COUNSELLING IMPLICATIONS OF MORAL EDUCATION FOR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN EZINIHITTE-MBAISE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, IMO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The chi-square statistic was used to test the relationship between moral education and academic performance of secondary school students; counselling implications of moral education for academic performance of secondary school students. The hypotheses were tested at 0.5 level of significance and 1 degree of freedom (p<0.5 df = 1). The result revealed that moral education and counselling had positive influence on the academic performance of students (p>0.5) whereas immorality had a significantly negative impact on the academic performance of students (p<0.5). Implications were discussed.

Moral education, that is, teaching or instruction in morals or ethical rules of conduct may be seen as part of a religious education programme or general studies approach via character education or education for citizenship. Many decades ago, Nigerians saw morality as the most valuable asset of life. But gradually, we have lost this valuable asset as manifested by the mosaic of corruption coupled with other negative features of our society.

Mambula (1999) considers moral education superior to any other form of education, as without it, other types of education would lose their efficacy. He maintains that the subordination of intellectual education, to moral education follows directly for the recognition of the basic aim of education, the elevation of ourselves to sense of the inner dignity of our nature, and of the pure lighter, godly being which lies within us. This sense is not developed by power of our mind in though but is developed by the power of our heart in love (p. 72)

Nwamuo and Ekwe (1998) opined that the aim of this education is perfection of thinking, feeling and action. Children are the youths who will later become adults and leaders of tomorrow. They should be influenced positively to behave well and have a positive character that will build hope for a better nation. But on the contrary Gias, (1993), observed that most of our youths in the secondary schools do not meet
up with the moral standard of our society. Immorality has eaten up the hearts of most Nigerian youths.

The effect of declined morality among youths is that such students are involved in many social vices such as armed robbery, secret cult activities, and sexual promiscuity. These result in poor academic performance and eventually low productivity. Iwundu (1995) noted that, youths who are morally sound are well adjusted in society; they are high academic achievers, future ideal representatives, building strong hopes in the life of their parents, teachers and societal members at large.

They are never threats in their environment instead they influence the environment positively. Moral education embraces discipline, enhances academic performances, and curtails juvenile delinquencies and many other social vices which may impede the progress in the work students. The aim of traditional African education is to produce an individual who is honest, respectable, skilled and comparative and conforms to social order of the day. Ajuwon (2000), Adamu and Mambula (1999), see moral development as necessary device for character building. Kelvin (1986), suggest, “five” (formula five Es) new moral education devices as follows: example, explanation, exhortation, environment and experience. Clifford (1990), the moral training of the child starts from life in utero and parents are believed to be role models for children, as they always imitate elders. Hence, the Bible enjoins us to train up the child the way he should go, when his is old; he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22).

Mondy (1987) noted that, once we have a comprehensive concept of character we need a comprehensive approach to developing it. This approach encourages schools to look at themselves through a moral lens and consider how virtually everything that goes on there affects the values and character of students. Then, plan how to use all classroom and school life as deliberate tools of character development. Against this backdrop that this study was carried out to assess the influence of moral education on the academic performance of students in Ezinihitte-Mbaise LGA of Imo state, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Secondary school students in Ezinihitte-Mbaise are progressively declining in academic performance and morality. This situation is prevalent all over Nigerian society observed Onyejioku (1991), who noted that there is high rate of failure in the West African School Certificate (WASC) examinations and an alarming rate of instability, insecurity, hooliganism, examination malpractice and teenage girls’ unwanted pregnancies. All these have posed negative effects on academic achievement and moral behaviour of youths, secondary school students in Ezinihitte-Mbaise are not exceptions.
In view of the poor academic achievement and poor morality among secondary school students, it is the investigators’ belief that, the introduction of moral education and educational counselling packages may enhance academic achievement and influence good moral behaviour of secondary school students in Ezinihitte-Mbaise.

Research Questions
The following research questions were raised on the background of the study:
1. Can there be a difference in the moral behaviour of secondary school students in Ezinihitte-Mbaise when taught moral education?
2. Can guidance and counselling activities in secondary schools influence the morality of students in Ezinihitte-Mbaise?
3. Can moral education influence the academic performance of secondary school students in Ezinihitte-Mbaise?

Research Hypotheses
The following research hypotheses were postulated in an attempt to find solutions to the specific research questions raised:
1. There is no significant difference between the academic performance of secondary school students in Ezinihitte-Mbaise who are taught moral education and those who are not taught moral education.
2. There is no significant difference in morality between the secondary school students in Ezinihitte-Mbaise who are exposed to guidance and counselling activities and those who are not exposed to guidance counselling activities.
3. Lack of moral education does not significantly influence the immorality of secondary school students in Ezinihitte-Mbaise.

Significance of the study
Just as the Bible declares that, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14 verse 34) even so does morality boost academic performance while immoral act is a hindrance to academic achievement among the youth. This study will encourage parents and teachers to improve the moral education of children as it will unveil the effects of moral education on the children academic performance. It will also help school planners to give adequate time to counselling and religious/moral instructions. It will help to produce good leaders of tomorrow, a progressive stable nation and improve productivity of our nation.

Method
The population for this research comprised of secondary school students, teachers, guidance counsellors and other workers from 4 out of 12 secondary schools in Ezinihitte-Mbaise. A systematic random sample of 800 respondents selected from this population consisting of 500 students (males and females) and 300 teachers and guidance counsellors (males and females) and other workers (males and females).
The research instrument was a questionnaire prepared by the researcher tagged “influence of moral education on the academic performance of students in secondary schools inventory” (MEA PSSSI). It had 35 items designed to measure the degree of influence of moral education and guidance and counselling activities by the respondents in relation to academic achievement and good moral behaviour based on a four-point graduation. These were statements to which the respondents were expected to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement.

The percentage of the mean mark of 4.6 was approximately 92.3%. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used to compute the scores of the two sets of responses.

The instrument was administered to the respondents at their various secondary schools, a total of eight hundred questionnaires. The questionnaires were collected from respondents within a week of administration. The contents of completed six hundred (600) questionnaires were examined for consistence of responses. The responses (scores) were subjected to chi-square test using the SPSS (R) (Statistical package for the social sciences). Significance was determined at 0.05 probability.

**Results:** Hypothesis 1 states that, there is no significant difference between the academic performance of secondary school students in Ezinihitte-Mbaise who are taught moral education and those who are not taught moral education.

**Results**

**Table 1.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good Moral Behavior</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers/Guardian/Other Workers/Counsellors</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coming to school early and participating in class work</td>
<td>60 (60.48)</td>
<td>49 (49.84)</td>
<td>30 (30.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good family background and other good moral behaviour</td>
<td>82 (42.81)</td>
<td>52 (52.81)</td>
<td>41 (41.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>health practices e.g. cleanliness and abstinence from alcoholism, drug abuse</td>
<td>72 (72.72)</td>
<td>59 (59.93)</td>
<td>37 (36.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(p<0.5; df = 1)
The calculated value of chi-square = 6.25, df = 6 while the critical value of chi-square = 5.592. Since the calculated value of Chi-square is greater than the critical value, we reject the null hypothesis. This shows that there is a significant influence of moral education on students’ academic performance.

Hypothesis 2 states that, there is no significant difference in morality between the secondary school students in Ezinihitte-Mbaise who are exposed to guidance counselling activities and those who are not exposed to guidance counselling activities.

**Table 2.2**
Chi-Square Test of Effects of Moral Counselling on Academic Performance of Secondary School Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good Moral Behavior</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers/Guardian/Other Workers/Counsellors</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>89 (89.3)</td>
<td>74 (74.58) 72 (72.20) 48 (48.93) 285</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>98 (98.7)</td>
<td>82 (82.44) 79 (79.8) 54 (54.08) 315</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>188</td>
<td>157 152 103</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(p<0.5; df = 1)

The calculated value of chi-square = 1.120 while the critical value of 3 at 0.0005 level of significance = 1.087. The calculated value of chi-square is greater than the critical value, we reject the null hypothesis. It means that moral counselling through moral instruction helps students to perform well as they remodel their character.

Hypothesis 3: states that lack of moral education does not significantly influence the immorality of secondary school students in Ezinihitte-Mbaise

**Table 3.3**
Chi-Square Test of The Effect Immorality on The Academic Performance of Secondary School Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good Moral Behavior</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers/Guardian/Other Workers/Counsellors</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drug addiction</td>
<td>32 (39.39)</td>
<td>48 39 44</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang/occultism</td>
<td>38 (32.87)</td>
<td>44 (45.79) 31 (36.27) 23 (21.08)</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The calculated value of chi-square = 7.27 while the critical value of chi-square = 5.592. The calculated value of chi-square is greater than the critical value; we reject the null hypothesis. It means that there is significant effect of immorality on the academic performance of secondary school students.

Discussion of Findings

The results has led to the rejection of the null hypothesis which states that moral behaviours do not significantly influence the academic performance of secondary school students, probably implies moral behaviour influences academic behaviours significantly. The results agree with Kelvin (1986) New Moral Education Theory of the Five E’s which states that example, explanation, exhortation, environment and experience is old and deeply rooted on classical thinking about education; the new moral education is simply resuming a responsibility traditionally assigned to teacher.

Findings presented on table 2 have also shown that moral counselling encourages a high performance in academic work as it remodels the student’s character. Moral counselling helps individuals to understand their strengths and weaknesses and enhances the ability to solve problems, make good decisions, have positive health and make choices. This finding gives credence to the work of Mallam (1990), moral counselling enables the counsellor to remodel the students’ values for moralization, indoctrination, point-out-reality, confrontation, role modeling and systematic decentisation. There is an intrinsic drive that propels the student towards studying hard hence intrinsic motivation sustains the individual into accomplishing a motive.

The results in table 3 have serious implications because some immoral behaviours like lateness to school, premarital sex, pregnancy among many others exist in secondary schools today and they hinder the academic performance.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, immoral behaviours as a result of lack of moral education can distract the attention of students from their primary aim of being in the school and negatively affect their academic performance. Students who are exposed to moral education generally perform better than those without moral

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Absenteeism/lateness to school</th>
<th>45 (39.63)</th>
<th>65 (55.73)</th>
<th>44 (43.73)</th>
<th>10 (24.42)</th>
<th>164</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Premarital sex/pregnancy</td>
<td>30 (33.11)</td>
<td>15 (46.12)</td>
<td>46 (36.53)</td>
<td>16 (21.01)</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>202</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(p<0.5; df = 1)
education; hence, moral education does not only remodel students’ character for positive changes but also boost their academic performance.

**Recommendations**

It is therefore recommend that moral education should be made compulsory by policy makers.

1. Teachers should be given opportunities to attend workshops and seminars periodically to create awareness of role modeling.
2. Parents should show good morals at home as this has been found to model their children’s morals.
3. Guidance counsellors must use the knowledge of learning theories and principles to modify the behaviour of the maladjusted students.
4. Students with immoral behaviours should therefore be referred to the school counsellors.

**References**


