



## **A Case for a Moral Education Programme in the Nigerian Secondary School Curriculum**

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### **Abstract**

Moral education has been, in some form, an overall goal of every school in different nations of the world including Nigeria. Education in Nigeria has a specific mission of producing morally balanced individuals who portray high quality of moral standards. Hence, this article examined moral education in Nigeria and its ability to foster moral and character development to create a sound and balanced environment grounded in moral and spiritual values. Firstly, the paper addressed moral education and its functions in general; it discussed social problems among teenagers, educational responses to moral decay, and the need for moral education. This study also explained the probable solutions to the problem of moral dilemma in Nigeria by encouraging the integration of moral education in secondary school curriculum. Library and internet-sourced materials were used as a research instrument to gather useful information needed. The findings revealed that the prevalence of moral decay has greatly hindered advancement in Nigeria and the phenomenon has continued to be a recurrent tale and thus calls for urgent action to enhance moral standards of the youths and teenagers. Therefore, the paper concludes by justifying the need for moral education in the secondary school as antidote to deliver the youths from moral decay and allied social ills prevalent in Nigeria. There is need for a better-planned moral education curriculum capable of preparing students to contribute effectively to national development.

**Keyword:** Moral Education, curriculum, values, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

Moral education has been a serious problem in schools for decades despite the fact that content and methodology have improved. Mainly, in this era of globalisation, moral education is largely affected



by community norms, beliefs and values, and thus has a huge influence on society. For instance, the Holy Qur'an says: "You are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah" (Q 3: 110). The above verse emphasises the position of moral education in Islam and as a toll for building and sustaining a dynamic society.

Presently, moral education has become one of the major concerns of the stakeholders since societies are facing an increasing number of social problems among youths and teenagers. For instance, Jimba (2021) reported the case of Almajiri children in the northern part of Nigeria who used to steal people's money and food on the street, and commit other forms of acts of immorality. Perhaps, this is why Lawal (2010) said teachers should teach moral education to their students.

In Nigeria, social ills among teenagers are at a level of concern and worrisome, and have become more serious over the year. Presently, every newspaper frequently presents different cases of social ills and crimes by youths and teenagers apart from those broadcasts on television. The case of Almajiri in northern Nigeria is a typical example; one sees the children along the street in tattered and dirty cloth, picking unhealthy food to eat on the street, begging for money, engaging in anti-social activities when they are expected to be in school (Jimba, 2021). These problems are not peculiar to Nigerian society alone as some other developing countries are also facing similar social malaises. The majority of teenagers around the world are facing similar social issues, such as drug abuse, teen pregnancy, abortion, alcohol consumption, and child abandonment among others.

Social problem among teenagers is a worldwide phenomenon and increasingly widespread. For instance, Malaysian teenagers faced some social problems, including crime, violence, drug abuse, adultery, rapes, baby dumping and others. It was reported that the corpse of a little girl was discovered at a bus stop close to Johor Bahru. It was also reported that a foetus was dumped and later found in Bandar Puteri Puchong, Selangor by the roadside (New Straits Times, 2010).

One of the major social problems in Nigeria in the 21st century is the threat of youth social and moral decadence. Anti-social activities are uncontrolled among youths and teenagers in the contemporary



Nigerian society. This is evident in the surge of social problems witnessed on regular bases. These problems which include Murder, robbery, riot, cultism, ethno-religious militancy, kidnapping, armed robbery, brutal murder, assassination, ritual murders, drug abuse, violence, vandalism, teen pregnancy, abortion, and baby dumping among teenagers represent only a few of the categories of crises among the youth in the society. These social ills pose serious threats in all ramifications to national development (Tamuno, 1991& Abdul Kabir, 2014).

As observed by Akinriola, Isaac, Rubina, Olutosin, Susheela & Joshua (2015) the estimated account for inducing abortion is currently between 20,000 to 50,000 maternal annual deaths in Nigeria. From 2009 to 2013, violence linked to the Boko Haram insurgency resulted in 3,600 deaths. Every newspaper is overflowing with stories about adverse social conditions. Every day, we can hear or read stories about social ills and the crimes by youths and teenagers on newspaper and television. Therefore, moral decadence among young people is now a matter of urgent concern in Nigeria and other nations of the world.

### **Concept of Moral Education**

The concept “moral” refers to the ability to distinguish between the right and the wrong. The term is said to be related to individual’s behaviours or conducts, and it has to do with goodness and badness of behaviour. Moral education has been defined as the process of guiding man’s character development. In other words, it is the teaching of standards of right or wrong behaviour. However, what moral education seeks to achieve as its aims is man’s ability to do what is right in the society and shun what is wrong (Lawal, 2010).

Ajuzie (2006) probably gives the most comprehensive definition of moral education. According to him, moral education is “a process of getting the learner to develop responsible attitudes towards others, in fairness, under free and rational considerations and to develop the skills of judgment after critical and logical reflections over what is considered to be right or wrong and the feelings for the others”. Additionally, moral education is a process which is aimed at helping individual acquire those virtues or moral habits that will help them



individually live good life and actively participate and contribute to the developments of their society.

In the same vein, Jingyi, Wen and Xuerong (2021) asserted that moral development refers to teaching the virtues of honesty, serving the people, loving the country, and collectivism. It is seen as an aesthetic appreciation based on dialogic, life-practice, oriented activities, emotion and care.

No doubt that, if moral education is well-planned and implemented, it will serve as an eye opener to prevent moral decay in the society and equally increase the school culture value. Values such as honesty, integrity, fairness, tolerance, hard work, respect for law, respecting the rights of others, respecting people, obeying the rules and regulation, perfecting their actions and characters are necessary for young people to succeed in life. Other characters such as wise use of resources are also necessary for sustainable society. Thus, through effective delivery of moral instruction, national development can be guaranteed.

It should be noted that, moral education at the early stage should be preponderance of learning specific moral rules and principles without sophisticated justifications. The starting point should be the inculcation of rules of ethics, courtesies, civility and good manners. There is no doubt that, a child who has been exposed to the importance of considering the feelings of others in his environment would no doubt develop into a morally mature adult (Ayeni, 2012).

### **Manifestation of Social ills among Teenagers in Nigeria**

Every society is faced with one problem or the other. Teenagers are prone to various forms of antisocial activities and moral decadence. Therefore, Nigeria society is tense with insecurity, fear, instability, lack of harmony and various kinds of social vices among youth and teenagers. The prominent social problems among teenagers include drug abuse, rape, robbery, cultism, vandalism and other immoral acts that are dangerous to the home, community, schools and nation. Surprisingly, all of these problems are inter-connected. The social evils that are plaguing Nigeria society today may not only give bad effects to individual, but a large number of peoples in the society.



For instance, drug use is an increasing problem among teenagers in today's societies. The act of smoking in some cases has led to drug abuse such as marijuana, heroin and morphine. Drug abuse has become a threat to the lives and success of the youth, and alcohol consumption and tobacco smoking enhance the risk of using other drugs later by the youths. These problems often result in adverse health, social, and economic consequences for the teenagers and their families. Furthermore, drug abuse has some social, economic, psychological, cultural, physical, moral, and health consequences that may lead to poverty, disability, maladjustment or death of the abuser (Abdu-Raheem, 2013). Thus, drug abuse is a serious problem among teenager in Nigeria which has slowly destroyed the life of some youth, sentenced some to a life of delinquency, turn some to the state of insanity and in some cases lead to untimely death. In a nut shell, the use of drugs can ruin the user's health, economy and social life.

Another identified serious problem among teenagers today is teen pregnancy, abortion and baby dumping. As a result of globalisation and socialisation, sexual activity has increased among teenagers. The number of unplanned or unwanted teen pregnancies is also alarming. Numerous findings have reported significant decline in the age of sexual debut in Nigeria as more young people engage in premarital sex and have multiple sex partners (Okpani & Okpani, 2000). Similarly, the rate at which kids are being sexually harassed in Nigeria society nowadays is disturbing as there are increasing cases of rape on both male and female kids by irresponsible elders which in some cases lead to an unwanted pregnancy. For instance, it was reported that a mechanic kidnapped a 13-year-old girl and kept her and repeatedly raped her for five days, from October 16 to 20, 2014 (Pulse NG, 2014). This kind of reckless abominable act may make the innocent little girl conceive an unwanted pregnancy that perhaps might ruin the life of the poor soul, and make her seeking an abortion or other alternatives.

Moreover, unplanned or unwanted pregnancy in some cases leads to abortion or baby dumping. There are several cases of newly born babies dumped in gutters, pit latrine, rubbish dumps, bushes, police station, hospitals, churches and other places where they may be found and taken care of. In this connection, it was reported that a 17-year-old



girl was arrested by the police in Kubwa, Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory, after she allegedly dumped a day-old baby she gave birth to at a refuse site at Phase 2, Site 2, in the area, (Daily Trust, 2015). Similarly, a baby estimated to be about three months old was also found near a motel in the Abule-Egba suburb of Lagos (Daily Trust, 2015). Accordingly, Okunola and Ojo (2012) stated that “children can be, abandoned in gutters, pit latrines, or rubbish dumps in the bush or along pathways near places like police stations, hospitals and several other places where they can be easily seen and cared for”. Consequently, sex education and moral instruction should be intensified in schools to control and curb incidents of teenage pregnancy.

Abortion is another problem rampant among teenagers with unwanted pregnancy. As reported by Shittu, Zachariah, Ajayi, Oguntola, Izegbu and Ashiru (2007) in their findings that in every 5 teenage pregnancies in Nigeria is unplanned and half of these unplanned pregnancies are terminated. The shame of the unwanted pregnancy leads majority of pregnant teenagers sought or engaged in an unsafe abortion that leads to destruction, sorrow and maternal death in the country. Abortion may also have a great impact on a teenager’s life such as threatened future fertility potentials. It was noted further that infection (PID) is one of the commonest causes of infertility due to tubal blockage in Nigerian women which are as a result of illegal abortion.

### **Educational Responses to Moral Decay**

Education is generally believed to be a strong weapon for the facilitation and promotion of national unity and international understanding. It is fundamental to the pace of political, social and economic development of any nation. Every educational system is founded upon philosophical and social bases. Education in Nigeria is aimed at developing basic knowledge, skills and competence to enable the individual to contribute to the development of the nation and for the transmission of the culture of the people to new generations (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2014) As a result, education in Nigeria is concerned with imparting values and morality to students who will participate in the development of the nation.

It can be argued based on the foregoing that values such as honesty, integrity, fairness, tolerance, hard work, respect for law,



respecting the rights of others, respecting people, obeying the rules and regulation, perfecting their actions and characters are necessary for young people to succeed in life. Therefore, teachers should not only pay attention to students' academic performance but also to value teaching to enhance the development of students (Jingyi, Wen and Xuerong, 2021). The achievement of these lofty qualities is not, as a matter of fact, the responsibility of formal school system, but there are other stakeholders that have significant roles to play. It is in this regard that Fatimoh (2004) submitted that the responsibility of child's training does not only lies with his or her biological parents, but also with neighbours, community and the society at large. However, the basic education child needs always comes from home and the child lives in a society whose impacts on him/her cannot be undervalued.

Therefore, everyone has a role to play in the high degree of social problems rampant among youths and teenagers in Nigeria. For school to perform its role, moral education was introduced into Nigerian school system in order to inculcate moral characters and attitudes in the students so that they would become responsible citizens. In support of this, Ojedokun, Adesina and Adeyemi, (2010) opined that moral education has recently been introduced to the school system in Nigeria as a measure of curbing social ills rampant in the society. Consequently, all levels of the Nigerian educational system is geared towards fostering students' ethical and social developments, providing them with the necessary skill to fight for the development of the nation and help them realise the importance of a healthy society. It is hoped that, in this way and through effective delivery of moral education instruction remedies can be found to the situation of our society, free from the social crisis of our society, bring progress to the community and maintain the zeal of development.

### **Moral Education in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects**

Moral education is a subject matter that develops in learners the right type of values and attitudes that are needed to create a peaceful and sustainable society. Basically, Moral education teaches values that would enable peaceful social integration in students. Values like maintenance of discipline, respect for law and order, recognition of the principles of cultural relativity and the effect of cultural ethnocentrism,



respect for other people's rights, formation of social competency and citizenship education (Adesina & Odejebi, 2011). These values are believed to be important factors in human relationship in society and essential for the development of the individuals as an active member of the society.

Furthermore, as a result of the efforts of the government to implement the country's philosophy of education through the school subjects, subjects like Social Studies, Religious Studies and Moral Education were introduced in the school curriculum. Hence, moral education is everything schools do to influence how students think, feel, and act regarding issues of right and wrong. Nigerian public schools have a long tradition of concern about moral education, and lately this concern has grown more determine. Consequently, the aforementioned subjects were introduced into the school curricula to find solution to the crises. Hence, it was the government's commitment to produce citizens that are progressive, disciplined and caring in order to work for a better future of the Nigerian society. Yet there is an increasing protest against the way values are addressed in schools.

Problems and barriers against the accomplishment of the goals set for Moral education are poor teaching methods, over population, poor motivation, corruption by law enforcement agents and politicians and the inconsistencies of government policies with regard to education (Adesina, 2010), politics of ethnicity and political cleavages (Alapiki & Barikor, 2002) and the pervasive influence of colonization (Ademoyega, 1981; Alapiki, 2005).

It could be seen from the foregoing that, the introduction of Moral education to the school curriculum is to prepare students to live harmoniously in a society where many different groups co-exist.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has examined moral education and the need for a moral education programme in the Nigerian secondary school curriculum. The findings of study revealed that, the prevalence of moral decay both locally and internationally has manifested a lot of devastation in human civilisation. The acts of immorality have greatly debilitated advancement in developing countries. Even in the most advanced countries, the phenomenon of social problems among the youth and





teenagers has continued to be a reoccurring tale and thus call for urgent need to restore moral standards of the youths and teenagers.

This paper has therefore juxtaposed the relevance of moral education as a moral antidote to deliver the Nigerians from miserable moral decays and social ills that are prevalent in Nigerian society and promote the growth and development of Nigerian society. Therefore, it could be concluded that there can be no national development without regarding moral education as a foundation for a sustainable development.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommends that moral education should be intensified in schools to control and curb social problems in the society. Also, the community should participate in instilling moral values in the teaming youths and should not see it as the sole responsibility of the school. Also, there is need for a well-planned moral education programme capable of preparing students with the knowledge and skills required to contribute effectively to the development of the nation. Finally, since the school system consists of learners from different religious and ethnic background with different orientation, moral education curriculum should cater for the needs of these learners.

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