

Moral Decadence among Nigerian Youth and the Role of Parents and Schools: A Study On Urban Secondary School Students In Ebonyi State

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Abstract

Moral decadence among Nigerian youths and the role of parents and teachers is a search for the role parents and teachers could play in reduction and elimination of moral decadence among youths. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The area of the study is Abakaliki the capital of Ebonyi State. The population of the study is 300 teachers selected out of 845 teachers in the area. Simple random sampling technique was used for selection of the teachers. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data and mean used for data analysis. The results revealed among others that parents and teachers are capable of remoulding and shaping of youths moral behaviour; hence their active participation in character formation is required. Based on the findings, recommendations were made to remedy the situation

Keywords: Moral decadence, Nigerian youths, Causes, Categories, Curbing strategy.

Introduction

Nigeria is indeed at the cross of history. As the country rolls irreversibly into the twenty first century, one should, with deep sense of responsibility reflect on our nation's existence Nigeria is a country with about eighty million people of diverse socio-ethnic and cultural background. Nigeria now is (57) fifty-seven years after political independence yet a toddler in terms of civilization and development. Nigeria is a nation endowed with both human and material resources; yet still underdeveloped. One may ask what could be responsible for the backwardness of the nation. Studies have shown that the major problem of Nigeria is corruption in both low and high places. Corruption is manifested in secondary schools in form of moral laxity or decadence. Categorically, Nigeria's moral values have degenerated to the lowest ebb. Immorality has taken a dangerous dimension in our society today; no wonder the president Mohammed Buhari declared Nigeria a corrupt nation. Corrupt practice is more prevalent among the youths especially in secondary school levels.

It is obvious that the state of Nigerian youths in terms of morality is hopeless and frustrating. Odeh (2015) noted that the rate at which immoral behaviours are practiced is overwhelming. Many young boys and girls are roaming about looking for one crime or the other they would commit. Majority of our youths are wayward, disobedient, disrespectful and ever ready to derail. Many of them are ready to kidnap, kill or maim people in order to survive the hard economy. Misham (2007) observed that the youths are pushed by the exploitative and uncarpeted socio-economic system of the society. The young in the bid to resist and revolt against the oppressive system results to myriads of deviant behaviours such as disobedience to constituted authority and as a result of that, they riot, vandalize and even maim other students as a way of showcasing their feelings. Some even work as political thugs, terrorists or bodyguards while females engage in prostitution and other social vices.

Moral decadence is a social problem because it affects the entire nation. No wonder every community is making serious attempt to check its growth. Ihuoma (1995) observed that a society that does not checkmate the growth of immoral practices would definitely end in disaster. Moral decadence involves any act or behaviour which violates the norms and codes of the society. It is an abnormality involving basic conflict with the society's value system. It could be better described as an aggressive behaviour which defiles the established values in a given society. Rogers (2003) viewed moral decadence as non-compliance through their parental upbringing, peer or societal influence. Parents that involves in anti-social behaviour stands chances of transferring such attitudes to their children, some out of guilty conscience do not have the moral power to instill discipline hence they practice indiscipline.

Most Nigerian youths engage in anti-social behaviour due to the family upbringing, some are from broken homes or defective homes that can rarely satisfy children's basic needs let alone parental affection. Researches carried out by Njoku (2015) have proven that family instability is a major cause of moral decadence among Nigerian youths. For instance if parents fail in their responsibility to show affection, guidance and proper

discipline, the children are likely to derail morally; it implies that indiscipline should be tackled by the family. When parents overlook ill acts of their children at home or they are incapable of inflicting suitable punishment whenever the children err, it is then an inevitable fact that they would grow wilder.

Low moral standard and hypocrisy of the elder generation gives room for the youths to get themselves involved in moral decadence when youths find out that the older generation is somewhat hypocritical, in that they pretend to inculcate set of moral norms but vigorously pursues the opposites (Saheed, 2013). As a result, they tend to join in the camouflage way of life.

Far from the family, the school also plays a major role in moral upbringing of a child. School is meant to be a training ground for children but in most cases the reverse is the case. Teachers who are supposed to be the trainers, directors, guardians and character moulders are already morally corrupt. According to Smith (2001) some of them exhibit some sort of anti-social behaviours, children who see their teachers as role models upholds every behaviour of the teacher as ideal. This agrees with Standstorm (2006) who said that where children are not properly taught how to spend their leisure hours profitably, the children are prone to misuse it. This calls for the need of recreational facilities and activities which can occupy children's time so that they would not be bored as well as pushed to exploring areas that may hurt the society. The above background poses a challenge on the role of the parents and the teachers in raising balanced individuals that would be capable of future democratic continuity.

Statement of the Problem

Issues of moral development or training of children has been a challenge to the nation. The interest of the researcher however is on the level of moral decadence among the growing youths of Nigeria. The rate of immoral practices observable in Nigerian secondary schools is at an alarming rate. Behaviours ranging from robbery, smoking, maiming, gross disobedience to school rules, truancy, sexual harassment to gangster just to mention a few are prevalent among the students. The effects of unwanted behaviours have been felt by both parents/guardians, school authorities and even the society at large. Most of the above listed behaviours have led to teenage pregnancy/abortion, suicide, early marriage, imprisonment in the remand homes, madness and other social vices. It is against this background that the researcher felt the need to study how parents and teachers could help in curbing moral decadence among secondary school youths as a step towards sustainable development in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

1. What are the causes of moral decadence among Nigerian youths?
2. In what ways do the youths manifest moral decadence?
3. How could parents and teachers help in curbing moral decadence among Nigerian youths?

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey design which aimed at investigating the roles parents and teachers could play in curbing moral decadence among the youths. Schools in Abakaliki Ebonyi State are the area of the study. The population is estimated at 845 teachers gotten from the 47 secondary schools in the urban area. The target population is 300 teachers selected through simple random sampling techniques. Structured response questionnaire was used to collect data. Mean was used to analyze data and criterion mean of 2.50 was used for interpretation of mean. Mean score from 2.50 and above was interpreted as agreed while mean score less than 2.50 was interpreted as disagreed.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Mean Response Scores on Causes of Moral Decadence among Nigerian Youths (n = 300)

S/N	Items	\bar{x}	Remark
1.	Poor parental upbringing	3.8	Agreed
2.	Lack of affection and care	2.8	Agreed
3.	Quest for materialism	3.5	Agreed
4.	Teachers' teaching behaviour	2.7	Agreed
5.	Peer influence	2.5	Agreed
6.	Home videos and media records	2.8	Agreed
7.	Societal influence	3.6	Agreed
8.	Carefree attitude of parents	3.5	Agreed
9.	Decline in religious training	2.8	Agreed
10.	Poor economy and political instability	3.2	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.12	Agreed

The above table scores a grand mean of 3.12 which is above the criterion mean of 2.5. This shows that respondents agreed that the above listed items are possible causes of moral decadence among Nigerian youths. The grand mean of 3.12 shows significant level of acceptance

Table 2: Mean Response Scores on Various Ways Nigerian Youths Manifest Moral Decadence (no = 300)

S/N	Items	\bar{x}	Remark
11.	Gross disobedient to constituted authorities	4.0	Agreed
12.	Sexual misconduct	3.0	Agreed
13.	Involving in clandestine activities	3.8	Agreed
14.	Maiming of fellow students/vandalization of school property	2.5	Agreed
15.	Robbery/stealing	3.2	Agreed
16.	Examination malpractice	3.5	Agreed
17.	Humiliating the teachers and principals	3.8	Agreed
18.	Indecent dressing	4.0	Agreed
19.	Truancy	3.8	Agreed
20.	Drug abuse	2.7	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.43	Agreed

Table 2 above on various ways Nigerian youths manifest moral decadence as listed in items 11-20 falls within the real limit of agreed. The table scored a grand mean of 3.43 which shows that respondents agreed that students indulges in the above listed immoral acts; hence the grand mean of 3.43 is very significant.

Table 3: Mean Response Scores on Ways Parents and Schools could Assist in Curbing Moral Decadence among Nigerian Youths (no = 300)

S/N	Items	\bar{x}	Remark
21.	School can enhance youth's moral through the use of religious curriculum content	2.5	Agreed
22.	Through stimulating students interest in positive thinking	2.8	Agreed
23.	Through proper disciplining of unacceptable behaviours	3.5	Agreed
24.	Through exercising right power and authority over the directions and guidance of youths	3.5	Agreed
25.	Through packaging himself well as a role model to the students	2.9	Agreed
26.	Encouraging and rewarding good moral behaviours	3.5	Agreed
27.	Indoctrinating and inculcating the right conducts among the students	2.8	Agreed
28.	Through being honest and kind to those under their care	3.1	Agreed
29.	Giving the students a sense of belonging	2.5	Agreed
30.	Maintaining openness and a friendly atmosphere	3.2	Agreed
31.	Being ready to play the seven key roles good a teacher	3.5	Agreed
32.	Giving a listening ear and being accommodative	2.5	Agreed
33.	Showing tolerance and love	3.5	Agreed
34.	Making every moment and activities a period of learning through interaction	3.0	Agreed
35.	Through structuring the learning situation for moral training	2.8	Agreed
36.	Proper supervision and guidance of recreational periods	2.8	Agreed
37.	Exploiting all the available awareness and approaches to moral training	3.5	Agreed
38.	Adopting authoritarian parenting style	3.5	Agreed
39.	Parents, care givers and teachers living positive life style	3.1	Agreed
40.	Through showing respect and care	3.8	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.11	Agreed

Table 3 above on the role of parents and school in curbing moral decadence scored a grand mean of 3.11 which is higher than the criterion mean of 2.5. This shows that respondents agree that the items listed above are ways parents and school could help in curbing moral decadence among Nigerian youths.

Findings of the Study

The following findings were made:

1. The study revealed poor parental upbringing, lack of affection and care, quest for materialism, teachers' teaching behaviour, peer influence, societal influence, poor economy, political instability and drug abuse as the causes of moral decadence among Nigerian youths.
2. And those Nigerian youths in the secondary schools manifest moral decay in the following ways: sexual harassment, robbery, truancy, maiming of fellow students, clandestine activities, and gross disobedience to authorities, disrespects, examination malpractices and drug abuse.
3. The study also revealed how parents and teachers could help in curbing moral decadence among Nigerian youths.

Discussion

It was observed from the findings of table 1 that many factors are responsible for moral decadence among Nigerian youths. The factors ranges from poor parental upbringing, lack of affection and care, quest for materialism, teachers behaviours, decline in religious training, poor economy and peer influence to mention but a few. The finding is in agreement with Oladipo (2009) that home training is a major factor in moral behaviour formation. For instance, children learn from their parents, caregiver, peers and home videos at home. So if parents are firm in correcting, directing and guiding their children, they would only learn those things their parents approve of. The above finding goes further to showcase the role of parents and care givers in moderating and shaping young one's behaviour.

This finding could be supported by the study of Roger (2003) who said that development of moral behaviour is a product of good parental rearing, care, education and training. In this way parents, care givers and teachers are majorly accused about children's immoral behaviour.

The finding of Table 2 revealed that there are many forms of moral decadence among secondary school youths. The factors ranges from clandestine activities, maiming of fellow students, vandalization of school property, robbery/stealing, examination malpractice, gross disobedient to authorities, dishonesty, to sexual misconduct to mention but a few. The findings agree with Odeh (2013) who said that most secondary school students are involved in cultism, sexual and drug abuses of all kinds. The finding is captivating because it showcased various ways youths manifest moral decadence in schools in Ebonyi State. These behaviours are not prevalent only in Ebonyi, rather it could be generalized because it is also witnessed in other states of Nigeria.

The study further revealed various strategies or ways by which parents and teachers could curb moral decadence among the youth in the state. This finding is in support of Saheed (2013) that parents and teachers being the major instrument of training could go a long way in shaping and re-shaping youths morality. However, Odeh (2013) emphasizes the role of parents in character formation of the youth. Odeh intones that parents should be proactive in ensuring that the type of relationship their children keep are good because it exerts great influence on the behaviour of the child. Thus, parents and teachers are encouraged to exercise more power in instilling discipline both at home and in the school as a means of checkmating children's excesses before it becomes their permanent way of life.

Finally, the authority nature bestowed on the parents is enough to compel children to obey and behave well. In this same vein teachers are endowed with moral power to train and shape behaviour which is the major aim of education. It is therefore expected that if both could put hands on deck, Nigerian youths would be salvaged morally.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following were recommended.

1. Adequate teaching of moral instruction should be emphasized.
2. There should be good orientation and re-orientation programmes for students on the danger of immoral behaviour.
3. Parents should devote more time in observation, correction and instilling discipline appropriately as a way of shaping and reshaping behaviours of children at home.
4. There should be adequate counselling service to encourage students to have faith in God and work hard to face every challenges of life.
5. Both parents and teachers should as a matter of fact live out what they teach their children. This is because if they grow amidst unfairness, vulgarity, cheating and lying and they are taught moral behaviours at school, they cannot see its relevance in issues of life.

Conclusion

The study identified causes of moral decadence, various types and ways youths manifest moral decadence as well as how parents and teachers' effort could go a long way in reshaping behaviour of the youths. The causes are highlighted in the following sub-heading: parental, societal, peer, and the teachers' influences. However, teachers and parents were presented as major causes of moral decay among secondary school youths,



hence, the study highlighted ways teachers and parents could enhance good morals and reduce or eliminate immorality among school youths. It is concluded that if teachers and parents put in more effort in readdressing the ugly trend, Nigeria in no distant time would be corruption free.

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