

UNMASKING THE NEXUS BETWEEN PARENTING AND IMMORALITY: TOWARDS EFFECTIVE GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to shed light on the interconnectedness of parenting and immorality in contemporary Nigerian society. It explores the impact of parental influence on the development of moral values in children and the consequences of immorality on societal well-being. The paper examines the intricate relationship between parenting and immorality in Nigerian secondary schools, emphasising the need for effective guidance and counselling interventions. It also highlights parenting practises, factors influencing parenting practises, family dynamics, and societal influences in shaping children's and students' moral development generally. Additionally, it discusses the importance of guidance and counselling services in addressing moral challenges and promoting positive behaviour among Nigerian secondary school students. Drawing from existing research and theoretical perspectives, this write-up underscores the need for proactive measures to address these challenges and foster a more ethical and inclusive society. The paper concludes and recommends, among others, that the government should fund and establish guidance and counselling centres at all levels of the Nigerian educational system, to enable psychologists and counsellors to provide all round functional, psychological, and counselling services to all and sundry.

Keywords: Parenting, Immorality, Guidance and counselling

INTRODUCTION

Parenting and immorality in Nigerian secondary schools are complex and interconnected issues that have garnered attention in recent years. The cultural, socioeconomic, and educational dynamics of Nigerian society contribute to the challenges faced by parents, students, and educators in maintaining moral standards within secondary schools.

In Nigeria, parenting plays a crucial role in shaping the behaviour and moral development of children. However, changing social dynamics, economic pressures, and modern influences have presented significant challenges to traditional parenting practises. This has resulted in some children not receiving adequate guidance and supervision from their parents, which can contribute to behavioural and moral challenges in secondary schools.

Immorality within Nigerian secondary schools manifests in various forms, including sexual promiscuity, substance abuse, bullying, cheating, and violence. These issues are influenced by factors such as peer pressure, exposure to inappropriate media content, limited sex education, inadequate school guidance, and limited parental involvement. Therefore, understanding the complexities of parenting and immorality in Nigerian secondary schools is essential for devising effective strategies and interventions. By addressing these challenges, stakeholders can create a conducive environment for students' moral development and overall well-being. Collaborative efforts between parents, schools, government agencies, and communities are crucial in mitigating the impact of immorality and fostering positive values among Nigerian secondary school students.

In essence, this paper explores parenting styles (authoritative parenting, permissive parenting, authoritarian parenting, and neglectful parenting), key factors influencing parenting practises (cultural and religious beliefs, socio-economic factors, and parental education and awareness), the nexus between parenting and immorality under the following subheadings: Influence of parenting on development, family

dynamics and moral behaviour, the role of guidance and counselling on moral development, societal influences and moral challenges, immorality and societal consequences, as well as the way forward to curb immorality in the Nigerian secondary school system.

Definition of Keywords:

Parenting: This means a process of bringing up and caring for a child. Denga and Denga (2007) opined that the process may be carried out by biological or blood parents, or the parent in the case of a single parent. The process of child parenting may also involve surrogate parents (stepparents or special care-givers) who are not real parents but are acting in loco parentis. Parenting involves the responsibility and obligations of parents to meet the needs of the child, and teach the child ethical and spiritual principles of society. It is when parents fail in their duties that the issue of inadequate parenting arises. (Uwe, Asuquo, and Ekuri). Parenting also refers to the process of raising and nurturing children, encompassing the responsibilities, behaviours, and strategies employed by parents or guardians to support the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of their children. It involves providing love, care, guidance, setting boundaries, and instilling values and life skills in order to promote the well-being and positive growth of children. This goes a long way towards curbing immorality in children.

Immorality: Human actions as individuals or groups are guided by certain values. These rules categorise human actions as good or bad, morally right or wrong. Kant (2002) described morality as binding laws that ought to govern human actions. It determines what is right or wrong as accepted in society. Immorality, on the other hand, connotes the unacceptable behaviour or actions of men as individuals or social beings in society. The unaccepted act may have a positive or negative effect, be noticed or not, and have an immediate or long-term effect on society. Whatever the level of its impact may be, immorality needs to be eliminated from the lives of individuals, groups, students, or communities. Immorality can also be referred to as behaviours or actions that are considered contrary to accepted moral principles, values, or ethical standards within a particular society or cultural context. Immoral actions typically involve a disregard for principles such as honesty, fairness, respect for others, and adherence to societal norms. Examples of immoral behaviour may include dishonesty, theft, violence, bullying, substance abuse, or engaging in illicit activities. At this juncture, in order to guide students against unacceptable behaviour that may lead to immorality, guidance and counselling can set the pace

Guidance and Counselling: Guidance and counselling refers to the process of providing a safe and supportive environment where individuals can examine their actions, understand the impact of their behaviour, and work towards personal growth and moral development. It also involves helping individuals develop empathy, respect for others, and a stronger sense of ethical values. Nwachukwu (2007) asserted that guidance and counselling is a systematic and organised education-helping service given by a professionally trained counsellor or therapist to a learner of any age, within or outside the school walls, at an appropriate level, to assist them in understanding themselves, their situation, and their environment, discovering their interests, potentials, and opportunities in life, and learning how best to effectively utilise their assets as well as maximising their weaknesses to live a maximum productive life. Ali (2002) regarded guidance and counselling as a process of helping individuals become aware of their personal identities and perceive themselves in relation to their environmental and interpersonal relationships, such as attitudes. Guidance means to direct, pilot, manage, steer, aid, assist, lead, and interact, while counselling is seen as a process by which a person with a problem is helped by a professional counsellor to voluntarily change his behaviour and clarify his attitude, idea, and goal so that his problems may be solved (Tambuwal, 2010).

PARENTING STYLES

Authoritative parenting: This parenting style involves setting clear rules and expectations while providing emotional support and guidance. Research suggests that adolescents raised in authoritative households are more likely to develop moral values and exhibit prosocial behaviour. These parents tend to foster open communication, encourage independence, and promote mutual respect (Adekoya and Adebayo, 2017).

Permissive parenting: This parenting style is characterised by a lack of clear rules and discipline. Parents who are permissive may prioritise their child's happiness over enforcing boundaries. This approach can sometimes lead to adolescents developing a sense of entitlement and engaging in immoral behaviour due to a lack of guidance and structure (Opara, 2014).

Authoritarian parenting: This parenting style is characterised by strict rules and high levels of control. While authoritarian parenting may prevent immoral behaviour in some cases, it can also result in rebellion, secrecy, and dishonesty among adolescents. This may occur as a reaction to excessive control or an inability to develop their own moral compass (Ebigbo and Nwagwu, 2015).

Neglectful parenting: Neglectful parenting involves a lack of involvement and attention from parents. Adolescents raised in neglectful households may experience a lack of emotional support and guidance, leading to an increased risk of engaging in immoral behaviour as they seek validation and connection elsewhere (Baumrind, 2002).

Some key factors influencing parenting practises are:

1. Cultural and Religious Beliefs: Cultural and religious beliefs shape parenting practises and influence what is considered moral or immoral within a community.
2. Socioeconomic Factors: Socioeconomic status can impact parenting practises and the prevalence of immorality, as economic instability and limited resources can affect parents' ability to provide adequate guidance and supervision.
3. Parental Education and Awareness: Parental education and awareness about child development, moral values, and responsible parenting influence parenting practises.

THE NEXUS BETWEEN PARENTING AND IMMORALITY

Influence of Parenting on Moral Development:

Parenting practises significantly impact the moral development of adolescents. The type of parenting style, parental involvement, communication patterns, and family values all contribute to the formation of moral values and behaviours in children. Adequate parental guidance, positive role modelling, and effective communication between parents and children are essential in fostering moral development. Parenting styles, values, and guidance have a significant impact on a child's moral development. Studies have explored the relationship between parenting practises and children's moral behaviour in Nigeria. For instance, a study by Omoteso and Alebiosu (2013) titled "Parenting Styles and Moral Development of Adolescents in Nigeria" examined how parenting styles influenced the moral development of Nigerian adolescents. The study found that authoritative parenting, characterised by high warmth and high control, was associated with higher levels of moral development. This invariability indicates that permissive parenting styles are characterised by lack of clear rules and discipline

Family Dynamics and Moral Behaviour:

Family dynamics play a crucial role in shaping a child's moral compass. Factors such as parental warmth, monitoring, discipline, and family cohesion influence students' attitudes and behaviours. The presence of a supportive family environment, where parents provide guidance and set appropriate boundaries, can contribute to the development of moral values and discourage immoral behaviour. (Akande and Adeniyi, 2018).

The Role of Guidance and Counselling in Moral Development:

Guidance and counselling services play a pivotal role in addressing moral challenges among Nigerian secondary school students. The aim of guidance and counselling in relation to students' immorality is not to pass judgement or condemn students, but to provide a platform for students to discuss their concerns, seek guidance, and develop skills to make ethical decisions. Effective counselling programmes should incorporate

value education, character development, and proactive strategies to address moral issues. (Adeyemo and Adeyinka, 2018).

Societal Influences and Moral Challenges:

Nigerian secondary school students are influenced by various societal factors that can contribute to their challenges. Peer pressure, exposure to media (including social media, television, and movies), and community norms can shape students' behaviour and values. Addressing negative influences and promoting positive socialisation are crucial to mitigating the impact of these external factors. (Oyo and Ayodele, 2016). Adolescents may be influenced by their peers' attitudes and behaviours, and media platforms can expose them to explicit content that may conflict with their moral values. (Asagba and Ojeme, 2016). Additionally, positive peer influence can reinforce moral values, while negative peer pressure can contribute to the prevalence of immorality.

Immorality and societal consequences:

The prevalence of immorality in society has wide-ranging consequences for social cohesion and well-being. Immoral behaviour, such as dishonesty, selfishness, and a lack of empathy, weakens the social fabric and fosters an environment of mistrust and disillusionment (Kaptein, 2019). It hampers the development of a sense of civic responsibility and undermines the collective effort required for a just and equitable society (Tyler, 2006). Moreover, immoral actions perpetuate inequality and contribute to the marginalisation of vulnerable populations (Shaw, 2003).

THE WAY FORWARD

To curb immorality, guidance and counselling programmes can play a crucial role in promoting ethical behaviour, personal growth, and responsible decision-making. Here are some suggestions for implementing effective guidance and counselling programmes aimed at addressing immorality:

1. Education on moral values: Develop a comprehensive curriculum that focuses on teaching moral values, ethics, and character development. This curriculum should be integrated into the regular academic curriculum and cover topics such as integrity, respect, empathy, honesty, and responsibility.
2. Individual counselling: Provide individual counselling sessions for students who may be struggling with moral dilemmas or making unethical choices. Trained counsellors can help students explore their values, address underlying issues, and develop strategies for making morally sound decisions.
3. Group discussions and workshops: Conduct group discussions and workshops to facilitate open dialogue about ethical issues. These sessions can encourage critical thinking, perspective-taking, and empathy among students. It's important to create a safe and inclusive environment where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and opinions.
4. Peer mentoring and role models: Establish peer mentoring programmes where older students or trusted individuals act as role models for younger students. Peer mentors can offer guidance, support, and positive examples of moral behaviour, thus influencing their peers in a positive way.
5. Parental involvement: Engage parents and guardians in the guidance and counselling programmes. Organise workshops or seminars for parents to enhance their understanding of their children's moral development and provide them with tools to reinforce ethical values at home.
6. Awareness campaigns: Conduct awareness campaigns that highlight the consequences of immoral behaviour and emphasise the benefits of ethical conduct. These campaigns can include posters, videos, social media initiatives, and community outreach programmes.

7. Monitoring and evaluation: Regularly assess the effectiveness of the guidance and counselling programmes through surveys, feedback sessions, and data analysis. This feedback will help identify areas for improvement and ensure that the programmes remain relevant and impactful.

CONCLUSION

This paper concludes by summarising the key findings and underscoring the urgency of addressing the interconnected challenges of parenting and immorality. It emphasises the need for collaborative efforts among policymakers, educators, parents, and communities through guidance and counselling services to foster a more ethical and inclusive society. By prioritising moral values and integrity, societies can enhance social development and create a brighter future for generations to come. Parenting practises, family dynamics, societal influences, and effective guidance and counselling services are interconnected factors that influence the moral behaviour of Nigerian secondary school students. By understanding this nexus, educators, policymakers, and counsellors can work collaboratively to develop comprehensive interventions that promote positive values and address immorality in Nigerian secondary schools.

It is important to note that parenting practises alone cannot entirely account for immoral behaviour in adolescents. Other factors such as peer influence, exposure to media, socio-economic conditions, and cultural norms also play significant roles. To address the issue of immorality in adolescents, it is essential for parents to adopt authoritative parenting practises that provide clear guidance, promote open communication, and emphasise the importance of moral values. Additionally, society as a whole should work towards creating supportive environments that foster positive values and provide opportunities for moral development among adolescents. This can be achieved through education, community programmes, and collaboration between parents, schools, and other relevant institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Provide training and professional development opportunities for teachers and school staff to equip them with the knowledge and skills to address ethical issues effectively. This can include workshops on counselling techniques, conflict resolution, and moral education strategies.
2. Community participation should be encouraged to provide moral values and social cohesion.
3. Establish partnerships with external organisations or professionals who can provide specialised support for students facing severe ethical challenges or engaging in illegal activities. These referrals can ensure that students receive appropriate intervention when needed.

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