SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' MORAL BEHAVIOR: A REALISTIC APPROACH. A CASE STUDY SOUTH WESTERN, NIGERIA

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Abstract:

It has been said that education is the best legacy; if you say education is expensive, try ignorance.Education, therefore, is the most important factor in the development of moral values and social practices. It also gives one a verge towards becoming a successful person, to be useful to oneself and to society atlarge. It is not only restricted to pursuing a degree for economic gain, rather attaining moral values and respect which will serve as guidelines to people and learn from the person. This study therefore, examined the statistically significant differences between gender and level of study of students towards their moral behavior among secondary school students in south-western part of Nigeria. Two research questions and hypotheses guided the study. The study employed descriptive survey design method. A sample of 365 secondary school students was drawn from the total population of 7011 through proportionate random sampling technique. The instrument used to obtain data was a self-developed questionnaire. Thus, the instrument was content validated by Subject Matter Experts (SME). The reliability coefficients of morality scale are.808 determined through Cronbach alpha technique for internal consistency. The findings of the study revealed that there were no significant differences between gender and level of study of respondents' moral behavior. It was therefore, recommended based on the results of the study that moral education must be imparted to all the secondary school students to develop moral behavior. Curriculum wing of Ministry of Education must involve teachers to design a separate course of morals for secondary school students in Nigeria.

Keywords: Moral, Value, Attitude, Students.

Introduction

Morality is the code of exemplary behavior which individuals show within a group. People have their views of good and bad and they like others to do themselves what they do to them. Morality is a way of accommodating members of the society with their opinions, personalities, thoughts and needs. It is not an individual function but a practice to be done collectively. It encompasses the major features of a person, his thoughts, ideas, feelings and dealings in any aspects of his actions. It is to live in a society in a compromising manner. To do the appreciable and to abstain from the condemnation is called morality (Afifa Khanam, 2008). More so, morality can be viewed from different perspectives and it is necessary to start with the simple definition of the word itself.It refers to the concept of human action which pertains to matters of right and wrong, or also referred to as "good and evil". It can be used to mean the generally accepted code of conduct and discipline in a society, or within a subgroup of society. It relates to values expressed as: a matter of individual choice, those values to which we ought to aspire; and those values shared within a culture, religious, secular, or philosophical community are now misused by people who have so called integrity (Vishalache Balakrishnan, 2010). Equally, morality is concerned with fundamental questions of right and wrong, justice, fairness, respect, kindness towards others and tolerance towards the views of other people, and choosing to do what is right, returning things to the rightful owner and basic human rights. Moral issues are mediated by sociocultural factors, since cultural values and norms have a strong bearing on how individuals think and act which is normal by every human being. Nevertheless, attitudes and behavior towards such issues as lying, stealing, murder, fornicating and the value of justice are generally considered to be shared across cultures (Nucci, 2001 in Afifa Khanam, 2008). Henceforth, this definition is clear when morality is spelt out and agreed upon by others. However, it becomes ambiguous when defined by different ethnic groups, especially in the multicultural Nigerian setting. Puka as cited by Vishalache Balakrishnan, (2010) argues that if we do not know what morality is we cannot teach it. In crucial ways we do not know what morality is, yet, we must teach it because it is of prime importance and must be learned. Furthermore, teaching must not be brainwashing; it must be moral. Consequently, morality cut across everybody and all nations and societies.

Likewise, moral, has been defined as standards, principles of good behavior. Thus, moral values imply behavior, respect, truthfulness, tolerance and attitude exhibited and encouraged by members of the society for the fact that they are both good and desirable to mankind generally as against those behaviors condemned and discouraged. Examples of moral values include faithfulness, humility, self-discipline, honesty, brotherliness, patience, hardworking, respect and truthfulness (Adam. Adesina M. L & Suhaila, H 2017; Ohwovorione 2013). However, most of the philosophers, such as Kurt Baier, Phillipa Foot, and Geoffrey Warnock, claim that morality prohibits actions such as killing, disrespect, immoralities, murder, cheating, slaying, assassination, causing pain, arrogance, deceiving, and breaking promises (Trezise 1996). Consequently, the study of Berkowitz pointed out that good moral system protects human rights, equitable access of everybody to all the material and human resource. It has clear definition for 'virtues' and 'vices' and it accommodates all the aspects of human life. It determines the actions on pleasures and pains. It defines limits for relationships. It facilitates the community to act acceptably in all spheres of life. For that reason, Morals are evaluated through logic, experience and proper judgment, whether this originates from culture, philosophy, religion, society or individual conscience. In the normative and universal sense, morality refers to an ideal code of conduct, discipline and politeness in the society which one would adopt in preference to alternatives by all rational people, under specified conditions. "To deny 'morality' in this sense is a position known as moral skepticism" (Berkowitz in Afifah 2008).

Moreover, Walker (2004) elucidates that "morality is a fundamental and pervasive aspect of human functioning with both interpersonal and intra psychic components: more specifically, it refers to voluntary behaviors that have, at least potentials of people of integrity, some social and interpersonal implications that are governed by internal psychological i.e., both cognitive and affective mechanisms".

Correspondingly, in the view of Ime & Unwanaobong (2014), moral conduct and discipline should lead youths to develop from a stage of anomie; often characterized by pre-morality to a stage where an individual is not forced to be moral and is personally convinced on standards that ought to guide his/her conduct in society which would help that child to grow in a well-mannered behavior. Additionally, the intra psychic aspects of moral functioning

elaborated by Walker have been noticeable and recognizable implications for our social interactions for the reason that our moral values, respect, obedient, tolerant, truthfulness, goals, and character are directly played out in our relationships with others. Secondly, this definition of morality asserts that moral functioning is essentially complicated, encompassing the dynamic interplay of thought, feeling, and behavior of individual in society (Walker, 2004). Besides, moral values are taught in moral education as certain acceptable, valuable and cherished qualities that are worthwhile in developing a sound character of human being in the society (Osaat and Ekpiwre in Ime & Unwanaobong 2014). However, moral problems in Nigeria of today has really backsterdized our enabling environment such that the young do not respect the old, dishonesty, intolerance, students lack manners and respect in schools, women no longer respect their husbands and also want to rule in their working places. In Nigerian society, a lot of effort has been made more so in religious homes in order to curb these ungodly acts (Kehinde, E. O. 2015). These moral problems are becoming a portion of great concern in society. As highlighted by many researchers such asOgungbeni et al. (2016) and Oyedepo (1986) discuss thatpossibly the problem plaster society today is the problem of identification of moral value when the value is lost, everything about moral will not be there. We have lost our moral value for our daily duty and value for all. We no longer regard work and duty as value. We put no value on clean environment; stealing intolerance disrespect and frauds are often seen as the order of the day which is normal within the society. Worst of all, we have taught our youth to maturein wrong values and a bad practice in behavior of consumption. In the same vein, Malomo (1986) categorically asserts thathis view of our moral ethical situation is that Nigeria is morally sick. our moral sickness is however, a unique product of certain unique internal biases and certain external have portrayed in such a way that people don't even correct immorality from the people. There is no doubt that there are crowds of moral problems confronting Nigeria as a nation. In essence one must be morally upright in one's life and train the children in that perspective and if nothing is done to urgently squeeze these problems' outgrowth, the nation may sink under its influence. Malomo (1986) further attests to those moral problems as follows:

> *"By moral "sickness" of Nigeria, I refer to that pan-national perverse goal, value, attitude and manner of life which in its*

*malignant fierceness in destroying every facet of life and strength
in us, till we now may just collapse and die-any moment- if nothing
is done."*

A desire for an effective moral order has become an issue of both serious and urgent concern to all that every person needs to attend to with a rational mind in recent times. The concern for a sound moral status is occasioned by the alarming rate of decline in the moral consciousness among youth and adults in the Nigerian society. This decline has become a disease eating systematically into the very vein of the entire nation. In the last few years, the Nigerian nation began to experience ever than before a serious collapse of discipline, not only in the educational institutions but also in other sectors of the nation.

Morality as it has been argued is the life wire of any successful society. Therefore, a society that is faced with the problem of immorality is not only being inactive but indeed deeply sick. In recent times in Nigeria of today is characterized by all forms of immoral practices ranging from robbery, cheating, forgery, fraud, raping, disrespect for constituted authority, lawlessness. It is from this entire attitude that the society too should try to curb all these ungodly acts which are not expected from a good and responsible person. There is no doubt that the Nigerian secondary school system is failing in its duty towards inculcation of expected moral values in Nigerian students because these students are our leaders of tomorrow (Igba et al., 2016).

Similarly, the study of Mkpa M. A (1999) inOhwovorione Peter A. (2013)observed thus; part of the reason why morality appears to be at its lowest recede in the Nigerian society is the lack of focus on sound moral values in our schools. Today, dishonesty, intolerance, disrespect, disobedient and other forms of malpractices manifest themselves in the various Nigerian schools in form of cheating during examination, dishonesty, riots, cultism, kidnapping, raping, and abuse of drugs. Therefore, the major challenge of the school system therefore is to redeem its image and take up forcefully more than ever its primary and fundamental duty of providing a balanced education for the Nigerian youth.To this end, this paper attempts to examinedifference between gender and level of study attitudes towards moral behavior of the secondary school students' south-western part of Nigeria.

Research Objectives
The main objective of this research is to examine the statistically significant difference between gender and level of study attitudes towards moral behavior of the secondary school students' south-wester part of Nigeria.

Research Questions
1. Does Students' gender (male and female) differ significantly in terms of their Morality?
2. Does Students' level of study differ significantly in terms of their Morality?

Research Hypotheses
$H0_{1=}$ There is no statistically significant difference in students morality based on their gender

$H0_{2=}$ There is no statistically significant difference in students morality based on their various level of study

Methodology of the Study
The present study was quantitative cross-sectional in nature and carried out through survey method. The geographical limits were selected secondary schools in south-western part of Nigeria. Within these limits secondary school consisting Islamic private and public schools had been selected for collecting data. Total respondents were 365 students containing 185 boys' and 180 girls' students. Therefore, the researchers used a self-constructed questionnaire, consisted of seventeen items. The 5-point Likert scale was used, ranging from 1= Never, 2= Rarely, 3= Once in a While, 4= Often and 5= Frequently. The information concerning this research study was collected through this questionnaire and was constructed based on previous literature review (e.g. Tanaka, 2014; Ime & Unwanaobong 2014; Ohwovorione Peter A, 2013).

However, the content validity of the instrument was certified by the experts. Also, the reliability was determined through Cronbach's Alpha in SPSS software, version 24, with The Cronbach Alpha values of .808.

Result
Table 1: The demographic characteristics of the Respondents

Type	N	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	365		
Male		185	50.7
Female		180	49.3
Level of Study	365		

Junior Students	198	54.2
Senior Students	167	45.8

HO1: There is no statistically significant difference in students morality based on gender. To test this hypothesis, t-test analysis was used to test the difference in male and female secondary school students' towards their morality.

Table 2: Differences among Secondary School Students Morality Based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	P-value
Male	185	3.45	.2214	363	-1.512	.189
Female	180	3.48	.2364			

*Significant; α at < 0.05

The table 2 above demonstrates the mean scores of students' moral behavior based on gender. For male is M = 3.45; SD = .2214, and the mean score for female is M = 3.48; SD = .2364, t (-1.512), 363, p = .189. (P-value = 0.375 > α at 0.005). The results therefore suggest that there is no statically significant difference between males and female students in terms of their moral behavior. Therefore, the study failed to reject the null hypothesis.

HO2: There is no statistically significant difference in students' morality based on level of study.To test this hypothesis, t-test analysis was used to test the difference in level of study of students' attitude towards moral behavior.

Table 3: Differences among Secondary School Students Morality Based on Level of Study

Level of Study	N	Mean	SD	df	T	P-value
Junior Students	198	3.451	.2179	363	1.153	.375
Senior Students	167	3.479	.2420			

*Significant; α at < 0.05

The results in table 3shown the mean scores of students' moral behavior based on level of study. For junior students is M = 3.51; SD = .2179, and the mean score for senior students is M = 3.479; SD = .2420, t (-1.53), 363, p = .375. (P-value = 0.375 > α at 0.005). The results then indicate that there is no statically

significant difference between junior student and senior students in terms of their moral behavior. Hence, the study failed to reject the null hypothesis.

Discussion

The current study revealed that there is no statistically significant difference in the moral attitude of gender (male and female) and level of study (Junior and senior students) students towards moral behavior. This finding is in line with the study conducted by Elizabeth J. Abdul Halim A.& Nornazira S. (2018); Zakaria & Yusoff, (2009) and Raeisoon et al., (2014), where they also found no statistically significant difference in the moral attitude and problem solving skills ofamong secondary school students. Correspondingly, the finding of this study is similar to the studies of those by (Salleh 2004; Akin & Folorunsho, 2014; Pushpa & Yeshodhara, 2014). That secondary school students statistically no significant differe4nce in their moral attitude behavior towards problem solving and academic competencies.

However, the result of this study is in contrast with the findings of Matovu, (2012) whichposited that there isdifference instudents' moral behaviour towards solving problems. He further found a statistically significant difference in the possessing different beliefs about their academic self-concept and competencies of secondary school students.

Implication of The study

The results of the study designated that there was no statistically significant difference exist between gender (male and female) and level of study of students in their moral behavior, which means gender or students level of study does not show any role when it comes to behavior asdemonstratedin this study. However, this may be resulted from the fact that masses in Nigeria context, especially in South west part of Nigeria sharing the same moral guides to nurture their children from their childhood. The cultural background and traditions are taught to the children mostly since the childhood by the elderly people of the family. Even some probably used to send their children for the teaching and learning of morality from head of family (Kehinde E. O. 2015). Hereafter,this is justified with means score extracted for gender as well as level of study of student scoresslightly the same to each other's.

Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to examine the statistical differences between gender (male and female) and students' level of study towards morality behavior among secondary school students in south-western Nigeria. From the findings of this study, it is concluded that there is no statistical difference exists between students' morality based on gender and level of study. Thus, teachers are required to assist their students in this direction to further cultivate good moral behavior in the latter. Likewise, results of the study are likely to broaden our knowledge as to how we can stimulate students' moral attitude positively towards their behavior. Also, this study adds to the existing body of literature. Besides, more research requests and needs to be done on moral attitudes towards thebehavior manner,principally among secondary school students who are mostly at the youthful age and have the probablelikelihood of undergoing changes in the way they observe issues and accomplish tasks on their own.

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