

## **Tertiary Institutions Lecturers and Students Level of Moral Development: Counseling Implications for Nigeria's National Development**

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study investigated the moral development levels of tertiary institutions lecturers and their students in South-West of Nigeria. 12 Tertiary institutions, from which 10 lecturers and 30 students per school, giving a total sample of 240 subjects, were selected through stratified random sampling technique, and participated in this study. Kohlberg's (1977) Heinz's wife dilemma and simbo's (1989) civil responsibility episode served as validated research instruments. T-test was used in comparing the mean score of responses by lecturers and students on a 6-point Likert scale which corresponded to the six stages in the Kholbergian model. It was hypothesized that there would be no significant differences in the moral development levels of lectures and their students and between female and male students who participated in this study. Results of the data collected and analyzed showed that there is no significant difference between lecturers and their students ( $t = 0.67, P > .05$ ) in their level of moral development. Similarly, the null hypothesis that predicted similarity in the moral development level of male and female study subjects was confirmed ( $t=0.49; P > 0.05$ ). The main counseling implication is that the time for training of more professional counselors to carter for the ever-increasing population in Nigeria is now. Related to this is that functional counseling centers be establish in all schools in Nigeria. The study also recommended, among others, that moral education curriculum be design for our schools and made a core subject, especially at primary and secondary school levels of our educational system in Nigeria.*

**KEYWORDS:** moral, moral development, counseling, national development

### **INTRODUCTION**

The moral character of children, adolescents and adults has always been important. Berkowitz (2018) posits that no society, community, or family can thrive, perhaps even survive, if its members don't have basic moral qualities necessary for effective and nurturing interaction. The rapid socio-technical transition which started in Nigeria since the late 1950's with the discovery and subsequent exploitation of petroleum, coupled with the advent of the oil boom of the 1970's, brought in its wake phenomenal increase in urban growth and development. These developments, inadvertently and significantly impinged negatively on our traditional child rearing practices, value system and moral behaviours. Added to the above is the fact that the

world is increasingly becoming a global village due to the ever increasing and sustained advances in science and technology, especially in the areas of communication and transportation. Consequently, Nigeria is more or less swamped by western culture and practices. Put succinctly, our traditional culture and child-rearing practices appear to have been subverted by the influx of surreptitious foreign cultures. Morality deals with the rightness or wrongness of action. It deals with the ability to act and behave caringly in our relationship with others. A behaviour is moral if it is in accord with the universal principles of equity, conscience, justice and care for fellow human beings. True morality does not distinguish between religious, ethnic or other social considerations.

Implicit in morality is the notion of internal control on the part of individuals. True moral behaviour is not and should not be significantly dependent on external control. According to Mundy Castle (1993) the acquisition of high moral values and development of morally guided behaviors are obviously of crucial importance for national development. Moral development is the process through which children develop proper attitudes and behaviors toward other people in society, based on social and cultural norms, rules and laws. Moral development focuses on the emergence, change and understanding of morality from infancy through adulthood. Morality develops across a lifetime and is influenced by an individual's experiences and behaviors when faced with moral issues in the course of physical, social and cognitive development. The development of moral reasoning is consequential, in part, because moral reasoning enables youths and adults to challenge unfair societal arrangements (Arsenio 2015; Flanagan, 2014, Ruck et al., 2019). The Nigerian school system, as presently organized, seem not to be well prepared in its expected role for the moral training of the Nigerian child. According to Alhassan (1993), in Nigeria today, there is a crisis of confidence and a crisis of faith in our schools. Most of the immoral behaviors that are prevalent in Nigerian society (disrespect for constituted authorities, stealing, cheating, kidnapping and hostage taking, child and sex abuse, smuggling, tribalism, ethnicism.

Justices' miscarriage and suppression and sex for marks, votes thumb printing before election and other ancillary immoral behaviours) are perpetrated by products of our educational system. Oguegbune-Okewenu and Anyacho (1995) put it more powerfully by positing that Nigerian society lacks any defined standard for measuring people's choice of social actions. The society, they maintain, is fast becoming Machiavellian. The end of any action justifies the means among most Nigerians. This brings a lot of pressure to bear on the few morally upright ones to join the amoral crowd. Orji (1982) opined that. "People want money without work. There is no fellow-feeling among citizens as brethren of one nation. No laws are diligently enforced for social protection. The slogan here is "use" what you have to get what you "want". The reward system is wrong in that those who are engaged in honest productive endeavors' make far more less than those who cheat on the system via nepotism, tribalism, corruption and economic crime against society." (P.58) The fact that these amoral behaviours by many well educated Nigerians seem to be on the rise, speak volumes in terms of the quality of moral

development which products of our school system possess, especially those of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

**Moral Development Theories:** Many theories that attempt to explain the nature and processes involved in moral development exist. However, this discourse is restricted to two of such theories, namely, Cognitive moral development and Instruction Based model of moral Development which are more or less summarily presented here.

**Cognitive Moral Development Theory by Kohlberg (1963):** Cognitive moral development theory posits that an individual's thinking about matters related to morality changes or matures through invariant sequences. The increase in maturity involves the growth or development of a more rational system of reasoning about situations involving moral conflicts. Kohlberg (1976, 1984, 2008) has made very significant contributions to the characterizing and understanding of the sequence involved in the development of human moral reasoning. The specific sequences he presents are in three hierarchically structured levels--the pre-conventional, the conventional and the post conventional, each consisting of two stages. The first stage is the heteronomous stage which is characterized by blind obedience to rule and authority and avoiding punishment. The second stage is that of individualism and instrumental purpose and exchange. Right here is serving one's own or others needs and making fair deals in terms of concrete exchange. The reason for doing right is to serve one's own needs or interest in a world where you have to recognize that other people have their interests, too. The first two stages constitute the pre-conventional level of morality.

Stage three is the stage of mutual interpersonal expectations, relationships and interpersonal conformity. Right here involves playing a good nice role, being concerned about other people and their feelings, keeping loyalty and trust with partners, and being motivated to follow rules and expectations. Stage four is the social system and conscience stage. Right is doing one's duty in society or the group. What is right is fulfilling the actual duties to which one has agreed. Laws are to be upheld, except in some extreme cases where they conflict with other fixed social duties. Right is contributing to society, the group or institution. Besides, the reasons for doing right are to keep the institution going as a whole, self-respect or as meeting one's defined obligations. Thus, stage three and four constitute the Conventional level of morality. Stage five is the stage of social contract or utility and of individual right. This pertains to the rights, values and legal contracts of society, even when they conflict with the concrete rules and laws of the group. What is right is being aware of the fact that most values are relative to your group. Reasons for doing right, are in general, that individuals feel obligated to obey laws for the good of all and to protect their own right and right of others.

Stage six, which is at the apex of Kohlberg's (1963) stages, is the stage of universal ethical principle. Here, the individual is guided by self-chosen ethical principles. Particular laws or social agreements are usually valid because they rest on such principles. When laws violate these principles, one acts in accordance with the principle. Principles are universal principles of justice, equality of human rights and respect for the dignity of human beings as individual

persons. These are not merely values which are recognized, they are principles used to generate particular decisions. The reason for doing is that as a rational person, the stage six individual has seen the validity of principles and has become committed to them. Stages five and six therefore constitute the Post conventional level of morality in Kohlberg's paradigm. Thomas (2006) has asserted that with the use of defining issues test (DIT) by Rest (2006), most of findings support the validity of Kohlberg's theory. Besides, moral reasoning develops slowly over the lifespan (Dahl, 2020, Hamlin and Vondervoort, 2018).

Instruction Based Model of Moral Development, by Ezeani (2001): This theory, unlike others, introduced the God-factor element in moral development. According to this perspective, morality deals with ability to act and behave justly and caringly in one's relationship with others. A young infant is said to be naturally egocentric and does not take other people's perspective into consideration. However, as he grows up, he learns by interaction with the environment that certain behaviours are negative and create disharmony, while some others are positive, make for harmony and progress for the society. Practice invariably plays a significant role on whether good moral behaviours will be internalized and manifested when occasion calls or not. That is to say, good moral development involves a progressive process that commences from infancy to adulthood. It is enhanced by the availability of good moral models as parents and teachers in the environment, particularly when children are still at the impressionable ages of their lives. When good foundation of morality is laid along with obedience to the immutable word of God, a morally matured individual is thus "created" for the attainment of the positive goals of the society.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This empirical investigation attempted to:

- i. Determine the moral development levels of tertiary institutions lecturers and students in south west Nigeria.
- ii. Compare the moral development level of lecturers with that of their students.
- iii. Proffer functional counseling strategy and moral training strategy alternative for Nigerian youths.

### **Problem of the Study**

The problem of the study is derived from the unsavoury upsurge in immoral behaviours' which has become common place today. It had also tried to determine if there is any significant difference in the moral decisions made by lecturers and those of their students. In Nigeria, tertiary institutions students and their lecturers are presumed to be operating at the highest level (post conventional, autonomous or principled level) in Kohlbergian moral development paradigm. Unfortunately, this lofty expectation seems not to be materializing as manifested in the general repugnant situations being witnessed everyday across the geographical space and political divides, which in no small measure is contributing to the lowering of the standard of

living and quality of life, and unbridled lack of trust among many Nigerians and foreigners too. If Nigeria is to go forward in terms of sustainable socio-economic and political development, good moral behaviours on the part of all pertinent stakeholders is 'sine qua non'.

Research Hypothesis: The following hypotheses were formulated to guide this study:

1. There is no significant difference between lecturers and their students in their level of moral development.
2. There is no significant difference between male and female study subjects in their level of moral development.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Design: A descriptive survey research design, using sample survey technique, was used for this study.

Population: The population comprises all the 27 tertiary institutions in south west Nigeria, their students and lecturers.

Sample and Sampling Procedure: The sample consists of 240 subjects who were selected from institutions in the six states that make up the geopolitical space of south west Nigeria. Through the use of stratified random sampling, one university was selected from each state. Besides, one polytechnic or college of education was also selected from each of the six states. This gave a sample size of 12 tertiary institutions. 10 lecturers and 30 students who were selected from each of the six states which gave a grand total of 240 subjects who participated in the study.

Research Instruments: The research instruments included two moral dilemmas which were adapted from Kohlberg's (1977) classic episode, 'Heinze's wife', and Simbo's (1989) civil responsibility episode, 'the only witness' to which the study subjects were exposed and they subsequently reacted to by giving reasons for their intended line of actions. The differences in reasoning were directly related to differences in Kohlberg's stages of moral development. The scores were structured on a six-point Likert's type scale from pre-conventional level to post-conventional, autonomous or principled level.

Validity of the Research Instrument: The instruments were validated by subjecting them to careful scrutiny by a panel of experienced psychologists drawn from the Department of Psychology, Guidance and Counselling of the Federal College of Education, Abeokuta. The instruments were found appropriate and adequate for the study.

Method of Data Analysis: Data generated were analyzed through the use of the t-Test.

## **RESULTS**

Table 1: Result of T-Test Comparison of Mean Score Responses of Students and Lecturers on A 6-Point Likert Scale

Subjects	No	Means (x)	SD	DF	T
Students	180	3.07	1.18	238	0.67
Lectures	60	3.48	1.23		
P>.05 Not significant.					

The t-test analysis in table I shows that the calculated t-value is 0.67 at 0.05 level of significance. The critical t-value, however is 1.96. The critical t-value is therefore greater than the calculated t-value. The results indicate that there is no significant difference between the two mean scores earned by students and their Lecturers who participated in this study. The finding therefore shows that tertiary institutions students are essentially operating at the same level of moral development as their lecturers. The intriguing thing about this finding is that the bulk of the students and lecturers seem to be fixated at the conventional and pre-conventional levels of morality in their decision makings.

Table 2: Result of T-Test Comparison of Male and Female Subjects on 6-Point Likert Scale of Moral Development Stages

Subjects	No	Means (x)	SD	DF	T
Male	130	3.65	1.28	238	0.49
Female	110	3.44	1.24		
P>.05, Not significant.					

The t-test analysis in table 2 shows that the calculated t-value is 0.49 at 0.05 level of significance. The critical t-value however is 1.96. The critical t-value is therefore greater than the calculated t-value. The results indicate that there is no significant difference between male and female study subjects in their level of moral development and functioning. Gender therefore does not seem to exert a significant influence on moral development of both lecturers and students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

## DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study seem both surprising and interesting. It was hypothesized that there would not be any significant difference in the moral development level of students and lecturers in tertiary institutions and between male and female study subjects in their level of morality. The results of the findings confirmed the acceptance of the two null hypotheses proposed. The expectation that students and lecturers would be operating at Kohlberg's conventional level of morality was not supported by findings of this study. Besides, the similarity between male and female subjects in their level of moral development and functioning appears more surprising. This is because in our culture, males are always expected to dominate females in all areas of

activity, most especially those that bother on negative behaviours such as cheating, telling lies, funds embezzlement, callous indifference to other people's suffering, tribalism, corruption, religious bigotry, blood shedding, kidnapping and other forms of dishonesty. Females are expected to be less aggressive, to conform better to social values than males, more empathic, docile and honest. These expectations appear not to be so in the contemporary Nigerian situation. Females, for example, have been found to be less aggressive and more likely to conform and to be more level headed than males in their reasoning and judgment (Costanzo and Shaw 1966, Singer 1971). Such stereotypes fall in line with what Witherals and Edwards (1991) described as socio-conventional reasoning — areasoning tainted and influenced by the culture of the people.

**Counseling Implications:** The findings of this study have a number of counseling implications. The findings indicate that lecturers and their students are operating essentially at the conventional level of moral development. The expectation for them is to have attained the post conventional level of morality. One obvious implication derivable from this finding is the absence of well-designed and articulated programmes of moral education in our school system. This unfortunate state of affair does not augur well for the moral upliftment of Nigerians, most especially the leaders of tomorrow. Implied also from this observed phenomenon is the fact that the present moral tone of Nigerians, which is giving a lot of people — parents, public leaders, well-meaning individuals and foreigners — some serious concerns, may yet further deteriorate, if appropriate steps are not taken by our school curriculum developers, not only to develop relevant and functional moral education programmers.

But also, to enhance the status of moral education at all levels of our school system. Besides, the implication of the observed similarities in the cognitive processes and functioning of male and female subjects, is that appropriate time has now come for the jettisoning of the old prevalent male-female stereotype characteristic of the Nigerian society in favour of males. Females think, reason and behave exactly the same way like their male counter parts. Females are not immuned from criminal and other immoral behaviours often associated with males, such as lying, stealing/armed robbery, waywardness, embezzlement of public funds, kidnapping, ethnicity et cetera. More importantly too, there is urgent need for the production of well-trained counselors in our institutions in other to match up with the ever-rising population and demand for professional counseling services. Related to the above is that functional counseling centres, as a matter of necessity, should be established in all schools in Nigeria without further prevarications.

## **Recommendations**

Sequel to the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby proposed;

1. It is hereby recommended that moral education programmes be introduced in all schools of the federation and be made a core course quite separate from the present situation where moral

instruction is just made one of the components of primary and secondary schools' social studies curriculum.

2.It is also recommended that our public and private leaders should, more than ever before, show good examples in both their private and public lives by consciously exhibiting a high sense of morality both in their private and public lives.

3.The present reward system which immorally favours those who cheat on the system and legislators should be reversed.

4.The conferment of national honours in Nigeria, Chieftaincy titles and the like should be based on perceived high moral standards of potential recipients instead of being based on any other mundane considerations,

5.For Nigeria to go forward in terms of sustainable socio-economic and political development, good moral behaviours on the part of all pertinent stakeholders are inexorable or 'Sine qua non'

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