

CAUSES OF MORAL DECADENCE AND THEIR EFFECTS ON THE  
BEHAVIOUR OF ADOLESCENT STUDENTS IN SENIOR  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ZAMFARA STATE

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ABSTRACT

*This study is titled "causes of moral decadence ad its effects on the behaviour of adolescents students in senior secondary schools in Zamfara State" Three research hypotheses were formulated to establish the causes of moral decadence. Literatures that bear relevance with this study were properly reviewed. The research design used was descriptive survey type. The population of this study was made up of adolescent students in senior secondary schools in Zamfara State, teachers and parents of the students. Random sampling technique was used to select the schools where respondents were drawn from. The sample consists of 379 respondents. The research instrument used was adopted from Idowu (2002). The instrument was administered and the results showed that there were no significant difference in the mean opinions of the respondents for all the hypotheses formulated through the use of t-Test for hypotheses 1 and 2, and ANOVA for hypotheses 3. The findings revealed that most of the respondents agreed that unfriendly home environment, lack of concern by parents among other things form part of the causes of moral decadence among adolescents students of senior secondary schools in sokoto Zamfara States. Based on these findings, it was recommended that parents should be good disciplinarians, the government should supply adequate facilities to create room for effective teaching and learning process and students should be encouraged to join youth clubs/societies meant for character training.*

**Introduction**

Adolescence is from Latin word *adolescere* meaning 'to grow up'. It is a transitional period generally happening at second teen. In most of the communities of the world, adolescence is a period regarded as a transitional stage of physical and mental development of human

being. In Nigeria, the adolescence stage coincides with secondary school period. Point to note about adolescence stage, is that, it varies from country to country. It even varies within a single country or culture. That is why individuals are considered matured enough at different age in different communities and culture. A good

example is that of Hausa community where an adolescent is referred to as "Balagagge" meaning somebody at adolescence stage.

Nevertheless, psychologically, adolescence stage is characterized by cognitive, physical and emotional changes. These changes are heavily influenced by home, environment, school community, religion and peer-groups.

Moral, refers to doing something good, ethical, honest right, decent, proper, honourable, just and principled. Decadence, just like the word adolescence has its roots in Latin meaning "fall down or away". Therefore, moral decadence refers to decline, fall away from ethics of our society, good behavior, doing the right thing, being honest, living decently, being just and principled. From social context, moral decadence is described as corrosive declination of moral traditions of our society. Among Nigerian adolescents the followings are considered morally wrong, disrespect to elders, examinations malpractice, political thugery, drug abuse in various forms and many others not listed here.

The development of sound moral values in the lives of adolescents in Nigerian child is highly dependent on the child rearing practices or parental upbringing. For example, where parents promote warm

atmosphere towards the children, listen to their problems and where there is cordial relationship, there would be better adjustment at school, i.e. the child is likely to be respectful to school authorities because of home parental supervision. But whereby the environment in the family is very chaotic, the child will be swimming in the ocean of such negative values like dishonesty, indiscipline, secret cult, examination malpractices, bribery and corruption, greed, laziness/idleness etc. Buttressing this view point, Kegan cited in Okoli (2011), opined that most families in a given society are aware of these values and prepare their young children for future live in the community. Adolescents whom are guarded against these negative values may end up causing problems at school.

With the introduction of western civilization in Nigeria and the developments brought by information communication technology (ICT) like the internet, facebook, twitter the country began to experience political, educational, economic, religious and moral changes. Obilom (1989) in Okoli (2011) observed that the changes had made the Federal Government of Nigeria to include the programme of moral re-orientation in the new National Policy on Education, to protect our adolescent population. .

### **Statement of the Problem**

Education is and has remains a central technique in transforming society from generation to generation. It is a vehicle of bringing about positive change in behavior in the individual adolescents in zamfara state and indeed in Nigeria. It is in recognition of this, the state government sends its sons and daughters to secondary schools. Despite the efforts by the state Government towards curbing moral decadence through education among students who are 99% adolescents, the problem continues to be in the increase. The problem is also a matter of concern and source of worry to parents, education managers, principals, teachers, guardians and religious leaders. The problem is very much shown in how these adolescents are in sexual promiscuity, cheating and examination malpractices drug abuse and many other bad behaviors in the state.

Adolescents are sometimes described as a generation under pressure whose behaviours had always been surrounded by varied problems. Thus, this study was poised to investigate the causes of moral decadence and its effects on the behavior of students in senior secondary schools in Zamfara state.

### **Objectives of the study**

The main objective of the study was to find the causes of moral decadence and its effects on the behavior of adolescent students in senior secondary school in Zamfara State. However specific objectives were formulated to help in achieving the main objective. These are:

1. To find out from male and female students the causes of moral decadence among adolescent students in senior secondary schools in Zamfara
2. To find out from teachers and parents the causes of moral decadence among adolescent students in senior secondary school students in Zamfara State.
3. To find out from students, teachers and parents the effects of moral decadence on behavior of adolescent senior secondary school students in Zamfara State.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions were raised for the study.

1. Is there any difference in the mean opinions of male and female students on the causes of moral decadence among adolescent students

- in senior secondary school students in Zamfara state.
2. Is there any difference in the opinion of teachers and parents on the causes of moral decadence among senior secondary school students in Zamfara state.
  3. Does any difference exist in the opinions of students, teachers, and parents on the effects of moral decadence on the behavior of adolescent students in senior secondary schools in Zamfara State.

### **Hypotheses**

Based on the research questions the following hypotheses were formulated.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean opinions of male and female students on the causes of moral decadence among adolescent students in senior secondary school in Zamfara State.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean opinions of teachers and parents on the causes of moral decadence among adolescent students in senior secondary schools in Zamfara.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean opinions of students,

teachers and parents on the effects of moral decadence on the behavior of adolescent students in senior secondary schools in Zamfara state.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Hurlock (1981) ascribes the word "adolescence to its Latin root, "adolescere", which translated means "to grow" or to grow to maturity. According to her, adolescence has a broader meaning. It includes mental, emotional and social maturity. Also in line with the above definition Nwachukwu (2000), sees adolescence as to grow into maturity. In addition he said that adolescence is seen as "a process rather than a period, a process of achieving the attitudes and beliefs needed for effective participation in society". This definition made Rogers to categorize adolescence period into its various aspects, namely: adolescence as a period of physical development, as an age span, as a discrete developmental stage, as a socio-cultural phenomenon and as a way of life or state of mind.

Adopting almost the same perspective, Wall in Nwachukwu (2000) understands adolescence as a learning process during which the individual experiences progress "towards the successful fulfillment of a highly complex series of adult

social roles". Against such a background, he underscores the critical role which media play "both as provokers and as shapers of growth and change".

Steinberg (2002) in his own way sees adolescence as Latin in origin, derived from the verb *adolescere*, which means "to grow into adulthood". In all societies, adolescence is a time of growing up, of moving from the immaturity of childhood into the maturity of adulthood, of preparation for the future. He further stressed that adolescence is a period of transitions: biological, psychological, social and economic. It is an exciting time of life. Individual becomes interested in sex and become biologically capable of having children. They become wiser, more sophisticated, and better able to make their own decisions. Adolescents are permitted to work, to get married, and to vote. And, eventually, adolescents are expected to be able to support themselves financially.

### **Causes of Moral Decadence**

Educators, parents, religious leaders, politicians and others are all attempting to ascertain the causes of moral decadence among adolescents in secondary schools. Usually, the parents put their blame on the teachers, as being responsible for the moral shortfall of their adolescent children.

Though in families and schools, transgressions and deviant behaviours were dealt with severely, but the cause and development of immoral behaviours received little attention. Often, especially during the recent past teachers feel that the discipline of children in school was outside their sphere of authority. This may be the result of the hostile attitude of some parents toward disciplinary measures on their children at school. Unfortunately in the present complex social system, not only that most of the parents do not have time to train and discipline their children for wrong behaviours, but also most of the children are no longer available for parents' surveillance and discipline. All these make the problem of morals during adolescence very complex and intriguing. Some factors have been identified to be the causes of moral shortfall among adolescents.

### **Effects of Moral Decadence on Adolescents Students Behaviour**

Building a morally and socially accepted behaviour is difficult for adolescents because of inconsistencies in the standards of right and wrong they encounter in daily life. These inconsistencies confuse them and impede their progress in building a morally accepted behaviour which is not only satisfactory to them but which will also lead to socially approved

behaviour because of their inability to cope with the problem, the failure results to tragic consequences which affects them and the society at large. These are some of the effects of moral decadences on adolescents as they battle with the developmental stage. The following are some of the perceived effect of moral decadence in adolescent learners.

- i. Vandalism
- ii. Breakdown of Social Norms
- iii. Drug Addiction and Abuse of Substance
- iv. Examination Malpractice
- v. Lack of Respect
- vi. Stealing, lying and Truancy
- vii. Bullying and Fatigue .
- viii. Political thugery.
- ix. Examination malpractice

### **Methodology**

This study used descriptive survey design.

### **Population and Sample**

This research covered the entire senior secondary adolescents students, teachers and students' parents in Zamfara State. There are four Education Zones in the state, sixty one (61) senior secondary schools with estimated population of 26,019 students as at 2010/2011 academic session. The population under study was homogeneous in nature with common language, religion, culture and etc. the age of

the population was between 16-20 years. 379 sample size was used as a sample size, this was in accordance with Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table of determining sample size. Cluster random sampling was used to get the sample from the zones.

### **Instrumentation**

The instrument used in this study was adopted from Idowu 2002. The instrument contains fourteen test items. And was based on four point Likert rating scale, consisting of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The instrument was validated by the original author at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. For reliability the author used a population of 30 students in his pilot study at Government College Funtua. A reliability coefficient of 0.68 was obtained.

### **Data Analysis Technique**

The techniques used in analyzing the collected were; t-test and ANOVA. The first two hypotheses were tested with t-test while ANOVA was used for the last on

### **Results**

HO<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant difference in the mean of male and female students on the causes of moral decadence among

adolescent students in Zamfara State.  
senior secondary schools in

**Table 1: t-Test result for mean scores of male and female students on the causes of moral decadence among adolescent students in senior secondary schools in Zamfara State.**

Sex	N	X	SD	T <sub>cal</sub>	T <sub>crit</sub>	Decision at P<0.05
Male	189	21.57	5.859			Not
Female	190	19.37	3.931	1.65	4.29	Significance

The table above indicated that computed t - value as 1.65 at 377 degree of freedom. The table value of t is higher than the t cal, at 0.05 level of significant. Therefore the stated hypothesis above is rejected.

HO<sub>2</sub>: There is no significance difference in the mean opinion of teachers and parents on the causes of moral decadence among adolescent students in senior secondary schools in Zamfara State.

**Table 2: t-Test result for mean scores of teachers and parents on the causes of moral decadence among adolescent students in senior secondary schools in zamfara State**

Variables	N	X	SD	T <sub>cal</sub>	T <sub>crit</sub>	Decision at P<0.05
Teachers	248	21.53	5.465			Not
Parents	131	18.44	3.544	1.65	5.852	Significance

Table 2 above shows that the calculate t value is 5.852, while table-value of t is 1.65 which indicates that the calculated t is less than table value, hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

HO<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant difference in the mean opinion of students, teachers and parents on the effects of moral decadence among adolescent students in senior secondary schools in Sokoto metropolis.

**Table 3: ANOVA result for mean scores of students, parents and teachers on the effects of moral decadence on adolescent student's behavior in senior secondary schools in Zamfara State.**

Source of variation	Sum of square	Df	X square	F	Sig	Decision at $P \leq 0.05$
SSB	22.404	26	.450	1.933	.006	Not significant
SSW	158.006	352	.236			
TOTAL	180.470	378				

Table 3 above shows that the F calculated value was 1.993 which is more than the table value of f. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted. This means that there is significant difference in the mean opinions of the respondents.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The data gathered from the questionnaire as returned by students, teachers and parents was subjected to statistical analysis using t-Test for hypotheses one and two, while ANOVA was used for hypothesis three.

**Null hypothesis 1,** There is no significant difference in the mean opinions of male and female students on the causes of moral decadence among adolescent students. The findings from the table 1 shows that male and female students are in agreement with factors identified as the causes of moral decadence; especially on factors like socio-economic influence and peer influence. In the words of Bourgue (1996), socio-

economic factor such as poverty exposes youths to moral decadence. In line with this fact, one can see that the adolescents are the majority of the people that make-up this group called youths, and once the socio-economic status of their parents is low, it leads the adolescents into antisocial acts that are not good for their moral wellbeing. Once; an adolescent student is not adequately cared for, providing him/her with what he/she requires in school may become frustrated and have difficulties in adjustment, In support of this, Jeslid (1961) states that poverty among other factors is responsible for children's immoral attitude in schools.

Peer group factor was another point the male and female students strongly agreed to. In support of this, Shure (1978), confirms that many adolescent children who get into trouble are influenced by other children of the same age. Children of adolescent years are often strongly influenced by the actions of the peer group. Also Enang



(2007) sees adolescent moral judgment being often influenced by peer group pressure. The peer group pressure on adolescents is often so imposing that personal moral judgment or strength of character is disregarded.

**Null hypothesis 2**, There is no significant difference in the mean opinions of teachers and parents on the causes of moral decadence among adolescent students in senior secondary schools in zamfara State. The result of the findings in this hypothesis showed that the calculated t value is 1.65 and less the t-table value which is 5.85. This shows that the null hypothesis is rejected. This result shows that teachers and parents are in agreement with the factors responsible for moral decadence among adolescent students especially on family and environmental influence factor. Most of the teachers who are also parents agree that when the home environment is not conducive, and the home is confronted with problem associated with polygamy and divorce, children brought up in such an environment could develop maladjustment problem in school and even manifest deviant and antisocial behavior. In line with this Mukherjee (2002) is in support that broken homes, drunkenness in the family, illegitimacy of children, and lack of love and affection in early years of children's lives lead children to be delinquent during

their years of adolescence. Also Denga (1982) in Idowu (2002) added that there is higher incidence of juvenile delinquency in polygamous families than in monogamous families in Nigeria. He maintains children who are starved of love, affection, education, and basic needs have like become delinquent. This is to say that children from such homes could be prone to truancy, late going to school, anxiety/worry, lying, disrespect to authority and so on. On influence of mass media, teachers and parents agree that their inability to control the kind of print material their children read at home and in schools couple with indecent films they watch has led the adolescents into misbehaving in school and at home. Adeniran (1999) in Idowu (2002) confirmed this by saying that the parents are to blame for exposing their children to indecent films.

**Null hypothesis 3**, There is no significant difference in the mean opinions of students, teachers and parents on the effects of moral decadence on adolescent students' behavior. The result of the ANOVA shows that all the respondents virtually agreed with all the factors identified to have effects on moral decadence on adolescent students' behavior. All the respondents agreed that moral decadence lead the adolescent students into unwanted behavior. Bratfos (1967) and Shamsiel

(1968) in Idowu (2002) agreed that disorganized nuclear family in which parents are divorced or separated are associated with unsocialized aggressive reaction in children. Characteristics of such children include disobedience, lying, stealing, truancy, physical and verbal aggression. In line with this Anderson, Bargnan and Magnisson in Steinberg (2002) affirmed that substance abuse during adolescence, whatever, as an antecedent, is associated with a host of other problems at school, experience psychological distress and depression, have physical health problems, engage in unprotected sexual activity and become involved in dangerous or deviant activities including crime, delinquency, and truancy. Klausmier and Blount (1968) added that adolescents having grown up big physically are usually misled by their size. Sometimes this is manifested in their underrating the stature of their teachers, especially the male students with their female teachers. This at time results in disrespect, disobedience and insult.

### **Conclusion**

Moral decadence increases anti-social behaviour in any society. Among students, the problem could be more grievous since they constitute the enlightened group of a society. Apart from this, increase in anti-social behaviour could

adversely affect their adjustment in school and such students are likely to go contrary to school rules and regulations, This study has brought to light some facts that are of assistance to the present adolescence and the future generation of young people that as they progress, the type of moral upbringing they have will determine the kind of value orientation they will have in the next stage of development.

### **Recommendations**

The findings made on this study are not conclusive. It is hope that the recommendations will provide assistance to the government, teachers, parents, students and future researchers.

1. The relationship that exists between the father and his wife/wives is expected to be cordial. This is because the first and one important and intricate relationship that human being ever experiences is the family. There a vital need for parents to understand their role and to collectively and mutually see the progress of their wards. For parents to achieve this, force and threats must not be used. Davidoff (1987) state that if parents use force and threats primarily, their offspring develop external

- ... moralities; those based on fear of punishment. Parents should know their children's peer groups even to their families and discourage bad peer influence.
2. The parents should be good disciplinarians and responsible by being good role models, providing good guidance rather than being over protective, pampering or giving too much freedom to their children/ward. primarily, their offspring develop external moralities; those based on fear of punishment. Parents should know their children's peer groups even to their families and discourage bad peer influence.
  3. The ministry of education in collaboration with the guidance and counseling's units of schools should make that the service of the unit are not ignored students because through their services in schools, the students will be able to explore and understand themselves better. Moral instruction should be encouraged and taken more seriously in schools especially by teachers concerned. Youth clubs, societies and organizations must be encouraged in

schools and supported by parents. These societies stand as instruments for character building and training. Examples societies are Muslim student's society (MSS), fellowship of Christian students, (PCS), red Cross Society and so on. The government and ministry of education should make sure that adequate facilities that will enhance teaching and learning in schools are provided.

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