MORAL DECADENCE AND NIGERIAN YOUTHS: ADULT EDUCATION CURRICULUM PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract
This paper focuses on moral decadence and Nigerian youths: Adult education curriculum perspectives. Adult education is seen by many developing countries as an instrument for the promotion of the people's status politically, economically and socially. As much as education of this group of people is concerned, issues surrounding moral decadence among the youths have become worrisome to all and sundry. Concepts of moral decadence and youths have diversely been define and discussed adequately. Other issues addressed include causes and effects of moral decadence in our societies; adult education curriculum perspectives among others. Causes of moral decadence identified in this paper include family instability, school factor, mass media, peer influence, influence of western culture and unemployment. Effects of moral decadence on youths include under - development, collapse of family and community life, and water down the integrity of the people and nation. Arising from this, the paper outlined the following as its way forward: Family values must be uphold to stand for what will help their wards leave above board in character, belief and what they stood for. Schools should jettison on immoral acts of the students by dealing with it from the bud before it escalate to what other children will copy. They (schools) should not spear any parents either on account of what they stand to loss if such a children leave their school or not. Standard should be maintained at all times. Appropriate authorities like National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and others should monitor the activities of media houses in the Country not to promote acts capable of encouraging immoral acts in our society. Finally, parents should watch out for peer influence on their wards and ask questions where necessary before it becomes too late.
Keywords: Adult Education, Curriculum, Moral decadence and Youths

Introduction

Moral decadence as a phenomenon has been overlooked for so long and gradually becoming unaccepted in today's world. No doubt, it is prevalent among the youths and often caused by poor breed of these youngsters by the older generation. These youths are considered as the backbone of every society and are supposed to be leaders of tomorrow but have soil their hands in vices capable of destroying their future life. The character traits engendered by our social system that is, by our way of living, are pathogenic which can affect an individual's personality as well as that of the society at large. In Nigeria today, there is widespread concern about the moral crises faced by the country. Moral decadence permeates all aspects of our public life and rampant cases of corruption associated with it are easily noticeable. A significant number of youths have imbibed the culture of immorality for their selfish gains. The result of which does not only affect the perpetrators and or victims, but the whole society as well.

In lieu of this, immorality can be found in all aspects of our being. It is so common that sometimes children learn from adults and the circle goes on. Immoral behaviors are found in schools, homes, on the streets, at work places and even in places of worships. This situation has greatly affected national development and has led to the bad reputation of the country overseas. Adebisi (2018) believed that youths are easily lured into it since they are individuals full of energy and curiosity about life and their environment. These make them vulnerable to societal vices, as it is a period of exploration, uncertainty and doubts. They are regarded as the younger generation of the society, within the period of adolescence and below the age of forty years old. It is therefore not surprising that many of these youths have been wrongly lured into accepting such life styles that can, at best be injurious to their present and future aspirations. Such lifestyles include smoking, alcoholism, obsessive womanizing, cultism etc. Fake drugs also consumed by them have damaged the biological systems of many people, while others have lost their lives. Apparently, the need to find lasting solutions to moral decadence among the youths using the instrumentality of adult education curriculum is being sought for.

Concept of Moral Decadence

The subject "moral decadence" has lent itself to diverse definitions. Few of the definitions said to have been examined here include that of Afuye (2015); Muraiwo and Ugwumba (2014); Odeh (2013); and others. Afuye (2015) viewed moral decadence to have come in the form of cultism, examination malpractice, teenage pregnancy, rape, sexual harassment among others. It is thus a behaviour that defiles the accepted norms and values of the society. It is in direct conflict with the society's values. Similarly, Muraiwo and Ugwumba (2014) explained it to mean the process of acting in such a way that portrays low moral standards. It therefore connotes the collapse in moral norms, values and ethical standards. Contributing further to moral decadence, Odeh (2013) believed moral decadence represents the inability to uphold sound morality in the society. Hume (1975) also explained that moral decadence means a condition of having a decline in morals.

On his part, Idensi (2010) asserted that moral decadence is reported in different societies and cultures, industrialized world to non - industrialized world and that behaviours denoting immorality such as rape, sexual abuse, drug abuse, school violence and killings have known to be common among youths and children all over the world. These problems reduce the value of education, destroys the human capacity for leadership and good citizenship, including lowering the academic integrity of institutions especially where parents have provided these young lads with access to education. This act has had adverse effects on society, because it changes cultural, moral, and social norms and sets new but lower standards for appropriate behaviors. It equally promotes public acceptance of violence, justifies discrimination and injustice, and limits opportunities for social development that is so important to keep societies flourishing.

Obviously from all these, moral decadence is an extreme delinquent, disorder, irregular, destructive unjust and non - conforming behaviour characteristics of stratified people or individuals which continue to spread on our societies (Adedoyin, 2012). Operationally, moral decadence is any behaviour that contradicts the ethical values and norms that govern an individual and/ or the society at large. Other acts in this category may include drug abuse, disrespect to elders, and stealing. It is thus an abnormality involving basic conflict with the society's value system. All in all, it could be better described as an aggressive behaviour which defiles the established values in a given society. Rogers (2003) on his part viewed moral decadence as non - compliance through their parental upbringing, peer or societal influence. Parents that are involved in anti - social behaviour stands the chances of transferring such attitudes to their children, some out of guilty conscience do not have the moral power to instill discipline hence they practice indiscipline. It reiterated that most Nigerian youths engage in anti - social behaviour due to the family upbringing, some are from broken homes or defective homes that can rarely satisfy children's basic needs let alone parental affection.

Moral Decadence and its Causes among the Youths

Mofoluwawo in Lukman (2021) pointed out that many youths have been involved in all kinds of activities regardless of whether it is right or wrong, so long as they can be able to sustain themselves in it. Few among the causes of immoral acts identified amongst the youths are:

1.	Family Instability: Researches carried out by Njoku (2015) have proven that family instability is a major cause to moral decadence amongst the Nigerian youths. For instance if parents fail in their responsibility to show affection, guidance and proper discipline, the children are likely to derail morally; it implies that indiscipline should be tackled from the family. When parents overlook ill acts of their children at home or they are incapable of inflicting suitable punishment whenever the children err. It is then an inevitable fact that they would grow wilder in it. Low moral standard and hypocrisy of the older generation gives room for the youths to get themselves involved in moral decadence when youths find out that the older generation is somewhat hypocritical, in that they pretend to inculcate set of moral norms but vigorously pursues the opposites (Saheed, 2013). As a result, they tend to join in the camouflage way of life.

2.	School Factor: Far from the family, the school also plays a major role in moral upbringing of a child. School is meant to be a training ground for children but in most cases the reverse is the case. Teachers who are supposed to be the trainers, directors, guardians and character moulders are already morally corrupt. According to Smith (2001) some of them exhibit some sort of anti - social behaviours, children who sees their teachers as role models uphold every behaviour of the teacher as ideal. This agrees with Standstorm (2006) who said that

where children are not properly taught how to spend their leisure hours profitably, the children are prone to misuse of it.

3.   Unemployment: today has exposed youths to immoral acts. As Adebisi (2018) puts it, that youths who roam the streets due to lack of jobs or unstable academic session, have become nuisance to the society. The jobless youths have become easy targets for radical organizations and have been used as tools by politicians to perpetrate mayhem especially during electoral season.

4.   Peer Influence: The influence of peer group is also one of the major causes of moral decadence. Faustine (2013) argued that peers are regarded as an important influence in the character of an individual, especially at young age. Therefore, the affiliation with peers who engage in risky behaviors is known to be a strong prediction of the youth's character. Similarly, the lack of discipline and willingness to learn, especially in primary and secondary schools in Nigeria, has resulted into immoral acts.

5.   Mass media: The mass media has also been blamed for encouraging immoral acts among youths in the society. Adebisi (2013) explained that the information that is widely broadcasted in the media is not always censored. Youths that watch pornographic scenes, war films, drug addiction and trafficking scenes, tend to practice what they learn. The media and technology have played huge roles in promoting moral decadence among youths.

6.   Influence of Western Culture: The gradual imposition of the western culture on the traditional African society has also contributed to the decline in morality today. This has resulted into a rapid shift from traditional society. Hence, the colonization of African countries by western countries has exposed these colonized countries to new western values (Sofadekan, 2018). These western values do not represent the true African norms and values that existed before the coming of colonial masters to the continent.

Effects of Moral Decadence on Youths and the Nigerian State
The problems that occur as a result of immorality cannot be part of the progressive development of any country. Moral decadence according to Louw (2009), impedes the growth and development of individuals as well as the nation. These are noticeable in the following areas:

1.   Under - development: Foreign investors tend to back down from doing businesses in the country (Sodefakan, 2016). Immoral acts committed mostly by energetic youths have crippled the progress of the country. Muhammad and Abubakar (2018) shared this view when they argued that moral decadence has resulted into the slow pace of development. These immoral vices ranging from stealing, bribery, examination malpractices, insubordination among others, have contributed immensely to the educational and economic decline in the country.

2.   Collapse of Family and Community Life: Another consequence of moral decay has led to the collapse of family and the community life, because youths imbibe the attitude of lack of integrity, violence, self - decline, etc. Awoniyi (2003) explained that a visit to the police stations and court rooms have shown that most of the crimes committed are perpetrated by youths. They engage in vices such as arson, cultism, forgery etc, all of which are detrimental to the progress of any society. If such actions are left unchecked, the society will be negatively affected and the youths who are supposed to be useful, become social deviants (Alloy, 2000).

3.   Water down the Integrity of the people and nation: Moral decadence has affected the integrity of Nigeria as a whole. Corruption and other immoral acts taking place in the country have affected the image of the Nigerian societies internationally (Chinedu, 2020). In a similar vein, criminal activities in our societies have affected tourism, a sector which could generate huge capital to the country (National Orientation Agency, 2009; Enu and Esu, 2011). Moral decay has further impeded moral education, because it does not assist the society with respect to molding a good character that should have been instilled right from the beginning (Oliver, 2017). Hence, the implications of moral decadence, both nationally and internationally cannot be overemphasized.

Adult Education Curriculum Perspectives
Adult education no doubt within this context is change - oriented. It is the type of education planned to bring about positive change to the adults who will invariably bring about positive change to their families and the society at large. Hitherto, before now, these adults are seen as those who have not lived upto expectations in their families and at bringing up their children in a more upright manner. It is in view of the important role of adult education in national development and transformation, that Nyerere in Ugwoegbu (1992) stated that people must develop first before the nation can develop. He stressed further that we must educate adults since

children will not have immediate impact on the economic development of the nation. Speaking further, Egwu (2012) stated that Nigeria is currently undergoing rapid changes economically, socially, politically, culturally and technologically and to meet the present societal challenging times in the fast changing world, adult education becomes a vital instrument for a society undergoing such changes.

Adult education as a concept is one most difficult to define. Yet a concept which people define in different perspectives. Most writers seem to agree that adult education is the education geared towards the adult. This gives rise to the question "who is an adult". An adult as a concept, just like adult education, has been defined by many different authors and writers from different perspectives. Some use the biological parameter in defining it, while others use the chronological, historical, economic, psychological, political and social parameters in defining who an adult is. Nzeneri (2010) on his part, observed that illiteracy is often associated with underdevelopment, instability, low productivity, low income, poor health, high poverty and mortality rates. It is in the recognition of these ills that a one - time chairman of National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non - formal Education in Nigeria, Eke (1992) succinctly puts it that:

> A cursory look at the political climate of the world shows clearly the regions of mass illiteracy are generally regions of instability, economic and political underdevelopment. Economically, an illiterate is on the periphery, politically he is completely in the dark.

In order to get out of the aftermath of issues linked to adult education arising from poor handling of immoral acts among their wards, the following objectives of adult education should be pursue:

(i) Provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who did not complete their primary education. These include the nomads, migrant families, the disabled and other categories or groups, especially the disadvantaged gender

(ii) Provide functional and remedial education for those young people who did not complete secondary education.

(iii) Provide education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills.

(iv) Provide in-service, on-the job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills and

(v) Give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

It is however sad that the present curriculum content of adult education in Nigeria is too narrow and does not make for functional literacy as expected. A cursory look into adult education programme in many adult education centres in Nigeria reveals that they are merely centres for the teaching of the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetics (3Rs) and for preparing people (adults) for certificate examinations with which they can get white - colar jobs or gain entrance into another level of education. The programme without doubt lacks saleable skills for independent living. Coupled with this, there is the absence of vocational and technological content as well as other curriculum innovations such as peace education and entrepreneurship education which are indispensable for meaningful living and sustainable national development and transformation.

The adult populace forms the human resource for the development of any country including their families. The adults may not function effectively and efficiently if not given the prerequisite education. Nigeria is a nation with many illiterate adults. This fact is obvious from what is daily seen in this part of the country and of course, what is stipulated as the expected completion rate (for secondary and even tertiary education). Notably, most of the manpower (adults) of the country are either unskilled or semi - skilled. The few skilled and highly skilled adults are threatened by obsolesce due to fast technological changes in their work environment (Eyibe, 2005).

Without mincing words, adult education in Nigeria is seen as merely education for the stack illiterates' adults of the populace who lacked the opportunity for regular formal education in their childhood years. It is equally treated as a remedial programme for those who dropped out of the regular formal school system. Adult education was therefore regarded as the educational programme for the unfortunate, the pushouts, and the leftouts. This low status of adult education in Nigeria was perhaps what is responsible for lack of proper state control, standardization, and accreditation where necessary. In reality, it is neither in doubt that adult education

in Nigeria has lost its standing as products of homes are now found wanting in all manner of social vices within the society. Nigeria may not be tapping the great benefits of which adult education has to offer. However, if well harness such offers could help address the various social issues such as massive unemployment, internal security, insurgencies, terrorism, environmental, and health. These problems are not youth problems alone but that of the entire population. Ugwuegbu (2003) argues that Nigeria has placed undue emphasis on formal education while apparently neglecting adult and non-formal education especially for those who could attend schooling at the right time.

While lending his supports, Afolabi (2012) is of the opinion that the purpose of adult literacy education is to help move people from whatever level of consciousness they currently operate to a level of critical consciousness, wherein they can ask questions about things around them, as well attain capacity to change their lives positively to the benefit of the society. Onyenemezu (2012) equally observed that adult education is expected to address the socio - economic, cultural, political and environmental problems besieging humanity in their various societies observing further that, the goals of adult education as stated by the Federal Government in the National Policy on Education, have not been properly achieved. One is certainly not in doubt as most youths who indulge in immoral vices are products of homes where parents have not lived up to expectation largely because of their low level of education.

Conclusion
Unless the adults in our society plays the roles expected of them as parents or guardian, youths will go astray in the immoral acts they are known for. It is high time parents irrespective of the level of their education spend more time with these youngsters and guide them properly from extinction. Otherwise, they will blame themselves in the nearer future for what they see them doing now and failed to correct them to go on the right path. If only the family virtues are inculcated in the youths at an early stage of their life, the future is bright for them and society can be proud of better leaders of tomorrow. Moral decadence is characterized by behaviours, actions, attitudes and opinions that are considered by most members and social group not right and thereby unacceptable, wrong and retrogressive.

Suggestions
Judging from the causes and effects of moral decadence among the youths of Nigeria, the writers of this paper have therefore identified the followings as its way forward:
1. Family values must be uphold to stand for what will help their wards leave above board in character, belief and what they stood for.
2. Schools should jettison on immoral acts of the students by dealing with it from the bud before it escalate to what other children will copy. They should not spear any parents either on account of what they stand to loss if such children leave their school. Standard should be maintained at all times.
3. Appropriate authorities like National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and others should monitor the activities of media houses in the Country not to promote acts capable of encouraging immoral acts in our society.
4. Parents should watch out for peer influence on their wards and ask questions where necessary.

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