Spirituality, Cultural Factors, Student's Achievement In Social Studies As Predictors Of Morality Among Secondary School Students In Benue State, Nigeria

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Abstract
The concept of morality is mostly seen as a brainchild of people's religion as well as their cultural formation. This study was necessitated as a result of the rising cases of immorality among youths in our today's generation; hence, attempts to identify the root causes of such behaviours have been an endless debate among scholars. The study adopted correlational research design, and Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select three hundred and fifteen (315) students from two senatorial districts (Zone A, and Zone C) in Benue State. Four instruments were used for the study; Religiosity and Spirituality scale, Cultural factors questionnaire, social studies achievement test and Moral Identity Questionnaire. Findings from the study revealed that all the variables jointly predicted morality among junior secondary school students in Benue State significantly. Furthermore, results showed that components of independent variables considered; Spirituality (Beta=0.044, t =0.659, p>0.05), Cultural factors (Beta = -0.092, t = -1.633, p > 0.05), and social studies (0.076, t=1.337, p>0.05) do not significantly predict morality among secondary school students. It was concluded that parents/guardians should take special interest in curbing moral decadence among the youths. When the thought of the youth is modified or transformed, their actions will definitely be transformed.

Introduction
Morality is a concept that has been discussed widely by moral philosophers and has received much attention over the years. This is because moral deterioration has continued to be a major hindrance to the healthy development of youngsters all over the world and Nigeria in particular. One of the problems Nigeria has been facing and is still facing recently is moral decadence among the youths who constitute tomorrow's leaders and are often seen and described as the wealth and pride of the nation. It appears as if the level at which immorality is committed in our society today doesn't seem to be evil.

Morality as a concept varies from culture to culture or from one tradition to another, notwithstanding, it can collectively be referred to as the principles of right and wrong behaviours either religiously, socially or otherwise. According to Krebs (2008), morality facilitates group functioning, and makes people live together in unity by regulating their behaviours. Looking at the definition of morality, Ogbodo (2018) looked at morality as beliefs of the kind of behaviours that are either good or bad. This includes certain factors like ethics, rightness and nobility together with

certain virtues which can be compared to certain standards that are right and good. He further asserted that morality refers to character or conduct that are interpreted as good or bad, right or wrong. In most cases, moral may refer to relationship or concern with character or conduct that are distinguished from reflective or natural perspectives. Thus implying that, any deviation from moral standards may lead to immorality.

Immorality is the violation of some moral laws, norms or standards. For the purpose of this study, immorality can be seen as a socially unacceptable behaviour that contradicts the agreed written or verbal standards and values of a particular group or organization which are to be followed by members of that group or organization. In some cases, moral can mean goodness, probity, virtue, honour, rectitude, honesty, perfection, or excellence depending on the observer's belief which could be subjective or objective.

Attempts to deconstruct how morality is formed among youths, especially secondary school students have been an endless debate as to whether the task rests with religious beliefs (spirituality), cultural factors, or social studies

education. Some researchers are of the opinion that living a moral life is synonymous with spirituality, hence, spirituality has everything to do with religion which offers certain standards that make easy the spiritual journey of a person. Scholars from this school of thought believe that morality is synonymous with spirituality and anyone that is moral is expected to live honestly anywhere he or she finds himself.

Although spirituality has traditionally been rooted in religion, the link between the two is passionately debated. Hence, being religious does not translate to being spiritual. Therefore, any hasty conclusion on this definition will not be ideal because the concept of spirituality is still under study (McCormick, 2012). This is because spirituality varies ranging from feminist writings to New Age practices and other programs. On one side, some other forms of spirituality can augment some ethical institutions that have achieved mental rigour at the cost of abandoning the needed motivation required to live morally. Similarly, other considerations required for spirituality can generate debates in ecclesiastic and academic circles. (McCormick, 2012).

On the other side, some aspects of spirituality seem repellent to any kind of prescriptive expression, regardless of whether it is theological or religious. This may be because some person's intuition and experiences give them room for the acceptance of certain behaviors. That is why most times you hear people say, they are not religious, but spiritual. This could be that they have been exposed to certain resources and experiences that are backed up by some doctrines and other religious dogmas.

Therefore, it is unavoidable to say that the challenge of spirituality can be traced to the history of any society. This is because a man's spirituality is determined by his/her religion as well as his secular system, thereby making the concept of spirituality more cumbersome to address and define. Principles such as honesty, openness, freedom, and equality create an environment for the spiritual growth of an individual. Since the mid-twentieth century, scholars have studied the concept of spirituality

and came to an understanding that spirituality is the ability of an individual to create his world by setting values of his life which reflect in his quality and standard of living. (McCormick, 2012).

Nevertheless, in an attempt to give a concise definition of spirituality, the Cambridge dictionary looks at spirituality as, "those standards that involve a feeling and belief in a supernatural being, instead of the physical things of the world." Similarly, the researcher defines spirituality as the act of arousing from an ordinary consciousness and rising above the desires of the flesh to a wider understanding. It also means expounding the mind above limitations, imaginations and limited thoughts about life and the world in general. Spirituality in Christian sense, which is the researcher's focus, is the general belief in the almighty God, as well as a person's relationship with God and the transformation that is possible through the grace to follow the footsteps of Jesus (Marsh, 2014).

Therefore, the moral aspect of spirituality is grounded on freedom of will as well as the choices a man makes, and his ability to take responsibility for his actions. Therefore, morality is socially-tailored, which makes it impossible for a person to be moral with himself. For instance, someone in a desert all by himself is responsible for his actions and can decide to lie down, sit, or die without making any other effort for progress, or he can decide to move on and fight for his life, which is his total freedom. This means that an individual who has deprived himself of personal selfish interest and is free from self is considered spiritual.

Regarding whether or not morality requires spirituality, Socrates, a great philosopher cited in Plato's work titled "Euthyphro" asked whether goodness is cherished by the gods just because it is good or whether it is cherished because it is loved by the gods. Although he favoured the former argument, other researchers have debated that morality is impossible without God, and the belief in God in most cases leads to spirituality (Kelechi, 2018). Dostoevsky (1990) for example, stated clearly that without God,

everything is good." This notion that spirituality is synonymous with morality has been promoted by researchers like Laura Schlesinger who stated that "morality cannot be attained without belief in God". Similarly, Zuckerman has claimed that "the current decline in moral standards is as a result of the rise in secularism of organized religion which has been bestowed with the responsibility of inculcating moral standards among its members. This assumption has been disputed by so many contemporary researchers with facts that many, if not all religious doctrines and standards including spirituality have not passed the test of morality, therefore concluding that spirituality is not sufficient for morality (Pierre Bayle).

Some researchers have argued that the typical African man is very inseparable from his culture and that culture influences peoples' cosmology and perception of things around them. Therefore, a child's culture should also be held responsible for his/her immoral behaviours. Lahey (2004) defines culture as certain behaviours, beliefs, traditions and values of a community, nation, or any social group. Such beliefs include languages and other moral beliefs that are acquired from other people we live with. These patterns of behaviours, beliefs, traditions, language and values are generally referred to as cultural factors, hence they contribute in shaping the personality of an individual. This may be why Kennedy (2000) stated that one cannot fully understand an individual without understanding his cultural and ethical formation. According to him, childhood is the period through which the characterization of children is built and their personalities formed, thereby concluding that culture forms the personality of an individual.

Benue State is inhabited with mainly three (3) cultural groups comprising the Tiv, Idoma and Igede. These cultural groups have various cultural practices and teachings which are supposed to inculcate discipline, moral uprightness, hard work, courage and also to teach their youths how they can stand against vices such as theft, rudeness, hatred, wickedness, premarital sex and dishonesty. For instance, the Tiv has ethics which are expressed in norms, which regulate relationships between individuals and social groups. There are sanctions or condemnation attached to deviants of the norms. It has been observed that illness or sickness is attributed to misfortunes which arise as a result of personal relationship between human kind and the laws controlling the land. In other words, sickness and misfortunes emanate from broken norms regulating the action of members of Tiv society. Tiv ethics is seen to be more spiritual than societal in nature. This is the reason why certain actions are outlawed because their violation tends to disrupt the spiritual or supernatural order established by *Aondo* (God).The violation of moral laws of *akombo* which permeates virtually all that the Tiv do is said to disrupt the equilibrium in nature, letting loose calamities, sickness and death. The elders who are the custodians of morality have a spiritual power in them called *Tsav*, which enables them to outlaw certain behaviours that go contrary to the functioning of the spiritual universe. In this regards, Tiv's moral life which is embedded in their traditional ethics is deeply religious and one cannot separate one from the other.

The Idoma cultural beliefs are mostly expressed through their festivals, Agila cultural carnival, cultural dances, performance and traditional marriages. For instance, traditional marriage is an arrangement between two families not just the individuals. It is considered as a lifelong state of union, although in Idoma land, divorce is allowed on the account of infidelity.

The Igede also have their culture as well, for instance, the young ones can greet an elder by mere hand shake without necessarily prostrating which is more western, but contradict other cultures. The culture allows for wives to kneel while serving their husbands. The Igede culture does not allow for a house wife to cheat, a husband's brother cannot tie the rapper of his brother's wife. The Igedes are also rich in traditional tales and varied cultural elements. Like other societies, they display their traditions, customs, beliefs, and lifestyle by some distinctive behaviours, dressing and communication.

On the other hand, considering the fact that the traditional approaches to problem solving have been inadequate in our time and the desire to come up with other ways of providing solutions to challenges in our society, Social Studies, which has been a compulsory subject at the junior secondary school level in Nigeria was introduced to help Nigerian youths from the strings of Western education which introduced foreign values and acquaint them with their cultural norms and values. With respect to this, it is generally believed that social studies, as a subject, was brought into Nigerian schools as part of the solutions to social vices and a tool for societal development. It equally provides individuals with the attitudes and values necessary to attain individual excellence in life. Its study deals with patriotism, loyalty, self-sacrifice, sympathy for others, sense of harmony, judicious use of public utility. This is why Ogundare (2009) stated that social studies is basically a tool for attitude formation among youths. Adaralegbe (1980) also stated that social studies programmes are basically introduced when a society feels a need to inculcate some basic skills, understanding, and actions regarding human relationship among its members.

Therefore, it is expected that students who are exposed to social studies education would have a remarkable change in their nature and personalities meaning that any study on morality among secondary school students will not be complete without looking at whether or not the subject has played a significant impact in the life of the learners.

It is disheartening to state that despite the strong emphasis placed on the development of good citizenship through Social Studies education, the subject has not realized this goal (Falade, 1997). The researcher pointed out that there are cases where final year Social-Studies students are disciplined for examination malpractice while others are alleged on one social misconduct or the other i.e. cultism, thuggery, violence, stealing, etc.

Similarly, Akanji and Dada (2012), stated that there are numerous social ills among youths worldwide, Nigeria not excluded. Youths are faced with similar social problems like drug abuse, abortion, bullying, alcohol problems and others. Some of these predominant social ills include rape, cultism, drug abuse, vandalism and other behaviours that are dangerous to their health, home, schools and the society at large. Some of these problems can lead to others. For instance, smoking sometimes can lead to drug abuse and heroin. Youths who take alcohol and tobacco have the risk of using other drugs. These behaviors can possibly lead to sexual activities, which may result in unwanted pregnancies and abortions.

Therefore, if social studies was basically introduced to promote citizenship and value education, and considering the fact that majority of the students offer social studies in schools, then as a matter of urgency, its effect needs to be looked into since such problems are still persisting despite its introduction into the school curriculum.

From the above background, it is very clear that religious beliefs (spirituality), culture and social studies have significant influences on students' morality. It is disheartening and worrisome since high level of immorality is being exhibited in schools on daily basis despite all these efforts. At different times, Nigerian Governments have made conscious attempts to resolve the problems of immorality in schools. This study explored religious beliefs (spirituality), cultural factors as well as social studies as a subject on morality among secondary school students in Benue State and their relative and composite contributions to morality among secondary school students.

Statement of the Problem
Immorality in our society especially among secondary school students has increased tremendously sending perilous signals on the future of youths in our society and national development at large. Unacceptable behaviours like students' radicalism; dishonesty, lies telling, etc are skyrocketing by the day. Unfortunately, religious organizations and schools which are supposed to enhance the moral behaviour of students by providing a common sense of belonging to groups that are responsive to their needs have done their best, yet cases of

immorality are still on the increase. Attempt to trace the sources of these immoral behaviours among secondary school students has been an endless debate among scholars. Hence, some say it is rooted in religious beliefs (spirituality), cultural factors as well as social studies education. Studies have examined spirituality, cultural factors and social studies but little has been done to examine the combined influence they have on moral vices in secondary schools especially in Benue State. There is insufficient empirical evidence regarding which of the factors that has more influence on secondary school students' morality especially in Benue State. Therefore, this study looked into the relationship between spirituality, cultural factors and social studies on morality among Secondary School students in Benue State, Nigeria.

Research Questions
1. What is the composite contribution of spirituality, cultural factors and social studies on morality among junior secondary school students in Benue State?
2. What is the relative contribution of spirituality, cultural factors and social studies on morality among junior secondary school students in Benue State?

Methodology
Correlational research design was adopted in this quantitative study. Correlational survey studies typically employ questionnaire, interview and observation to elicit information from a large population and to determine the options, preferences, interest and perceptions of people about issues for the purpose of drawing inferences. The design is conceived best for this kind of study hence the researcher is interested in obtaining in-depth information on students' perception on immorality.

Multistage sampling technique was also adopted for this study. At the first stage; purposive sampling technique was employed to select two senatorial districts (Benue Zone A, and Benue Zone C) to ensure that all the major cultural groups in Benue State were included in the study. The two Senatorial Districts are already clustered into six Zonal Education Areas comprising Education Zone A, Education Zone B, Education Zone C in Benue North East, and Education Zone A, Education Zone B, Education Zone C in Benue Zone C. At the second stage; from the Zonal Education Areas, schools were stratified into urban, semi-urban and rural schools. Simple random technique was used to select three schools each from urban, semi-urban and rural areas at stage three. At the fourth stage; intact classes of JSS III students from the sampled schools were used which gave a total of 315 students.

The instruments used for data collection were Religious and Spirituality Scale (RaSSY); Cultural factors scale; social studies achievement test, and Moral Identity Questionnaire.

$R = 0.23$

$R^2 = 0.052$

R^2 Adjusted $= 0.034$

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1606.243	6	267.707	2.831	.011
Residual	29125.643	308	94.564		
Total	30731.886	314			

Table 4.1 shows the regression analysis of the composite contribution of spirituality, cultural factors, and social studies on morality among junior secondary school students in Benue State. The table revealed that spirituality, cultural factors, and social studies jointly predicted morality among secondary school students in Benue State significantly ($F_{(6, 308)} = 2.831$, $p < 0.05$). The R-value (0.23) is the relationship between the observed and the predicted values of spirituality, cultural factors and social studies on dependent variable (morality). Furthermore, the combination of spirituality, cultural factors and social studies jointly accounted for about 3.4% of the variance observed in students' morality (R^2 Adjusted = 0.034). The result showed that the combination of spirituality, cultural factors and social studies significantly determine students' morality in Benue State. The implication of the result is that secondary school students 'morality in Benue State is predicted by spirituality, cultural factors and social studies.

Research Question 2: What is the relative contribution of spirituality, cultural factors and social studies on morality among junior secondary school students in Benue State, Nigeria?

Table 4. 2: Relative contribution of spirituality, cultural factors and social studies on morality among junior secondary school students in Benue State, Nigeria

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	54.598	6.524		8.369	.000
Spirituality	.000	.032	.001	.014	.989
Cultural factors	-.167	.102	-.092	-1.633	.104
Social studies	.148	.110	.076	1.337	.182

Table 2 showed the table of Coefficient of Regression analysis for the relative contribution of spirituality, cultural factors and social studies on morality of junior secondary school students in Benue State. The result shows a non-significant beta value of ($\beta=0.044$, $t =0.659$, $p>0.05$) spirituality. From the result, it is very clear that spirituality does not necessarily predict students' morality, holding all other variables constant. The implication of this is that it does not necessarily require someone to be spiritual for him or her to be morally upright hence being spiritual does not necessarily mean you are morally upright. Similarly, the result showed that cultural factors do not significantly predict secondary school students' morality in Benue State ($\beta = -0.092$, $t = -1.633$, $p > 0.05$). The result showed that cultural factors are not a good predictor of students' morality, holding all other variables constant. This implies that it does not necessarily matter the kind of culture a student is coming from for him or her to be morally upright, hence cultural factors are not a good predictor of students' morality in Benue State. Similarly, the result showed a non-significant beta value of ($\beta=0.076$, $t=1.337$, $p>0.05$) in social studies. The result showed that social studies does not predict secondary school students' morality in Benue State, holding all other variables constant. The implication of this is that an increase in the study of social studies or social norms and values does not necessarily mean students will be morally upright, hence social studies does not and is not a good predictor of secondary school students morality in Benue State after holding all other variables constant.

Recommendations

From the findings of the research, it was therefore recommended that;

1. The furtherance of immoral programmes and films by the media should be discouraged by the government since the students are often the first victims of such.
2. More programmes and films which portray the riches of societal values like sexual restraint, the veneration of virginity and frowning at immoral behaviours should be encouraged. Through this, the students will grow to appreciate the dignity of self-discipline and not seek to imitate things that run contrary to decency.
3. There should be cooperation between the Ministry of Education and religious groups in reinforcing the moral development of youths. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) should also be involved in emphasizing the importance of instilling moral virtues in the youths.
4. Students from Secondary schools should understand why they are sent to school by their parents and be ready to take instructions from their teachers. The teachers should also be diligent in carrying out their responsibilities.
5. Secondary school students should be enlightened about the attendant effects of immorality.

Conclusions

From the outcome of the findings, the general conclusion of the study is that the development of moral behaviour follows a gradual and deliberate process. It is in the light of this that this research work suggests that religious organizations and schools should take special interest in curbing moral decadence among the youths. When the thought of the youth is modified or transformed their actions will definitely be transformed.

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