

IMPACT OF PARENTAL GUIDANCE ON MORAL DEVELOPMENT OF ADOLESCENTS IN LOKOJA, KOGI STATE: COUNSELLING IMPLICATION

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of parental guidance on the moral development of adolescents in Lokoja, Kogi State and its counselling implications. The primary goal was to assess how parental guidance impacts adolescents' moral reasoning, ethical decision making, and general moral development through open communication, role modelling, and the establishment of clear moral expectations. The study used descriptive survey research. Out of a 396,337 population, 400 JSS1-JSSIII adolescents from six secondary schools were purposively selected for the study. The Impact of Parental Guidance on Moral Development of Adolescents in Lokoja, Kogi State Questionnaire"was a carefully developed questionnaire used for data collection with a reliability coefficient of 0.87 using Cronbach Alpha. Data analysis used the Chi-square (χ^2) test at a 0.05 significance level. The findings revealed that the development of adolescents' moral reasoning, ethical decision-making, and overall moral character were all positively correlated with parental guidance, which includes open communication, parental role modelling, and the establishment of clear moral expectations. This proved that adolescents who get regular positive parental guidance exhibit higher levels of moral awareness, empathy, and social conformity, whereas lack of parental guidance or negative guidance leads to moral disengagement and bad conduct. The study suggested that family-based strategies can enhance moral guidance in adolescents, highlighting the importance of parental impact on adolescent moral development. Implications for counsellors include the need to design programs that teach parents effective guidance skills and encourage cooperation between counsellors, parents, and adolescents to improve moral development.

Keywords: Parental guidance, Moral development, Adolescents, Counselling implications.

Introduction

Adolescent moral development is an important part of human development that has a big impact on how people behave and engage in society. The biological, cognitive, emotional, and social changes that adolescents go through as they move from infancy to adulthood shape their

worldview and moral decision-making. Parental supervision is one of the most significant influences in forming their moral character. Adolescents need parental guidance to get through this critical developmental stage because it gives them a foundation for morality, develops empathy, and pushes them to follow social standards (Maduelosi & Ezuluofor, 2022). A variety of strategies, including dialogue, moral expectation-setting, and role modelling, can be used to provide this instruction. Traditional values are still prevalent in Nigeria, especially in Lokoja, Kogi State, although they are under threat from globalisation, fast social change, and the impact of contemporary technology. Parents frequently face the difficulty of continuing to have an impact on their children's moral development while navigating these changes (Wishah, 2021).

In this sense, parental supervision becomes a vital tool for navigating the complexity of contemporary adolescence, as adolescents are subjected to conflicting moral narratives from peers, the media, and other social forces. Parents are the initial socialisation agents who are in charge of fostering the moral compass of adolescents since the family is the main social institution in Nigeria and it is vital to moral growth. Nonetheless, studies show that the level and calibre of parental supervision may have a favourable or unfavourable effect on adolescents' moral development (Adakole, 2023). Adolescents who get effective parental advice are more likely to develop strong moral reasoning, ethical decision-making, and empathy.

Effective parental guidance is defined by open communication, emotional support, role modelling, and the articulation of explicit moral standards. On the other hand, moral disengagement, deviant behaviour, and social nonconformity have been linked to parental disengagement or negative impact. In light of the unique socio-economic and cultural characteristics of Lokoja, Kogi State, where urban and rural influences coexist, parental guidance's function in moral development warrants particular consideration (Oluremi, 2023). The strains of industrialisation, coupled with the dissolution of traditional values, provide special problems for parents in this region. This study was aimed at investigating the impact of parental supervision on the moral development of adolescents in Lokoja, Kogi State, and its implications for counselling methods within the framework of these circumstances.

Statement of the Problem

Concerns over the growth in moral delinquency, antisocial behaviour, and ethical failings among Nigerian adolescents are being expressed by policymakers, parents, and educators alike. The problem is especially noticeable in Lokoja, Kogi State, where adolescents are exposed to a wider range of moral influences, many of which contradict one another, making it more difficult for them to make moral decisions. Peer pressure, social media, and the overall erosion of traditional moral values which were formerly the cornerstone of moral training in Nigerian society are just a few of these effects (Usonwu et al., 2021). Although the home has historically been seen as the main source of moral training, the influence of outside media sources, parental absence, and other circumstances has undermined this role, leaving many adolescents without a strong sense of moral guidance. This leads to a generation of youth that frequently lacks the skills necessary to deal with the challenges of contemporary life, which increases the risk of

juvenile delinquency, moral disengagement, and unethical decision-making. The issue is made worse by the poor communication that exists between parents and adolescents, since many parents are either insensitive to or ignorant of the moral difficulties that their adolescents are facing (Archibong & James, 2019). Furthermore, parental behaviour that is at odds with the moral principles they aim to impart has frequently undercut the function that role modelling plays in fostering moral growth. Parents who participate in immoral behaviours, such as corruption, dishonesty, or moral apathy, for example, convey contradictory messages to their children, which hinder adolescents from developing a consistent moral compass (Akinsola, 2010). The efficacy of parental guidance in guiding the moral development of adolescents and the degree to which parental participation might lessen the negative impacts that adolescents experience in their everyday lives are important topics that are brought up by this circumstance.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To examine the influence of parental guidance on the moral reasoning and ethical decision-making of adolescents in Lokoja, Kogi State.
2. To investigate the role of parental communication and role modelling in the moral development of adolescents.
3. To assess the relationship between parental expectations and adolescents' adherence to social and moral norms.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How does parental guidance impact the moral reasoning and ethical decision-making of adolescents in Lokoja, Kogi State?
2. What is the role of parental communication and role modelling in the moral development of adolescents?
3. How do parental expectations influence adolescents' adherence to social and moral norms?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in this study:

1. There is no significant relationship between parental guidance and the moral reasoning of adolescents in Lokoja, Kogi State.
2. Parental communication and role modelling do not significantly influence the moral development of adolescents.

Theoretical Framework

Lawrence Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

Using Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory, American psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg established his Theory of Moral Development in 1958. Kohlberg developed a six-stage model of morality with three levels: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional (Kohlberg, 1973). The idea states that moral thinking, which underpins ethical behaviour, evolves as people mature and focuses on fairness. According to Kohlberg (1971), these phases show how humans reason about moral difficulties, with each step becoming more complex. At the pre-conventional level, incentives and punishments affect morality in young children. The conventional level, typical in adolescents and adults, values social order and compliance. Finally, post-conventional morality is based on abstract ideals of fairness and human rights, frequently challenging established conventions (Rest et al., 1999). Kohlberg's theory posits that moral growth is a cognitive process that develops through phases and is impacted by social interactions and experiences, notably moral dilemma reasoning (Gibbs, 2010). The idea states that moral reasoning develops in a universal sequence, meaning that people across cultures go through the same phases, albeit the pace may vary depending on individual and contextual conditions (Snarey, 1985). The approach emphasises the need of socialisation and direction, especially from parents and authoritative figures, in helping moral development progress (Walker & Taylor, 1991). As role models and moral educators, parents shape adolescents' moral reasoning and knowledge of justice and ethical decision-making (Turiel, 2006).

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development helps explain how parental guidance affects Lokoja, Kogi State adolescents' moral thinking and ethical decision-making. Kohlberg's moral development phases emphasise the relevance of social interactions, especially parental influence, in moral cognition. This study suggests that parental assistance, including moral discourse and role modelling, helps adolescents proceed through Kohlberg's moral development stages. Strong parental supervision helps adolescents develop post-conventional morality, which bases decisions on universal fairness and justice (Power et al., 1989). Parents' unambiguous moral expectations coincide with Kohlberg's emphasis on organised moral reasoning, where adolescents internalise moral concepts via guidance and reflection (Rest & Narvaez, 1994).

Promoting positive parental participation in adolescent moral development has therapy consequences. Moral growth is both cognitive and social, as Kohlberg's theory shows. Thus, counsellors might utilise this theoretical framework to create therapies that improve parental moral thinking and guiding. Counsellors can help adolescents go through higher moral stages by encouraging open moral discussions with parents, minimising moral disengagement and aberrant behaviour (Gibbs, 2014). Thus, Kohlberg's theory provides a framework for understanding how parental guidance affects adolescent moral development and a practical direction for counselling treatments to promote family-based moral education.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to investigate the impact of parental guidance on the moral development of adolescents in Lokoja, Kogi State. In this study, the descriptive survey approach was chosen to gather quantitative data from a large sample of participants and analyse it to find patterns and correlations between variables. This study approach collects data from respondents in their natural contexts to examine the link between parental guidance (independent variable) and adolescent moral development (dependent variable). Questionnaires and other standardised instruments allow descriptive survey researchers to collect and analyse data statistically. A descriptive survey is ideal for capturing the study's findings on how parental guidance, such as communication, role modelling, and moral expectations, affect adolescents' moral reasoning, ethical decision-making, and moral character.

Each Lokoja, Kogi State junior secondary school (JSS1-JSS3) adolescents was studied. Lokoja, a state capital with urban and rural elements, is a good place to examine how traditional and modern parenting techniques affect adolescent moral development. Adolescents from varying socio-economic and cultural backgrounds are included to study how parental supervision affects moral development across demographic groups. Lokoja has 396,337 JSS1–JSS3 adolescents in public and private secondary schools, according to statistics. This broad population allows the researcher to pick a representative sample that represents the diversity of local teens, boosting the study's generalisability.

The research purposefully picked 400 adolescents from six Lokoja secondary schools. Purposive sampling was utilised to target children in the important developmental stage of adolescence (JSS1-JSS3) who are most likely to produce useful data for the study. Based on their location in Lokoja and adolescents socioeconomic and cultural variety, the six secondary schools were chosen. This made the sample typical of Lokoja's teens. To guarantee proportionality, stratified random sampling was used to sample JSS1, JSS2, and JSS3 adolescents. This method reduces sampling bias and guarantees that data obtained represents adolescents' moral growth throughout early secondary education.

The main data collecting tool was a constructed questionnaire called "The Impact of Parental Guidance in Moral Development of Adolescents in Lokoja, Kogi State: Counselling Implication Questionnaire." The questionnaire was carefully developed to capture crucial characteristics of parental guidance, such as parental communication frequency and quality, role modelling, and moral expectations. The questionnaire assessed adolescents' moral thinking, ethical decision-making, and moral growth. The questionnaire included two parts: Section A: Demographics (age, gender, class, family background). Section B: Parental guidance and moral development questions on a 5-point Likert scale from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree."

The Likert scale quantifies respondents' opinions, making statistical analysis easier. To allow respondents to freely explain how parental advice has shaped their morality, open-ended questions were provided. Educational psychology, counselling, and research technique experts

reviewed the questionnaire to guarantee its validity. These experts reviewed the questionnaire to verify that it accurately examined parental guidance and moral development and that the questions were clear, unambiguous, and relevant to the study's goals. By connecting questionnaire items with moral development and parental impact theories, the tool assessed what it was supposed to. Face validity was confirmed by pre-testing the instrument with a small sample of adolescents to ensure that the items were acceptable for the target age range.

A pilot research with 50 non-sample adolescents assessed the instrument's dependability. Pilot study data were analysed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a 0.87 reliability value. This high reliability value implies that questionnaire items were internally consistent and stable. For the primary investigation, the device proved trustworthy.

School officials and parents gave consent to gather data, assuring ethical standards were followed. We obtained parental and adolescents approval to assure voluntary participation. School workers and research assistants were taught to help chosen adolescents complete the surveys during school hours. To guarantee meaningful responses, adolescents were given clear instructions and adequate time to complete the questionnaire. Research assistants helped adolescents clarify questions without affecting their answers. To prevent data loss or contamination, questionnaires were collected promptly.

Survey data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The demographics and questionnaire responses were summarised using descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. These statistics showed parental guiding practices and moral development levels in the sample.

At a 0.05 significance level, the Chi-square (χ^2) test was utilised for inferential analysis to assess research hypotheses. The Chi-square test was utilised to determine the link between categorical factors like parental guiding practices and adolescents' moral growth. This research determined if parental communication, role modelling, and moral expectations were statistically associated with moral reasoning, ethical decision-making, and overall moral development. Cross-tabulations were used to examine how parental guidance affects moral development across demographic categories. To simplify understanding and emphasise crucial findings, tables, charts, and graphs were used.

Result

Research Question 1: How does parental guidance impact the moral reasoning and ethical decision-making of adolescents in Lokoja, Kogi State?

Table 1: Impact of Parental Guidance on Moral Reasoning

Level of Parental Guidance	High Moral Reasoning (%)	Moderate Moral Reasoning (%)	Low Moral Reasoning (%)	Level of Parental Guidance
High Parental Guidance	65	25	10	High Parental Guidance
Moderate Parental Guidance	45	35	20	Moderate Parental Guidance
Low Parental Guidance	20	30	50	Low Parental Guidance

From Table 1, it is evident that adolescents who received high levels of parental guidance (65%) exhibited stronger moral reasoning compared to those who received moderate or low levels of parental guidance. Conversely, adolescents with low parental guidance were more likely to demonstrate low moral reasoning (50%). This finding suggests a clear relationship between the quality of parental guidance and the moral reasoning ability of adolescents.

Research Question 2: What is the role of parental communication and role modelling in the moral development of adolescents?

Table 2: Role of Parental Communication and Role Modelling in Moral Development

Aspect of Parental Guidance	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Parental communication improves moral development	50	30	10	7	3
Parental role modelling promotes ethical decision-making	55	28	8	6	3

Table 2 indicates that a majority of respondents (50% strongly agree, 30% agree) believe that open parental communication plays a crucial role in their moral development. Additionally, 55% strongly agreed that parental role modelling, i.e., parents setting an ethical example, significantly promotes ethical decision-making in adolescents.

Research Question 3: How do parental expectations influence adolescents' adherence to social and moral norms?

Table 3: Parental Expectations and Adolescent Adherence to Social Norms

Parental Expectation Clarity	High Adherence (%)	Moderate Adherence (%)	Low Adherence (%)
High Expectation Clarity	60	30	10
Moderate Expectation Clarity	40	40	20
Low Expectation Clarity	20	30	50

Table 3 shows that adolescents who reported clear parental expectations were more likely to adhere to social and moral norms (60% showed high adherence). On the other hand, those with low parental expectation clarity had a higher likelihood of low adherence to these norms (50%).

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between parental guidance and the moral reasoning of adolescents in Lokoja, Kogi State.

Table 4: Chi-Square Test for Parental Guidance and Moral Reasoning

Variable	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Decision
Parental Guidance	16.74	2	0.001	Reject H0

From Table 4, the Chi-square (χ^2) value is 16.74 with a p-value of 0.001, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that there is a significant relationship between parental guidance and the moral reasoning of adolescents.

Hypothesis 2: Parental communication and role modelling do not significantly influence the moral development of adolescents.

Table 5: Chi-Square Test for Parental Communication and Moral Development

Variable	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Decision
Parental Communication	12.86	2	0.003	Reject H0
Role Modelling	18.20	2	0.000	Reject H0

Table 5 shows that both parental communication ($\chi^2 = 12.86$, $p = 0.003$) and role modelling ($\chi^2 = 18.20$, $p = 0.000$) have a significant influence on the moral development of adolescents. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal a strong positive relationship between parental guidance and adolescent moral development. Adolescents who received high levels of parental guidance, including clear communication, effective role modelling, and explicit moral expectations, exhibited stronger moral reasoning, ethical decision-making, and adherence to social norms.

These results final support in Maduelosi and Ezuluofor (2022), who emphasized that parents serve as primary moral agents in their children’s lives, and by Adakole (2023), who identified parental influence as a major determinant of students’ moral competence. Both studies reinforce the notion that adolescence is a critical period during which strong parental direction significantly shapes moral outcomes.

The study also found that the clarity of parental expectations plays a significant role in

determining adolescents' adherence to social norms. Clear and consistent expectations from parents appear to help adolescents internalize societal values and conform to acceptable standards of behaviour. Conversely, the absence or ambiguity of parental guidance often leads to moral disengagement and deviant behaviour. This aligns with the findings of Archibong and James (2019), who reported a positive correlation between explicit parental expectations and moral behaviour among secondary school adolescents, as well as Oluremi (2023), who showed that structured parent-child communication significantly reduced risky behaviours through the reinforcement of societal values. Both studies validate the importance of transparency in parental guidance as a tool for promoting social conformity among youths.

Moreover, the findings underscore the importance of parental role modelling. Adolescents who observed their parents engaging in ethical behaviour were more likely to exhibit similar behaviour. This reinforces the idea that adolescents learn through imitation, making it crucial for parents to practice what they preach. This finding is supported by Wishah (2021), who found that adolescents often internalize values through observational learning, and by Usonwu et al. (2021), who emphasized that modelling appropriate behaviour is a central theme in effective parent-adolescent communication. The implications of these findings for counselling are profound, suggesting that counselling interventions aimed at improving adolescent behaviour should focus on enhancing parental involvement and communication.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated the pivotal role that parental guidance plays in the moral development of adolescents in Lokoja, Kogi State. The findings show that adolescents who experience high levels of parental communication, role modelling, and clear moral expectations exhibit stronger moral reasoning, make better ethical decisions, and conform more readily to social norms. The research also reveals that the absence of or inconsistency in parental guidance can lead to moral disengagement and deviant behaviour among adolescents. By highlighting the importance of parental influence in shaping adolescents' moral frameworks, this study contributes to a growing body of literature that underscores the family as a fundamental environment for moral development. The implications of these findings suggest that fostering effective parental engagement can enhance adolescents' moral capacities, which is crucial for their overall development and societal integration. It is evident that the quality of parental guidance whether through direct communication or modelling ethical behaviour has a long-lasting impact on adolescents' ability to navigate moral challenges and make responsible decisions. Therefore, this study underscores the need for parental involvement in adolescent moral development and calls for strategies to support parents in fulfilling this critical role.

Counselling Implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for the field of counselling, particularly in family-based interventions aimed at improving the moral development of adolescents. First, counsellors must recognize the vital role that parents play in shaping the

moral outlook of their children. Given the strong correlation between parental guidance and adolescent moral development, counsellors should design programs that involve parents in the counselling process. For instance, counsellors can organize workshops and training sessions that teach parents effective communication techniques, the importance of role modelling, and how to set clear and consistent moral expectations. These programs can help parents develop the skills necessary to guide their children through ethical challenges, thereby reinforcing positive moral behaviour. Additionally, counsellors should advocate for a collaborative approach, involving both parents and adolescents in the counselling process. This joint approach allows for open dialogue between parents and adolescents, creating a supportive environment where moral issues can be addressed in a structured and non-judgmental manner.

Counsellors must also work with schools and community leaders to raise awareness about the importance of parental involvement in moral development. By establishing partnerships with schools, counsellors can facilitate programs that integrate moral education into the academic curriculum, while also encouraging parental participation. Finally, counsellors should provide individualized support to adolescents from homes where parental guidance is lacking or inconsistent. Such support might involve mentoring programs that provide alternative role models or peer-based interventions that promote moral development through social interactions.

Recommendations

Based on the major findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Parents should be encouraged to engage in open and regular communication with their adolescents about moral and ethical issues. Schools and community-based organizations can organize workshops to teach parents effective communication strategies that foster moral development.
2. Parents should be aware that their behaviour serves as a model for their children. Counsellors and educators should emphasize the importance of setting a good example through ethical behaviour in everyday life, as adolescents tend to imitate the behaviours they observe in their parents.
3. Parents should set clear and consistent expectations regarding moral behaviour. Counsellors should work with parents to help them articulate these expectations in a way that adolescents can understand and internalize. Additionally, schools can provide guidance on creating a home environment that reinforces social norms and values.

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