

Socio-Economic Laxity on University Students: Implication for Social Values and Sexual Morality

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Abstract

The rate at which social values are being eroded in recent time among the university undergraduates in Nigeria is very alarming. The position of their parents' wellness and economic power are pointers to values erosion and compliance. Morality has degenerated globally, with particular reference to university undergraduates in southwest Nigeria. This calls for concern and urgent attention to ameliorate the upsurge. The study adopted a descriptive research design of the survey type. The population consisted of all university

undergraduates in both public and private universities in southwest Nigeria. The sample size consisted of 1,581 undergraduates; they were selected using multistage sampling procedure. An instrument tagged "Values Awareness and Compliance Questionnaire" (VACQ) was used to collect data for the study. Cronbach's Alpha reliability Coefficient Analysis was used to determine the reliability coefficient which stood at 0.92 after the face and content validity had been ensured by experts in Social Studies, Sociology, and Tests, Measurement and Evaluation. The data collected were analysed using ANOVA and t-test analyses. The three hypotheses generated were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that socio-economic status of parents did not significantly influence university undergraduates' social values however, the socio-economic status of parents significantly influenced university undergraduates' sexual morality. Based on the results, it was recommended that the proprietors of private universities should identify the reasons behind the problems of undergraduates' values degradations and parents of university undergraduates should not use their bad past experiences and present affluence living to jeopardize the inculcation of right values to their wards as regards compliance and assist them to desist from sexual immorality.

Key words: Immorality, Moral degradation, Re-socialisation, Socio-economic status, University ownership, Values.

Introduction

Values are fundamental in parenting since they deeply influence all behaviours and attitudes and affect decisions and relationships. There is a need for parents to move from verbal teaching to actions and these must reflect in their behaviours as parents who are role models for children and wards. Values define what we regard as important or unimportant, and they guide our preferences as they inform our life choices (Ogunyemi, 2014). Uwaifo (2008) asserted that the family background of a child affects his reaction to life situations and his level of performance. In the same vein, Osunloye (2008) also affirmed that family background plays a pivotal role in children's educational attainment and social integration (Henrietta & Odozi, 2014).

The socio-economic status the parents according to this article means their economic strength and possibly their prosperity and affluence level. Socio-Economic Status is an economic and sociological combined measure of a person's work experience and that of an individual's or family's economic and social position in relation to other people's level of economic strengths (Osunloye, 2008). Based on household income, earners' education and occupation are examined, as well as combined income; whereas for an individual's socio-economic status only their own attributes are assessed (Igba; Igba; Nnamani; Nduka- Ozo & Ngwoke, 2018). The level of parental socio-economic strength goes a long way to determine which institution and the type of institution their children and wards attend. This attests to the reason why some parents prefer to send their wards to either private or public institutions right from the kindergarten to the university level. This further confirms that parents' socio-economic strength largely determines the lifestyle of university undergraduates. Such lifestyle is all-encompassing as it involves compliance to societal social values and their interrelationship with their colleagues especially with the opposite sex which could be positive or negative; wholesome or otherwise. Non-conformity to many of the values may be the product of parents' socio-economic status that condones some of the lifestyles of their children and wards that contravene the societal norms. Many seem to use their wealth and prosperity, either directly or indirectly, to spoil their children in the name of freedom and enjoyment. This is based on the wrong premise that they would not allow their children or wards to suffer what they went through while growing up. The parents have now discovered the difference between poverty and prosperity because they have tasted both. With this, too much freedom seems to have been given to the children which have endangered their values compliance and sexual morality even as university undergraduates.

The ownership of universities refers to their proprietorship, which are individuals, organisations and governments who sponsor and finance the establishment of such institutions. Thus universities in Nigeria could be classified as public and private (NUC, 2019). According to this policy document on guidelines for establishing institutions of higher education in Nigeria, the universities were established with stated core values which they strive to pursue with vigour as some of such values are associated with good characters among the students who are the products of such institutions (Oyewole, Arogundade & Sadiku, 2019). The enforcement and compliance

with such values could be functions of the nature of the university ownership and management team.

In a survey carried out by Guillerma and Adalberto (2007) among 3,575 undergraduates in Santa Marta, Colombia, it was discovered that studying in a private institution or public institution is a factor related to having had sexual intercourse by the students. Guillerma and Adalberto (2007)'s study also revealed that students from public institutions are linked to having sexual intercourse or having engaged in sexual activities more than their counterparts from private institutions. Bernache-Baker (1998) disclosed that 61.8% of adolescents and youths in public institutions have engaged in premarital sexual activities as against 38.2% in private institutions. To corroborate the above assertion, Akibu, Gebresellasie, Zekarias and Tsegaye, (2017), posited that a good number of students engage in premarital sexual practices and that 18.7% of them engage in sexual debut with 50.6% those sexual activities were performed based on students' interest to meet their sexual desire.

To ameliorate the above, Oni (2007) concluded that parents have significant roles to play in the adjustment process of the university undergraduates. The behavioural problems of most deviants are rooted in their homes. From the practical experience, when a good relationship exists between parents and their children, it creates a healthy environment for the development of the children. However, when a good rapport exists between the parents and the children, they feel free to express their minds and worries to their parents. But the problem that many children are facing in recent times is the problem of non-availability of the parents even when they are most needed. However, parents are so much preoccupied with economic pursuance at the expense of their responsibility to their children (Ang & Goh, 2006). This, in our view, has far-reaching implications for the value orientation of the children.

The traumatic family socio-economic condition can be another factor that makes university undergraduates engage in some of the obnoxious behaviours. The family socioeconomic status is based on the family's source of income or income level, occupation of the parents, and the parental social status in the community they reside (Vereecken, Maes & DeBacquer, 2004 and Oni, 2007). Neighbourhoods that are characterised by high residential turnover, poverty and crime rates, and which are perceived by residents to be dangerous, affect children's moral behaviour, such as the tendency to have early onset of the sexual intercourse, low use of contraceptives and high undergraduates pregnancy rates (Miller, 2002).

Igba; Igba; Nnamani; Nduka- Ozo and Ngwoke (2018) have attempted to examine the role of socioeconomic status of the parents and the moral behaviours of the undergraduates. In another study, Nwankwo, Emodi and Kanu (2013) investigated the association of locality and parental socio-economic background as influencing factors to the moral behaviour of the undergraduates in southeastern Nigeria. One hundred and seventy-six undergraduates were selected from four secondary schools that were used in gathering the required data. The result revealed that a significant influence of locality exists on moral behaviour among the undergraduates. The study also found out that there is a significant influence of parental socio-economic background on the moral behaviour of the undergraduates. Their work confirmed the prediction that participants from a low parental socioeconomic status would show a higher level of morality than those from high parental socioeconomic status. The stress felt by families struggling to 'make ends meet' does leave parents with enough time to monitor the progress (value conformity) of their children or wards.

The work of Nwankwo; Emodi and Kanu (2013) aligns with the work of Vereecken, Maes and DeBacquer (2004) on the association of lifestyle behaviour with educational level and social background based on parental occupation in adolescence. Vereecken et'al. (2004) sampled 12,490 secondary school students for the study in Belgium. Survey multiple regressions adjusting for age and gender were used to assess the effects of parental occupation and students' educational level on the selected lifestyle behaviour. The result indicated that students of parents with lower socioeconomic status based on the occupation of the head of the household (father/husband) exhibited behaviours that are considered as anti-social behaviours. Both works of Vereecken, et al. (2004) and Nwankwo et al. (2013) have specified that morality is rooted in self-regulation and limitation of a moral mode list rather than abstract reasoning. From the foregoing, it was discovered that most rich parents who serve as models to their children lack moral behaviour due to the nature of their jobs. This, in turn, has a significant negative influence on their children concerning their moral behaviour.

To support the revelation of Nwankwo et al (2013) about the wealthy parents who spoiled the morality of their children in the name of love, Adeboye (2014) warned that parents should not use love as an excuse for not been able to discipline their children and in teaching them morals of the society. According to him, some parents in the name of love, allow their children to do whatever they want whereas they have only succeeded in destroying them. Adeboye (2018)

supported the above, stated that many parents, because of their past experiences with poverty, want to spoil their wards now that they are rich. They do not want their wards to experience the same because of the taste of poverty and prosperity; they have discovered the difference between the two. Reference was made to the book of Proverbs 29:17 in the Holy Bible, which counsels parents thus, ‘Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest, yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.’ Adeboye (2014), while reflecting on his own background stated that there are three categories of children: those without home training (*alaileko*); those who were trained but rejected such training (*akoigba*), and those who were trained and accepted such training (*omoluabi*). Many children were actually trained by their parents but along the line, they derailed from the line their parents asked them to follow which is due to re-socialisation, of which they were exposed to through the influence of their peers.

Statement of the Problem

Experience has also shown that many parents are no longer interested in the teaching of moral values to their children especially on how to avoid pre-marital sex and maintain virginity until the wedding night as many of parents are preoccupied with economic gains, career advancement than inculcation of social values. However, the socioeconomic status of undergraduates’ parents seems to have contributed much to this negativity. The family factor, the family structure, family size and family type appear to be contributory factors to undergraduates’ sexual behaviours, so also is largeness or smallness of the family. Unfortunately, many now consider this tremendous moral value to be ‘*old school*’ belief. However, it seems that pre-marital sex has become acceptable in our current society; this in our argument needs a significant repositioning to ensure a stable and societal moral value.

It appears as if immorality has become the order of the day among the undergraduates and this may be due to laxity in the area of inculcation of moral values through informal training that children need to be exposed to at home or through re-socialisation in the course of interaction with peers. Our general observations showed that modern-day undergraduates have greatly eroded the values attached to sexual continence. Many of the undergraduates who engage in sexual immorality or immoral activities do not feel guilty when they are caught in such acts. This perceptibility may be connected to the wrong belief they have, that “everybody is doing it”.

The problem statement confirms that there is moral decadence among the contemporary undergraduates in the society and much more moral decadence among the adults as well. This might be confirming an adage that says “one can only give what one has”. Furthermore, contemporary undergraduates seem to be faced with the problem of role model. Some undergraduates who were brought up by house-helpers also seem to experience confusion on whose value to take after as many of them may have been nurtured by different house-helpers even possibly within a year; they may have access to three to four house-helpers, and each of them comes with his/her different moral principles based on where they (housemaids) were brought up; their antecedents could also have influence on the child/children in their care.

The objective of the Study

Based on the above lacuna, the study was purposed to find out whether parental socioeconomic status determines social values compliance by the university undergraduates. The study also determines whether ownership of university could influence university undergraduates’ social values, and also how parental socioeconomic status could influence university undergraduates’ sexual morality.

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated in the study.

1. Ownership of university will not significantly influence university undergraduates’ social values.
2. Socioeconomic status of parents will not significantly influence university undergraduates’ social values.
3. Socioeconomic status of parents will not significantly influence university undergraduates’ sexual morality.

Methodology

Descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted for the study. It provided the researchers with the opportunity to utilise quantitative approach in data collection and analysis. The population consisted of all University undergraduates in both private and public Universities in Southwest, Nigeria. A total number of 1,581 University undergraduates which are made up of 750 male and 831 female undergraduates selected through multi-stage sampling procedure. A self-

designed research instrument titled “Values Awareness and Compliance Questionnaire (VACQ)” was used for the study. It consisted of 25 items drawn on the level of values awareness and compliance on University undergraduates. Experts in Social Studies, Sociology, Test, Measurement and Evaluation departments validated the instrument while its reliability was ensured through Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient test. A reliability coefficient of 0.92 at 0.05 level of significance was obtained and was considered high and appropriate for this study. The researchers administered the instrument with the help of trained research assistants in each University. Data collected were analysed with the use of mean, median, t-test and ANOVA statistical tool. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Findings

Hypothesis 1: Ownership of universities will not significantly influence university undergraduates’ social values.

Scores relating to undergraduates’ values were computed and compared for statistical significance based on ownership of Nigerian universities using t-test at 0.05 level of significance as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: *t-test of University Undergraduates’ Social Values by Ownership of Universities*

<i>Group</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t_{cal}</i>	<i>t_{tab}</i>	<i>P</i>
Private	536	62.31	9.509				
Public	1045	61.65	9.751	1579	1.285	1.960	0.327

$P > 0.05$

Table 1 reveals that t_{cal} (1.285) was less than t_{tab} (1.960) at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted. This implies that ownership of universities did not significantly influence university undergraduates’ values.

Hypothesis 2: Socio-economic status of parents will not significantly influence university undergraduates’ social values

In order to test the hypothesis, scores on university undergraduates’ values by socio-economic status of parents were computed and subjected to statistical analysis involving Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level. The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: ANOVA of University Undergraduates' Values by Socio-Economic Status of Parents

<i>Source</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F_{cal}</i>	<i>F_{tab}</i>	<i>P</i>
Between groups	303.419	2	151.709			
Within groups	147485.740	1578	93.464	1.623	3.000	0.198
Total	147789.159	1580				

P>0.05

Table 2 depicts that the socioeconomic status of parents did not significantly influence university undergraduates' values ($F=1.623$, $P>0.05$). The null hypothesis was not rejected. This implies that the socioeconomic status of parents did not significantly influence university undergraduates' social values.

Hypothesis 3: Socio-economic status of parents will not significantly influence university undergraduates' sexual morality

Scores relating to university undergraduates' sexual morality were computed and compared for statistical significance using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) based on the socio-economic of parents at 0.05 level. The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: ANOVA of University Undergraduates' Sexual Morality based on the Socio-Economic Status of Parents

<i>Source</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F_{cal}</i>	<i>F_{tab}</i>	<i>P</i>
Between groups	4078.781	2	2039.390			
Within groups	671565.633	1578	425.580	4.792*	3.000	0.008
Total	675644.414	1580				

*P<0.05

Table 3 shows that F_{cal} (4.792) is greater than F_{tab} (3.000) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that the socio-economic status of parents significantly influenced university undergraduates' sexual morality.

In order to locate the sources of significant difference among the socio-economic groups, Scheffe Post-Hoc test was carried out as presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Scheffe Post-Hoc Analysis of Parents' Socio-Economic Status and University Undergraduates' Sexual Morality

<i>Socio-economic status</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Low			*	958	65.97
Medium				361	62.96
High				262	62.35

Table 4 reveals that there was a significant difference between sexual morality of university undergraduates from low and high socio-economic background at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there was a significant difference between sexual morality level of university undergraduates from low socio-economic background to that of university undergraduates from high socio-economic background. The influence was more pronounced in low socio-economic families (=65.97) than in high socio-economic families (=62.35). However, the mean difference between low and medium, medium and high socioeconomic status is not significant at 0.05 level of significance in each case.

Discussion of Findings

It was revealed that ownership of universities would not significantly influence university undergraduates' social values. This could be because social values inculcation and compliance were not part of the reasons why parents send their children/wards to private or public institutions but for academic excellence where incessant strike actions by University unions would not disrupt academic work. This does not mean that some faith-based institutions are not set up to propagate values inculcation and compliance.

Findings on the influence of socioeconomic status of parents revealed that socio-economic status of parents did not significantly influence university undergraduates' social values. The reason adduced for this may not be far-fetched because being rich or being poor has nothing to do with the inculcation of right values to one's child, but the availability and responsiveness of parents are very germane here. Brinda (2016) posited that parents are a child's first teachers and role models. They are responsible for shaping up the child's behaviour and implementing positive values in the life of such children. Bearing this in mind, the children listen, observe and imitate their parents. In so doing, it is expedient for parents to be good role model, the kind they would want their wards to follow. Parental educational background, an income of parents and parental

occupation did not show any influence on university undergraduates' values. The finding of this study is in variation to the work of Igba, et al. (2018) that the socioeconomic status of parents affects the laying of foundational values in their children.

The findings further revealed that the socio-economic status of parents does significantly influence university undergraduates' sexual morality. It was revealed that parents with low socioeconomic status are mostly affected by the issue of university undergraduates' sexual morality. This study agreed with Vereecken et al. (2004) who discovered that parental socio-economic background served as an influencing factor to the moral behaviour of the university adolescents in Belgium. For instance, adolescents whose parents are of lower socioeconomic status exhibited anti-social behaviours. Likewise, Nwankwo et al. (2013) corroborated Vereecken et al (2004) in a study which took place in the Southeastern part of Nigeria. This study is consistent with Thomas (2011) who discovered that the relationship between parents and their children moderate their children sexual behaviour and value system. The researcher concluded that the pursuit of economic power, career and academic excellence has not allowed many parents to have a close relationship with their children and this has denied many adolescents the right values and acceptable sexual behaviours.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the exploration of literature, data analysis and findings, we hereby conclude that ownership of universities did not influence university undergraduates' social values. It was noted in the study that parents' socio-economic status did not influence university undergraduates social values; however, the sexual morality of university undergraduates was influenced by the socioeconomic status of their parents. Based on these, the study made the following recommendations:

1. University proprietors should identify the reasons behind the problems of undergraduates' values degradations.
2. Parents of university undergraduates should wake up to their responsibilities by encouraging their children to desist from sexual immorality that could post a negative impact on their future.

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