

MORAL DECLINE IN SCHOOLS: REFLECTIONS ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN IGANGA DISTRICT, UGANDA

Basome Samson

Faith Discipleship Ministries International (FAMI), P. O. Box 406, Iganga, Uganda

Vencie Allida*

University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, P. O. Box 2500-30100, Eldoret, Kenya *Corresponding Author: Email address – vencieallida@yahoo.com

The declining moral standards among secondary school students are becoming a challenge in the 21st century and a topic of discussion. Many stake holders and Scholars are wondering what could be the cause. Therefore, this study evaluated the causes of moral dissipation in secondary schools, the effects of moral decline amongst the students in secondary schools and what could be done in this 21stcentury to curb the causes of moral decline. The present study involved 30 participants that were randomly selected from three (3) secondary Schools in Iganga District, Uganda. This study used descriptive design, specifically literature from the library, newspapers, reports and interviews were used to complement the information on the moral decline in schools. The results showed that decline of morals among secondary students have been greatly affected by poor parenting, media, group influence, the use and development of various internet technologies such as facebook, sending and receiving emails, googling and charting. It is recommended that policy holders should compare what happened 1950's when these sorts of technology had not yet introduced and what is going on today and forge partnership with teachers and parents to find the possible ways on how to curb the increasing moral decline in Iganga District, Uganda.

Keywords: Technology, student, moral decline, parenting

Introduction

Globally there is a general decline of morals in schools and outside schools. No wander homosexual is noticed in schools and outside schools and to make matters worse it is being supported and practiced by some religious leaders. In the American society, morals have been greatly shaped by the media as compared to the 1950s. In a survey by the Culture and Media Institute cited in Harrell (2010), 74% of Americans believed that the nation was in a state of moral decline, a wide majority (64%) believed that the entertainment and media industries had a big role to play in the outcome of this statistics. Such moral changes can be depicted in language dressing and general lifestyle aspects. School children tend to imitate what they see in the media and entertainment circles. According to a report in New Vision (Thursday 15th February 2006), many secondary schools in Uganda are infested with vices such as indecent dressing, use of abusive languages, early pregnancies, homosexuality and drug abuse.

Iganga district has been noted to be the source of most sorts of moral decay in Uganda. For example,

the leakage of examination malpractice of 2017 in different parts of the country began in Iganga District (The Observer, November 1st, 2017) and strikes in schools, corruption among others are highly observed in Iganga District secondary schools. Okoth (2013) noted that religion today is in decline because people find that it does not work and only things of the earth work. Things that work and Solve problems instantly are wars, lying, cheating, stealing, corruption, greed, etc. The above mentioned signs show that there is decline in morals. According to Forster (cited in Atuhaire, 2009), morals are the socially accepted customs, values, traditions and conventions held as appropriate conduct by a particular group of people sharing originality and locality or nativity. Morals are principles and standards in the society to compare what is good or bad depending on the environment or the people involved (Cherkowski, Walker, & Kutsyuruba, 2015). They further emphasized that morals vary from place to place i.e. what could be termed as wrong in one scenario may be different in another. In religious contexts, morality is followed with more emphasis than other aspects of society. Over the decades, standards of morality have been

dwindling from society to society this can be attributed to changing perceptions across generational circles. Morality today is now characterized by what could have been termed as immoral in the past.

Okoth (2013) pointed out that during this 21st century as many schools attempted to ignore the moral dimension of schooling, three things happened: Achievement scores began to decline, rampant examination malpractice, discipline and behavior problems increased, and voices were raised accusing the schools of teaching secular humanism. Hence, this study investigated the decline of morals amongst the secondary School students in Iganga District.

Statement of the Problem

Morals fall into a number of categories according to Cherkowski et al. (2015). They can be classified into codes of conduct, personal or cultural values and social mores. Codes of conduct usually dictate the Relationship between people in the work place. Moral development and transformation has for long remained prime objectives of all religious and education systems globally (Miller, 2017). Many studies on human moral development concur that religion; education and socialization remain the most vital strategies for the creation of honorable national and international citizens. Conceptually, moral transformation and moral formation are compound phrases each combining two distinct words common among all is morals. Five teachers including two headteachers were charged in Iganga court for examination malpractice (New Vision, November, 2017). Okoth (2013) said that the absence of moral and religious instructions, has given rise to low moral standards in society, which is largely responsible for cheating during examinations, fornication and defilement.

Available evidence from press reports also indicates that, several indicators of immorality are still noticeable in all schools. These include: all sorts of sexual immorality, increasing cases of violence in schools where some students beat up their head teachers and setting schools on fire, strikes that culminated into scorching effects, ill-treating fellow learners, embarrassment of teachers and other social elders, theft and escape from schools for leisure functions. There are offensive trends reported particularly in girls include indecent dressing, involvement in transactional sex for either marks or other material benefits, early pregnancies, backbiting, use of abusive and obscene languages, dropping out of school at an early age and disrespect to

parents and other elders. Therefore, without educators and stakeholders' interventions, the said vices are likely to continue and we end up with incompetent medical doctors, engineers, pharmacists, immoral teachers and these developments pose a danger to the nation. There was a need, therefore, to examine the decline of moral values in secondary schools in Iganga District.

Research Questions

- 1. What are morals?
- 2. What are the causes of moral decadence in secondary schools of Iganga District?
- 3. What are the effects of moral decline amongst the students in secondary schools of Iganga District?
- 4. What could be done to curb moral decline in Secondary Schools of Iganga District?

Theoretical Frame work

This study on the moral decline in secondary schools was guided by Kohlberg's theory on moral development. In this 21st century as many schools attempted to ignore the moral dimensions of Schooling; there is decline in performance, examination malpractice, rape, defilement and all these have been attributed to moral decline in Schools by the stake holders. At the same time, educators were encouraged to address the moral concerns of students using two approaches: values clarification and cognitive developmental moral education.

The first, *values clarification*, rests on little theory other than the assumption that students need practice choosing among moral alternatives and that teacher should be facilitators of the clarification process rather than indoctrinators of particular moral ideas or value choices.

The second approach, *cognitive developmental moral education*, sprang from the work of the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget and was further developed by Lawrence Kohlberg. In contrast to values clarification, cognitive moral development is heavy on theory and light on classroom applications.

As cited in McLeod (2013), Kohlberg agreed with Piaget's theory of moral development in principle but wanted to develop his ideas further. He used Piaget's story telling technique to tell people stories involving moral dilemmas between the rights

of some authority and the needs of some deserving individual who is being unfairly treated.

Kohlberg's theory was divided into three levels of moral development as discussed in McLeod (2013).

Level: 1 Pre-conventional Morality (Nine years old and young)

At level 1 (one) it is at this level were our moral code is shaped by the standards of adults and the consequences of following or breaking their rules. This stage child is at level of discovering new things. Therefore, Teachers are encouraged to engage students from an early age and throughout their schooling in discussion of moral issues and dilemmas. Children who are not helped at this stage are the immoral students in secondary Schools and many in most cases don't complete secondary Education.

Level 2 - Conventional morality

At the conventional level (most adolescents and adults). At this level 2, we begin to internalize the moral standards of valued adult role models. Authority is internalized but not questioned, and reasoning is based on the norms of the group to which the person belongs. This is the stage where a child is in upper primary, secondary and post-secondary. This stage a child is given freedom to make decision because most of the time is left alone either at School with teacher or with the fellow students at School. Teachers have a role to guide these students not be spoilt by this generation which is becoming immoral. School children are under an age group where personality is still being defined and it's at this point various factors act to shape up the final personality.

Level 3 - Post-conventional morality

At level 3 Individual judgments is based on self-chosen principles, and moral reasoning is based on individual rights and justice. According to Kohlberg, this level of moral reasoning is as far as most people Only 10-15% are capable of the kind of abstract thinking necessary for stage 5 or 6 (post-conventional morality). That is to say, most people take their moral views from those around them and only a minority thinks through ethical principles for themselves.

Stages of Kohlberg's moral Development

The stages of Kohlberg theory s of moral development as reflected in the three levels of moral

development are most popular and important and individuals could achieve. Each stage represents a distinctive way an individual thinks about a moral situation or problem. In the later years of his life, Kohlberg was urging educators to transform their schools into "just communities," environments within which students' moral stage development would pick up the pace. The stages in relation to our topic of study a student's moral are determined by the environment of child's growth can either contribute to child's moral decline or development.

Research Methodology

This study used descriptive design, specifically literature from the library, newspapers, reports and interviews were used to complement the information on the moral decline in schools: Reflections on public secondary schools in Iganga district, Uganda.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher put two ethics into considerations and these were informed consent and confidentiality. The researcher informed the respondents about the purpose of the research so the respondents were stimulated and participated willingly. They were informed about the objectives of the study and so forth. Moreover, the researcher did not disclose the names of the respondents during the research process. All issues concerning the researcher and the respondents were not revealed to anybody outside the circle and also assured the respondents that the data collected will be used for academic purpose only. Before data collection started, the researcher obtained a letter of introduction from the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton Dean of School of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences and permission to conduct research in Iganga District, Uganda. Since Iganga District Schools fall under the jurisdiction of the area District Education Officer, the researcher obtained permission from his office to collect data from the Schools. The researcher obtained permission from the headteachers to collect data from the teachers.

Findings of the Study

What are Morals?

The study revealed that morals are the rules

that govern which actions are right and which are wrong. Morals can be for all of society or an individual's beliefs. Sometimes a moral can be gleaned from a story or experience. For example: Do not gossip, Tell the truth, Do not have sex before marriage, Do not cheat in exam etc.

Morals are principles and standards in the society to compare what is good or bad depending on the environment or the people involved (Cherkowski et al., 2015). They further emphasized that morals vary from place to place i.e. what could be termed as wrong in one scenario may be different in another. The term Moral is associated with behavior or character development, hence, Schofield (1972) regards moral as behavior and adjective. Moral and immoral imply behavior acceptable and unacceptable, respectively. Hornby (1974) defines morals as being able to understand the difference between right and wrong, principle of right and wrong.

Okeke (cited in Okeke & Okoye, 2016) stated that moral laws are considered to be divine commands: knowledge of them is often attributed to divine revelation. He further maintains that ethics and moral are two different words but are synonymous & for this reason, the two words are substantially interchanged. Therefore, the word moral concerns what is good and what is bad. Okwueze (2002) confirms this when he says, "morality involves a more or less clearly articulated set of belief about the nature of man, ideas about what is good is merely descried or worthy of pursuit for the sake of orderly coexistence "Morals are usually used to compare an individual's action according to society's expectations. Morality is a subject that is widely used in Religion. It is used to guide people on doing what is right and avoiding what may be termed as morally wrong.

Most thinkers, educational practitioners, and parents acknowledge that children are born helpless and need the care and guidance of adults into their teens and often beyond. More specifically, children need to learn how to live harmoniously in society. Historically, the mission of schools has been to develop in the young both the intellectual and the moral virtues. Concern for the moral virtues, such as honesty, responsibility, and respect for others, is the domain of moral education.

Moral education, then, refers to helping children acquire those virtues or moral habits that will help them individually live good lives and at the same time become productive, contributing members of their

communities. In this view, moral education should contribute not only to the students as individuals, but also to the social cohesion of a community. The word moral comes from a Latin root (*mos, moris*) and means the code or customs of a people, the social glue that defines how individuals should live together. Theoretically, Nucci and Weber (1991) in reflecting about Moral Development and Character Formation as reflected in Kohlberg's theory of moral development maintains that the moral worlds within which people act out their lives are affected by informational, socialization as well as contextual variables which enter into the evaluations people generate about particular courses of action.

Moral leadership is understood in two-part process involving personal moral behaviour and moral influence (Brown & Treviño, 2006). This process has been described as holding much promise for enabling school administrators to lead in a manner that can best help teachers develop and empower themselves to teach and lead in the context of external pressures to reform schools (Greenfield, 2004).

The Causes of Moral Decadence in Secondary Schools

The findings revealed that negative attitude by teachers towards the teaching of Religious Education in secondary Schools has resulted into indiscipline and chaos. Even a religious (missionary) environment alone can make the difference. This concurs with the research conducted by Zziwa , as reported by Lukwago (2013), who found that the decline of morals in schools has been a result of teachers negative attitudes into the teaching of Religious Education.

The introduction of technology is also one of the causes of moral decline in secondary schools in Iganga District. Some teachers reported that at times a teacher may be teaching while a student is playing with a phone, on what sap or face book and this is a sign of moral decline and also affecting Students academic performance.

The findings also revealed that poverty to be one of the causes of moral decline in secondary Schools. In Iganga District many families are living in total poverty to the extent that they cannot afford to provide for their children all the necessary requirements needed at school. Parents have for long been noted for their key role in financing schools right from the colonial era especially after the first world war

had affected donations for missionaries to run schools in Uganda (SSekamwa, 1997). This is also a cause to moral decline in that when a student is not given all what is needed may end up getting involved in immoral activities like fornication, drug abuse and among others and this will affect his/ her academic progress.

Failure of parents to provide necessary needs to their children like feeding them at school is also one of the causes of moral decline in secondary Schools in Iganga District. This concurs with Kamwa (2010), the new Vision reporter, reported that learners of Iganga District noted that lack of meals at school had contributed to moral decay and cases of defilement, which they said that it undermines academic performance as well as Universal Education programme.

Government policies have also led to Moral decay amongst secondary students in Iganga District whereby head teachers today are asked to sign performance contract. Therefore, headteachers and teachers who cannot maintain integrity have been involved in Examination malpractice to get high score in final examination to continue heading the schools. The New vision of November, 2017 reported that five teachers including two head teachers were charged in Iganga court for examination malpractice.

It was also revealed that poor parental guidance to be among the causes of moral decline in Iganga District secondary Schools, A true depiction of moral study will be best explained through the eyes of young kids. Traditionally moral formation and transformation was a social activity spearheaded by the parents and the elders. They would conduct informal sessions through folktales, stories, legends, myths, taboos, customs and informal counseling sessions with the children to impart good morals (Byamugisha, 1991). However, with the shift brought about by modernity formal education dictated that children had to spend less time with the parents and more with the teachers in schools. This made the modern formal school a basis for learning morals for the school going children. This age group is usually more pure in mind than older age groups. Information retrieved from school children is likely to be much reliable than from older folks who may want to protect their image.

Peer influence has been noted to impact on a child's moral upbringing but the wider responsibility rests on the entire society. It will be wrong to note that only parents are responsible for a child's upbringing because studies have shown that various perspectives of the society play an important part in the way a child is

raised up to judge what is right or wrong. The results of the study concur with the findings of the research conducted by Obedi (2014) who discovered that lack of proper control measure, loss of the sense among the youth, urbanization of peer pressure are among the causes of moral decline in Uganda.

Arranged marriages for adolescent girls without their consent are also a common in Iganga District Uganda especially in rural area. This is also a cause of moral decline amongst secondary school girls especially those from such back ground.

The Effects of Moral Decline on the Society

According to the Daily Monitor dated 25th July 2017, it was revealed that moral decay in Uganda has reached on alarming level, almost every aspect of life is affected. There is need for proper analysis and give recommendations which will help to deal with moral decline in Iganga District. However, below are some of the effects of moral decline in Iganga District:

Moral decline has led societies to have corrupt leaders. In Iganga district today if you are looking for a job or any kind of promotion you have to behave a Ugandan way. This means to be called a "Ugandan" you need to be a corrupt person or to support bribery. New Vision (2018) noted that corruption in Iganga on the rise and has strong connections between officials, politicians, and criminals, infiltrating every aspect of a vulnerable society. Corruption brings a gradual change for the worse, a demoralizing process, destabilizing a society and rendering great harm to a nation. Corruption affects us all. It threatens sustainable economic development, ethical values and justice; it destabilizes our society and endangers the rule of law.

Moral decline has led leaders in authority to be compromised with evil. The results of the study concur with the findings of Zziwa, the Bishop of Kiyindi Mityana Diocese and vice chairperson of Episcopal Conference said that; the authority want to control sexual immorality among the Youth by providing condoms to them to use, they have encouraged girls to abort in order to continue with Education (Lukwago (2013). Moral decline has led people in authority to declare the defeat by treating symptoms instead of the disease its self.

Increased strikes in secondary Schools. This is a result of moral decline where students today they nor-

longer give respect to the teachers. They are free to demand whatever they need at any expense. The findings concur with the findings of the staff writers in the Red Papper of September 12th 2013 noted that Head Teachers have blamed social media trends for the increase in strikes. But head teachers are challenged to seek new strategies to prevent strikes and also quick ways to intercept full blown strikes before they become destructive. It is observed that some school administration still use high handed rules that are out of touch with reality

Increased drop out of students from school. This is also a result of moral decline. Many youths in secondary Schools are involved in fornication and some have ended up conceiving before completion of studies. This is similar to the report of the District Education Officer Iganga District according to new vision of 4th, August 2010 noted that a total of 187 girls dropped out of school in Iganga district this was a result of early pregnancies and marriages

The Freedom given to children in form of children rights has ended up spoiling the children and the future mothers. How does one react to this situation where the children are given a lot of freedom especially legally in form of a question: How would one achieve this objective in a society where the court and child and family counselors (some of whom are not married) dictate for parents how to raise their children? In courts it is the child against their parents or the wife against her husband. Such condition which gives the child unlimited powers and freedom undermine parental control and guidance.

Developmental influence, the human brain continues to develop until adolescents reach their 20's. Thus teenagers do not have the same capacity for reasoned decision making and safe discipline adults. Likewise, moral development is a process that lasts throughout adolescence. Teenager and in particular young teens are not developmentally and biologically able to exercise moral reasoning like an adult or order adolescent.

Parental influences can affect the way that a teen behaves and makes choices. In particular parental behavior plays an important role in how teenagers make decisions, e.g. if a teenager sees his parent acting impulsively or making poor choices such as neglecting house hold responsibilities or skipping work, the teen might behave that he is entitled to make similar choices.

Parents can and should discipline their children. It is a parent's job to teach their children about

expectation, rules, morals and values. The constitution of Uganda (1995) sets the age of marriage at 18 years. However, getting formally or informally before the legal age known as child marriage and this is a common practice across the country.

Solutions to Curb Moral Decline In Secondary Schools

Historically, three social institutions share the work of moral education in a society: the home, the church, and the school. Cotter as cited by Atuhaire (2009), the influence of western culture on these institutions and the African homes in Diaspora is myriad. The role of the school in moral education has become so profound in all societies.

In schools moral values are always passed on by teachers of Religious Education. Therefore, teachers should begin teaching of Religious Education in schools. This concurs with the findings of Ziiwa,(reported by Lukwago, 2013), who said that in order to regain morals among the young generation, schools must go back to the basics and teach religion. He said, "If all schools go back to the religious foundation and teach religion to the children at all levels, it would help minimize immoral and evil behaviors, such as corruption, murder, rape, defilement, jealous and others among the current and future generations, which will help the country."

Government interference in religious matters should be limited. Okoth (2013) suggested that; Let the religious bodies take back their schools and install moral discipline. It is not a simple war to bring back sanity to society and save it from moral collapse. Mukyala, the Diocesan Education Coordinator Central Busoga Diocese, said that if we need to install morals amongst our learners we should take back the education system to the foundation laid by missionaries. There is a need to use holistic education as a tool for the achievement of integrated development and strengthening of religious education that supports the growth of positive values and Faith as sources of spirituality.

Guidance and counseling sessions, religious fellowships and Bible study programmes to be introduced in secondary schools. This could be one of the ways of inculcating morals in the young people. This is actually what the Anglican Church of Uganda has started in its founded schools. However, according to Olsen as cited by Atuhaire (2009), granting religion

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to be the essential basis of moral action, may further require what are the chief conditions requisite for the growth and development of morality in the individual and in the community. Such three may be singled out as of primary moment; namely: (1) a right education of the young (2) a healthy public opinion (3) sound legislation.

Tackling racism should be done from a much wider context than having to deal with the victims. It's been observed that racial perpetrators tend to justify societal opinions through acts of racial prejudice on their victims. This therefore exposes the need for racism to be tackled on a wider concept of societal racial perceptions.

Zziwa, the Bishop of Kiyinda in Mityana diocese and vice chairman of Episcopal conference said that in order to retain morals among the young generation, school must go back to the basic and teach religion. He further emphasized that if all schools go back to the religious foundation and teaches religion to the children at all level, it wound help to minimize immoral and evil behaviors, such as corruption, murder, rape, defilement, jealous and others among the current and future generations, which will the country (Lukwago, 2013).

Mwesigwa (2012) questioned the Uganda government's proposed exclusion of religious education from the education curriculum and its replacement with moral education. He suggested that while moral education needs to be maintained but re-designed to address the multi religious context. In Uganda where religion is manifest in public places and where it is still in very powerful force in galvanizing society, teaching of religion in school has not been accorded the importance in deserves.

Conclusion

In conclusion, morals are the rules that govern which actions are right and which are wrong. Morals can be for all of society or an individual's beliefs. Moral education is important in that it prepares the child to become a well-rounded adult. The findings revealed that negative attitudes of teachers towards the teaching of Religious Education, poverty, failure of Parents to provide necessary needs to their children, Government policies and introduction of technology to be one of the causes of moral decline in secondary schools. Therefore, learning in Uganda should focus on devel-

oping human being intellectually, emotionally, physi-

cally, socially and spiritually.

There a great influence of Uganda's education policy on students Morals decline especially in line with limiting the efforts of other stakeholders in moral promotion. This calls all stake holders in Education and Parents should join hands and work together towards the improvement of moral decline in secondary schools.

Recommendations

In view of moral decline in public Secondary Schools in Iganga district, Uganda, various recommendations should be put into consideration. There is a need to establish the effectiveness of the Anglican Church of Uganda education policy in improving the morals of students is secondary achools. Teachers need to be professionally and morally exemplary to the learners in all aspects of life.

Teachers of Religious Education to work hand in hand with Religious leaders and policy makers to ensure that Religious Education is taught at all levels of Education.

There is a need to adopt more methods of moral formation and transformation that would also cater for the secularly corrupted students instead of only relying on the religiously based approaches. The new approaches should however review the previous traditional methods which proved to be workable and adopt some.

There is need to polish the currently used methods of moral transformation and formation among students. More comprehensive methods are required to address the individual differences among the learners especially the ones from different family and religious backgrounds which is also among the factors leading to moral decline in secondary Schools. There is a need to use holistic education as a tool for the achievement of integrated development and strengthening of religious education that supports the growth of positive values and Faith as sources of spirituality. Guidance and counseling sessions, religious fellowships and Bible study programmes to be introduced in secondary Schools and to be included in school timetable.. This could be one of the ways of inculcating morals in the young people



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