ENVIRONMENTAL VARIABLES AND LEVELS OF MORALITY AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN CALABAR EDUCATION ZONE OF CROSS RIVER STATE – NIGERIA AND COUNSELLING IMPLICATIONS.

[1]Okpechi, Philip A. Ph.D., [2]Arop, Lucy Obil Ph.D. and [3]Edwin Okpa Bassey

[1&2]Department of Guidance and Counseling, University of Calabar, Calabar- Nigeria
[3]National Open University of Nigeria, Ikom Community study Centre, Nigeria

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of school environment variables on the level of morality among secondary school students in Calabar education zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. To guide the study, one hypothesis was formulated at 0.05 level of significance, using stratified random sampling. the instrument used for data collection was questionnaire titled Environmental Variables and Secondary School Students Morality Questionnaire (ESSMQ). The instrument had a reliability indices ranging from 0.705 to 0.871, using Chrombach alpha reliability estimate. The study adopted ex-post facto research design and the statistical tool for data analysis were simple linear regression and t-test. The result revealed that teacher-students' relationship does not significantly influence the level of morality among secondary school students (F= .746, P= .388). The study therefore concluded that favourable school environment is a key to a positive, health, mental and moral development and recommended that school managers, school administrators should organize seminars, conferences and workshop that will motivate teachers to improve their level of class room management style to enhance and influence students' morality.

Key words: Environmental, Variables, Morality, Secondary school, Students

Introduction

The aspiration of any government is to inculcate in the learners the right type of moral attitude and values for survival of both individuals and society, since education is an integral and indispensable tool for national development. No government may really be effective unless it citizens are educated to understand its functions, live and maintain standard of behaviour considered acceptable and right, observe its laws and cooperate in his work.

Following the gradual decay in the level of morality among students, government at all level need to rise up to the challenges of maintaining high level of morality in the school system. For the government to curb youth militancy, restiveness, insurgency, cultism, prostitution, examination malpractice, among others, its needs to enforce moral values, morality in the schools.

This would enable students to cultivate the spirit of honesty, patriotism, respect, transparency, hard work and be law abiding (Enu, 2017; Okpo, 2018).

Secondary school students as within the age of adolescent is a time for dependence (Isangedighi, 2007) a transitional stage from childhood to adulthood, a stage of emotional instability. A young person who is developing into adult usually between the ages of 12 to 18 years is referred to as an adolescent. In the same vein, Onyejiaku (1991), stated that since adolescent are inexperienced, energy packed, curious, exploratory and full of expectations, they are vulnerable to behaviours that goes against the moral code of the society. As can be viewed commonly in our secondary schools, certain traits and tendencies seems to be prevalent among secondary school students, such as stealing, bullying, fighting, truancy, assault and other immoral acts.

It is however, important to state that, the future of any society rest on this category of people and on the school which play the role of a clearing house of the society for higher morale preparation of adolescent for adulthood. When students are exposed to negative variables that affects such development, they grow up with negative, social, physical and behavioural problems which act as a detriment to the morality of the society.

Denga (2010) opined that the required change in behaviour of the learners need 45% moral aspect of the teacher as role model and so on. The rational morality commits the teachers to introducing the child from the very start to the idea of reasons for rules, and that this would enable the learner to always want to do what he/she considers to be rational or appropriate regardless of what the teacher and other elders may say. At this point, the teacher's moral belief guides the teacher's conduct, expression and utterances to enhance morals in a classroom situation. Even the Holy Bible agrees with this when it says "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22 verse 6).

School environment variables are all conditions prevalent in a particular school, which exerts significant influence on intellectual behaviour and levels of morality among students. School environment variables are all factors, conditions and resources within the school setting such as class size, teachers' classroom management style, tone of discipline in the school and teachers-students relationship, which tend to influence teaching and students learning. The nature and functioning of a school depends largely on the state of these school environment variables. The level of morality among secondary school students could be highly correlated with the quality of their school environment variables, as well as the social-political, moral development and economic conditions prevalent in that society (Cotton, 2005).

There is often a mutual continuous interaction between the learner and the environment. The individual brings about changes in the environment and the environment to a great extent influences the learner's behaviour. A favourable environment is key to a positive, healthy mental and moral development. This is why it is believed that the intellectual, social and moral development of every child is influenced by both hereditary and physical environmental factors, which in education parlance are referred to as "nature-nurture" factor (Anwana, 1999). Nature here

refers to what the child inherited from his immediate environment, while nurture means the rearing, training, upbringing which the child receives from the environment. Morality according to Okpo (2018) comes from a Latin word "mores" which means customs, manners and patterns of behaviour that conforms to the standard of the group. Ozumba (2001) maintained that morality or moral values therefore are those absolute universal and eternal truth which men sees and hold as good and important. Denga (2010) enumerated morality or moral values to include, honesty, goodness, uprightness, social justice, loyalty, fair play, respect for other people's interest, etc.

A critical look at the above definition would reveal the fact that, morality and moral values have a common focus – morality has to do with conformity to the rules of one's social group. The individual who conforms is regarded as having good morals whereas the person who refuses to conform is seen as immoral or low moral. Morality is associated with desirable human conducts or behaviour such as peculiar to various cultures and sub-cultures, which this study anchors.

The high rate of moral laxity among students in Calabar education zone secondary school system viewed against the common saying "the youths of today are the leaders of tomorrow", calls for some serious concern. Secondary school environments have become havens for brutal and cold blooded murder incidents, examination malpractices, drug abuse, indecent dressing, prostitution, stealing are among the symptoms of moral decadence eating deep into the fabric of the students. The irony of it is that the development of Nigeria, as a nation, is dependent on how these students are groomed to give the destiny of the nation safe landing.

Students are supposed to inhibit high level of morality in school, but in some public secondary schools the reverse is the case. Monity (2012), reported that in the 12th day of June 2008, the principal of government secondary school, Akamkpa, wrote a petition to the honorable commissioner of education entitled "incessant attack by hoodlums on the staff and the authority of government secondary school, Akamkpa". In this report, the principal complained that a team of disgruntled and dangerous elements attacked staff of the school, because the authority did not allow cheating in the senior secondary certificate examination /West African Examination Council (SSCE/WAEC), 2008 examination (Monity, 2012). This attack resulted in the loss of one life and several properties were destroyed. Students and their syndicate resorted in breaking into staff houses and stealing valuable properties. In another related incident in community school Oban, a student got a teacher badly beaten up because the student was punished for stealing another student's text book.

Therefore, the state government deemed it fit that her transformation agenda is feasible through enhancing high level of morality among secondary school students. This should be realized if school environment variables are taken care of. This deviant behaviour makes the school environment not conducive for learning. The degree of anomaly which these incidents create in the educational system has motivated past researchers to carry out in depth studies on how to plan and develop learning environment that can inculcate moral behaviour in school students.

This consideration therefore, aroused the curiosity of the researchers to investigate on school environmental variables and level of morality among secondary school students in Calabar education zone of Cross River State, Nigeria and the counselling implications.

Statement of the problem

The broken morality of students in school, societies and the nation at large has been of much concern to government, parents, guidance counsellors, teachers and even students themselves. The level of decay of morality in the Nigeria secondary schools and the immediate society is quit disheartening and unfortunate. The teaching and learning of moral values has become a more academic exercise devoid of practically positive behavioural change. Thus, the youths are the hit of this evil, such as disobedience, examination malpractice, cultism, teenage prostitution, rape, sexual harassment, students' demonstration, drug abuse, indecent dressing and many other social vices. This ugly situation has caused people to ask many questions as to the ability of educational institution to achieve the goals for which they have been established. Its becomes pertinent therefore, to ask: could the problems of the level of morality among secondary school students be as a result school environmental factors such as class size, teachers, class management experience, tone of discipline in the school and teacher-students relationship? There are no ready answers to these questions. It is against this backgrounds that the researchers are motivated to investigate on the influence of school environmental variables on level of morality among secondary school students in Calabar education zone of Cross River state, Nigeria and counselling implications.

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant influence of teachers-students' relationship on the level of morality among secondary school students in the study area.

Review of related literature

Teachers as surrogate parents of the students are expected to be knowledgeable, hardworking and dedicated in their services to the school. Teachers are supposed to be above board in their characters, attitude to work and to students' welfare. Klem and Connell (2004) stated that the class teacher constitutes the adult member who is charged with the responsibility of caring for and educating the students based on prescribed guidelines or principles. Lead and Burgess (2001) stated that children who form class relationship with teachers enjoy the school more and get along better with peer morally. The authors posited that, positive relationship with teachers can also serve as a secure base for young children; they see their teachers as a model to follow those observable positive behaviours, they can count on their teachers to recognize and respond to their problems. Positive relationship with teachers may even help those behaviorally at risk, students learn more

adaptive behaviour as evidenced in a study among a group of aggressive African and Hispanic students in which supportive students-teachers' relationship were associated with decline in aggressive behaviour between second and third grade.

However, students who are difficult in forming supportive relationship with teachers are at greater risk of school failure. Poor relationship may be conceptualized as producing concurrent risk in which conflict between a student and teacher may lead to problems in the class room during the school year.

Sule (2017) opined that no intellectual activity can go on smoothly under an environment where there is no morality and discipline; learning is a discipline and moral effort which cannot take place successfully under chaotic conditions. High standard of morality invariably results in high standard of academic achievement, immorality in school may lead not only to low academic achievement but also to high rate of dropout among students.

Different findings in the study suggested that early relational difficulties are important indicators of problems throughout student's school careers. Ogbiji (2005) suggested that the relationship between the teachers and students should be guided by the following:

(i)   Provide counselling services: teachers do not only teach, they provide counselling services to students in addition, they should be professional counsellors who will avail students of their services in academic and moral development.

(ii)   Develop school ideas and spirit: teachers should make the students see themselves as having bright opportunities for success by care preparation and presentation of lessons, avoidance of sarcasm, immoral and deformatory remarks.

(iii)   Development of favourable relations: class teachers should make students or relations as their senior friends, uncles and significant others by showing serious interest in students moral behaviour in school.

(iv)   Remove temptations from students: teachers should avoid putting students in a situation that you will make them to misbehave, riot, or get involved in destructive demonstration in school. For example, school rules and regulations should not be too stringent.

Ajomi (2009) in a comparative study of juvenile delinquencies among pupils from public and private primary school in Ikom Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria. Sampled 400 subjects from 16 public and private schools, with delinquent behaviours questionnaires (DBQ) as instrument, Ajomi analyzed the data with t-test analysis and the result revealed that pupils from primary school were indiscipline in their behaviour compared to pupils from private schools. The researchers, concluded that pupils from public schools are left loose as no concern is shown by the school management, that public school students are too many to be managed and that, they are not exposed to stimulating environment.

This is not different from the views of Adis (2006) that loose environment both at home and in school, where children are left most on their own, attracts immoral behaviour as pupils are

tempted to try certain behaviour even those that are negative just to occupy their time and minds. The researchers discovered that strong supportive relationship between teacher-student is fundamental to a healthy moral development of all students in school.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was Ex-post facto. Isanghedigi, Joshua, Asim and Ekuri (2004) asserted that ex-post facto study is a systematic empirical inquiry in which the researcher does not have direct control of the independent variable because their manifestation has already occurred.

The sampling procedure adopted for the study is stratified and simple random sampling techniques.

Data collected was analyzed using the simple linear regression technique with teacher-students' relationship as independent variable and level of morality among secondary school students as dependent variable. The F-ratio and t-test were applied in the hypothesis.

Results

In analyzing the hypothesis, the regression of significant influence of teachers-students' relationship on the level of morality among secondary school students was used.

Hypothesis one

There is no significant influence of teacher – student relationship on the level of morality among secondary school students in the area of study.

TABLE 1

Regression of level of immorality among secondary school students on teacher – students' relationship.

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F-value	P-value
Regression	8.496	1	8.496	0.746	0.388
Residual	5669.704	498	11.385		
Total	5678.200	499			
R-value	0.039				
R-squared	0.001				
Adj. R-squared	0.001				
Std. error	3.374				

Predictor variables	Unstandardized coefficient		Std. coeff.	t-value	P-value
	B	Std. error			
Constant	25.196	0.874		28.826*	0.000
Teacher-student relationship	0.039	0.045	0.39	0.864	0.388

*Significant at 0.05 level, P<.05

The result in Table 1 shows an R-value of .039 was obtained giving an R-squared value of .001. This means that about .0% (less than 1 percent) of the total variation in the level of morality among secondary school students is explained by teacher-student relationship. The P-value (.388) associated with the computed F-value (.746) is greater than .05. inconsequence, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This means that teachers- students' relationship does not significantly influence the level of morality among secondary school students. The P-value (0.000) associated with the computed t-value (28.826) is less than .05 but the F-value (.388) associated with the computed t-value (0.864) for the regression coefficient (.039) representing the influence of teachers- students' relationship, is greater than .05 level of significance. This means that the regression constant (25.196) make significant contribution to the prediction of the level of morality among secondary school students, but teachers – students relationship does not.

Discussion of Result

Data analysis revealed that the null hypothesis was not rejected. This means that teacher – students' relationship does not significantly influence the level of morality among secondary school students. This result is similar to the findings of Ali (2016) who found that morality is not primarily a character trail, but a function of the environment; the researcher noted that the moral climate of a school is very important to determine the result. Okpo (2018) observed that 75% of respondents agreed that low moral tone of their school encourage cheating while 25% were of the opinion that immoral practice is due to poor moral values of the individual no matter how strong teacher –student relation might prove to be. This result was supported by Keliber and Turiel (1971) who found that the stages sequence of moral development was function of culture, not necessarily teacher- student relationship.

The finding is contrary to that of Lead and Burgess (2005) who found that children who formed class room relationship with teachers enjoyed the school more and get along better with peer morally, and also that teacher-student relationship is associated with decline aggressive behaviour of the student. Also contrary to this present finding is the assertion of Ogbiji (2005) who suggested that relationship between the teacher and students should be guided by the following: provide coulselling service, develop school ideas and spirit, development of favorable relations and removal of temptations from students.

The result of this study is surprising because ordinarily, one would have expected that teachers- students' relationship could have influenced the level of morality among secondary school students, but this is not the case in this finding. The reason could be that though there is teacher – students' relationship, they did not trust each other. In this situation that the result is not significant, justified that teacher student relationship does not influence the level of morality among secondary school students could be that there are other variables responsible for the result. Probably, it could be suggested here that since students spend little time with teachers in school, this could be the reason for the result. It is therefore, suggested that the issue of morality still rest on parents at home.

Conclusion and recommendations

It is clear from the findings of data analysis that teacher student relationship does not significantly influence the level of morality among secondary school students. It could be concluded that favourable school environment is a key to a positive, health, mental and moral development of a child, when accessing the level of morality among students. School managers, school administrators should organize seminars, conferences and workshops that will motivate teachers to improve their level of class room, management style to enhance students' morality in secondary school. Also, in the allocation of classes to teachers, the school authority should ensure that classes like SS1, II, and III are allocated to well behaved, respected, responsible with proven characters, so that they can influence their students' morally.

References

Adis, C. P. (2006). Human characteristics and school learning. New York: McGraw Hill.

Ajomi, T. O. (2009). Comparative study on the juvenile delinquencies among pupils from public and private primary schools in Ikom LGA of Cross River State. Unpublished thesis, Benue state university, Nigeria.

Ali, C. O. (2016). School cheating behaviour in Nigeria primary, secondary schools and the need for counselling examination candidates. Unpublished M.Ed. thesis. University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River state, Nigeria.

Anwana, U. I. (1999). Psychology: aspect of human development. Agbor; central books.

Cotton, K. (2005) school wide and class room discipline, school improvement and research series. Retrieved February 16, 2020 from http://www.awrel.organization/scpd/sirs/5/cn.9.html

Denga, D. I. (2010). Moral and sociological foundations of education in Nigeria. Calabar, Rapid educational publishers.

Isanghedigi, A. J. (2007). Child psychology development and education. Eti-Nwa.

Isanghedigi, Joshuan, Asim and Ekuri (2004). Educational research in context. Essentials of research and statistics in education and social science (pp. 18-20) Calabar, Eti-Nwa associates.

Keliberg, L. and Turiel, E. (1971). Recent research in moral development in educational encyclopedia 6.

Lead, G. W. and Burgess, K. (2001). Do relational risk and protective factors moderate and linkage between childhood aggression and early psychological and school adjustment? Child development, 72, 1579-1601.

Monity, F. M. (2012). Physical school environment and secondary school students discipline in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State. Med. Unpublished thesis university of Calabar.

Ogbiji, J. E. (2005). Practicum in class room management and organization; Calabar: ultimate index book publishers.

Okpo, G. E. (2018). School environmental variables and levels of morality among secondary school students in Ogoja education zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. Unpublished thesis, university of Calabar.

Onyejiaku, F. O. (1991). Psychology of adolescence. Calabar: Rapid education publishers.

Ozumba, G. O. (2001). A course text of ethics, Lagos. Obaroh and Ogbinaka publishers Ltd.

Sule, S. A. (2017). Influence of school environment on students' discipline in Dekina education zone, Kogi state. Unpublished M.Ed. thesis, university of Calabar, Nigeria.