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EARLY ACCULTURATION AND VALUE RE-ORIENTATION IN THE IMO STATE SCHOOL SYSTEM: A CASE AGAINST DEVIANCE AND MORAL DECAY

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Abstract

The study adopted a case study descriptive design to investigate the remote causes of the prevalent deviant behaviours among the youth of nowadays with focus on the secondary school students in Imo State. It is assumed that the family and school socialization/acculturation have suffered severe collapse. Hence, the impulse to investigate the value system as emphasized in the Imo State Schools. The population for study is 200 respondents sampled randomly across the rural, semi-urban and urban areas of the state with focus on students of secondary schools, parents and teachers. Data collection was by questionnaire. A Value Emphasis Questionnaire (VEQ) was formulated and structured to find out the causes of students deviant behaviour, the prevalent antisocial conducts, as well as the perceptions of parents and teachers on value re-orientation in the school system. The questionnaire was structured using four-likert scale of VHE, HE, LE and VLE of points graded for 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Data were collected and analyzed using Mean Rating Statistics at 2.5 value benchmark. From the results, it was deduced that moral values are poorly emphasized in the present day school system, that deviant behaviours

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are high among the school children of nowadays; and that parents and teachers advocate for inclusive and value-emphasized education in the state. The researchers also made some recommendations.

Keywords: Values, Re-orientation, Deviance, Acculturation, Socialization

INTRODUCTION

One of the major areas of emphasis in any society (primitive or modem) is to ensure continuity and social reproduction, not just to exist as an entity but to reproduce itself by passing on its culture and values from generation to generation. The older generations try to transmit the basic knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary to make one a functional and efficient member of the society. This is done by the process of socialization or acculturation.

Social reproductive and progress cannot be sustained where the core values of the society are not consciously instilled in the lives of the younger generations by the better experienced elders and stakeholders of the society. When this is no; well grounded in the upbringing and socialization of the child by the very agencies of socialization, social mischief becomes the inevitable resultant effect, and the future life untold.

Today, it is crystal clear that the centre can no more hold, the moral stakes have seem to be completely fallen apart. Morality and integrity are becoming things of history among the present generation of youth, and even among the elders and leaders of our time. Restiveness of all worth has taken over events and lifestyle of the youths, which according to Iwejuo, Nkume and Igbokwe (2016) broods moral decadence and social nuisance in the society, and drains away the core values in the character of the young men.

Human social life is governed by norms and rules. Hence, every society has a unique way of life and highly placed moral code of conduct that is esteemed and generally upheld as values and norms. These constitute the culture of the society. It is expected that every member of the society should abide by and conform to these generally accepted principle of social life referred to as value consensus.

However, some of these strongly held norms with ethical and moral connotations may be violated but without serious consequences in a particular culture. These according to Kendall (2004) are referred to as "mores". On the other hand, some mores are strongly

held that their violation is considered to be extremely offensive and even unmentionable. According to Kendall (2004), these are referred to as "Taboos".

Giddens (1992) asserts that our activities would collapse into chaos if we did not stick to rules which define some kinds of behaviour as appropriate in given contexts and others inappropriate. But regrettably, not everyone conforms to social expectations all of the time. People quite deviate often from the rules they are expected to follow. The society has stipulated ways of instilling its values and virtues in the moral life of the child from the early childhood through his/her entire lifetime through rewards and sanctions to make for a total man. This lifelong acquisition of morality, values, knowledge, idea and culture of the society is referred to as "acculturation" or "socialization". This however must take off from the earliest stage of life of the child, and if not that early, a generational gap will be created, and such an individual cannot be made a total man.

Iwejuo, et al(2016) posit that if any society must attain stability, growth, vis-à-vis, survival, the moral values and conformity to such must be highly emphasized in the private and public character of the members. Conformity to the value consensus and philosophy of the society should be indispensable in all aspects, sectors and its institutions.

One major area of emphasis in our society now is to address moral values in the various sectors of social life. Some of the early Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle whose teachings and ideas laid the foundations to the present day education and philosophy held on to moral values as the bedrock for societal consensus and stability. Socrates argued that his intention was to do the greatest good for his people. He did not only teach virtue, but practiced it up to his death. Plato on the other hand was of the school of thought that moral training should start from the cradle - preschool, primary stages of education, stating that all is ugly and immoral should be avoided in the child's education.

However, this emphasized moral values should at any stage of development of the child be reawakened consciously and should cut across the major expository social institutions as the family, schools, culture, media, religious bodies etc. if values can be well addressed early enough in the acculturation of the child, it will definitely transcend in the later life and be obviously extended into other social sectors like politics, employment, marriage, and the society will definitely progress and prosper.

It is no longer a news that corruption has eaten deep into the moral fabrics of Nigeria. Every successive government has in one way or the other lunched various programmes and advocacy as agenda for curbing corruption, but rather it seems they are fueling the case. What a paradox. Amaele (2007) laments on the issues of global moral crisis and its worst effect on the degree of explosion in our dear country Nigeria beyond the bearing point. This is absolutely an ill-wind. Does it mean that corruption, deviance and moral decay are now permanently part of our life? In the words of Achebe (1993), indiscipline and corruption pervade our lives so completely today that one may be justified in calling it the condition per excellence of contemporary Nigerian society. Iwejuo, Ugwumba and Ibe (2015) decry that one can easily say that impunity is a lifestyle amongst many Nigerians. The menace of this has cost the Nigerian image so much in the global world.

This is largely attributed to poor moral upbringing of the child by parents, teachers and the caregivers, leading to a total disorientation of the younger generation on the core values. History bears it that high moral conduct and discipline was the emphasis of socialization in the past generations. According to Fafunwa (1974) dignity of labour, character development, respect to elders and adherence to culture, norms and values were highly esteemed in the lives of the members of the society.

Today, all these seem to have been completely eroded by the floods of corruption and impunity. To the youth of nowadays, character and dignity without wealth, no matter how acquired is meaningless. Wealth fame and luxury are most cherished in the society today. Recognition for traditional titles, political leadership and even marriages has now been shifted on the level of material wealth you command over character. This has inevitably resulted to all manner of crimes and social vices like internet fraud, kidnapping, ritual killings, armed robbery, prostitution and school drop cuts among our youths as the order of the day. Ohia and Onuigbo (2011) lament that violent crimes like armed robbery, kidnapping, assassination and ritual killing are threatening the Nigeria's socio-economic development.

Nwosu (2009) posits that the more the government tries in one way to curb the prevailing social vices, the more multifaceted, multi-dimensional and hydra-headed corruption and evil become. The evolution of globalization as an aftermath of technological breakthrough has brought a great deal of social change. One major effect of this is "cultural infiltration", a situation in which the cultural and social elements of other societies (both positive and

negative) diffuse into our own social system. According to Nnajieto (2011), this has suddenly turned our esteemed cultural virtues into a mere social aberration. Virtually, all our highly respected, collective values as honesty, dignity of labour, integrity, morality and all worth have been watered down.

Deviance and the Present Day Social Upsurge

Giddens (1992) states that our activities would collapse into chaos if we did not stick to rules which define some kinds of behaviour as appropriate in given contexts and others as inappropriate. It is quite obvious that it's not everyone that conforms to social expectations all of the time. Hence, in sociology it is a fascinating task to study deviance. Deviance is such a complex area of analysis because there are many types of rule-violation as there are social norms and values. However, since norms vary between different cultures, and between differing sub-cultures within the same society, what is normal in one cultural setting is deviant in another. Nnajieto (2011) posits that the concept of deviance consists of those acts which do not follow the norms and expectations of a particular social group.

Hickey cited in Nnajieto (2011) defines deviance as a behaviour that violates social norms and is negatively sanctioned by a society or group. Giddens (1992) asserts that deviance as non-conformity to a given law, norm or set of norms, which are accepted by a significant number of people in a community or society. According toAhamefula and Nnajieto (2005), deviance in most cases tends to be relative in its applications, depending on the society. This therefore means that what constitutes deviance in one community or society may not be construed as deviance in another. In some cases, many norms have only a specialized application, because they are relevant to certain categories of members of the society.

Smah (2000) decries that deviant behaviour such as alcoholism and hard drug use, prostitution, armed robbery, extortion, examination malpractices, sexual harassment, rape, kidnapping, internet fraud, assassination etc have been on the increase in the recent time among our youth. However, these social vices are being encouraged and sponsored by some unguided elders and stakeholders who should rather be good mentors and role models. These include the parents, leaders, politicians who use them as instruments to rig elections and assassinate political opponents to have their way, stakeholders and employers who demand sex for employment or promotions, lecturers who demand sex for marks, to mention but a few. Some traditional rulers go as far as giving traditional tittles and cabinet membership to criminals and fraudsters because of material wealth. What an ugly paradox.

Hence there is no doubt that moral and ethical values and norms of integrity and honesty have been jettisoned by the society. In addition, Okpan and Anigbogu (2016) state that the traditional Nigerian society saw the codification of a set of national values that are oriented towards very high moral standard and ethics. A good name was a virtue so highly esteemed that it would not be traded for mere wealth by the society. Unfortunately, the value is seemingly eluding the Nigerian society. The highly cherished values are becoming things of history amongst our youth. The ravaging deviance nowadays in Imo State among others include indecent dressing among the girls, nite clubbing, examination malpractice, hard drug use, kidnapping and internet crimes. Apparently, according to Okpan and Anigbogu (2016), the computer technology and modernity has given birth to new forms of crime and criminality in Nigeria.

Some Identified Moral Problems in Imo and the prescribed remedies

Amaele (2007) rightly concluded in his work that education alongside other socialization agencies has not done much in achieving the moral values expectations in Nigeria. A lot of factors are attributed to this.

The Family and Parental Factor

Haralambos and Holborn (2008) explain that through socialization the individual internalizes society's values - they become part of his or her personality. The family being the first socialization agency, remains the most fundamental in building the personality of the child. The parents and sibling constitute the first elements of social environment of the child. Societal values and norms are instilled in the life of the child through various means by the parents. Hence, the parents should stand as the epitome of the morality and dignity that the child should look unto as he grows and develops. The parental socialization and education of the child should be holistic and comprehensive. Amaele (2007) asserts that this parental education cuts across the cognitive, effective and psychomotor domains.

But it is quite unfortunate that nowadays the parents have left this costly responsibility to fade away. According to Amaele (2007)

> Unfortunately today, like the case of Nigerian society, the home and indeed parents have dropped their responsibilities of moral upbringing of children and wards for the pursuit of wealth. Some parents leave their houses too early in the morning only to come back very late in the night. In this case,

> they neither see their children in the morning, for it is too early to wake them up, nor in the night, for it is too late to keep them awake.

These children are left at the mercy of the housemaids who abuse them in most cases. But little do these parents know that they are piling up lime-bombs against their later lives. These children that were malsocialized can grow up and squander the entire wealth over night and the parents die in shock and grief. Little wonder Anya (2014) laments that one of the major reasons why our generation is failing is that we have failed at homes. Most of our political and religious leaders have failed woefully in building successful homes, and thus cannot govern an egalitarian society.

However, if parents spend more quality time and carefully inculcate values in their children, and live exemplary moral life before them the children's moral upbringing will be of virtue, harmonized and strengthened. This reinforcement will inturn enhance the level of the nation's moral tone.

The School Teacher and Curriculum

Kendall (2004) defines education as the social institution responsible for the systematic transmission of knowledge skills and cultural values within a formally organized structure. In this context, education covers in its factor the school, teacher and curriculum.

The school is a formally organized institution where the societal values, culture, skills and knowledge are perfected. Hence, it is a refining ground. The school requires qualified manpower, highly-equipped teaching and learning facilities and conducive environment to carry out its functions properly (Amaele, 2007). The teacher is the principal instrument of curriculum implementation. He should therefore be apt, well knowledgeable and morally sound as a role model. The teacher in no wise should be involved in any form of negative and undesirable element in the school socialization of the child. From the very beginning, the child starts to see the teacher as a PERFECT model, even above the parents. Hence, they look unto him, observe all his steps and actions, and try to imitate his ways as a role model.

It will be therefore quite disappointing and unmentionable to see the teacher in deviation from the expected civil roles. When a teacher is seen engaging in some antisocial behaviour like tenancy, immorality, extortion, cultism etc, it gives an unimaginably ugly impression

and trends that can discourage the child in no small measure. There is hardly any way such a teacher can make a positive impact in the lives of his students. Iwejuo et al (2016) refer this a "moral paradox".

On the other hand, the curriculum of the school is widely tilted to academic approach in context and assessment, and less to morality and character development.

Statement of the Problem

It seems that things have completely fallen apart in the moral lives of youths of nowadays. The rate of restiveness and immoral behaviour among the children in secondary schools now is quite alarming. To mention but a few, the public secondary schools are becoming the brooding nests of young cultists, marfians and prostitutes. In the past couple of decades, it was quite like a taboo that a child be seen going to school by 8:00am and beyond, or seen dressed indecent or engage in any antisocial behaviour in school uniform. There was a strong cordial discipline-based communication between the school and family as regards the moral and academic life of the child. The character and morality of the child was on a strict check, and the products then were men and women of integrity in the society.

But nowadays, things have really fallen apart. Our secondary schools are becoming beehives of antisocial activities for our young boys and girls. The emphasis on morality and dignity seems to have been completely eroded. Observation shows that there is obvious absence of moral instruction as an indispensable content for character moulding of the school child. Punishment and sanctions for wrong behaviour seem to have been regarded obsolete and jettisoned in our school system, hence the resultant social and moral ills among our school children.

Amaele (2007) decries that the absence of moral instruction as an independent subject in school curriculum clearly indicates lack of moral commitments of our schools.

> Therefore, we may not expect our schools to properly teach moral values of the nation where the school curriculum is almost silent about moral instructions, or where the curriculum content is foreign to the learners. (Amaele, 2007).

Purpose of the Study

Being deeply concerned with the alarming rate of moral collapse among our young adults and leaders of tomorrow, the researchers have purposed that the study will be a viable tool in remedying the future fate of our generation. The study is geared towards awakening the consciousness of the government and stakeholders in the frontiers of education and socialization of the children to squarely inculcate moral values in their lives and attitude by revisiting the curriculum content and conditions in the school system. Furthermore, the study is aimed at ensuring that our young adults who have passed through the school socialization develop into men and women of high integrity. This will in no small measure ensure the redemption of the nation's lost image in the global world.

Research Questions

In furtherance of the study, the researchers developed the following research question to guide the proceedings.

1. To what extent are moral values emphasized in Imo State School System?
2. To what extent are prevalent social behaviours among students in Imo State Schools?
3. To what extent are the perceptions of parents and teachers on value reorientation in Imo State School System?

Theoretical Inclination

Theories of Deviance

The concept of deviance is more or less complex because norms vary considerably across groups, times and places. In the recent years, a number of theories have emerged from different criminologists. According to Harcourt (2020) four different theories of deviance have been propounded.

Theory of Differential Association

The term "differential association" was coined by Edwin Sutherland to address the issue of how people learn deviance. This theory assumes that the environment plays a major role in deciding which norms people learn to violate. People learn their norms and attitude from the socializing agents around them, such as parents, teachers, friends, the media, co-

workers etc. Also deviant behaviours are learnt from interactions with others, especially in intimate groups.

Anomie Theory

This theory was postulated by Robert Merton in the 1960s. He used the term describe the differences between socially accepted goals and the availability of to achieve these goals. He stressed that anomie refers to the confusion that when social norms conflicts or do not even exist. This confusion arises when ways or channels of achieving one's set goals are distorted by a better advantaged individual or group. The primary contribution of this theory is its ability to explain many forms of deviance.

Control Theory

Walter Reckless postulated that both internal and external factors work against deviant tendencies in individuals. According to him, people may want to indulge into deviant behaviour but internal controls such as conscience, values, integrity and the desire to be a "good person", and external control such as police, family, friends and religious authorities or sanctions restraint them. This theory attributes the key to developing self-control to proper acculturation or socialization, especially early in childhood.

Labeling Theory

This is a type of symbolic/interactionism. The theory focuses on the meanings people place on another symbols, labels, actions and reaction. It holds that behaviours are deviant only when society labels them as deviant. Powerful and influential individuals or bodies such as political leaders, judges, or the law court, constitution, army or police officers, doctors or professional fields typically impose the most significant labels. Labeled persons may include robbers, drug addicts, criminals etc.

METHODS

The study is a case study descriptive research, aimed at sociological analysis of the prevalent moral decadence and antisocial behaviours among the young Nigerian children in secondary schools with Imo State as a case study. Inferences were drawn from the analysis of data collected from questionnaire administered to both students, teachers and parents sampled randomly across the urban and rural areas of the state. Value-Emphasis Questionnaire (VEQ) was formulated and structured using four-likert scale of VHE, HE,

LE and VHE. The points were graded thus: VHE (4), HE (3), LE (2) and VLE (1). Data were collected and analyzed using mean rating statistics at 2.5 value benchmark. Two hundred respondents were sampled at random.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: To what extent are moral values emphasized in Imo State School System?

Table 1. shows the mean response of students on the extent moral values are emphasized in the schools in Imo State.

S/N	Questionnaire Item	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	N	X	Decision
1	Regular Moral Instruction	15	32	94	59	200	2.02	Rejected
2	Effective parent-teacher communication	32	30	70	68	200	2.13	Rejected
3	Punctuality & character check	20	35	60	65	200	2.05	Rejected
4	Regular inspection of students works	22	40	78	60	200	2.12	Rejected
	Grand Mean						**2.08**	**Rejected**

From table 1 above, analysis of the students' response indicates that moral values are poorly emphasized in our schools nowadays. This is because the grand mean has a value of 2.08 which is below the range of acceptance.

Research Question II: To what extent are the prevalent social behaviours among students in Imo State School?

Table 2. shows the mean response of antisocial behaviours among the school children in Imo State.

S/N	Questionnaire Item	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	N	X	Decision
1	Cult activities	60	68	47	25	200	2.82	Accepted
2	Examination malpractices	102	51	42	05	200	3.25	Accepted
3	Get-rich quick syndrome	94	87	13	06	200	3.35	Accepted
4	Immoral addition and relationship	89	65	38	08	200	3.18	Accepted
	Grand Mean						**3.15**	**Accepted**

Table II indicates that antisocial activities and behaviours are high among the young children in Imo State. This is evident in the grand mean value at 3.15 which is in the range of acceptance.

Research Question III: To what extent are the perceptions of parents and teachers on value re-orientation in Imo State School System?

Table 3. shows the mean perception parents and teachers on value system in the Imo School System.

S/N	Questionnaire Item	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	N	X	Decision
1	Value re-orientation should be a primary focus	105	70	22	62	200	3.38	Accepted
2	Moral instruction should be made a substantive subject in the curriculum	111	68	18	03	200	3.44	Accepted
3	Corporal punishment should not be ruled out	85	61	48	06	200	3.13	Accepted
4	Strict moral code should be clearly spelt out for both the teachers and students with serious sanctions	120	53	15	12	200	3.41	Accepted
	Grand Mean						**3.34**	**Accepted**

Table III indicates that parents and teachers highly advocate for inclusive and value-emphasized educational system in Imo State.

DISCUSSION

It is no longer news that moral decay among the youths of nowadays is on red alert. In agreement with Nnajieto (2011), dignity and morality are becoming things of history in this generation. The disciplinary codes that guided the behaviour and actions of scholars in the past decades right from the inception of western education and in the traditional socialization before the advent of western education have been drastically watered down or completely eroded away in the name modernization, as indicated in table 1. The school which is supposed to be the most effective correctional social institution in all ramifications has seemed to become the primary center for antisocial indulgence as decried by Amaele (2007). Table II indicates some prevalent deviant behaviour seen among the school aged children such as cultism immoral addition and relationship, (which results to early

pregnancy, abortion, drop-out and even untimely death), indecent dressing, get-rich-quick syndrome which leads them to betting, gambling, prostitution, theft etc). Hence, there is little or no attention paid to academic works. This results in the high level of examination malpractice and persistent poor academic performance over the years.

This sorry state of moral value in the school system of Imo State and Nigeria at large indicates a missing link in the acculturation from the early childhood and hereby gives a deep concern to the researchers, and as such if nothing is done by the government, parents, teachers and stakeholders, the fate of this and the upcoming generations will be unmentionably in disarray.

Recommendations

The researchers hereby recommend to the government private educators, parents and teachers that morality and values should not be traded for anything in the process of education and acculturation of our children.

Also as affirmed by Amaele (2007), boarding system should be reintroduced in our school system with effective monitor.

Corporal punishment and sanctions should be meted out for any form of deviance for both students and staff.

Parents and teachers should maintain effective two-way traffic communication to complement each other's disciplinary effort.

Teachers should be well motivated to boost their spirit for effective delivery of their mandate.

CONCLUSION

No nation can thrive in the platform of indiscipline and moral decay. The government and stakeholders should ensure that discipline regains its foremost stand in education and socialization of the child. This call cuts across every sector of the society. Those in positions of political authorities, parents, teachers, religious leaders, elders etc, should live exemplary lives and serve as the "mother goat" which the kids will look unto as a guide for their moral conduct. If all these play a good modeling role, and the government at all levels pay more attention to education by boosting the motivation and incentives to the teaching workforce, they will give in their best and a better standard and result will be achieved.

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