

THE INCIDENCE OF MORAL LAXITY AMONG NIGERIAN YOUTHS: IMPLICATION FOR COUNSELLING

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Abstract

Our society today has experienced a good number of deviant and antisocial behaviour among our youths. Negative vices such as aggressive behaviour, drug abuse, secret cult activities, armed robbery, indiscipline and indecent dressing are mounting a roadblock towards effective development of desirable morals among our youths. The paper has examined some of the agencies that can be utilized in transmitting good moral values to our youths. The need for counselling to be utilized in doing away with antisocial behaviours among youths has also been stressed.

It has been noticed in recent times that cases of moral laxity have increased among Nigerian youths. Students in our institutions of learning are involved in secret cult activities, drug abuse, indecent dressing, armed robbery, examination malpractice, stealing, alcoholism and many other undesirable behaviours that are not condoned by the society. These problems have mounted a roadblock towards effective upbringing of our children. Parents and Teachers of our youths now point accusing fingers on one another for not performing their roles effectively.

Some Nigerian Parents are of the opinion that since we are living in a democratic age; our children should be given sufficient freedom to operate on their own. For such parents, when their wards are punished at school for exhibiting undesirable conduct, they are not happy at all. On the other hand, teachers in our institutions of learning shift their blame to parents for not fostering desirable moral patterns for their children. Some teachers believe that hence charity begins at home; parents must inculcate good morals to their children before sending them to school.

In the past, frantic efforts were made by military government, to foster and instill good discipline in Nigerians. The Launching of War Against Indiscipline (WAI)

was geared towards the realization of the morality goal. Denga (1986) pointed out that a well disciplined citizen is one who shuns virtually all immoral behaviours such as corruption, bribery, cheating, disloyalty and other acts of indiscipline. He further stressed that; an educated person with a sound moral character is more useful to the society than one without a moral conscience. To this end, morality entails a people's belief of what is right or wrong. For the Nigerian youths to develop the concept of morality, they must be taught good morals by people around them. That is why Proverbs chapter (22:6) has called on parents to train their children in good morals why they are young so that when they become old; they may not depart from what they have been taught. It implies that, parents and other family members must make use of the formative years of our children by inculcating desirable moral patterns for our youths to imbibe.

Causes of Moral Laxity among Nigerian Youths

A good number of factors or reasons could be given as to why the morality of our youths has been eroded. First and foremost, parents Lukewarm attitudes to the moral upbringing of their children is one of the causes of moral laxity among our youths. Most Nigerian parents have neglected their role of supervising their children. These youths are left alone to do as they wish. Some parents feel that hence we are practicing democracy as at now, the children should be given a wide range of freedom to operate on their own. To such parents, antisocial behaviours are not punished at all. They prefer to spare the child and save the rod.

Similarly, the issue of unemployment has caused a lot of havoc to the moral laxity of our youths. Some of our jobless youths have resorted to antisocial behaviours like armed robbery, thuggery, 419, begging and stealing for their survival. This confirms the adage that an idle mind is a devils workshop.

Again, the quest for material wealth is yet another factor contribution to the moral laxity of our youths. The acquisition of money whether by hook or crook has become the order of the day. Our youths also want to drive flashy cars and Jeeps-at all cost hence money is worshiped in our country.

Lack of moral instructions from schools is yet another factor that has contributed to the moral laxity of our youths. Some teachers have abandoned their role of imparting good moral training to students. They therefore blame parents solely for the undesirable attitudes that are exhibited by their students. The teaching of moral values by the school should be given the necessary attention it deserves.

Antisocial Behaviours and Negative Values of Some Nigerian Youths

There has been a public outcry about the moral laxity of our youths. Students in our schools indulge in secret cult activities. Denga (1991) stated that secret cult activities are causing a lot of concern to the Nigerian populace. Members of this group conduct their secret meetings mainly at night and in odd places. They torment teachers, lecturers, erring members and even non-members. They carry out barbaric activities by assaulting, killing and torturing people indiscriminately. Also, part of their initiation is done by

drinking of human blood. The cult members are always bold and ready to strike simply because they go on hard drugs.

Similarly, the issue of examination malpractice has threatened the existence of the school system. This ugly trend has become the order of the day. Some students go into examination halls with their guns to shoot anybody that will question them for cheating. Again, our youths are claiming that hence out politicians cheat to win elections, they should be allowed to cheat and pass their examinations as well. This cankerworm has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian Education system. The consequences of examination malpractice has a devastating effect on our educational systems. Bulus (1998) pointed out that the manpower produced by our schools and universities would be half-baked and unfunctional. This could be attributed to lack of morality on the part of our youths and teachers.

Furthermore, sex related issues also pose a threat to the moral laxity of our youths. There are several cases of unwanted pregnancies, abortion, child abandonment as well as bastard and unwanted children born without identified fathers. Similarly, sexually transmitted diseases like gonorrhea, syphilis and the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) are posing a threat to our youths. This could be attributed to lack of moral training by our youths. Okpede (1994) has therefore called on the teaching of good morals and sex education in our schools.

The other antisocial behaviour that has been posing a threat to our youths is drug abuse. There has been a public outcry about the widespread usage of drugs by our youths. Denga (1991) warned that there are several consequences on the users of drugs. This ranges from delinquent behaviours, unwanted pregnancies, armed robbery and violence. Similarly, cult activities, violence, rapes, armed robbery and road accidents could be attributed to the usage of drugs. There is need to stamp out this menace from our youths and the school system. Several other antisocial behaviours among Nigerian youths include indecent dressing, aggressive behaviour, armed robbery, fighting, stealing and alcoholism. There is need for parents, teachers and counselors to find the causes of such immoral behaviours and proffer solutions to them.

Agencies for the Transmission of Good Morals

The Home – the home is the foundation of every individuals moral values. It is the responsibility of the home to provide adequate family values to the children. The family values that are taught by the home include greetings to parents, eating habits, toileting habits and courageous habits. A strict family produces a child with total submission. According to Notte (1954) cited by Gbenda (2002:6) the family plays an important role in the moral upbringing of the child. He stated that:

If a child lives with criticism

He learns to condemn

If a child lives with hostility he learns to fight

If a child lives with pity

Pristine

He learns to feel sorry for himself
If a child lives with jealousy
He learns to feel guilty
If a child lives with encouragement
He learns to be confident
If a child lives with tolerance
He learns to be patient
If a child lives with praise
He learns to be appreciative
If a child lives with acceptance
He learns to love
If a child lives with approval
He learns to be himself
If a child lives with recognition
He learns it is good to have a goal
If a child lives with fairness
He learns what justice is
If a child lives with honesty
He learns what truth is
If a child lives with security
He learns to have faith in himself and those around him
If a child lives with friendliness
He learns the world is a nice place in which to live.

It is true to note that in a home where there is parental affection and cordial relationship between the father and mother, there is every tendency that the children will imbibe good morals. Denga (1986) pointed out that, it is the duty of parents to teach the values of honesty, cleanliness, selflessness and concern for others at home.

The School – the school is a place where the child finds his bearing. So many things are learnt in the school system. Virtually all the school subjects contains moral values. In subjects like literature and history, stories of great men are told of how they exhibit desirable moral patterns during their time. In this regard, students can emulate such people and portray desirable moral patterns. The school system provides an avenue through which youth could be taught the values of integrity and justice, courage, discipline, obedience to rule and self-control Denga (1986).

The Peer Group – the peer group is made up of children coming from different family background. They come together and share ideas among themselves. Positive and desirable moral values could be inculcated among members. They youths even regard their parents wisdom as being updated and old school. However, the peer group could be selected and given an orientation to propagate the need to imbibe good moral values among themselves.

The Church/Mosque – Religious organizations have a vital role to play on the moral development of their members. Apart from preaching on Sundays and Fridays,

they can also make use of Sunday schools and choir practices to inculcate sound religious moral values to their members.

Mass Media - The media can also play a vital role in propagating the need to imbibe good morals by the citizens of our country. They can preach against anti-social behaviours in the society by making use of firms, newspapers, television and radio to convey their message. This will go a long way in stamping out negative vices among the Nigerian youths and even adults. Denga (1999) warned that, we should not allow our youths to grow on a steady diet of corrupt practices. The mass media should do away with blue films and phonographic materials that are rampant in our markets.

The Community – The child is born in a particular society. As he or she grows up, he comes in contact with members of his community. In this regard, if the members of his community are corrupt the child will look at corruption as a way of life. If the community frowns at stealing, laziness and other negative vices, the child will learn to obey the rules of his community. The community should therefore set good examples for the youths to emulate.

Counselling Implication for Moral Development

Counselling as a helping profession can be utilized to assist youths in doing away with negative values in our society. The behaviour modification theory of counselling argues that behaviour is learnt and that if behaviour is learnt, it could be unlearned as well. This theory can assist our youths to decrease maladaptive behaviours and increase adaptive behaviours that are cherished by the society.

The group counselling strategy could be used to inform our students about the purpose and objectives of education. The youths will also be made to develop desirable study habits, skills in writing examination and effects of examination malpractice and other negative vices as it affects the individual and the nation at large. Counselling students on sex related matters will also acquaint them with the basic knowledge associated with sexual ignorance. The behavioural modification theory will assist our youths to change their behaviour from bad to good.

The Rational Emotive Theory of Counselling could also be utilized in resolving the incidence of moral laxity among our youths. The theory sees man as being rational or irrational. On the other hand, man is irrational when he begins to think illogically by creating false sentences about himself. The theory believes that nothing is good or bad but thinking makes it to be so. Most of our youth who indulge in negative vices is a result of illogical thinking. Counselors will assist our youths to recognize and re-order their thinking.

Conclusion

The issue of morality has been stressed as an essential ingredient that can help to produce citizens that will have respect for constituted authority, respect truth, honesty and good norms of the society.

Recommendations

More counselors should be trained and posted to our schools to curb the incidence of moral laxity among our youths.

Jingles should be made on Radio and Television condemning negative values that are perpetrated by our youths.

Counseling programmes aimed at inculcating desirable moral values should be featured prominently both on the Nigeria Television Authority and Radio Nigeria.

Teachers and Parents should exhibit desirable moral patterns to be emulated by our youths.

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