

Moral Decadent among the Youths in Potiskum Local Government: The Roles of Parents and Government

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100800147>

Received: 16 August 2026; Accepted: 22 August 2026; Published: 28 August 2026

ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the roles of Parents and government in moral decadent among the youths in potiskum local government, it is well known that idle youth are used for problems of insecurity and these come from lack of moral. Moral decadent is a condition which affects large number of people in an adverse manner. It can also be seen as a difficulty of misbehaviour which vast majority wants to correct. Therefore, it is necessary to eliminate them as quickly as possible. In view of the above expositions, this paper exploited primary and secondary source of data to gather it information, such as interview, textbooks, journals and newspaper, three theories were used to complement each other such as Sociological Moral Theory, Philosophical Moral Theory and Psychological Moral Theory were used to exploit the key areas of the challenges. Furthermore, the paper argues that illiteracy, poverty, unemployment and Negligences of the parent and government leads to the problems today. The paper suggested that government should formulate a policy strategies that will mandated education for all, moral education should be included in all schools syllabus and any parent who fail to catered for the upbringing of their children should be penalize. Finally, the paper recommends that elimination of justice discriminatory practice, equal distribution of resources especially on children, women, less privileged and minorities in order to create harmony of co-existence and cooperation amongst Nigerians.

Keywords: Moral decadent, Youth, Parents, Potiskum Area, and Government.

INTRODUCTION

Restiveness among the youth has become one of the global phenomenon such as USA, UK and those in Nigeria has been unprecedented increase. Since last decade and more there has been proliferation of unrivalled violence, the case of kidnapping, abduction, and insurgency wonton destruction of valuable infrastructures as well as lives and personal properties. These are mostly activity of the youth that are socially unacceptable triggered by enforced desired of outcome from the constituted authority (Yusuf, 2014). It is obvious that the state of Nigerian youths in terms of morality is hopeless and frustrating. Odeh (2015) noted that the rate at which immoral behaviours are practiced is overwhelming. Many young boys and girls are roaming about looking for one crime or the other, they would commit. Majority of our youths are wayward, disobedient, disrespectful and ever ready to derail. Many of them are ready to kidnap, kill or maim people in order to survive the hard economy. Misham (2007) observed that the youths are pushed by the exploitative and uncarpeted socio-economic system of the society. The young in the bid to resist and revolt against the oppressive system results to myriads of deviant behaviours such as disobedience to constituted authority and as a result of that, they riot, vandalize and even maim others as a way of showcasing their feelings. Some even work as political thugs, terrorists or bodyguards while females engage in prostitution and other social vices.

Moral decadence is a social problem because it affects the entire nation. No wonder every community is making serious attempt to check its growth. Nkechi & Donatus (2017) observed that a society that does not checkmate the growth of immoral practices would definitely end in disaster. Moral decadence involves any

act or behaviour which violates the norms and codes of the society. It is an abnormality involving basic conflict with the society's value system. It could be better described as an aggressive behaviour which defiles the established values in a given society. Rogers (2003) viewed moral decadence as non-compliance through their parental upbringing, peer or societal influence. Parents that involves in anti-social behaviour stands chances of transferring such attitudes to their children, some out of guilty conscience do not have the moral power to instill discipline hence they practice indiscipline.

Most Nigerian youths engage in anti-social behaviour due to the family upbringing, some are from broken homes or defective homes that can rarely satisfy children's basic needs let alone parental affection. Researches carried out by Njoku (2015) have proven that family instability is a major cause of moral decadence among Nigerian youths. For instance if parents fail in their responsibility to show affection, guidance and proper discipline, the children are likely to derail morally; it implies that indiscipline should be tackled by the family. When parents over look ill acts of their children at home or they are incapable of inflicting suitable punishment whenever the children misbehave, it is then an inevitable fact that they would grow wilder.

Low moral standard and hypocrisy of the elder generation gives room for the youths to get themselves involved in moral decadence when youths find out that the older generation is somewhat hypocritical, in that they pretend to inculcate set of moral norms but vigorously pursues the opposites (Saheed, 2013). As a result, they tend to join in the camouflage way of life.

Not only from the family, but the environment also plays a major role in moral upbringing of a child. Parents is meant to be a first teacher to children but in most cases the reverse is the case. Parent who are supposed to be the trainers, directors, guardians and character moulders are already morally corrupt. According to Nkechi et al. (2017) some of the parent exhibit some sort of anti-social behaviours, children who sees their parents as role models upholds every behaviour of the parent as ideal. Nkechi et al. said that where children are not properly taught how to spend their leisure hours profitably, the children are prone to misuse it. This calls for the need of recreational facilities and activities which can occupy children's time so that they would not be bored as well as pushed to exploring areas that may hurt the society. The above background poses a challenge on the role of the parents and the government in curbing moral decadent among the youths in potiskum local government.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of moral decadence generally includes the following key ideas:

1. **Erosion of Shared Values:** Moral decadence is fundamentally characterized by the weakening of a society's collective moral compass. This involves a shift where behaviors once considered unacceptable become normalized or even celebrated.
2. **Dominance of Self-Interest:** A major component is the increasing prioritization of personal gain, pleasure, or status over the common good. This can manifest as widespread dishonesty, corruption, and a general lack of civic engagement.
3. **Breakdown of Social Institutions:** Traditional institutions that once served as moral anchors, such as **the family, religious organizations, and educational systems**, begin to lose their influence. When these institutions fail to transmit core values, it creates a void in moral guidance for new generations.
4. **Technological and Cultural Shifts:** Rapid advancements in technology and changing cultural values can contribute to moral decline. For example, online anonymity can reduce accountability, and consumer culture can prioritize materialism over ethical conduct.
5. **Psychological Factors:** At an individual level, moral decadence is supported by psychological phenomena like **moral disengagement** and "compassion fatigue." Moral disengagement allows

individuals to rationalize unethical behavior, while compassion fatigue can desensitize people to the suffering of others.

6. **Systemic Inequality and Injustice:** When people perceive a system as unfair or corrupt, it can breed cynicism and lead them to disregard its ethical norms. This can create a vicious cycle where a lack of social trust and widespread cynicism further contributes to moral decay.
7. From a sociological perspective, theorists like **Émile Durkheim** have explored how the breakdown of social bonds and shared norms (a concept he called "anomie") can lead to a state of moral crisis. He argued that as societies transition from traditional to modern forms, the forces of secularism and individualism can weaken the moral authority of communities, leading to a normative vacuum where individuals feel disconnected and lack a clear sense of right and wrong.

Theories and Sources of Moral Decadence

The concept of moral decadence is explored through several theoretical lenses, drawing from different academic disciplines. These theories provide a framework for understanding the causes and consequences of moral decline.

Sociological Theories

Sociologists focus on how changes in society's structure and institutions contribute to moral decay. The primary source here is the breakdown of social institutions that traditionally transmit moral values.

Émile Durkheim's Theory of Anomie (1893): Durkheim argued that as society's transition from traditional (mechanical solidarity) to modern (organic solidarity) forms, the old, rigid moral codes based on shared beliefs and customs weaken. This can lead to a state of **anomie**, or a lack of social norms and moral regulation. In this state, individuals feel disconnected and a "normative vacuum" is created, leading to increased crime, suicide, and a general feeling of moral disorientation.

Cultural Pessimism and Communitarianism: These modern sociological perspectives, influenced by Durkheim, argue that a combination of extreme individualism, consumerism, and the loss of communal bonds is the root cause of moral decline. They suggest that the "me-first" mentality and the focus on personal pleasure and wealth accumulation erode the sense of shared responsibility and collective well-being.

Sources:

1. **Breakdown of the Family Unit:** The family is considered the first and most important institution for moral training. High rates of divorce, single-parent households, and parental negligence are often cited as major sources of moral decay.
2. **Erosion of Religious Influence:** As societies become more secular, the moral authority of religious institutions diminishes, leading to a loosening of ethical standards once grounded in religious teachings.
3. **Materialism and Consumerism:** A culture that idolizes wealth and material possessions can lead individuals to prioritize personal gain over ethical behavior, fostering greed, dishonesty, and a transactional view of relationships.

Philosophical Theories

Philosophers approach moral decadence by questioning the very nature of morality itself and how it is sustained.

Friedrich Nietzsche's Critique of Morality (1886): Nietzsche argued that traditional morality (especially Christian morality) was a "slave morality" that glorified weakness, selflessness, and pity. He believed that this system was a source of moral decay because it stifled the natural human will to power and creativity. He

foresaw a future of **nihilism**, where the death of God and the erosion of absolute values would lead to a state of meaninglessness and moral crisis.

- **Moral Relativism:** This philosophical stance, which asserts that moral truths are not absolute but are instead relative to a specific culture or individual, can be seen as both a symptom and a source of moral decadence. When there is no universal standard of right and wrong, behaviors once considered wrong can become acceptable, leading to moral confusion and a breakdown of shared values.

Sources:

- **The Enlightenment and Rise of Subjectivism:** The emphasis on individual reason and autonomy, while positive in many ways, has been critiqued for fostering a subjective view of morality where each person becomes their own ultimate authority on what is right.
- **Erosion of Objective Truth:** The postmodernist rejection of objective truth and universal narratives can be seen as contributing to the idea that all values are equally valid, thus making it difficult to condemn any behavior on moral grounds.

Psychological Theories

Psychologists examine the individual-level mechanisms that contribute to moral decline, focusing on how people rationalize unethical behavior.

Moral Disengagement: Developed by psychologist Albert Bandura in 1990, this theory explains how individuals can justify immoral actions and maintain a positive self-image. It involves cognitive restructuring mechanisms such as **moral justification** ("I did it for a good cause"), **euphemistic labeling** (using benign language to make harmful acts seem acceptable), and **displacement of responsibility** ("I was just following orders").

Sources:

- **Peer Influence and Social Pressure:** Individuals often conform to the unethical behavior of their peer group to gain acceptance, overriding their own moral compass.
- **Exposure to Media:** The media, particularly social media, can normalize and even glamorize immoral behavior, desensitizing people and blurring the lines between right and wrong.
- **Inadequate Parenting and Education:** The lack of consistent moral guidance from parents and educational institutions can leave individuals without a strong ethical foundation, making them more susceptible to negative influences.

Area of study

Potiskum is a local government area and city in Yobe State, Nigeria, known as the state's largest and most populous city. Its history is closely tied to the Potiskum Emirate and its strategic position as a center of commerce. Establishment and Early History of the Potiskum Emirate was founded in 1809 by Mai Bauya, a chief of the Ngizim people. The Ngizim, one of the major ethnic groups in the area, established the state after subjugating the local Karai-Karai people. The emirate later became part of the British Northern Nigeria Protectorate in 1901. Colonial Era and Post-Independence During the colonial period, the British merged the Potiskum Emirate into the Fika Emirate in 1913. This merger lasted until 1993, when the Pataskum Emirate was recreated by the Yobe State government. The emirate was dissolved briefly by the military government but was reinstated in 2000. The headquarters of both the Fika and Potiskum emirates are located in the city of Potiskum (Audu, 2015)

Furthermore, Potiskum has long been a hub for trade and commerce, owing to its strategic location. It is particularly famous for having one of the largest cattle markets in West Africa, which attracts traders from neighboring states and countries. The city's economic importance has made it a significant center for learning

and cultural revival in the region. In Potiskum Local Government Area of Yobe State, youth moral is a significant challenge, largely driven by socioeconomic factors. The most prominent issues are unemployment, which often leads to other negative behaviors, and a rise in substance abuse (Kasim, 2023).

Statement of the Problem

Problems of moral development or upbringing of children has been a challenge to the nation. The interest of the researcher however is on the level of moral decadence among the growing youths in Potiskum local government of yobe state. The rate of immoral practices observable in Potiskum local government is at an alarming rate. Behaviours ranging from robbery, smoking, maiming, gross disobedience to the ruler, sexual harassment to gangster just to mention a few are prevalent among the youths. The effects of unwanted behaviours have been felt by both parents, government authorities and even the society at large. Most of the above listed behaviours have led to teenage pregnancy/abortion, suicide, early prostitute, imprisonment in the remind homes, madness and other social vices. It is against this background that the researcher felt the need to study how parents and government could help in curbing moral decadence among youths as a step towards sustainable development in Potiskum local Government and Nigeria at large.

Objectives of the Studies

This aspect of the research is to highlight the objectives of the study as follow:

1. To assess the causes of moral decadence among youths in Potiskum Local Government.
2. To determine the ways the youths manifest moral decadence.
3. To determine how parents and Government could help in curbing moral decadence among youths in Potiskum Local Government

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

1. What are the causes of moral decadence among youths in Potiskum Local Government?
2. In what ways do the youths manifest moral decadence?
3. How could parents and Government help in curbing moral decadence among youths in Potiskum Local Government?

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey design which aimed at investigating the roles of parents and Government could play in curbing moral decadence among the youths in Potiskum Local Government of Yobe State. The population is estimated at twelve (12) respondents gotten from the varieuse area of potiskum local Government. The target population is twelve (12) comprises of Security Personnel, traditional leaders, Parents and Market Women. Information was gathered using question guide through open-ended interviews.

Table 1: Breakdown of the population presented in Table 1.

S/NO	Area (locations)	Security personnel	Traditional Leaders	Parents	Market Women	Total
1	Yindiski Gadan Talakawa Area	1	1	1	1	4
2	Unguwa Bolewa Tsowuarr kasuwa Area	1	1	1	1	4
3	Gashua dabuwa Unguwar Lamba Texaco Area	1	1	1	1	4
		3	3	3	3	12

Source: Field Survey, 2025

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The following findings were made:

1. The study revealed poor parental upbringing, lack of affection and care, quest for materialism, Bad Parent behaviour, peer influence, societal influence, poor economy, political instability and drug abuse as the causes of moral decadence among Nigerian youths.
2. Nigerian youths moral decay in the following areas: sexual harassment, robbery, maiming of fellow colleagues, clandestine activities, and gross disobedience to authorities, disrespects to elders, and drug abuse.
3. The study also revealed how parents and government could help in curbing moral decadence among Nigerian youths.

DISCUSSION

It was observed from the first two respondents (security personnel and traditional leader) that many factors are responsible for moral decadence among Potiskum youths. The factors ranges from poor parental upbringing, lack of affection and care, quest for materialism, Parent behaviours, decline in religious training, poor economy and peer influence to mention but a few. The finding is in agreement with Oladipo (2009) that home training is a major factor in moral behaviour formation. For instance, children learn from their parents, caregiver, peers and home videos at home. So if parents are firm in correcting, directing and guiding their children, they would only learn those things their parents approve of. The above finding goes further to showcase the role of parents and care givers in moderating and shaping young one's behaviour.

This finding could be supported by the study of Roger (2003) who said that development of moral behaviour is a product of good parental rearing, care, education and training. In this way parents, care givers and peers are majorly accused about children's immoral behaviour.

The second two respondent (Parent and Market women) revealed that there are many forms of moral decadence among potiskum youths. The factors ranges from clandestine activities, maiming of fellow colleague, vandalization of Government property, robbery/stealing, gross disobedient to authorties, dishonesty, to sexual misconduct to mention but a few. The findings agree with Odeh (2013) who said that most youth of nowadays are involved in cultism, sexual and drug abuses of all kinds. The finding is captivating because it showcased various ways youths manifest moral decadence in schools in potiskum. These behaviours are not prevalent only in potiskum, rather it could be generalized because it is also witnessed in other states of Nigeria.

The study further revealed various strategies or ways by which parents and Government could curb moral decadence among the youth in the state. This finding is in support of Saheed (2013) that parents and government being the major instrument of training could go a long way in shaping and re-shaping youths morality. However, Odeh (2013) emphasizes the role of parents in character formation of the youth. Odeh intones that parents should be proactive in ensuring that the type of relationship their children keep are good because it exacts great influence on the behaviour of the child. Thus, parents and government are encouraged to exercise more power in instilling discipline both at home and out of home as a means of checkmating children's excesses before it becomes their permanent way of life.

Finally, the authority nature bestowed on the parents is enough to compel children to obey and behave well. In this same vein Government are endowed with moral power to train and shape behaviour which is part of the major aim of Government save guide the lives and properties of the people. It is therefore expected that if both could put hands on deck, Nigerian youths would be salvaged morally.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following were recommended.

1. Adequate teaching of moral instruction should be emphasized.
2. There should be good orientation and re-orientation programmes for students on the danger of immoral behaviour.
3. Parents should devote more time in observation, correction and instilling discipline appropriately as a way of shaping and reshaping behaviours of children at home.
4. There should be adequate counselling service to encourage students to have faith in God and work hard to face every challenges of life.
5. Both parents and teachers should as a matter of fact live out what they teach their children. This is because if they grow amidst unfairness, vulgarity, cheating and lying and they are taught moral behaviours at school, they cannot see its relevance in issues of life.

CONCLUSION

The study identified causes of moral decadence, various types and ways youths manifest moral decadence as well as how parents and teachers' effort could go a long way in reshaping behaviour of the youths. The causes are highlighted in the following sub-heading: parental, societal, peer, and the teachers' influences. However, teachers and parents were presented as major causes of moral decay among secondary school youths, hence, the study highlighted ways teachers and parents could enhance good morals and reduce or eliminate immorality among school youths. It is concluded that if teachers and parents put in more effort in readdressing the ugly trend, Nigeria in no distant time would be corruption free.

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