

Teachers' Perception of Causes and Strategies for Combating Moral Decadence among Secondary School Students in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

Ojo Oludare David

ojo.od@unilorin.edu.ng

University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

Aliyu Yunus

aliyu.y@unilorin.edu.ng

University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

Ogundele Omolara Bidemi

omolara.adeboye@eksu.edu.ng

Ekiti State University, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This study investigated teacher's perception, causes and strategies for combating moral decadence among secondary schools students in Ilorin. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised all the Christian Religious Studies (CRS) teachers in senior secondary schools in Ilorin. Purposive sampling technique was used to sample 135 CRS teachers in Ilorin. Researcher- designed questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents with reliability coefficient of 0.81. Data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. Findings obtained from the study revealed that cultism, drug abuse truancy, examination malpractice were some of the moral decadence common among secondary school students. The causes were identified and strategies of combating them were proffered. The study recommended that parents should be up and doing in the discharge of their duties and moral education should be emphasised in schools.

Keywords: Moral Decadence; Morality; Perception; Secondary Schools; Values

INTRODUCTION

The problem of moral decadence has in recent times become a national concern. Moral decadence is a pervasive evil that poses great challenge to Nigerians. It is also a national problem with certain destructive tendencies. The level of moral decadence in Nigeria is disturbing and in whatever form, it distorts plans, programmes and processes of moral education. It is also manifested in several spheres of both school and society. Moral decadent behaviour in schools include unwanted acts like sexual abuse, smoking, drug abuse, examination malpractices, cultism which has claimed lives of many young promising students, vandalism, rudeness, insubordination, truancy and other social vices (Bashar et al. 2020). Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the social media is changing the

landscape of the society. There is violence, lack of respect, thuggery and a lot of social vice being experienced every day. Poor parental upbringings, lack of affection and broken homes have also been linked to moral decadence (Ogunsanya, 1999; Jegede et al., 2013). Some parents put the blame on teachers as being responsible for the moral short fall off their children forgetting the fact that the children spend more time at home than in the school. In many homes in Nigeria, parents are not available to train their children due to their engagement in white collar jobs, businesses and other economic activities. (Nwosu, 2009). As a result, the activities of children are not checked by their parents at home. This is an indication that deviation from the traditional role of women in home keeping, caring for the children and aged is being eroded and substituted by immoral behaviours. In line with this, Mukherjee (2002) is in support of the fact that the delinquent behaviour such as, drunkenness in the family, illegitimacy of children, lack of love and affection in early years of children lives lead children to be delinquent when they get to school and during adulthood.

Coupled with the fact that economic meltdown has made the parents to be separated due to nature of work and other economic situations that the country is passing through at the moment. The over pursuance of wealth by most parents has produced wards who do not know and comprehend their parents. Consequently, most children reflect what they watch in television programmes, videos and internet web pages (Aggarwal, 2010). Some of them equally learn from nannies, housemaids and relations. Such children are at risk of developing dysfunctional and psychopathic behaviours due to ineffective parenting, poor supervision and unchecked access to ICT's. Therefore, the student cannot be tamed or controlled unlike before because technological development has brought about new cultures and morality on the society. The inability to control the kind of print and electronic materials children read and watch at home and in the school has led the students into misbehaving in school and at home.

The issue of moral decadence in our society has become a very controversial issue because the society seems not to know the disparity between what is morally right or wrong. Ugwu (2010) described morality as the astuteness of one's conduct and behaviour which enhances good conduct and fair relationship. Consequently, young individuals within our homes and schools often struggle to distinguish between actions that are morally right and religiously commendable and those that are not. This lack of clarity has led many of them to lack the strength and fortitude to resist the allure of engaging in immoral or unlawful behaviour.

Muraino and Ugwumba (2014) asserted that morality is collectively upholding of certain beliefs, ideas, values, and behaviour, rules and regulations which are considered good, right, and acceptable by the society and to members of the society are bound. Gert (2012) posited that the descriptive definition of morality explain morals as a set of conduct put forward by any group, including the society and the normative definition which is based on the idea that what is moral should have a code of conduct put forward by any group, society or nation that is acceptable by members of the group.

In most of the primary school, moral problem abound as deviant behaviour. School children break into head teachers' office and destroy school property with reckless abandon. Some of the teachers have bitter complaints, of how school pupils engage in various form of disciplinary behaviours such as group fighting, bullying one another, using abusive words on teachers, and even examination malpractices, pupils' involvement in such ugly development is regrettably on the increase. According to Ejionueme (2004) these deviant behaviour neither spare our customs nor favour our traditions.

Many more people feel concerned about the ugly situation of many schools. According to Uche (2000), the rate of moral decadence is high and it is evident in incessant cases of violence, assaults fighting even rape, which are daily activities of many school children. Igbinoria (2004) adds cultism as another evident manifestation of immoral behaviour among

pupils. Agbo (2010) remarks that cultism was formerly a higher institution affairs but has today gone down the line of the education institution and beyond. Children are today associated with behaviour that are suggestive of cult members.

Muraino and Ugwumba (2014) further to say that moral decadence is the process of behaving in a way that show low moral standard. It means gross reduction in the moral values in a particular society. Thus moral decadence appears to be a fall in the moral standard of the society. It seems to be deteriorating or a collapse in upholding our societal values, beliefs, norms and ethical standards. Bratton (2015) see perception as the process of selecting, organising and interpreting information in order to make sense of the world around us. Agim and Ejiogu (2011) asserted that perception is a belief held by a person or many people, based upon how they see the world around them. Hence perception appears to be an idea, belief we have as a result of how we see or understands something.

Statement of the Problem

In recent times, there have been several instances of unruly and inappropriate behaviour among students and adults alike in Nigeria. A wide range of negative attributes including dishonesty, cheating, bribery and corruption, harassment of different types and dimensions have become pervasive in the country. The decline of moral values has permeated all aspects of life to the extent that people turn to social vices as a means of survival. The issues according to the saying that the youths are the leaders of tomorrow may not hold because, the behaviour found among the youths is not something that anyone should be proud of. Though each there are some youths that are upright and well-behaved, however. A lot is still being expected from the youths. All stakeholders must be involved so that the future of the youths is at stake. So, where lies the leaders of tomorrow when moral decadence such as cultism, examination malpractices, drug addiction, robbery and so many other vices are noticeable among the youths. It is possible that the inability or unwillingness to involve the parents and counselling units in the various schools might be contributing to some of the undesirable anti-social phenomena violence, indiscipline, truancy, dishonesty and ultimate dwindling academic performance visibly associated with the youths. It is important therefore, for the need to stern down the tide of moral decadence among students in the society. It is worthy to note that, this is a collective mandate for the parents, school administrators, teachers, government and the society as a whole.

Therefore, it is important to investigate the perception of teachers in terms of forms, causes and strategies of how to reduce moral decadence among students since the teachers interact with the students very closely and would therefore be able to proffer solutions to this hydra-headed menace.

Research Questions

1. What are the teachers' perceived forms of moral decadence common among secondary school students in Ilorin?
2. What are the teachers' perceived factors responsible for moral decadence among secondary school students in Ilorin?
3. What are the teachers' perceived strategies for reducing moral decadence among secondary school students in Ilorin?

METHODOLOGY

The study used the descriptive survey design. This involves the collection of data in order to answer the research questions on teachers' perception, causes, and strategies for combating moral decadence among secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis. The population of this study was made up of all the Christian Religious Teachers in both junior and senior secondary schools in Ilorin. All the CRS teachers (135) in the schools were purposively sampled because that is the total number of teachers teaching CRS in the schools. Researcher-designed questionnaire was prepared and administered on the respondents. The questionnaires were a closed-ended type, which was constructed in relation to the topic of the investigation. Four-point Likert scale type was used to construct the questionnaire which range from Strongly agreed (4points), Agreed (3points), Disagreed (2 points) and Strongly disagreed (1point). The questionnaire contains a total of 36 items. An instrument is said to be valid when, it measures adequately what it is supposed to measure. The instrument was given to two lecturers in the Department of Social Sciences Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin to ascertain its content and face validity and the questionnaire satisfied both content and face validity. The Cronbach Alpha of internal consistency was used to determine the validity. The reliability value of the questionnaire was 0.81 which implies that the instrument is reliable. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions.

RESULTS

A cut off score of 2.50 was used as the baseline for determining participant's responses.

Research Question 1: What are the teachers' perceived forms of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ilorin?

TABLE 1. Perceived forms of Moral decadence among secondary school students

S/No	ITEM	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Cultism	2.72	1.18	Perceived
2	Drug Abuse	2.62	1.07	Perceived
3	Sexual Immorality	2.96	1.04	Perceived
4	Improper school uniform	1.84	1.04	Not Perceived
5	Disobedience to school authority	2.83	1.36	Perceived
6	Bullying	2.58	1.31	Perceived
7	Dishonesty	2.65	1.23	Perceived
8	Examination Malpractices	2.71	1.07	Perceived
9	Truancy	2.70	1.36	Perceived
10	Vandalism	2.62	1.19	Perceived
11	Alcoholism	2.61	1.05	Perceived
12	Indecent dressing	2.72	1.06	Perceived

Grand mean 2.63

As revealed in Table 1, the mean score of all the items except item 4 were above 2.50. This implies that there is high perception of different forms of moral decadence among students.

Research Question 2: What are the teachers' perceived factors responsible for moral decadence?

TABLE 2. Factors responsible for moral decadence

S/No	ITEM	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Poor Parental guidance	2.81	1.13	Perceived
2	Social Media	3.32	1.15	Perceived
3	Lack of guidance and counselling	2.81	1.04	Perceived
4	Poor group influence	2.06	1.08	Perceived
5	Poverty	2.84	1.08	Perceived
6	Unconducive learning environment	2.27	0.96	Not Perceived
7	Craze for wealth	2.76	1.07	Perceived
8	Parents leaving the roles to teachers	2.82	1.08	Perceived
9	Parental separation	2.74	1.06	Perceived
10	Absence of moral education	2.55	1.07	Not Perceived
11	Mobile phones	2.41	1.05	Perceived
12	Ineffective school management strategies	2.36	1.09	Perceived

Grand mean 2.63

As revealed in Table 2, respondents agreed that the items listed above were the causes of moral decadence which is above 2.5. However, items (6) unconducive learning environment and absence of moral education were not perceived as causes of moral decadence among students which fell below 2.5.

Research Question 3: What are the teachers' perceived strategies for reducing moral decadence among students?

TABLE 3. Mean responses of teachers perceived strategies for combating moral decadence among students

S/No	ITEM	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Parents should devote more time to their children upbringing	2.98	2.56	Perceived
2	Strict and adequate supervision should be provided	2.64	1.58	Perceived
3	Teaching of moral education in the school	2.67	1.52	Perceived
4	Less emphasis on materialism	3.54	1.54	Perceived
5	Provided leadership by example	3.62	1.02	Perceived
6	Emphasis should be placed on right values	2.98	1.68	Perceived
7	Discipline and contentment should be encouraged	2.68	1.82	Perceived
8	Recreational facilities should be provided	2.75	1.57	Perceived
9	Strict adherence to rules and regulations	2.83	1.53	Perceived
10	Counselling centres should be functional	2.42	1.32	Perceived
11	Censor media content	2.62	1.06	Perceived
12	Organise talk, symposium, lectures and conferences	2.32	1.23	Perceived

Grade mean 2.83

Table 3 presents the analysis of the respondents on the strategies for combating moral decadence among secondary school students. From the study, the grand mean 2.83 revealed that there is high level of strategies to be used to combat moral decadence in schools.

DISCUSSIONS

The study sought to know teachers perceived forms of moral decadence among secondary school students. The result from table 1 revealed that students manifest different forms of moral decadence in schools. Students were seen using ICT devices copying materials from their

phone to answer scripts. Moreover, the same devices were used to store pornographic materials, indecent movies, cult related materials and pictures such as nudity. This is in line with the findings of Bashar et al. (2020) who asserted that moral decadence in schools includes acts like sexual abuse, drug abuse, examination malpractice, insubordination, sexual immorality and other vices. There is lack of respect for constituted authority, outright disobedience to school rules and regulation. Tait (2015) observed that there are ugly experiences of disobedience, stealing, bullying, lateness to school, insincerity, sexual challenges and the likes among students which has now attained pronounced heights. This was also corroborated by the findings of Oguji and Echefu (2022) that a high level of moral decadence exists among secondary school students such as absenteeism, cultism, indecent dressing and truancy. Nabiswa, Misigo and Makhanu (2016) also agreed that behaviours such as truancy, drug and alcohol abuse, promiscuity, skipping class, riots, smoking, vandalism, fighting, reporting late for class and insulting, resistance to change and a host of other negative behaviours constitute deviant acts in the school environment. Odebode (2019) also opined that moral decadence among students in Nigeria schools remained a source of concern to stakeholders as it had caused a lot of mental, emotional and physical damage in the society to the extent that schools and colleges have lost their sacred character as formation centres and have become breeding ground for thugs, secret cults, gangsters, rapists and prostitutes.

This study also revealed in table 2 that poor parental guidance, peer group pressure, craze for materialism and poverty were some of the causes of moral decadence among secondary school students. This implies that the majority of the secondary school students are yet to internalize the right moral behaviour into their self-concept, and if appropriate actions are taken in good time, it can lead the students from becoming deviants in the future. The finding is in agreement with previous studies Alidizulwi (2000) emphasised that many parents are not involved in the education of their children causing poor results and high dropout rates. It has been observed that majority of parents do not care about their children's welfare and are always ready to abide with whatever their children request from them even when they know that it is not in the best for the upbringing of the children. While Bowman (2004) and Ngwokabuenui (2015) believed that parents' failure to discipline their children is identified as the greatest contributing factor to moral decadence in schools. This is due to the fact that when the children failed to heed to the instruction of their parent, by the time they get to the school the teacher would not be able to pass information to discipline them as expected. The findings of the study found a significant relationship between the parental separation, poor parental guidance, family structure of the students and moral decadence. This outcome implies that the family structure of the students is a significant determinant factor of engagement in deviant behaviour. Also peer group accounted for another cause of moral decadence of moral decadence among students. According to Ndubisi (2013), poor peer relationship is associated with social cognitive skill deficit which has extra ordinary influence on the child's conduct in school.

Moreover, the study revealed that unconducive learning environment is not a cause of moral decadence whereas, Kiwale (2017), Engenti (2020) and Bolu-Steve (2017) opined that overcrowded classrooms and unconducive learning environment, enforceable school rules and regulation are factors that contribute to moral decadence in schools.

The result of Table 3 revealed some strategies that could be used to positively reduce the incidences of moral decadence among secondary school students in the study area. The study suggested that parents should create more time for their children upbringing, teaching of moral education should be encouraged in schools, and emphasis should be paid on the right type of values in the society. The results of the study are in agreement with the submission of Ellenwood (2007) that the best strategies for curbing moral decadence involve the use of moral

instruction not only on collective values but also challenging them to think analytically and contextually and to make informed decisions using social and historical contexts. Students could be better instructed on the importance of good behaviour by means of storytelling which facilitated a significant effect on students' interest and shape their behaviour. Parents, elders and teachers should provide leadership by example for the students to emulate. This supports the view of Steven (2013) that with adequate parental guidance moral decadence would reduce immoral acts among the students. Osankile and Falana (2011) remarked that moral instruction in schools when emphasised in schools would seek to address all unwholesome attitudes of children while Ogunsanya (1999), Mbatic et al 2009; Minja & Goodluck (2010) believed that if parents can focus on the cardinal roles of disciplining their children, they would in turn become great leaders and moral decadence will be a thing of the past.

CONCLUSION

It was established from the study that moral decadence is manifested in different forms among secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis, ranging from cultism, drug abuse, truancy, indecent dressing and many others. The causes of moral decadence were also highlighted which may lead to poor performance, school dropout and in turn lead to irresponsible future citizens. Parents were to therefore devote more time to children upbringing, enjoined to show leadership by example, there should be less emphasis on materialism and censor media content available to students. As guidance and counselling is a very dynamic one with new approaches and techniques emerging every day the world over. Parents and teachers should avail themselves of how best to guide the children from engaging in decadent acts in order to be good ambassadors of their school and family

Recommendation

1. Parents should be up and doing in discipline and provide the basic necessities to their children.
2. Guidance and counselling centres should be utilised to the benefit of the students.
3. Lectures, seminars and symposia should be organised for the students at regular intervals.
4. Moral education should be made compulsory for the students.

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About the Authors

Ojo, Oludare David is a lecturer at the University of Ilorin, Faculty of Education. His major area of specialisation is in Religious Education and Curriculum Development

Aliyu Yunus is a lecturer at the University of Ilorin in the Department of Arts Education. His area of specialisation is in Religious Education and Curriculum Development

Ogundele Omolara is a lecturer at the Ekiti State University in the Department of Arts and Language Education. Her area of specialisation is Religious Education and Curriculum Development