ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FAMILY IN THE MORAL EDUCATION OF THE NIGERIAN CHILD

Lami Ofie
School of Education
F.C.E., Kano

Abstract
Our children have a mighty opportunity to carry our legacy to places where we will never go and to years far into the centuries ahead. This will also continue through their children, even far beyond. This can only be achieved through sound moral training given to children by their parents. It is to this effect, that this paper looks at the term morality, some immoral acts exhibited by children and the roles and responsibilities of the family in training the child morally. It further provides some recommendations which if followed, could help to enhance a morally developed society.

Introduction
The family is the first institution and the most important agent of socialization. The child has the first contact with the family before any other person or agent in the society. There cannot be the child without the family. The family is the first teacher of the child. Therefore, if the family is morally upright, the child will surely be morally upright in most cases. The child is familiar with every member of the family before he reaches school age. At this time, the child is expected to be initiated gradually into the family system where he learns the norms and values of the society. The child is spiritually, emotionally, physically and socially connected to the family. A child will definitely be influenced, trained and shaped by the family according to the character standard set by the family.

Our society will be a friendly society if only the family will do its work well by giving the right moral training to their children. The immoral family gives birth to the immoral society. It is one thing to be a parent but another to parent. Families should therefore parent well so as to have a morally developed society.

The society today, is a mirror that displays corruption, cheating, disrespect, armed robbery, examination malpractice, child trafficking, prostitution and a lot of immoral acts due to carelessness on the part of the family to train the child morally. In order to have a sanitized society the home/family have to work hard on the child to bring out the acceptable attitude in him. There is no teacher in the life of the child like the parents. Parents are very much influential in the psychological development of the personality of the child. Musa (2004)
opined that the hereditary endowment the child receives from each parent determines his potential for development.

**The Concept of Morality**

Kohlberg in Anakwe (2008), defined morality as the behaviour in accordance with certain standards of what is good and what is evil, imbibing the good and rejecting the evil.

Furthermore, Etete (2005), viewed morality as the rules of conduct of life. He further explained that it is also the way of life, regulations, the dos and don’ts of a community or society. In addition, he remarked that morality is a system, which contains beliefs about the nature of man, man’s relationship with God, his fellow man and his environment or the entire world.

However, from the above definitions, morality could be seen to cover everything that is upright in the society. It differs from society to society’s stages of development, level of thinking, knowledge available at that time. What one society may deem immoral another society may see it as moral. Therefore one has to study the society well so as to conform to its moral values. Every society has its rules and regulations that govern it. These rules and regulations affect the lives of people. Etete (2005) opined that for an orderly society, there must be agreements, understandings, principles and rules of conduct. Some of these agreements are unconscious as found in customs and traditions of the group. Others are semi-conscious or wholly conscious.

**Some Immoral Acts in our Society**

Nigeria is an area, which exhibits rapid change due to technological advancement. This has brought new ideas in our ways of life both positively and negatively. Due to technological advancement, children today explore the Internet and watch corrupt programmes like pornography and other sexually immoral activities. Sometimes these children watch immoral programmes at home through the satellite services at home. Our decent dressing has given way to indecent ones. Ladies no longer value their body most especially the breast and navel. They dress exposing these areas for attraction to the opposite sex.

The computer which has come to ease our work is today making some of our children to be lazy and exhibit fraudulent behaviour. Certificates and other valuables are being forged through the use of the computer.

419 cases are also rampant in our society due to laziness on the part of our children. Children no longer want to earn a living. Luxury is what occupies their mind.

In addition to the above immoral activities, Nigerian children also indulge in examination malpractices, stealing, robbery, nepotism, cheating, prostitution, telling of lies, lesbianism, homosexualism, fighting, violent, vandalism, laziness towards works and so on.

**Roles and Responsibilities of the Family in the Moral Training of the Child**

The family plays very important role in the life of the child. The child has
his first contact with the family. The child is the reflection of the family. He cannot anyone as he comes to the family. The family becomes his first teacher before he is enrolled into the formal school system. Rafindadi (2006), stated that the child’s parents and siblings form what is called significant others, whom he depends on physically, socially, economically, morally and psychologically.

The family has a lot of roles to play in the life of the child to bring about moral decency in him. The family is a teacher/a model, a counsellor, a spiritual leader, a disciplinarian, a value conveyer and so on.

The family is the first teacher that transmits the appropriate behaviour patters, values, attitude and norms of the society to the child. It is only the family that has the role of “every time teacher” to the child. The training of the child morally begins at birth and never stops even when he is old. So the child remains in, depend, interact and associate with only members of the family for 18 – 21 years. This has to do with the spiritual development of the child to respect for elders; from learning to love and respect every member of the family to loving the world about us.

In addition, it is the role of the family to provide food, shelter and education to the child. Every member of the family who is of age, most especially the parents, should be hardworking. Family members should not exhibit lazy attitude work and family affair. Every family should be able to cater for members of its family. Even the Bible in 1 Timothy 5:8 states: If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (NIV).

The family should be a model in the all round development of the child. Parents should keep themselves clean, so also their environments. Communication in the family should be loving. The family should communicate by the examples of their lives. Sala (1978) posited that an extrovert parent is likely to have an extrovert child and that show her a parent who is generous and she will show you a teenager who has learned warm-heartedness and generosity because it was practiced at home.

Furthermore, the family is to fulfill its responsibility to the child by providing him with good formal education. This will help him become a responsible member of the society. The education acquired will also help him to different from being a responsible member of the society. While in school, it is the responsibility of the parents to provide for the child’s school materials and pay his school fees regularly to avoid dropout from school.

Moreso, it is the responsibilities of the family to see to the spiritual development of the child. The family should pray together and see that everyone is spiritually sound. The word of God is to be read and memorize by family members. Once spiritual things occupy the heart or mind of the child, then he will not indulge in immoral things.
Conclusion
From the foregoing discussion, the family plays major roles and responsible in the moral development of the child. This could be summed up in the words of Sala (1978),

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 ridicule,
He learns to be shy.
If a child lives with shame,
He learns to feel guilty.

If a child lives with tolerance,
He learns to be patient.
If a child lives with encouragement,
He learns confidence.
If a child lives with praise,
He learns to appreciate.
If a child lives with fairness
He learns justice.

If a child lives with security,
He learns to have faith
If a child lives with approval,
He learns to like himself
If a child lives with acceptance and friendship
He learns to find love in the world.

Recommendations
The following suggestions are made:

- Parents should know who their children’s friends are.
- Parents should not force their children into doing what parents like but counsel them.
- Parents should check the kinds of things their children wear and watch on television, read and also listen to.

References


*The Holy Bible (NIV)*. Great Britain.