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# ENHANCING DEVELOPMENT OF POSITIVE MORAL VALUES BY ADOLESCENTS THROUGH PARENTAL MENTORING

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## Abstract

The study examined the relationship between parental mentoring and moral value orientation of adolescents in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria using ex-post facto design. One hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The sample comprised 1245 Senior Secondary one students drawn from a population of 62,168 Senior Secondary one students using multi-stage sampling technique. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) was used to test the null hypothesis. The finding of the study revealed that there is a strong relationship between parental mentoring and moral values orientation of adolescents. In view of the finding, it was recommended among others that: parents should teach their children the acceptable values of the society by being role models, as early family experiences are critical to moral development.

**Keywords:** Moral values orientation, Moral development, Adolescent, Parental mentoring, Peer influence

## Introduction

All children need love and personal attention but many are not receiving it in the quantities they should have. The rate of divorce is on the increase in our society. When the home breaks up, children lose the benefit of a resident father or mother. The remaining parent who usually works outside the home has less time and energy to give adequate and proper parenting of the children, who usually experience trauma as a result of divorce. Violence and sexual themes flood the media as never before, and the pressure on the school system is ever present. Who can remedy the situation as even the supposed experts on mentoring children have strongly disagreed among themselves on the way to deal with these problems?

During childhood and adolescence, parents play important roles in either fostering or hindering the process of values internalization (Grusec, Goodnow & Kuczynski, 2003; Grolnick, Deci & Ryan, 2007). Values are moral or ethical principles that one views as good and important. Values influence one's behaviour, priorities, relationships, as well as the moral guidance parents give to their children.

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Moral values are good and positive attributes and attitudes that guide an individual on how to evaluate the right and the wrong. Indeed, because adolescence is a period of identity exploration and development, adolescents may explore values that are different from those taught in the home especially when there is poor parental mentoring. Identity in psychology refers to all of the beliefs, ideals and values that help shape and guide a person's behaviour. Adolescence can be defined biologically as the physical transition marked by the onset of puberty and the termination of physical growth. It can be defined cognitively as changes in the ability to think abstractly and multi-dimensionally; and socially, as a period of preparation for adult roles (Christie & Viner, 2005; Dorn & Biro, 2011; Arnett, 2007).

According to Erikson (1968), the most important process of identity development takes place during adolescence. In early adolescence, the individual undergoes a basic change in attitude; he begins to oppose dependence, including both the rule of external environmental factors (parents, teachers, the law and so on) and the rule of internal cravings - the newly awakening instinctual urges. Adolescence is usually accompanied by an increased independence allowed by the parents or legal guardians and less supervision as compared to preadolescence. Many adolescent characteristics are attributed to physical changes and what is called raging hormones in popular culture. Adolescents therefore, need mentors to push them beyond their limits and to their personal best (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2010).

Adolescence is a vital and very sensitive period in the social development process because exposure to the wrong things can have a major effect; and the adolescents can be easily influenced by the people they develop close relationship with (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2003). It is important for parents to make sure that adolescents are exposed to situations that they are capable of handling. With the social world developing quickly during adolescence, it is the role of parents to make sure that their children are not exposed to bad situations that will be detrimental to their social development.

In order to acquire a strong and healthy ego-identity, the child must receive consistent and meaningful recognition of his achievements and accomplishments through mentoring. In line with Erikson's (1968) theory, parents' duty is to mentor and monitor their children and instil the acceptable values of the society into them. A framework of rules and conditions is essential as the foundation of learning what is right or wrong (Steinberg, 2008). There is need to correct the child when the child goes wrong at every stage of development. This will enable the child to focus on the right moral track as the duty of the parents is to nurture and guide their children in the right path.

In the researcher's view, parenting role is very challenging but children can be helped to become what God designed them to be by bringing them up properly. The training of a child is like the bending of a rod. One can only bend a rod to a desired shape and style when one has heated it in a blacksmith forge. The bending takes time, needs one's strength and application of force to actualize the desired shape. Child training can also be likened to the forming of the foundation of a building. A faulty foundation predisposes the building to collapse either during the process of

construction, or after many years of completing the construction. What a child becomes in life is dependent on the type of training he/she receives.

A mentor is an individual usually older and more experienced, who gives guidance and training to a younger, less experienced person. Mentoring is a relationship where an individual through his/her experience, expertise and wisdom teaches, counsels and guides another individual to develop his/her perspectives, awareness and adaptability (Abcug, 2009). Slicker and Palmer (2009) were of the view that both natural and assigned mentors have the potential to modify, or even reverse, the negative developmental trajectories of at risk youth set in place by these changes. Mentoring is simply a tool for communicating important human skills (Anagbogu & Nwokolo, 2013).

Proper parental mentoring is very important in the life of children especially in their formative years. It helps them to develop a strong, positive character. Parental mentoring aims at promoting constructive feedbacks in the lives of the adolescents through support, guidance, instruction which are needed for smooth transition to adulthood. Parental mentoring offers light and guidance to adolescents in need during their darkest hours in the hope to strengthen and guide them to be what God wants them to be in life. Mentoring links an adult to a younger person with the goals of reassuring innate worth, instilling values, guiding curiosity and encouraging a positive youthful life (Olayiwola, 2013).

Mentoring creates an environment which is supportive, non-judgemental and non-competitive. It fosters trust, facilitates the sharing of information and is based on a foundation of mutual respect. The relationship promotes movement from some degree of dependence to independence and individualization. Parental mentoring hinges on how parents can work to improve outcomes for the children. Adolescents are known to engage in high-risk behaviours with consequential adverse health effects (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2005). It is observed that a great number of adolescents' deaths are due to unintentional injuries, suicides and many if not most, of these deaths are the consequences of high-risk behaviours (Jessor & Jessor, 2007).

Beyond issues of mortality are the significant morbidities associated with the risk of engaging sexuality, drug experimentation, violence, and weapon use (Harden & Mendle, 2011). The consequence of such behaviours include unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, infections with human immunodeficiency virus, trauma, and severe lifelong disabilities associated with violence, and the psychosocial concomitants of adolescent drug use, as well as the interrelationship of drug use and other risk behaviours. It is difficult to impress upon adolescents the adverse effects of some behaviours they engage in, as most consequences are not experienced until later on in life (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2010).

The goal of parental mentoring according to Kathryn (2012) is to discover the method for leading the adolescents to greatness – to become the future leaders who motivate individuals, communities and nations toward a greater good. Parental mentoring is the framework by which children are taught to govern themselves and to take personal responsibility for their education, and more importantly, for their life (Stuadt, 2005). It is only individuals who have actually

experienced it themselves that can mentor effectively. One simply cannot give what one does not have. Children are not expected to imbibe values and virtues that are lacking in adults. If a child is not given good mentoring, he/she is sure to have a rough adolescent and adult life. Like the difference between looking at a map as compared to actually being there and experiencing a place for oneself, parents need to walk the path.

Mentoring afford parents effective ways of managing their children's behaviour and how to intervene with specific child and adolescent problems. Parents can take the role of a mentor and leader, in guiding their children, while leading themselves to a better education. Parental mentoring is also referred to as leadership education. Leaders determine destiny. Leaders select the goals of nations, businesses, communities and generations, and which paths to take in pursuit of these goals. Parents who choose to become and mentor future leaders will construct the future. The goal of mentoring or leadership education is to discover the method for leading our children to greatness - to become the future leaders who motivate individuals, communities and nations toward a greater good (Mentor, 2009).

As rightly observed by Ekong (2014), parents must know the way themselves before they show the children the way. The success of mentoring is entirely dependent on the parents. Parents must first of all show evidence of virtue and godliness in their own lives for proper upbringing and mentoring to be in place. It is until parents actually gain the education for themselves that they want their adolescents to have, or become the leaders they would like their adolescents to become, they will never be able to mentor their children to become pioneers and trailblazers. Mentoring helps a child's successful transition to adulthood through parent-child interactions.

It is observed that adolescents who engage in one high-risk behaviour, are at increased risk of engaging in other risk behaviours and this often has a negative impact on families and communities and results in the loss of future productivity and creativity (Royse, 2008). An alternative approach to reducing if not eliminating the unwanted behaviour in the adolescent is the presence of an adult guide and mentor that will impact positively on the life of the adolescent to transit from childhood to adulthood. As observed by Kathryn (2012), teens around the world who have a supportive relationship with their parents have higher levels of moral development.

A study recorded in Enang (2009), which investigated moral decadence among Nigerian youths found that, 80 percent of the respondents attributed moral decadence among youths to bad life exhibited by their parents, teachers and other adults. It was also observed that parents and teachers at times choose to be dishonest instead of being honest, truthful, understanding and responsible which portrays that many people have lost touch with themselves and the value system.

This research is premised on moral development theory of Kohlberg (1958) which emphasized the role of the family in moral development. The theory stated that human beings are born with the potential for perfection but with the responsibility for achieving that state through the process of growth. The family is the framework supporting moral development. This allows for the explanation of the various empirical findings of the impact of family interaction and parenting on moral development. Experiences of all major family relationships that is, as child, sibling, spouse,

and parent are factors in moral development. Hence, participation in relationships within the family is the driving force in moral development. Kohlberg's theory suggested growth, development, the society in which the individual lives and the individual's personal attitudes, values, and belief system as the sources that are needed in the development of moral reasoning. Parents need to teach and model acceptable values in the society for adolescents to emulate. This theory implies that parents should gain insights into the developmental process of the child and take appropriate steps towards directing the child on the right moral path to follow at each stage of development.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Moral values in this present era seem to be in decline despite their importance. One observes that there is a general disorder and indiscipline among adolescents. The major challenge facing parents is usually how to raise children to be morally upright, good, productive citizens. The apparent continuous fall of the moral standard of children has become a heart rending issue on every parent. The pattern of training children these days has become that of trial and error approach. This is because the societies we live in have taken over the job of parenting. Children have become a sponge currently soaking up whatever character they see along the way. This goes to confirm the quote on children by Ginott in Kathryn (2012) that children are like wet cement; whatever falls on them makes an impression.

The moral value of the people has changed. What was regarded as evil in the past in the Nigerian society is not only tolerated now, but also admitted or praised in certain quarters. In today's world, the family is in a state of decline and confusion, and it is being challenged in so many ways both from within and without. The moral crisis of serious dimensions which is being experienced in this contemporary era is as a result of various forms of ethical, moral and legal misconducts. This moral problem plaguing the nation today may be as a result of parents neglecting their responsibilities and duties towards their children and low or no parental mentoring of their children.

This study specifically sought to examine the relationship between parental mentoring and moral values orientation of adolescents in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Research Question**

One research question was addressed in this study: What relationship does parental mentoring have with the moral values orientation of adolescents in Akwa Ibom State?

### **Null Hypothesis**

There is no significant relationship between parental mentoring and moral values orientation of adolescents in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Research Method**

An ex-post facto research design was adopted in carrying out this study. This design was adopted because the researcher examined retrospectively, the effects of a naturally occurring event on a

subsequent outcome with a view to establishing a causal link between them. The population consisted of Senior Secondary one (SSI) students in public schools from 25 LECs in Akwa Ibom State during the 2014/2015 school year. A population of 62,168 students as obtained from the statistics division of State Secondary Education Board was used. Multi-stage sampling technique was used in drawing the sample of the study to give a fair representation. From the total number of schools (233) in the state incorporated within the 25 Local Education Committees, 60 schools participated in the study. Twenty-two schools which were randomly sampled from Uyo Senatorial District participated; twenty-two schools equally participated from Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District; while sixteen schools participated from Eket Senatorial District. The number of respondents selected from each of the sampled schools from Uyo Senatorial District was 501. The number of students sampled from each of the sampled schools from Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District was 454. The number of respondents sampled from each of the sampled schools from Eket Senatorial District was 290. This in total gave a sample size of 1,245.

An instrument called “Enhancing Positive Moral Values of Adolescents Questionnaire (EPMVAQ)” designed by the researchers was used for collection of data for the study. The instrument was divided into two sections, A and B. Twenty eight items in the first part measured parental mentoring, while 30 items in the second part measured moral values such as obedience, contentment, respect integrity, and humility. Each item was constructed, weighted and adapted after a four point rating scale. The rating scale required the respondents to react to each statement by indicating their degrees of agreement or disagreement by ticking one of the four possible options of “strongly agree (SA)”, “agree (A)”, “disagree (D)”, or “strongly disagree (SD)”. All the responses made to the items in the first part were tallied and weighted as 4, 3, 2, and 1 for SA, A, D, and SD respectively for positive items. The reversed weights were assigned to negative worded items.

All the items were subjected to face validation in order to ensure that the various items in the instrument were relevant to the problem of the study, had a general relatedness to the research question and hypothesis formulated for this study. The reliability of the research instrument (EPMVAQ) was carried out using 50 students who were randomly selected from one of the schools that did not take part in the study. Data obtained from this reliability study was analysed using Cronbach’s Alpha (a statistical measure of internal consistency of the instrument). The result of the analysis showed a reliability coefficient of .68.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) was used in answering the research question and testing the hypothesis.

### **Answer to Research Question**

What relationship does parental mentoring have with the moral values orientation of adolescents in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 1: Nature of relationship between parental mentoring and moral values orientation of adolescents in Akwa Ibom State (N= 1243).

Variables	$\Sigma X$	$\Sigma X^2$	$\Sigma XY$	r-value	$r^2$
Parental mentoring	17442	36069	851964	0.67*	.4489
Moral values orientation of adolescents	37867	68894			

\*Substantial relationship

The r value of 0.67 shown in Table 1 reveals that the relationship between parental mentoring and moral values orientation of adolescents in Akwa Ibom State is positively substantial. This implies that the more the parental mentoring, the higher the moral values orientation of adolescents. The strength of linear association ( $r^2 = .4489$ ) reveals that 44.89 percent of moral values orientation of adolescents in Akwa Ibom State is attributed to parental mentoring.

### Null Hypothesis

Ho: Parental mentoring has no significant relationship with the moral values orientation of adolescents in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Parental Mentoring and Moral Values Orientation of Adolescents in Akwa Ibom State (N=1243)

Variables	$\Sigma X$	$\Sigma X^2$	$\Sigma XY$	r-value	t-cal	t-crit
Parental mentoring	17442	36069	851964	0.67*	31.79*	1.96
Moral values	37867	68894				

\*Significant at .05 level, critical r = .062, df = 1241

The result in Table 2 shows that the calculated r- value of 0.67 is greater than the critical r-value of .062 at .05 level of significance with 1241 degrees of freedom. This is further affirmed by the value of the calculated t of 31.79 which is also greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at .05 alpha level. With these results, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a significant positive correlation between the variables- parental mentoring and moral values orientation of adolescents. This means that adolescents who are properly mentored by their parents are likely to have better and positive moral values orientation than those with less parental mentoring.

### Discussion of Findings

Findings from the study shows that parental mentoring has significant relationship with the moral values orientation of adolescents in Akwa Ibom State since the calculated r-value of 0.67 is greater than the critical r-value of .062 at .05 level of significance. The correlation coefficient was transformed into t-distribution to further test the significance of the relationships. The result



yielded a calculated t-value of 31.79 which is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at .05 alpha level and 1241 degrees of freedom, the null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This finding is consistent with that of Bornstein (2005) who observed that teens around the world that have supportive relationships with their parents have higher levels of moral development. Parental mentoring offers light and guidance to adolescents in need during their darkest hours in the hope to strengthen and guide them to be what God wants them to be in life. Similarly, Royse (2008) found that teens with positive relations with their mothers and their fathers are less likely to be delinquent.

Positive mental and physical health in adulthood is positively associated with recollections of early parental support (Shaw, Krause, Chatters, Connell and Ingersoll-Dayton, 2004). The association is mediated by greater parental awareness about adolescence, more supportiveness and stronger family routines. Another study found that positive relationships or connectedness between parents and adolescents are linked to avoidance or lower use of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs (Olusakin & Nwolisa, 2010). On the contrary, most adolescents prefer to spend their time with peers than with family members because of the support and comfort they tend to gain from their peers. According to Denga and Denga (2007), the peer groups sometimes attempt to take over parenting by telling their mates to ignore what parents tell them generally about life but listen to their own directives. The researcher is of the view that parents need to respond effectively to their children's inspiration through encouragement and support on their journey of knowledge as the peers would do.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the research findings, it was concluded that parents have much obligation in bringing up their children in a proper way to curb most of the moral decadence of the adolescents. Children have the potential to achieve their dreams if properly guided, while parents have the power to help them succeed. No one is better equipped than parents to train children on how to live and succeed in life. It is the responsibility of the parents to provide the necessary care, training and environment for the children to be wholly moulded. This is because parents have the cultural, natural and divine duties towards their children. It requires maturity and wisdom to be a good parent as parenting is among the most serious commitment an individual makes to the future and to another human.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the strength of the findings and conclusions derived from this study, it was recommended that parents should actively inculcate the acceptable values of the society unto their adolescents by being role models because character is most readily learned by first hand example within family. It is needful to recognize the importance of becoming the best possible parent and to act upon this as early as possible, in order to create a brighter future for the children, oneself and the society at large.

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