

OUTLOOK ON HUMAN CAPACITY BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT:

*A HANDBOOK OF RESEARCH IN HONOUR OF
PROFESSOR IBRAHIM NJODI*



Edited by

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SOCIAL VARIABLES AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN UYO, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study determined the relationship between social variables and moral development of public secondary school adolescents in Uyo Local Government Area. Two (2) purposes of the study, research questions and research hypotheses guided the study. Correlational survey design was adopted. The population of the study comprised of 2459 respondents. A sample of 245 SS2 students was selected which represents 10 percent of the study population. A self-structured and validated questionnaire entitled "Social Variables and Moral Development of Adolescents in Public Secondary School Questionnaire (SVMDAPSSQ)" was used for data collection. Split-half method was used in testing the reliability of the research instrument, which yielded a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.74. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used in answering the research question and testing of hypotheses. Findings from the study showed that parent-child bond and peer pressure has significant relationship with moral development of public secondary school adolescents Uyo L.G.A. Conclusion was drawn and the study recommended among other things that, parents should always live an exemplary life and show good moral behaviour which the children can easily emulate.

Keywords: Parent-child Bond, Peer Pressure, Morals, Moral Development.

INTRODUCTION

Moral development is a universal phenomenon essential for children's cognitive, emotional and social development. It allows an individual differentiate their own ideas and moral responsibilities while gaining a better understanding of larger social structure. According to Berk (2008), young ones who are morally developed have the capacity of making fair and balanced judgement (the ability to determine what is right and wrong) forms the basis of moral development of adolescents. As observed by Yvonne (2011), adolescents become familiar with moral norms through socialization, education and other social structure. Thus, the home forms the foundation upon which children's socialization and education are laid.

During the early stage of children's development, young ones desire more love, care, closeness and intimacy with their parents and these they receive through social interaction and moral education. Such parent-child bond plays significant role in the way children behave and relate with people. It develops an internal pattern of attitudes and beliefs that shape children's character and behaviour. Smetana (2000) stated that parental attitudes and behavioural responses to what is right and wrong set the tone of

children's moral development. In addition, peer pressure is another perceived social variable influencing children's moral development.

Most adolescent often comply with the social norms of the group they belong in order to gain social acceptance and identity. Such pressure in most cases resulted in loss of self-dignity, sexual harassment, drug abuse, property vandalism, and disrespectful behaviour to parents and teachers, disobedience to school rules and involvement in other forms of social vices. Thus, since moral development is important to children's well-being and success in life, it is imperative to investigate social variables associated with moral development of adolescents in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State.

Theoretical and Conceptual Review

Lawrence Kohlberg is a leading American psychologist on moral development whose research grew out of Piaget's cognitive-developmental approach. Kohlberg (1984) developed an interest in the moral development of children, how they develop a sense of right, wrong and justice. According to the author, the development of moral reasoning is divided into three levels namely - pre-conventional, convention and post-conventional morality.

Pre-conventional level of moral reasoning is especially common in children, although adults can also exhibit this level of reasoning. At this level, an individual judge the morality of an action by its direct consequences. Adolescents with pre-conventional morality not only adopted or internalized societies conventions regarding what is right or wrong but focuses largely on external consequences that certain actions may bring.

To reason in a conventional way is to judge the morality of actions by comparing them to society's views and expectations. Conventional morality is characterized by an acceptance of society's conventions concerning what is right and wrong. At this stage, children are expected to abide by the conventional norms and values taught to them by parents through social interaction and communication.

The post-conventional level is marked by a growing realization that individuals are separate entities from society, and that the individual's own perspective may take precedence over society's view-individuals may disobey rules inconsistent with their own principles. Post-conventional moralists live by their own ethical principles that typically include such basic human rights as life, liberty, and justice. People who exhibit post-conventional morality view rules as useful but changeable mechanisms thus focuses on shared standard and principles.

The theory is relevant to this work in that it explains explicitly the relationship between parent-child bond and students' moral development. It clarifies the fact that children's judgement to morality of actions and acceptance of societal views and expectations depends largely on what the parent teaches them as morally accepted and adored. Students' adherence to moral rules and principles depend on the appropriateness of societal norms and values shared to children through social interaction and shared experiences.

Concept of Moral Development

Morals refer to actual patterns of behavior (Leicester, Modgil& Modgil, 2000). According to Berns (2007), morals are the principles of what is right and wrong. Morals involve acceptance of rules and govern one's behavior toward others. On the other hand, Moral development span across knowing what is right and wrong. It focuses on

the emergence, change, and understanding of morality from infancy through adulthood (Barrow, 2007). Morality develops across a lifetime and is impacted by an individual's experiences and their behavior when faced with moral issues through different period's physical and cognitive development. In short, moral development concerns an individual's growing sense of what is right and wrong. Broderick and Blewitt (2003), mention that moral development is an important ingredient in self-development and the acquisition of values. It is the way young people learn to determine what is right and wrong, which forms the basis of the principles of justice.

Parent-Child Bond and Moral Development of Adolescents

Bonding is the intense attachment that develops between parents and their children (Smetana 2000). Strong ties between parents and their children foster a sense of security; positive self-esteem and parents' responsiveness to an infant's signals can affect the child's social and cognitive development. Parents could develop a strong interpersonal relationship with children by acknowledging their views or opinions when it is due. When parents take the time to explain their behavior to their children and show awareness of how that behavior affects the child, they implicitly acknowledge that the child's feeling and viewpoint are important and worthy of attention but they should do what is right despite how they feel. Indeed, such respect for children is essential for the raising of children with good morals.

Also, nurturing and support given to children could enhance their moral development. According to Bertram (2004), the level of love, care, warmth and support given to children through modelling, social interaction and practical actions (deeds) enhances moral functioning of children. For example, parents trying to challenge children to think through the moral consequences of some behavior will be more effective if they show support for/and interest in the child's point of view, exhibit empathy for the child's feelings and provide supportive platforms for children to confront the moral implications of their behavior. Therefore parent-child discussions of moral issues seem to be most developmentally nurturing when done in a respectful and emotionally supportive way.

Studies have shown a strong connection between parent child bond and moral development of adolescents. One of such study was conducted by Mairin, Augustina and Cynthia (2014) in their longitudinal study of temperament, parenting and moral development in the behavioral characteristics and moral development of adolescents in London. The result showed that the pattern of parent's relationship with the child can inhibit or predict the moral dimensions of a child's behavior. Also, in another study conducted by Judith and Smetana (2008) on parenting style and moral concept studied during adolescence. The study showed that parent-child relationship significantly relates with students' moral development.

Peer Pressure and Moral Development of Adolescents

Peer pressure has direct influence on adolescents as some are often encouraged by fellow peers, often leading to changing of attitudes, values or behaviors to conform to those of the influencing group. According to Newman (2008), peer pressure is used to describe the demands for compliance to customs of the group and exhibiting dedication and loyalty to the members of the group. Adolescents belong and comply with the norms and values of a group they associate with so as to gain recognition and personal security.

Lerner (2000) argues that it is believed that peer pressure is the major cause of deviant behavior and antisocial behavior among adolescents. According to (Rathus, 2007), pressure from the peer group can lead to experimentation with alcohol and drugs, sex, missing school and high-risk behaviors. A sudden change in the children's appearance together with secretive behavior is a result of adolescents succumbing to peer pressure. Peer pressure can lead to loss of sense of dignity. Extreme pressure from other members of the peers could stimulate a student to act in a way that he/she would ordinarily have not chosen to behave.

Adolescents have a tendency of going blindly and imitating fellow peers in areas such as the hair style, clothing, music and other aspects of life without taking into cognizance the consequences. Pressure from the peer group can result to the adolescent losing their tastes of life and induce them to start liking what is liked by their peer group. Newman (2008) observed that continuous acceptance and practices of the norms guiding the behaviour of associating members of a group form the basis of adolescents' moral development.

Studies have shown a strong connection between peer pressure and students' moral development. One of such study was conducted by Agu (2010) who carried out a study on relationship between peer pressure and students' negative moral development in secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone. 459 students in senior secondary schools were used as sampled respondents and the questionnaire was used for data collection. The result showed that peer pressure relates to students' negative moral development.

Nicole (2009) conducted similar research on peer influence and moral development of adolescents in Aljuf High School, Saudi Arabia. One of the major findings was that peer group have great influence on moral development of adolescents. Emmanuel and Gabriel (2011), in their study on peer influence effect on student's moral behavior in SS1 class of Comprehensive Secondary school Idea to South, Imo State. The result of the study revealed that negative life styles such as stealing, addiction, sexual immorality, smoking and truancy were all learned by teenagers in their peer group.

Statement of the Problem

Moral decadence in today's society has become a challenging issue as morality and discipline are thrown overboard by adolescents. This is evident in the current level of disrespect for parents, teachers, and elders in the community, constituted authorities and so on. As observed by the researchers, some students exhibit truant behaviour, sexual promiscuity, indecent dressing, nuisance, sexual harassment, smoking, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, street crimes, violent activities and loss of dignity which is usually on the increase among adolescents. The manifestations of these social malaises have impacted negatively on adolescents' moral standard of behaviour and societal values. Therefore, the present study sought to determine the relationship between social variables and moral development of public secondary school students in Uyo Local Government Area.

The major objective of the study was to determine the relationship between social variables and moral development of public secondary school student in Uyo local government area. The study specifically sought to:

- Determine the relationship between parent-child bond and moral development of adolescents in public secondary schools in Uyo L.G.A.
- Determine the relationship between peer pressure and moral development of adolescents in public secondary schools in Uyo L.G.A.

Research Questions

The study aimed at providing answers to the following research questions:

- What is the relationship between parent-child bond and moral development of public secondary school adolescents in Uyo L.G.A.?
- What relationship exists between peer pressure and moral development of public secondary school adolescents in Uyo L.G.A.?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

- There is no significant relationship between parent-child bond and moral development of public secondary school adolescents in Uyo L.G.A.
- There is no significant relationship between peer pressure and the moral development of public secondary school adolescents in Uyo L.G.A.

RESEARCH METHOD

Correlational survey design was adopted. This design was used whenever a researcher wants to determine the magnitude and direction of relationship between the independent and dependent variable (Udoh and Joseph, 2005). This design is suitable for this study because it enabled the researchers to determine the interrelationship between social variables and moral development of adolescents in public secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Population and Sample

The population of the study comprised all the 2459 Senior Secondary Two (SS2) students in the fourteen (14) schools that make up Uyo L.G.A. (State Secondary Education Board, Uyo-2017/2018). A sample of 245 Senior Secondary Two (SS2) students was selected from the total population of 2459, which represents 10 percent of the study population. In selecting the sampled schools, systematic random sampling technique was used to select 7 public secondary schools out of fourteen (14) schools. This was done by arranging the schools numerically from 1 to 14, such that every even numbered school was selected for the study. As such, 35 senior secondary Two (SS2) students were selected from each school, which gave a total of 245 sampled respondents.

Research Instrument

A self-structured and validated instrument entitled "Social Variables and Moral Development of Adolescents in Public Secondary School Students Questionnaire (SVM DAPSSSQ)" was used for data collection. The research instrument was designed into three sections: section (A), (B) and (C). Section (A) contained demographic data of the respondents; section (B) contained 10 items on social variables while section C contained 8 items on moral development of adolescent respectively. Two research experts in the area of measurement and evaluation, two experts in the area of educational foundations, guidance/counselling at University of Uyo assisted in validating the research instrument to ensure the appropriateness of the instrument in relation to the objectives of the study. While validating the questionnaire, constructive corrections and modification of some of the items were made and same effected. To

ascertains the reliability of the research instrument, the research instrument was tested using split half method. In doing this, few copies of the questionnaire were administered to thirty (30) senior secondary two students 'once' within some time lapse and the scores were divided into two comparable halves for the purpose of scoring. Thereafter, the scores obtained were correlated using the Cronbach alpha statistics to determine the correlation coefficient. Thus, a correlation coefficient of 0.74 was gotten indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study. This coefficient supports the assertion of Nunnally (2007) who observed that any instrument with reliability coefficient of .50 and above should be counted as reliable for a study.

Method of Data Analysis

Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis was used in answering the research questions, using the r-value to determine the weight of relationship between variables. The same research tool (PPMC) was used to test the null hypotheses by comparing the r-value with the critical value, at .05 level of significance and at 243 degree of freedom (Df).

The research questions were answered using the decision rule as postulated by Uzoagulu (2011) as follows:

- Coefficient (r) ----- Relationship
- ± .00 to ±.20 ----- Negligible, weak, very low, little or none
- ± .021 to ±.40 ----- Present, Slight, but low
- ± .41 to ±.50 ----- Average, Moderately high or fairly high
- ± .61 to ±1.00 ----- Very high Positive

RESULTS/ DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research Question 1

What is the relationship between parent-child bond and moral development of public secondary school adolescents in Uyo L.G.A.?

Table 1: Correlation analysis of Responses on the relationship between parent-child bond and moral development of adolescents

Variables	N	ΣX	ΣX ²	ΣXY	r-value	Remark
		ΣY	ΣY ²			
Parent-Child Bond (x)	245	5624	96082	524824	0.97	Very High Positive Relationship
Moral Development of Adolescents (y)	245	1243	34784			

Result in table 1 shows a very high positive relationship between parent-child bond and moral development of public secondary school adolescents in Uyo L. G. A. This is evidence on the correlation co-efficient of 0.97, which means that parent-child bond has a very strong association with moral development of adolescents. This result implies that adolescents are most likely to be morally developed if societal accepted moral values and principles are shared to them by parents through close-knit of relationship and interaction.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between peer pressure and moral development of public secondary school adolescents in Uyo L. G.A?

Table 2: Correlation analysis of responses on the relationship between peer pressure and moral development of adolescents

Variables	N	ΣX	ΣX^2	ΣXY	r-value	Remark
		ΣY	ΣY^2			
Peer Pressure (x)	245	6025	12050			Very High Positive Relationship
Moral Development of Adolescents (y)	245	1243	34784	46834	0.65	

Result in table 2 shows a very high positive relationship between peer pressure and moral development of public secondary school adolescents in Uyo L.G.A. This is shown on the correlation co-efficient of 0.65, which means that peer pressure has a strong association with moral development of adolescents. The implication of this result is that students are most likely to be morally developed if those they associate with in school always display good morals and vice versa.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between parent-child bond and moral development of public secondary school adolescents in Uyo L.G.A.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Analysis of responses on the relationship between parent-child bond and moral development of adolescent

Variables	N	ΣX	ΣX^2	ΣXY	r-value	r-crit	Decision
		ΣY	ΣY^2				
Parent-Child Bond(x)	245	5624	96082				Significant
Moral Dev. of Adolescents (y)	245	1243	34784	524824	0.97	0.064	

Table 3: shows that the calculated r-value of 0.97 is greater than the critical value of 0.064 at the degree of freedom of 243 and at .05 significant level. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is retained. This implies that the more students' get attached to their parents and share good morals and principles, the greater their chances of becoming morally developed and vice-versa

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between peer pressure and moral development of public secondary school adolescents in Uyo L.G.A.

Table 5: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of responses on the relationship between peer pressure and moral development of adolescents

Variables	N	ΣX	ΣX^2	ΣXY	r-value	r-crit	Decision
		ΣY	ΣY^2				
Peer Pressure (x)	245	6025	12050				Significant
Moral Dev. of Adolescents (y)	245	1243	34784	46834	0.65	0.064	

Table 5, shows that the calculated r-value of 0.65 is greater than the critical value of 0.064 at the degree of freedom of 243 and at .05 significant level. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is retained. This result implies that the more students associate with those who often exhibit good morals in school, the greater they will be morally developed and vice versa.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The researcher made a combined discussion of findings from the research questions and hypotheses of the study.

Parent-Child Bond and Moral Development of Adolescents

Results from research question one and hypothesis one revealed a very high positive and significant relationship between parent-child bond and moral development of public secondary school adolescents in Uyo L.G.A. This finding is in line with the finding of Mairin, Augustina and Cynthia (2014) in their longitudinal study of temperament, parenting and moral development of adolescents' in London. The result showed that the pattern of parent's relationship with children can inhibit or predict the moral dimensions of a child's behavior. This finding is also, in tandem with the finding of the study conducted by Judith and Smetana (2008) on parenting style and moral concept studied during adolescence. The study showed that parent-child relationship significantly relates with students' moral development. Based on the above findings, the researcher wishes to observe that parent-child relationship has a strong relationship with students' moral development.

Peer Pressure and Moral Development of Adolescents

Results from research questions two and hypothesis two revealed a very high positive and significant relationship between peer pressure and moral development of public secondary school adolescents in Uyo L.G.A. This result is in tandem with the findings of Agu (2010) who carried out a study on relationship between peer pressure and students' negative moral development in secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone. The result showed that peer pressure relates to students' negative moral development. This finding also conforms to the finding of the study conducted by Nicole (2009) who found that peer pressure has great influence on moral development of adolescents. Thus, the researcher wishes to observe that peer influence is a determinant factor to students' moral development.

CONCLUSION

As children grew up, they are attuned with what they see than any other thing that happens within their social milieu. When parents teach and live a moral sound life, it positively shapes the moral development of a child. Therefore, based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that parent-child bond and peer pressure have a significant relationship with moral development of secondary school adolescents in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made from the findings of the study:

- Parents should always live an exemplary life and show good moral behaviour which the children can easily emulate;
- Students should always be watchful of the kind of friends they keep and associate intimately with those who often exhibit good morals which uphold societal acceptance so that they can be morally developed.

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