

MORAL VALUES AND ITS DEPRECIATION AMONG NIGERIAN YOUTHS: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING SERVICES

AMINU SANNI

Research Scholar, Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The focus of this paper is on the moral values and its depreciation among Nigerian youths, with the concomitant counseling implications. Moral values refer to activities in human character, conduct, social intercourse, etc. that can be judged as being good, wrong and the like; such cultural values include respect for elders, obeying rules and regulations, chastity etc., culminating in man's peaceful coexistence. Such woeful lack of values is most noticeable among the youths at the home and educational levels with the politicians/leaders and even parents acting as bad models. The counseling implications include giving accurate personal, social information and cognitive restructuring. Recommendations include, amongst others, proper modeling by various stakeholders.

KEYWORDS: Human Character, Conduct, Social Intercourse, etc

INTRODUCTION

Apart from insecurity, that is, the inability to adequately protect the lives and properties of the people, occasioned by Boko Haram insurgency, abject poverty, a serious decline in health care services, dilapidated infrastructure, that has bedeviled Nigeria just to mention but a few. Another very visible and painful problem in Nigeria today among the youths is the depreciation of moral values. According to BirnBatcher (2013), when something goes wrong in the society, one of the first diagnosis that would be given by a conservative leader is that of a crisis of values. Morality, as a concept defies a definition by necessary and sufficient conditions. It is elusive. This is because, morality, a course subtitled in religion and ethics, what is wrong or right is culture-restricted. That means, a thing could be wrong here (Nigeria) and be right in a place like U.S., for instance, gay marriage and incest that is celebrated in the U.S. and abhorred in Nigeria and Africa as a whole. Cultural and religious organizations seem to be failing in impacting the much needed value required from them. Values are expressed in the thoughts and invariably become palpable in practices and in acts. This is because; they are initially shown in the enduring characteristics of individuals, which become obvious in opinions and disposition.

However, for the purpose of this paper, moral value connotes those human conducts and activities that can be unequivocally judged as being good, bad, wrong, and acceptable by a cultural setting. It is a relative term. Some of these priceless virtues of moral values include respect for one another and elders, obeying rules and regulations, listening to parental counsel, honesty, sincerity, integrity, transparency, fidelity, decency, chastity, loyalty, etc. Adherence to these virtues bring about peace, joy, dignity, peace and harmony to man, life and society as a whole, sanity of tradition and respect for the overall rectitude of the society. The social functions of moral values in the society cannot be overemphasized as enunciated by Birnbatcher as follows:

- Individual orientation – orientating the individual in his behavior by providing a normative frame of reference.
- It limits the potential trespass of others social trust and reduces fear of aggression, deception and violation of self respect.
- Easing social cooperation – moral values make room for long term social cooperation by creating a climate of mutual trust in which every party is confident and contracts will be respected
- Peaceful conflict resolution – moral values provide possibilities of resolving conflicts of interest and norms in avoidance with shared social roles instead of the use of force.

Moral values show preferences, they are guides, principles and orientation that are encapsulated in an individual's behavior. It has been proved that half of the Nigeria's population is under the age of 19, that is, the Nigerians under the age of 30 are more than sixty five (65%) of the Nigerian population, which means overwhelmingly the young that is, the youths constitute the whopping majority of souls in the country (The Nation, pg. 21). What becomes of the future of Nigeria, if the youths of today diminish in moral values? What implications does it have for counseling? These would be unraveled in subsequent paragraphs;

Situation Analyses of Depreciating Moral Values among the Youths in Nigeria

The Education Section

The education sector that has the onerous task of transmitting the values that are germane to the society is now seriously enmeshed in serious moral value depreciation. Examination malpractices by the youths have become a re-occurring decimal. They run to special centers where they can perpetrate such crimes which, according to the Igbo and Ako (2006) are defined as any deliberate act of wrong doing contrary to official examination rules designed to place a candidate at unfair advantages or disadvantages before, during and after examinations. This is a deviation from the past when examinations were treated with suncity. The youths contribute money to induce the teachers, who unfortunately are poorly and untimely paid. In the various campuses of the tertiary institutions, students/youths now dress nakedly as a sign of civilization, academic culture mortgaged, and female students now parade themselves as certificated harlots with very suggestive and indecent dressing. Membership of occultic practices has become a sinequanon for the students. The education system by virtue of its statutory roles should be seen to serve as a strong agent of moral values; surprisingly, it is now engulfed in serious moral depreciation.

At the Family Level

At the family level, parents appear to be losing grip of their traditionally earned respect. The youths rebel in most of the situations. They always went to have their ways. They no longer allow their own values to be subsumed by that of the parents and elders which is better for them. The home provides the first impression which lasts the child's subsequent life. This is the first agent of socialization where the child is under serious surveillance. The youths no longer have a moral attachment to their parents. They do not have a close relationship and this has prevented them from parental expectations. This has also made them to kowtow foolishly to the whims and caprices of peer pressure. With age on their side, they become willing horses for criminal activities and mob actions.

What is then the hope of the future for these teeming youths? This state of adulterated moral value among the youth can be explained from the professional amble of counseling as follows;

Counseling Implications

A lot of information is often passed through non-verbal cues. Actions and inactions are often sources of veritable information. All these can provide counseling to an individual. It is, therefore, the opinion of this writer that the depreciating moral values among the youths in Nigeria is as a result of modeling through observational learning. This theory was propounded by Pandora (1977), who remarked that observational learning is a lie's extreme type of behaviorism, which stresses the observation of others as an avenue for learning which is seen as being mediated by cognitive factors. He averred:

Social learning theory approaches the experimentation of human behavior, in terms of reciprocal interaction between cognitive behavioral and environmental determinants, within the reciprocal determinism lives the opportunity for people to influence their destiny as well as the limit of self direction. Both people and environment are reciprocal determinants of each other (p. 8).

People learn through observations. The individual influences his/her environment and vice-versa. An individual has a mutual interplay with the environment. What the youth watches others do is what they do. For instance, a minister, under Goodluck Jonathan, bought two cars at an outrageous cost of N255, while an average Nigeria could not afford a square meal (Tell, pg. 36, 2013). While reacting to this, a comment on national issues, Muyiwa (2013) remarked:-

This gives an insight to people in government, who run this country with no regard to the economic situation. Even if the minister can afford such cars in her personal capacity, is it morally right for her to do so in a nation where poverty prowls the street?(P. 36)

Corruption is no longer news. From all indications, it appears that it has been constituted. This is because; it cuts across every sphere of the society. For the purpose of this discourse, it is the act of fraudulently meeting a need or want illegally, asking for an inducement in order to discharge a legitimate responsibility. Many Nigerian leaders have been found guilty of keeping money in foreign accounts, involved in money laundering, stolen money kept in overhead tanks, farmcanters, its leaders are no longer accountable to the people. The youths are watching and learning from these acts. What a wrong leadership modeling! Through observation, an individual gets an insight that provides data for interpretation and cognitive development. One's feature manifestation provides counseling for others around that is why the uncharitable leadership virtues have become a vicious circle.

What moral values are supposedly imbibed, when exam malpractices are encouraged by the various stakeholders? The youths, therefore, are no longer fervent in their studies, since at the end they pay heavy amount of money to get good results. All these have led to the development of low self esteem, absenteeism, truancy and general indiscipline among students. A teacher transmogrifies pupils into social and moral paragons, and so, has a strong influence on a child, the teacher is a mentor, role model, the young pays attention to the teacher, retains the observed, there is a verbal information and coding of what was perceived and the child eventually and overtly expresses the behavior. The youth learns through observation rather than reinforcement. New patterns of behavior are acquired through watching the teacher. Are the teacher's good models? If moral values are not right at the various institutions of learning, then it cannot be right at

the larger society, Education is the building brick of the society.

At the home front, what attitudes do the parents inculcate in their children? What kinds of films are children exposed to? The youths receive various counsels from watching films – moral and immoral, obedience, honesty, dishonesty, sincerity, insincerity, crime. They are quickly caught by them.

The writer of this paper grew up to believe that, beating a woman is right because, his model, during his upbringing was an agent of villainous pugilism. The wife was a punching bag. The writer caught that attitude of aggression. This because, learning through models played a significant role in the transformation, maintenance and acquiring of behavior. It therefore, becomes incumbent for the counselor to provide specifications on the environmental conditions responsible for providing behavior.

These depreciating moral values have implied for information service in counseling. The amount and the quality of information disposed to the youth affects what they see, believe, work on and their insight about life. It enables the youth to achieve self insight and understanding, develop healthy personalities. Adjust, accept and understand home conditions family members and parental expectations which can be sourced through pamphlets, social workers, talks on understanding self and others. It could also be through seminars, conferences, etc. (Okeke, 2000). The change begins with me agenda of president Buhar's administration is a call for a national rebirth, national reorientation, a glaring evidence that the much cherished moral values have depreciated and needed a re-awakening. Proper information to the youths can affect their cognitive restructuring towards thinking and to acting right in tandem with the acceptable moral values of the society.

Conclusively, it should be noted that what is being mentored today as a moral value in Nigeria is a cooperative enterprise among the various spheres of the society. They all provide the ingredients for moral value depreciation through modeling and so these various segments of the society needed to be addressed for the youths, to properly prepare as the Nigerians of tomorrow.

Based on the aforementioned, the following recommendations are made;

- The depreciating moral values among the youths in the society have counseling implications. Therefore, stakeholders in education, religious leaders, and politicians/leader's parents need to provide good counsel through their acts. For all their dispositions provide appropriate counsel to the youths since they are like mirrors in them.
- There is the need for a leadership, counseling course to enable leaders learn good leadership values and for proper monitoring of the youths. How would leaders thoroughly represent the people? How should they conduct themselves? What leadership legacies will they bequeath the next generation of leaders? Let them see the examples of late Nelson Mandela.
- There has to be appropriate personal-social information to the youths through the various sources. This can bring about appreciable cognitive-restructuring for them to think well and as well. Again, for the upcoming generation through this, morality and values that appear to have been neglected by the youth with reckless abandon will gradually be restored to peace and harmony, security and moral sanctity of individual members of the society guaranteed.

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