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EDITORIAL

The Journal of Research and Development in Education (JORDE) is the official Journal of the Institute of Education and Professional Development, University of Uyo, Uyo, Nigeria which aims at disseminating information on multidisciplinary issues in education. This volume contains empirical, philosophical and historical research reports systematically carried out and cross-validated in the areas of innovation in various aspects and levels of education including teacher education, instructional methods and delivery, technologies and innovations, as well as issues in quality assurance and policies.

Teachers and other stakeholders in education stand to gain insight from the comprehensive contributions of the authors of the articles in the Journal. The Editorial Board will continue to encourage researchers at all levels of education to write and share ideas as the publication of the Journal will be carried out twice a year. This current issue is No. 1 of 7th Volume of the Journal series published by the Institute.

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- (vi) Articles for publication are peer reviewed blindly and articles that meet the editorial standard of the Journal will be published.
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Article should be sent electronically as an e-mail attachment to researchedu@uniuyo.edu.ng. Two (2) hard copies of the proposed articles should also be forwarded to the Editor, Journal of Research and Development in Education (JORDE) c/o Director, Institute of Education and Professional Development, University of Uyo, P.M.B 1017, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

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ADOLESCENT MORALITY AND THE CONCEPT OF RELIGIOUS THINKING FROM CHILDHOOD

Agnes O. Adeyeye
Adesina A. Olubitan

Abstract

In the words of Plato, "the ignorance most fatal to States and individuals is not ignorance in the field of technology or professions, but spiritual ignorance". In this contemporary age, the perception of the adolescent can no longer be seen to be static. Instead, it has keenly followed a dynamic trend over times. In the Victorian times, the child was regarded as a passive figure which impressions had to be made upon. But nowadays, adolescents have energetic urges, drives and instincts, thereby making them 'internal combustion engine, capable of spontaneous activity'. Unfortunately, this change has greatly affected their morality and bring-up. The scenario here alluded to, is what presents concerned nagging questions. How will the future be safeguarded? How can morality be inculcated in the fibre of the adolescent? Would receiving religious instructions from childhood help in imbuing a sustained morality in the adolescent stage? How can moral up-bringing address the myriads of problems most adolescents undergo and the peculiarity of their class? Ultimately, the society, the church and family units are the major contributory agencies in the life of a child. But singling out the religious institution in this context, aims at articulating the connection between morality and adolescents and how religious thinking or education can affect or impinge on the growth of a child into the adolescent stage. It is understood that human beings cannot escape the inherent imperativeness of religion and morality upon their consciousness and life. It is a fact of religion that God is at the centre of life. Hence, using analytical and experiential methods, engaging the tool of interaction and personal participation, our findings showed that when basic religious instructions are instilled in the life of a child, it grows with them thereby making the child to live a positive life and constantly have recourse during adolescent stage. When moral instructions are structured in a way that address a child's problems and instructors are patient enough, it would be a double pay-off in the long-run.

Keywords: Adolescent, Childhood, Morality, Religious, Thinking

Introduction

According to the Twentieth Century Dictionary, "morality" is defined as a quality of being moral - relating to character or conduct considered as good or evil, ethical, virtuous in matters of sex; that which renders an action right or wrong. As Protus concurs, morality relates to the Christian understanding which sees it as the sum of true teachings about right and wrong, good and evil, as understood through natural reason and through fidelity to the teachings of Christ expressed in Scripture and tradition. From this view point, morality is mainly concerned with what is good and bad in the behaviour of human beings and in our daily living. In recent time the society is facing situation which are daunting and encumbrance. The generation of adolescents being paraded in contemporary time are lacking in etiquettes of human living and interpersonal relationship.

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Indeed, the issue of adolescent morality has become a phenomenon for contemporary discussion. William Barclay² puts it vividly in this quote,

Not so very long ago, when I was young and first entered the Ministry, the great battle-cry was; "Don't bother about theology; stick to ethics; people would say; "stop talking about the trinity and about the two natures of Jesus and all that sort of things, and stick to ethics; never mind theology; just stick to the Sermon on the Mount, and let the abstractions and the abstruseness and the philosophy and the metaphysics go". People said; "Take theology away- I can't understand it anyway". But thirty years ago no one ever doubt that divorce was disgraceful; that illegitimate babies were a disaster; that chastity was a good thing; that an honest day's work was part of the duty of any respectable and responsible man; that honesty ought to be part of life. But today, for the first time in history, the whole Christian ethics is under attack. It is not only theology that people want to abandon- it is the ethic as well.

The issue of adolescent morality, from the aforementioned; has become an institution to cater for. One could with less measurable evidence but correspondingly with more hair-raising power, as Loukes asserts, describe the general relaxation of ideals and hopes.¹ The situation can be judged by what people are proud or ashamed of doing, by the way the community distributes censure and praise punishment and reward. By this measure, contemporary adolescents are not in the right direction. According to Loukes,

they scarcely ever seem to distribute censure at all, except to those who censure them, they are the trustful (sic), destroyer of tradition, winning from a timorous and permissive society the right to do their own things. Promiscuity is becoming a positive ideal; like many other ideals it is not yet generally practiced, but it is being increasingly presented as of virtue in itself, as an alternative to war, as a condition of the growth of the free spirit.

The above summation points to the fact that the adolescents of this contemporary age are indeed facing serious moral problems. In the past, children being fearful of parents ran away when checked, the reverse is the case in contemporary times as children stand shoulder height to withstand or intimidate their parent. These children, upon getting to the adolescent stage, become pervasive as they begin to show disinterest in rituals which make society cohere. At this stage, most adolescents are seen spending their vast income and time on modern technologies, latest clothes and the social media. They pursue the short-term happiness and the rare ones who notice that it is not the right way to follow are isolated and feel like strangers to their generation. The adolescents have execrable manners, flout authority, lack respect and reverence to mention just few.¹¹ It is their contempt for authority and impatience of restraint, self-centredness, lack of clear thinking and clear conviction, the sheer immediacy and lack of principle in their behaviour that presume the discourse on adolescent morality from the perception of moral problems in

connection with religious thinking; that is, the imbibing of religious culture and principles from childhood as the panacea.

A Child's Moral Pattern and Development

The definition of morality as conforming to the 'mores' and customs of the community confines one to observe the customs and conform to the behaviour of a social settingⁱⁱⁱ. Hadfield also states that another divergent view to the meaning of morality, the pursuit of right ends and aims connotes virtues such as generosity, loyalty, and honesty are regarded as good in themselves and are to be pursued irrespective of the customs and standards of the community.^{iv} The pattern of this development is clearly evidenced in the developmental growth of a child. In consonance with Hadfield therefore, a child automatically reflects the behaviour of his parents and those around either good or bad. This is the sense in which a child's morality is understood. Hurlock, puts it in clearer form:

At birth, no child has a conscience or a scale of values. Consequently, every newborn infant may be regarded as unmoral or non-moral. And no child can be expected to develop a moral code alone. Instead, every child must be taught the group's standards of right and wrong.^v

Apparently, the birth and growth of a child in a particular community, society or group goes a long way to shape, form and make up his personality and morality. In other words, a child grows up to conform to what he/she met on ground or see others who are ahead of him/her doing. This is morality indeed, in the sense of a child conforming to the mores and customs of the community or social group. Hurlock noted that children cannot be expected to know all the mores of the group nor can they be expected to behave in a truly moral way except they are tutored and trained in ways that are generally acceptable to the community.^{vi}

In this view, it can be said that the development and cultivation of true morality which will guide a child when he/she gets to the adolescent stage is imbued in his conformity to certain social standards. This social standard is what shapes an adolescent and engender him/her to live responsibly. According to Hurlock, this comes with the transition from external to internal authority and consists of conduct regulated from within. This conduct that is regulated internally should be accompanied by a feeling of personal responsibility for one's acts.^{vii} If this is well developed, the idea is that a child will grow up into adolescent and beyond to give primary consideration to the welfare of the group he belongs to and the community at large while relegating personal desires or gains to a position of secondary importance^{viii}. Hadfield also observed that the higher conception of morality - the pursuit of right ends and aims - is awakened at the age when the child adopts his own ego, ideal and standards of behaviour, which he pursues, and by which he regulates his actions.^{ix}

From the foregone however, it is seen from this perception that moral development has both an intellectual and an impulsive aspect. Children must learn what is right and what is wrong. Then, as soon as they are old enough, they can be given explanations of why this is right and that is

wrong. They must also have opportunities to take part in group activities so that they can learn what the group expects. Nevertheless, of more importance is that, children must develop a desire to do what is right, to act for the common good, and to avoid wrong. This can be accomplished most successfully by associating pleasant reactions with what is right and unpleasant reactions with what is wrong^x. In either case, there is an observation that morality is the outcome of natural processes, and inevitably takes its place in the course of a child's development^{xi}.

However, there is the need for a commitment in asking the question, whether there is a moral sense in the child or is a child born with a sense of right and wrong? An understanding of this pattern of operation will help us to acknowledge the concept of religious thinking from childhood that we are bringing to the fore. On this point, the researchers share the opinion of Hadfield, who states that, it would be truer to say that the moral sense in a child is not inborn, but that the ingredients of a moral sense are present in every child. The moral sense of some is inevitable, because of the natural processes of suggestibility and identification. Hadfield however continues that, the nature of the moral sense of a child depends on the environment in which the child is brought up and the people with whom it identifies itself.^{xii} In this context therefore, if a child associates or identifies with people of the same religious groups and background, there is the tendency that his/her thinking will be shaped in line with those things that he/she has been taught. And there is a possibility that he/she will want to grow up to defend and uphold that belief or thought that has been inculcated in him/her.

Adolescents' Moral Problems

According to Obasola, the need for morality in the society has assumed a wider dimension especially in its relationship with religious, social and economic related issues.^{xiii} And in a narrower context, the youths, adolescents and in most instances, adults are embroiled in this moral contention. This portends the fact that the quest for morality is an indispensable fact of human existence as it helps in human struggle for survival.^{xiv} Hence, in the adolescent build-up, it is imperative to develop a sense of justice to serve as a prerequisite for social solidarity, religious cohesion, welfare and happiness in the society. Therefore, the imperative of morality is to establish the justifiability of an action, whether an action is well motivated or reprehensible.^{xv} This is the context in which the adolescent moral problem is articulated.

The fact that the adolescents are facing myriad of problems and challenges cannot be over-emphasised. However the root of the problem is morally inclined and it would demand a constructive solution for a structural change. The problem started when the Nigerian society had culturally changed from being a simple, traditional society to a complex urbanized society, at least, to a large extent. This change has occurred as Oderinde observed, because of the total impact of the Colonial Administration, Western Education, Christianity, Islam and heterogeneous population which is due to the non-indigenous coming to settle in Nigeria for farming, trading and public services.^{xvi} Furthermore, the cultural change has affected the various areas of the people's life including a change in perception. The collective and strict discipline which the traditional society made compulsory and enforced individually and corporately has become permissive and optional at home and at school. Oderinde observes further that, with whipping, beating and canning repealed at home and at school, it has thereby made discipline on students to be difficult

and often selective for teachers at school. As a result, the perception of punishment becomes distorted and meaningless to the public conscience. The legal punishment of detention and imprisonment has virtually replaced all other forms of disciplining children and youths as and when due. Unfortunately, the legal system has exempted young persons from a proper legal trial and punishment. The legal system has named the young persons as juveniles and educationists call them juvenile delinquents, and they are treated as babies of society.^{xvii} It is in this context that we find the problem of disobedience becoming more and more serious at home, at school, at work or in the society at large. Apart from the issue of disobedience becoming a problem, the degeneration of adolescents has greatly impinged on their social, religious and cultural life which calls for attitudinal re-orientation.

In addition, the adolescent's problem is said to have stemmed from a series of complex related issues which include: poverty, unpatriotic values, power relations, negative parental attitude especially to vocational technical education, and limited resources. Shyllon noted that, the adolescent's moral problems persist because of failure of the society to accept its moral obligation to address issues such as lack of essential resources, violation of fundamental human rights and denial of basic needs. These have compounded the problems of young people.^{xviii} She therefore laid credence to the fact that the problems of young people are morally inclined. According to the writer, the realities of the problems of the adolescents are not only social, political and economic, but also moral and ethical.^{xix} She opines that if the problem is not remedied, a bleak future is set for the youths although she is of the firm view that the solution lies in the church.

There is no doubt about it, that adolescence is a period of transition to adulthood and as Nigerians, over 26million adolescents prepare to enter adulthood, they face enormous challenges in an environment of rapid urbanization and social change. It was late Prof. Olikoye Ransome-Kuti; the former Minister of Health who once said that, "Adolescent sexuality is a reality; today's young people reach physical maturity earlier and marry later"; to this end, the society has a responsibility to ensure that they (the adolescents) make responsible sexual choices.^{xx} It needs to be affirmed that youths and adolescents are facing many moral problems ranging from coping with the physical, emotional and social changes that accompany this period of transition from childhood to adulthood to disobedience to parents and authorities, school truancy, drug abuse, promiscuous behaviour, young racketeers, juvenile delinquency, drunkenness and drunkards, youths' fraudulent transaction and youths' violence^{xxi}. Having done a brief observation of the adolescent's moral problems, it is important that the researchers engage the parameter upon which this issue could be addressed. From the aforementioned, the concept of religious thinking that is, religious inculcation is put forward.

The Concept of Religious Thinking

The teaching of religion in schools ultimately provides an avenue for religious moral instructions. This is because, as Nuttall avers, knowledge of the nature of a person's religious beliefs can lead to a greater understanding and moderation of that person's actions and way of life^{xxii}, which in turn can lead to imbibing sane and cultured lifestyle. The idea behind the principle of religious thinking is finding a way of inculcating religious principles and ideals in the mind-set of the adolescents. The concept brings to the fore-ground that, thinking religiously from childhood

through adolescence to adulthood would shape children's mind-set positively towards a moral life. To this extent, religious thinking is viewed as a shortened form of expressing the activity of thinking directed towards religion, not a term meaning separate rationality.^{xxiii} William James further expresses this vividly that:

there is religious fear, religious love, religious awe, religious joy and so forth. But religion is only man's natural emotion of love directed to a religious object; religious fear is only the ordinary fear... the common quaking of the human breast, in so far as the notion of divine retribution may arouse it; religious awe is the same organic thrill which we feel in a forest at twilight, or in a mountain gorge, only this time it comes over us at the thought of our supernatural relations...^{xxiv}

Smith puts it more succinctly by asserting categorically that; "a child is non-religious at birth as he is non-moral, non-aesthetic, and non-thinking. He inherits none of those qualities in a functional form but acquires them gradually through experience".^{xxv} The aforementioned in no way assumes that religion is not a natural expression of man's basic needs; it merely means that there is no one need or drive (sic). Rather, religion is the fulfilment of the entire man, of which his intellect is a part.^{xxvi}

Furthermore, religion has been known as generator, sustainer and custodian of moral values. Religion has a long history of being associated with morality. Religion is sociologically known as a form of social control among others, namely, law, education and custom. Sociologists have further argued that religion is a powerful and pervasive phenomenon. Hence, religion stands to be a vital and competent agent to be enlisted in the task of moral orientation of Nigerian youths in general. Historically, Composta noted that, all religions have been known to teach a set of morals. For instance, primitive Buddhism (Theravada or Hinayana) was a monastic organization for the practice of ascetic morals, but was not a religion, although it later transformed itself into a religion (Mahayana).^{xxvii} The idea of religious thinking also came to the fore in Western culture in the beginning of the sixteenth century. The question of whether morals or morality is possible without the knowledge of God often takes centre stage. Composta however prods that, a classical philosophy which does not renege on its metaphysical vocation knows quite well that man is open to transcendence, not only in affirming that God exists, but also in knowing that he is the ultimate Good and the principle of every sanctity. Hence, according to him, authentic morals are religious.^{xxviii} Thus, from the philosophical viewpoint, the nexus of morality to religious thinking is established. That morality stems from God and rooted in religion is also asserted by Alan Richardson who stated that, "the sense of obligation to do that which is believed to be right is, in fact, the pressure of God upon every human life..."^{xxix} in other words, as Obasola viewed it, it is God who puts in people the sense of what is right and what is wrong thereby bringing about the sense of obligation.^{xxx} This attestation narrows down to the fact that religious moral inclination imbue in a person the sense or attitude of obligation to behave and act morally.

Grounds for Moral and Religious Development

The fact that the need for moral and religious development is imperative, is to state the obvious, taking the definition of Briggs into consideration who defines religion as, "a system of thought,

feeling and action shared by a group that gives members an object of devotion; a code of ethics governing personal and social conduct; and a frame of reference relating individuals to their group and the universe".^{xxxii} This definition points to fact that religion as a system affects man's thinking, feeling and action. Apparently, religion if utilized appropriately is meant for the development of a total being. When we take this into consideration, religion as a code of ethics will hence be effectively utilized to govern personal and social conduct. It is obvious that, more often than not, morality has to do with character thereby bringing out the difference between what is right and acceptable, and what is wrong and reprehensible. Hence, morality is concerned with character formation and the distinction between what is right and what is wrong, acceptable or unacceptable with the sole aim of promoting societal good.^{xxxiii}

It is however important to state that, if we want to enhance this needful development, this assignment should be placed on moral and religious educators in schools, because greater part of the adolescent's time is spent at school. Efforts of the moral educator will therefore be geared towards bringing about a morally correct behaviour that will be acceptable in the society. From this standpoint, it is imperative to train people to advice on the ethics of action that can guide and enhance moral and religious development in the society.^{xxxiv} The moral educators must present inculcation of morality as something that account has to be taken and as that which guides one's life and conduct".^{xxxv} As Nuttal puts it, "the moral education of the new generation is the responsibility of everyone even if it is a responsibility that falls most heavily on those who come into contact with the young people more frequently - either through parenthood or having a particular occupation".^{xxxvi} It is on this point that the implication of religious thinking from childhood to adolescent for the society shall be assessed in subsequent section.

Implications for the Society

It is obvious that mankind has created societal strata to give room for inequality. The mind-set of the children of the poor will no doubt be different from that of the rich owing to their different upbringing. But it must be emphasized that matters of religion should not be stratified because all are equal before God and biblical injunction enjoined parents to train up a child in the way he/she should go. Therefore, it is paramount to state that the sole implication of moral and religious development by moral educators to the society at large irrespective of social or class stratification is the creation of ethical experts in all areas of enterprise and endeavours to regulate behaviours and moral development of the adolescent group. For instance, Nuttal draws an illustration that will bear positive implication on the society if this is ventured into.

According to Nuttal, a hospital consultant might seek the advice of an ethical 'expert' before deciding whether to carry out an abortion or turn off a life support machine.^{xxxvii} The same thing goes for all other fields to the extent that a moral consideration will have to be taken before embarking on any major decision-making process in any establishment. This idea of investing in moral development of adolescent group is vital for a peaceful and corrupt-free society. The impression in this concept is to first bring about a self-transformation that will in the long-run lead to a transformed society. The transformation and development of any society hinges to a large extent on the moral and religious development of the citizen. 'Development' in this view is

a process of enabling people to accomplish things that they could not do before - that is, to learn and apply information, attitudes, values and skills....^{xxxvii} It is the progression in the learning process and character development of a child. In this nexus, it is germane to point out that if Nigeria is to reflect a developed and morally imbued citizen, religious leaders must avoid the notion of indoctrination or incitement of one religion against the other religions. Nigeria being a pluralist State is poised to accommodate the different religious tenets and divergence views. What matters most should however be an adaptation of the cultural values inherent in the various religions concerned to the moral and emotional development of the adolescent.

To this extent, it is apparent that moral and religious development is pertinent and appropriate to the transformation and development of every facet of human life inter alia; adolescents. In other words, according to Asaju, the implication of moral and religious development to the society will be to serve as a springboard for the inculcation and improvement of ethical values which are fundamental to achieving correct human behaviour particularly as it relates to productivity on nation building.^{xxxviii} In this context, religious instructors should avoid indoctrination on the negative side that could lead to breakdown of Nigeria's cultural and ethical values of belongingness.

In essence, when these parameters are enshrined in the thinking and thought pattern of a child, then a new generation of adolescents will emerge. The idea is that having come out from their religious childhood experience into imbibing sound adolescent morality; they will be able to achieve the ideals of ethical development in adulthood for the good of the society. From this standpoint, it can be stated categorically in consonance with Obasola that, the hallmark of morality in any human society is to regulate those spheres of human life and conduct which no other aspect of human endeavour can curtail. It also regulates the personal and interpersonal relationships of people within an established social milieu thereby paving the way for social harmony, which engenders socio-political development.^{xxxix} Consequently, in the context of religious thinking from the adolescent, the development of their persons- socially, politically, economically, and otherwise, will be incomplete without the "guiding light" of morality. Therefore, any human organization where morality and religious inculcation is extricated from the body polity will inexplicably lead to perdition.^{xl} Apparently, the words of Shoben is suggestive here, religion must be seen to be personally relevant and important when it is believed and accepted with real commitment.^{xli}

Conclusion

In sum, from all the aforementioned, as a matter of urgency, religious institution should redouble their efforts in mobilizing the youths towards purposeful ventures. Youth camps should be built by these religious institutions to take adequate care of the morality of the youths. By this action, their bubbling youthful exuberance will be positively and rightly channelled towards a purposeful endeavour. In the course of the ventured project, various training schemes ranging from entrepreneurial to different empowerment programmes can be introduced. It should be remembered that religion is important, not only as the institutionalized embodiment of commandments or rules, but, as the carrier of great traditions of moral conduct, great models of responsible manhood. It is in these great religious traditions that one finds the material about

which a rational man can most profitably learn to think, and by engaging in such thought, to learn, unlearn and learn anew the styles of the moral life that enable him to participate in the human community and to confront, with courage and even a little gaiety, the poignant but distinctively human inevitability of moral dilemma.^{xlii}

In the same vein, Nwagwu pointed out that, religion and morality are two realities that touch the operation of the human person in history and time and respond to the spiritual yearnings^{xliii}. With the inculcation of religious moral instructions from childhood, the effort to restructure and transform the society would be fast-tracked. Religious moral guidelines should therefore be used to instruct, educate, and put into effect in order to reform the adolescent for a purposeful life to be significant in the building-up process of the human society, promotion of human dignity and rectification of certain imbalances in the society.^{xliv} Therefore, if adolescent morality is to be positively checked, religious thinking must and should be integrated in their ways of life. Adolescents should be involved in religious worship and activities privately and publicly. The scripture provides that, moral principles such as honesty and truthfulness are issued as divine commands, which a believer has no option but to obey. This obedience to the moral norms is seen as doing the will of God. This increases the adolescent's commitment to questions of morality because according to biblical injunctions, mankind is called upon to live a life of righteousness and holiness. On this parameter, it is therefore essential to inculcate moral and religious tenets in the adolescents for them to grow and develop into better persons in the society.

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