. Initially, Jayesimi attempts to evade suspicion, but Dasola's sharp observation exposes him:

DASOLA: *"Tarmac? No be the same Tarmac wey Fayedun talk say them steal him phone be that?"*
JAYESIMI: *"Ahh what is the meaning of that?"*
DASOLA: *"Nothing ooo. I talk am! It is the same phone now. Nokia Express Music. In fact, Jayesimi you did not even change the wallpaper, is this not Fayedun on the screen?"* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 121).

Jayesimi's crime is emblematic of economic desperation. The play does not present him as an inherently evil person but rather as a product of his environment. One where crime is often the only available means of survival. His reaction upon being confronted reinforces this:

JAYESIMI: *"How do we survive in this hard economy, how? At least, is stealing not better than killing innocent children all around?"* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 122).

This statement illustrates a moral dilemma frequently encountered in impoverished societies. Jayesimi does not deny that stealing is wrong, but he attempts to justify it by comparing it to more severe crimes. His reasoning aligns with Robert Merton's strain theory, which argues that when people lack legitimate means to achieve societal goals, they turn to illegitimate ones (Agnew, 2020; Murphy & Robinson, 2008). In a society where honest labour fails to provide basic necessities, crime becomes a rationalised alternative.

The theft of Fayedun's phone also highlights the normalisation of crime in *Imura*. Instead of condemning Jayesimi outright, some characters treat the situation with humour, while others focus more on how the crime affects them personally rather than its moral implications. For example, when Juwon realises that Jayesimi failed to change the phone's wallpaper, his response is not one of outrage but rather disappointment at his friend's carelessness:

JUWON: *"Guy, why didn't you change the wallpaper now?"*
(Obikoya, 2025, p. 122).

This reaction reveals a broader societal issue: crime is not always seen as inherently wrong but rather as something that should be done smartly to avoid getting caught. This normalisation is common in corrupt societies, where individuals justify small crimes by pointing to larger ones committed by the elite.

Crime in *Imura* is not limited to theft, it also manifests in the form of violence and lawlessness. Throughout the play, conflicts frequently escalate into physical altercations. One example is the fight between Ijagbemi and the Barber, which begins over a badly executed haircut:

IJAGBEMI: *"Ah ah, o ma ba je o, you this small boy, you want to fight me, Ijagbemi? I will surely beat the hell out of you."*

BARBER: *"Ijagbemi, oò tó bẹ, ten thousand of you cannot do anything, I will beat the old man out of you."*

IJAGBEMI: *"Do you just call me old man? I will show you that I still have bones in me, iwo omo alaileko yii, you must be out of your mind."* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 115).

The escalation of a trivial matter into a full-blown fight illustrates the culture of violence in the play's society. The quickness with which people resort to aggression suggests a breakdown in social order. Instead of resolving disputes peacefully, individuals see physical confrontation as the most effective way to assert dominance. This situation reflects both Marxist concerns about institutional failure driven by economic and class-based inequalities, and the perspective of moral criticism, which sees such lawlessness as indicative of a broader ethical collapse within society (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2021; Caufield, 2016).

Another example of unchecked violence occurs when Jayesimi and Juwon threaten Ijagbemi after he insults them:

JAYESIMI: *"Point of correction Mr. Ijagbemi or what is your name, yes we are youths but not jobless. See, if you don't mind your choice of words, we will gather hands to beat you."* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 116).

This statement highlights how crime and violence are deeply embedded in the daily interactions of the characters. Instead of addressing issues through dialogue or legal means, individuals rely on intimidation and brute force.

The Theme of Moral and Sexual Depravity in *Imura*

Moral and sexual depravity are central themes in *Imura*, reflecting the erosion of ethical values in a corrupt and economically strained society. The play presents a world where transactional sex, infidelity, deception, and the objectification of women are commonplace, further reinforcing the moral collapse of the community. While economic hardship is a driving force behind much of this depravity, the play does not excuse the characters' actions but rather critiques their complicity in perpetuating moral corruption. Through the character of Dasola, as well as the Barber and other male characters, *Imura* exposes the intersection of sexual immorality and societal decay.

Dasola, a local rice peddler, represents a woman who, despite her occupation, is deeply entangled in transactional sex and illicit affairs. While she is quick to criticise others for their wrongdoings, she is also deeply complicit in the moral decay that permeates the society. Her relationship with the Barber is a prime example of this. When confronted about her affair, she does not deny it outright but rather defends her actions:

BARBER: *"So Dasola, you support this agbaya to burn my shop abi, I can't blame you now, I can't blame you, just know that if this shop goes down then the five thousand naira you receive regularly at the motel has stopped."*

DASOLA: *"Well, there are many ways to the market. If you carry your mat, there are plenty rugs seeking Dasola's attention."* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 125).

This conversation exposes the transactional nature of relationships in *Imura*. The Barber openly states that Dasola receives money from him for their meetings at the motel, implying that their relationship is more of a financial arrangement than an emotional connection. Dasola's response further reinforces this, as she casually dismisses the loss of one financial sponsor by implying that she has other options.

Beyond her relationship with the Barber, Dasola is also accused of having multiple affairs, reinforcing her reputation as a woman who uses sex as a means of economic survival. This is highlighted in Ijagbemi's insult:

IJAGBEMI: *"If you carry your mat, there are plenty rugs seeking Dasola's attention."* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 125).

Here, Ijagbemi crudely suggests that Dasola is promiscuous, equating her to a woman who moves from one lover to another in exchange for financial gain. His statement is not merely an attack on her character but also an exposure of the

sexual economy that thrives in the society, where relationships are often transactional rather than built on mutual love and respect.

One of the most striking aspects of moral depravity in *Imura* is the hypocrisy that accompanies it. While many characters engage in immoral behaviour, they are quick to judge others for the same actions. This is evident in the way Dasola reacts to Jayesimi's theft. She is the first to call attention to the crime:

DASOLA: "*Tarmac? No be the same Tarmac wey Fayedun talk say them steal him phone be that?*" (Obikoya, 2025, p. 121).

She exposes Jayesimi's wrongdoing with moral outrage, yet she fails to acknowledge her own moral failings. This mirrors a broader societal trend where individuals criticise others while engaging in equally unethical behaviours themselves.

Similarly, the Barber, who is engaged in an extramarital affair with Dasola, is quick to judge her when their relationship is exposed. Rather than accepting responsibility for his part in the affair, he attempts to shift the blame onto Dasola, emphasising her promiscuity while downplaying his own actions. This dynamic highlights the gender bias in *Imura*, where women face harsher condemnation for sexual misconduct, while men are excused or even praised for similar behaviour.

While Dasola is the most explicit representation of sexual depravity in *Imura*, the male characters are equally, if not more, complicit in this moral decline. The Barber, in particular, embodies the sexual recklessness that pervades the society. Despite being married, he actively engages in an affair with Dasola and even objectifies women based on their physical attributes:

BARBER: "*You mean those old cargos, they are old school, Dasola has fresh blood, eje tutu.*" (Obikoya, 2025, p. 119).

His derogatory description of his wives as "old cargos" suggests that he sees women as disposable objects, valuable only for their youth and physical appeal. His preference for Dasola, whom he describes as having "fresh blood," further emphasises the commodification of women in *Imura*. In this society, a woman's worth is often tied to her physical desirability, reducing her to an object of male pleasure.

The prevalence of moral and sexual corruption in *Imura* has significant consequences for the society it depicts. One of the most immediate effects is the erosion of trust and stability in relationships. Instead of genuine connections, relationships are built on deceit, financial transactions, and self-interest. This is

evident in the way characters interact with one another. Rather than forming meaningful bonds, they engage in exploitative arrangements that ultimately leave them unfulfilled and disconnected.

Another consequence of this depravity is the normalisation of infidelity and transactional sex. When behaviours like those exhibited by Dasola and the Barber become widespread, they set a dangerous precedent where young people grow up believing that deception, promiscuity, and exploitation are acceptable means of survival. Moreover, the gender dynamics in *Imura* reflect the broader societal inequalities that allow men to engage in immoral behaviour with minimal repercussions while women are harshly judged. While the Barber is free to insult his wives and pursue younger women, Dasola is constantly reminded of her promiscuity, reinforcing the double standards that govern morality in patriarchal societies.

The Theme of Drunkenness and Irresponsibility in *Imura*

Drunkenness and irresponsibility are dominant themes in Samuel Obikoya's *Imura*, functioning as both a comic relief and a scathing critique of a society plagued by escapism and self-destruction. In the play, characters like Fayedun and his companions embody the culture of excessive drinking, which not only clouds judgment but also exacerbates societal decay. Alcoholism serves as a symbol of moral weakness, irresponsibility, and the refusal to confront reality, leading to a cycle of poor decision-making, violence, and social dysfunction. Through the exaggerated drunken antics of Fayedun, the play presents a sharp condemnation of how excessive drinking has become an accepted norm among men.

Fayedun, one of the most ridiculous yet tragically symbolic characters in *Imura*, is the embodiment of alcoholism and its consequences. His excessive drinking renders him incapable of recognising his own stolen phone, leading to an absurd and comical exchange that underscores the depth of his irresponsibility:

FAYEDUN: *"No... This is not my phone jooo, this doesn't look like my phone. Though I can see that the body is colour red, yes, my phone is colour red. The screen is colour black, yes, my phone screen is colour black. This is me in the wallpaper, yes, I used my picture as the wallpaper but this does not look like my phone."* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 127).

His incoherent insistence that the phone in his hands does not belong to him highlights the cognitive impairment caused by excessive drinking. Rather than confronting the reality of his situation, Fayedun becomes confused, unable to process simple logic. This reflects a broader societal issue where people,

overwhelmed by life's struggles, turn to alcohol as a means of escape, further worsening their condition (Wittgens et al., 2022).

The failure of Fayedun and his friends to act responsibly reinforces the idea that drunkenness has become an epidemic in their community. Instead of holding themselves accountable or striving for progress, they drown in alcohol, leading to lawlessness and chaos. The play suggests that such unchecked indulgence in drinking is one of the factors contributing to the breakdown of discipline and responsibility in the society of *Imura*.

A major critique in *Imura* is how alcoholism contributes to irresponsibility. Fayedun and his friends, who are presumably adults with responsibilities, abandon all sense of duty in favour of drinking. Instead of engaging in productive activities, they waste their time drinking and creating disorder. This is evident in how Fayedun reacts to the theft of his phone. Not by taking decisive action, but by stumbling through drunken confusion.

Additionally, the Barber, while not as explicitly drunken as Fayedun, is another representation of irresponsibility. His obsession with women, despite having multiple wives, reflects his lack of discipline. His affairs and disregard for his responsibilities as a husband mirror the recklessness of Fayedun's drunken behaviour. Both characters prioritise short-term pleasure over long-term responsibility, contributing to the moral decay of the community.

BARBER: *"You mean those old cargos, they are old school, Dasola has fresh blood, eje tutu."* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 119).

This statement reveals his utter disregard for commitment, as he devalues his wives while seeking new sexual conquests. His irresponsibility, much like Fayedun's, stems from self-indulgence and an inability to exercise restraint.

Another key aspect of drunkenness in *Imura* is its role in escalating conflicts. Throughout the play, drunken characters contribute to unnecessary fights and altercations. Fayedun, in his drunken aggression, challenges Jayesimi and threatens to unleash his drunken "officers" on him:

FAYEDUN: *"So na you steal my phone? The phone I bought with all my investment. And you see, the money for that phone is beyond the bride price your father paid for your mother. Where is my phone? Bring it out! I say bring it out!"* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 126).

His statement is not only insulting but also provocative, demonstrating how alcohol fuels reckless speech and conflict. Instead of addressing the situation rationally, Fayedun resorts to personal attacks, further escalating the tension.

Similarly, the drunken state of his friends, Aiyeyemi and Ayedunje, makes them easy to manipulate. When they are called upon to serve as "policemen," they blindly follow Fayedun's lead, despite their own intoxicated state:

AYEYEMI & AYEDUNJE: *"This does not look like your phone ooo, your phone is finer than this."* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 127).

Their response, despite the obvious evidence in front of them, highlights how alcohol impairs reasoning. Rather than thinking critically, they mimic Fayedun's confusion, reinforcing the play's critique of how drunkenness makes people susceptible to manipulation and poor decision-making.

Beyond its literal representation, drunkenness in *Imura* functions as a metaphor for the larger dysfunction in society. The characters' excessive drinking symbolises their refusal to confront reality, choosing instead to escape into a state of oblivion. In a corrupt and economically unstable environment, alcohol becomes a coping mechanism, yet it only serves to deepen the problems of those who indulge in it.

Moreover, Fayedun's inability to recognise his own phone is symbolic of how societal values have become distorted. In the same way that he cannot see the truth despite holding it in his hands, society in *Imura* is blinded by its indulgences, unable to recognize its own self-destructive path.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study is that *Imura* presents a damning critique of a decaying society where corruption, crime, moral depravity, drunkenness, and hypocrisy thrive unchecked. Through the actions of its characters, the play exposes a system in which individuals justify their immoral behaviours while condemning others for similar or lesser offenses. The normalisation of theft, ritual killings, sexual promiscuity, excessive drinking, and self-righteousness highlights a society that has lost its ethical foundation. The study finds that the key driver of this decay is the failure of individuals to take responsibility for their actions, choosing instead to engage in blame-shifting, escapism, and moral relativism.

To address this, the study recommends a shift toward individual accountability and moral reawakening. Society must reject the culture of justifying wrongdoing and instead uphold ethical standards. Leadership should be transparent and just,

while individuals should embrace self-discipline and integrity. Without such reforms, *Imura* warns that society will continue its downward spiral into lawlessness and dysfunction.

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